

BLEEDING OFF THE PAGE

A Cultural History of the Political Memoir in AUSTRALIA



Joshua Black

March 2023

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of
The Australian National University.

© Copyright Joshua Barry Black 2023

All Rights Reserved

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

This research was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship. I have also been the grateful recipient of the RSSS Director's Award for Higher Degree Research at the Australian National University.

I acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples on whose traditional lands the bulk of this thesis was written.



31/3/23

Joshua Barry Black

31 March 2023

For my grandmother, Fay Haley, with love and enduring gratitude

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to many people, and many institutions, for making this thesis possible. First, I thank the many archivists whose own work has facilitated mine. Steph Carter at the National Film and Sound Archive was enormously helpful in locating and facilitating access to some of the lively materials I have used in this project. Kathryn Dan and Sarah Lethbridge at the Australian National University (ANU) Archives have been wonderful always. Jacki Haas and Kate Sergeant from the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Library at the University of South Australia were highly supportive of this work. I also thank Isobel Johnstone at the National Library of Australia, Penny Robb and Paul Croke from the National Archives of Australia, and staff at the State Library of Victoria. Malcolm Farnsworth's *AustralianPolitics.com.au* online archive was a highly valuable repository that I was grateful to have at my fingertips. And I thank Sophie Garrett from the University of Melbourne Archives for her patience during months of questions and queries interspersed with lockdowns.

Secondly, I thank those who agreed to participate in an oral history interview as well as those who conducted research correspondence with me. Their testimonies were absolutely central to this thesis. I thank Louise Adler, Neal Blewett, Michael Bollen, Chris Bowen, Troy Bramston, James Button, Bob Carr, Kim Carr, Greg Combet, Selwyn Cornish, Mary Cunnane, Meredith Curnow, Judith Curr, Blanche d'Alpuget, Troy Daniel, Michael Dwyer, John Edwards, Craig Emerson, Gareth Evans, Peter Garrett, Rolf Gerritsen, Julia Gillard, Ian Hancock, Emily Hart, John Howard, Harry Jenkins Jr., Barry Jones, Ros Kelly, John Kerin, Cheryl Kernot, Angelo Loukakis, Phillipa McGuinness, Maxine McKew, Christine Milne, Anne Reilly, Graham Richardson, Andrew Robb, Susan Ryan, Robert Sessions, Bill Shorten, Margaret Simons, Garry Sturgess, Wayne Swan, Robert Tickner, Don Watson, and Hugh White. These individuals volunteered their time and made this project possible in doing so. I pay particular tribute to Susan Ryan and John Kerin, both of whom have since passed away.

Most of this thesis was written alongside my undergraduate teaching commitments at the ANU, as well as casual sessional contracts at the University of Wollongong, the University of New South Wales, and the Australian Catholic University. I benefited enormously from the opportunity to learn from, and converse with, all of those with whom I taught, namely Ben Mercer, Sean Quinn, Frank Bongiorno, Emily Gallagher, Fleur Goldthorpe, Jennifer Bird, Aditya Balasubramanian, James Watson, Peter Woodley, Ruth Balint, and Hannah Forsyth. My thinking has been shaped by each of them. I want to pay special tribute to Nicholas Brown,

whose incisiveness and compassion make him an inspirational lecturer, a valued intellectual guide, and a generous mentor to me. I also thank those who have employed me as their research assistant: Martine Mariotti, Lorna Lloyd, and Kim A. Wagner.

I have benefited enormously from the feedback and encouragement that the ANU School of History community, led by Frank Bongiorno and Carolyn Strange, has given me. The National Centre of Biography, directed by Melanie Nolan, has been a particularly strong source of intellectual support. I thank Malcolm Allbrook, Tania Colwell, Alex Cook, Karen Downing, Karen Fox, Rae Frances, Sam Furphy, Julie Hotchin, Rohan Howitt, Mike Jones, Amanda Laugesen, Nicole McLennan, Ben Mercer, Ruth Morgan, Maria Nugent, Tim Rowse, Bruce Scates, Martin Thomas, Amy Way, and Angela Woollacott for their wisdom and advice. I thank Jessica Urwin, Nicole McLennan, Karen Fox and Marija Taflaga for the opportunity to present pieces of this thesis to the School of History PhD reading group, the National Centre of Biography's Feedback Merchants group, the Gender & History reading group, and the School of Politics and International Relations' Cake4Comments feedback group respectively.

I am grateful to the International Australian Studies Association, the Contemporary Histories Research Group, the Australian Policy and History Network, the Friends of Noel Butlin Archives Centre, the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Peter Rose (*Australian Book Review*), and Amanda Dunn (*The Conversation*) for the opportunity to test out many of the ideas explored in greater depth in this thesis. Many people – too many to name – have offered constructive comments, insightful references and words of affirmation, and all have been appreciated. Stuart Macintyre met with me in the early months of this candidature and offered wisdom when there was much else for him to be doing. I treasure that conversation. Doug Munro has often emailed with incisive questions and eye-opening references, for which I am grateful. Sharon Crozier-De Rosa and Jen Roberts have shown ample kindness to me and my work, as has David Lee. I thank those at the Australian Historical Association who have offered encouragement over nearly three years: Melanie Oppenheimer, Frank Bongiorno, Michelle Arrow, Bethany Phillips-Peddlesden, Romain Fathi, Ben Jones, Daniel May, Joel Barnes, Chelsea Barnett, Anna Temby, and many well-wishing and collegiate colleagues on the executive committee. My particular thanks to Frank Bongiorno, Patrick Mullins, Bethany Phillips-Peddlesden, Jessica Urwin, James Watson and Amy Way for reading parts of the thesis very late in the piece. I deeply value their analytical wisdom and editorial nous.

My postgraduate colleagues have been integral to the thinking and conferring that underwrote this thesis. I have valued their distinct intellectual approaches and enjoyed their companionship. Tess Gardener, Shane Breynard and James Watson offered great company and intellectual sustenance in our shared offices. James, in particular, has always been willing to listen to my half-developed thoughts and ideas. Jessica Urwin and Michelle Staff were constant presences, and this final product owes much to them. They, along with Alexandra McCosker, Saskia Roberts, Jennifer Bird, Michele Horne, Ruby Ekkel, Zoe Smith, Peter Woodley, Michael Pearson, Daniel May, Nicholas Hoare, Wilbert Wong, Trish Downes, Nichola Garvey, Emma Cuppitt, Daniel Casey, Will Scates Frances, Eamonn McNamara, Miriana Unikowski, Sarah Hodge and Fleur Goldthorpe, made a material difference to this project. I thank Jeff Hole at Deakin University for rich and productive conversations, too. I give particular thanks to Emily Gallagher for shaping this project with piercing questions and the most steadfast support. My deepest gratitude goes to those whose kindness and generosity mattered enormously in the difficult final weeks of this journey.

I thank my supervisory panel for helping me to navigate a path through a project that often threatened to become unwieldy. Chris Wallace brought sharp comments and much mirth to our panel meetings. She was also generous in connecting me with many of the interviewees who participated in this research. Stephen Wilks was punctual and generous with his feedback, and a source of much enthusiasm throughout the project. Nicholas Brown was co-opted at various times to add to the discussion. I thank them.

Much credit is due to Frank Bongiorno for his role in this research. Even at his busiest, Frank made himself available for advice, encouragement and criticism in just the right proportions. I have found his own work engaging and energising, and I hope that this thesis makes good on the intellectual investments he has made in it.

Melanie Nolan has been a remarkable primary supervisor. She was a most welcoming presence as I commenced this research and established myself at the ANU. She was an intellectually stimulating interlocutor over many a coffee or other beverage. Melanie provided me with writing and reviewing opportunities early on in my candidature, and she also gave me intellectual freedom and trust in the years that followed. She has brought an enormous wealth of historiographical and theoretical clarity to this project at critical intervals. And when it was needed, kindness was given. I appreciate it all, and will continue to learn from her example.

This thesis developed against the backdrop of a number of personal challenges, of which the COVID-19 pandemic was obviously one. I thank friends and former housemates for their role in living with – putting up with, rather – the project and my preoccupation with it. Jarrod Prout and Emily Urquhart deserve special mention. My partner, Chantelle Dalton, has seen this project unfold in its entirety. I thank her for much practical support, and for her unwavering belief in my ability to do this. Thanks are due to my family, too, for their love and support. Above all, I thank my grandfather, Barry, whose passions and worldview cannot but have influenced mine, and my grandmother, Fay, who I dearly wish were here to hold this in her hand.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a contemporary history of the political memoir genre in Australia. It examines the politicians, the publishers, and the political issues that have been at stake in those acts of post-facto literary construction. The political memoir has in the past four decades become ubiquitous in Australian political culture, a significant component of the much larger life writing ‘boom’. However inelegant, these literary performances have had a distinct capacity for being newsworthy, for bleeding off the page and back into the important political and social debates that have shaped modern Australia.

For all its potential for impact and controversy, the political memoir genre has rarely featured as an object of critical study in Australian historiography. Literary and cultural historians have rejected the genre as too commercial, ephemeral or repugnant for close study, while political historians have offered analyses in incisive essays, book reviews, and perceptive codas of political biographies. Rarely has the political memoir been the object of extensive analysis as a component of the broader theatre of political power in Australia.

This thesis brings together distinct but connected historiographies of Australian politics, culture, and the book in order to examine the causes and effects of the political memoir in contemporary Australian public life. It is a study based on rich archival collections (draft manuscripts, commercial correspondence, book tour itineraries), a wealth of media sources (ranging from newspapers and television recordings to the voluminous public archive of *YouTube*), and 46 oral history interviews and email exchanges undertaken by the author.

Drawing on these sources and historiographical traditions, this thesis seeks to tell a meaningful story about the growing prominence, salience and commercial significance of the political memoir as a mode of political performance. It argues that politicians’ memoirs have been generated by, and have reaffirmed, the new political conflicts and emotional texture that have remade Australian politics since the 1970s. The thesis traces the unfolding of a memoir boom predicated not only on the commercial posturing of publishing houses and the hunger of the press for sensational stories, but equally on the major sources of conflict with the political class in the recent past, and the shifting emotional regime within which politics took place.

The chapters examine the role of politicians’ memoirs in publicly explicating distinct visions of politics and leadership, establishing personal brands and reputations, publicising passionate ideological debates within and between the major parties, reframing divisive policy

debates, contesting a highly gendered political culture, and advancing the cultural authority of the modern political staffer. Memoirists pictured the political process in competing ways, emphasising executive leadership, factional power, the influence of advisors or the power of the press. In doing so, they amplified and entrenched the very real power struggles that shape Australian politics. In placing the political memoir at the centre of these stories, the thesis offers a novel but holistic perspective on the ways those important conflicts have, over time, generated a more emotional and personalised political culture in modern Australia.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	v
Abstract.....	ix
Table of Contents.....	xi
List of Figures.....	xii
Abbreviations.....	xiv
INTRODUCTION: Approaching the Political Memoir Boom	- 1 -
<i>Snapshot 1, “Are You a Ghostwriter?”</i>	- 29 -
<i>Chapter 1, “FOR ALL TIME”: Bob Hawke, Graham Richardson and the Making of the Political Memoir Boom</i>	- 31 -
<i>Snapshot 2, An Archaeology of Feeling.....</i>	- 72 -
<i>Chapter 2, A GOLDEN AGE?: Narratives of Change, Reform and Failure in Hawke-Keating Ministerial Autobiographies.....</i>	- 76 -
<i>Snapshot 3, The Papers are Closed</i>	- 109 -
<i>Chapter 3, COOL HEADS AND BLEEDING HEARTS: Advisers, Speechwriters and the Right to Write</i>	- 112 -
<i>Snapshot 4, “They’re Doing You a Favour”</i>	- 144 -
<i>Chapter 4, (EN)GENDERING DISBELIEF: Gender, the Media and Public Perceptions of Politicians’ Memoirs</i>	- 146 -
<i>Snapshot 5, Disclosing Non-Disclosure</i>	- 184 -
<i>Chapter 5, “ENTER, STAGE RIGHT”: Performances of Liberalism and Leadership in Malcolm Fraser and Lazarus Rising</i>	- 186 -
<i>Snapshot 6, Roads Not Travelled.....</i>	- 224 -
<i>Chapter 6, TOXIC TALES: The Rudd-Gillard Trauma and the Peak of the Political Memoir Boom</i>	- 226 -
<i>Snapshot 7, Saving the Last Dance?.....</i>	- 261 -
<i>Chapter 7, “MORE THAN JUST A BOOK TOUR”: Performing and Publishing Political Ambition in Australia, 2008—2018.....</i>	- 264 -
CONCLUSION: Hard to Take Seriously?.....	- 303 -
Bibliography	- 312 -

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Annual federal political memoir publications, 1983 to 1999.	- 33 -
Figure 2: Geoff Pryor, “Graham Richardson and Bob Hawke Writing Their Memoirs”, <i>Canberra Times</i> , 30 March 1992. NLA, Geoff Pryor.	- 49 -
Figure 3: Bob Hawke defends <i>The Hawke Memoirs</i> at the National Press Club, 17 August 1994. BHPML, RH45/17.	- 65 -
Figure 4: Gary Punch, Robert Ray, Leo McLeay, John Della Bosca and Kim Beazley photographed laughing during Graham Richardson’s book launch, 31 October 1994. Trove, Mike Bowers.	- 67 -
Figure 5: Peter Walsh speaks at the launch of <i>Confessions of a Failed Finance Minister</i> , National Press Club, 3 April 1995. NAA: A13966, 950196.	- 83 -
Figure 6: Susan Ryan signing <i>Catching the Waves</i> at the University of Newcastle, 1999. Cae Pattison.	- 94 -
Figure 7: Prototype of the dustjacket for <i>Keating: The Inside Story</i> , 1996. Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.	- 132 -
Figure 8: Noel Pearson, Paul Keating and Don Watson at the launch of <i>Recollections of a Bleeding Heart</i> , Sydney Town Hall, 6 May 2002. AAP Photos, Guy Wilmot.	- 139 -
Figure 9: Women Members of the Australian Parliament by House, 1943-2004 (%). McAllister, 2006.	- 147 -
Figure 10: Cartoon of Joh Bjelke-Petersen on the cover of the <i>Courier Mail</i> ’s Sunday magazine, 1 April 1990. NLA, Courier Mail.	- 156 -
Figure 11: Cheryl Kernot and former premier of Victoria Joan Kirner at the launch of <i>Speaking for Myself Again</i> , Sofitel Hotel, Melbourne, 1 July 2002. AAP Photos, Julian Smith.	- 163 -
Figure 12: Television host Andrew Denton interviewing Mark Latham on <i>Enough Rope</i> , 15 September 2005, Sydney. AAP Photos, ABC Television.	- 171 -
Figure 13: Pauline Hanson pictured with Sydney radio broadcaster Alan Jones at the launch of the former’s autobiography, Sydney, 29 March 2007. AAP Photos, Tracey Nearmy.	- 178 -
Figure 14: Ron Tandberg, Malcolm Fraser cartoon, <i>Age</i> , 4 February 1983, p. 1.	- 200 -
Figure 15: Malcolm Fraser signs a copy of <i>Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs</i> for Gough Whitlam in Sydney, 11 March 2010. AAP Photos, Bruce Postle.	- 214 -
Figure 16: John Howard signing copies of <i>Lazarus Rising</i> at a bookstore in Brisbane, 16 November 2010. AAP Photos, Kym Agius.	- 220 -

Figure 17: Front cover of the paperback issue (2017) of Peter Garrett's memoir, <i>Big Blue Sky</i> , published with Allen & Unwin in 2015.	- 242 -
Figure 18: Front cover of Kevin Rudd's second volume of memoirs, <i>The PM Years</i> , published with Pan Macmillan, October 2018.	- 249 -
Figure 19: Former governor-general Dame Quentin Bryce and former prime minister Julia Gillard at the launch of the latter's memoir, <i>My Story</i> , Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 26 September 2014. AAP Photos, Dean Lewins.	- 255 -
Figure 20: Full page spread of Peter Costello in the <i>Age</i> , Thursday 11 September 2008. NLA, <i>Age</i> .	- 277 -
Figure 21: Front cover of Tony Abbott's <i>Battlelines</i> , published with MUP, first edition, 2009.	- 281 -

A single-use licence has been obtained for all Australian Associated Press images displayed in this thesis for the purpose of examination only.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ANU	Australian National University
ANUA	Australian National University Archives
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BHPML	Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Library
CBA	Curtis Brown Australia
CEF	Clean Energy Future program
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPRS	Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme
DURD	Department of Urban and Regional Development
ERC	Expenditure Review Committee
GST	Goods and Services Tax
IMG	International Management Group of America
MCA	Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
MP(s)	Member(s) of Parliament
MUP	Melbourne University Press/Publishing
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NFSA	National Film and Sound Archive
NLA	National Library of Australia
NSW	New South Wales
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
RBA	Reserve Bank of Australia
RPS	Reserve Price Scheme
SLV	State Library of Victoria
TCF	Textiles, Clothing and Footwear industry
UAP	United Australia Party (1931—44)
UMA	University of Melbourne Archives
UQP	University of Queensland Press

UniSA

University of South Australia

WHA

William Heinemann Australia

INTRODUCTION

Approaching the Political Memoir Boom

A century ago, Australians scarcely bought or read memoirs written by their elected political representatives, chiefly because most politicians refrained from writing them. Even at Melbourne's famous Coles Book Arcade, where until 1929 consumers could purchase books unavailable "anywhere else", there was a thin offering of such titles.¹ Internationally, American presidents and German chancellors had proven that political memoirs could be a "publishing sensation", but to Australian eyes, such proof was wanting.² Instead, Australia's first prime minister Edmund Barton "kept no confessional diaries" and, following a post-parliamentary career at the High Court, receded from public memory.³ Two of his contemporaries, Henry Parkes and George Reid, did publish their "reminiscences", but in the latter case consumers seemed less than eager to part with the "high price" of 1 guinea (almost a third of an unskilled male labourer's weekly wage in the 1920s) to acquire a copy.⁴ The memoirs of British prime ministers, European royalty, and even the odd Russian revolutionary could and did attract Australian press attention, but as Sean Scalmer has shown, tales from inside the local political tent were "neither numerous nor influential".⁵

Now, in contemporary Australia, politicians' memoirs are ubiquitous. Even in the context of a global pandemic, memoirs are newsworthy. In April 2020, the former prime minister Malcolm Turnbull's memoir *A Bigger Picture* caused enough controversy to compete with COVID-19 for attention at ministerial press conferences and in news headlines for a brief while.⁶ Turnbull revealed in the book that he had suffered "suicidal thoughts" following his

¹ "Cole's Book Arcade: Is it Going?", *Prahran Telegraph*, 20 May 1927, p. 5. See also Beverley Kingston, *Basket, Bag and Trolley: A History of Shopping in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 31.

² George Egerton, "Politics and Autobiography: Political Memoir as Polygenre", *Biography*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1992), p. 230.

³ Geoffrey Bolton, *Edmund Barton: The One Man for the Job* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000), p. xi. For discussion of Barton's disappearance from Australian civic memory, see Anna Clark, "Teaching the Nation's Story: Comparing Public Debates and Classroom Perspectives on History Education in Australia and Canada", *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, vol. 41, no. 6 (2009), p. 747.

⁴ "George Reid's Book", *Sun*, 15 April 1917, p. 21; P. G. Macarthy, "Wages for Unskilled Work, and Margins for Skill, Australia, 1901–21", *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1972), p. 144.

⁵ Sean Scalmer, "The Rise of the Insider: Memoirs and Diaries in Recent Australian Political History", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 56, no. 1 (2010), p. 83. Examples of reporting on foreign memoir publications include "Behind the Scenes: Lord Oxford's Memoirs", *Age*, 20 October 1928, p. 5; "Mr Asquith's Memoirs", *Herald*, 14 July 1928, p. 4; "Ex-Kaiser's Memoirs – Apprehension Among Germans – Political Crisis Feared", *Daily Standard*, 12 June 1926, p. 6; "Little Willie's Memoirs", *Northern Star*, 26 September 1922, p. 3; "To Write Memoirs – Trotsky's Intentions", *Brisbane Courier*, 4 February 1929, p. 15.

⁶ Josh Taylor and Malcolm Farr, "Malcolm Turnbull's Book *A Bigger Picture* 'a Bestseller' Days After Launch", *Guardian*, 23 April 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/apr/23/malcolm-turnbull-memoir-new-book-a-bigger-picture-bestseller-after-launch>, accessed 9 May 2020; Scott Morrison, Transcript of Press

first removal as Liberal Party leader in December 2009.⁷ He used scathing prose and colourful diary entries to tell the story of his three-year prime ministership and its ill-fated conclusion in August 2018. He described the “betrayal” he endured at the hands of former colleagues during the leadership spill that ended his career, and he argued that the right-leaning News Corporation media empire and its mogul Rupert Murdoch more readily resembled a “political party” rather than a news provider.⁸ In a direct political attack, Turnbull called his successor Scott Morrison a “control freak” whose dishonest “double game” had ultimately cost the author his premiership.⁹ In reply, factional operatives called for the former prime minister’s expulsion from the Liberal Party and even went so far as to breach intellectual property laws by pre-emptively leaking the entire book.¹⁰ Bootleg copies on the internet notwithstanding, Hardie Grant publishing had to order a second print run to meet consumer demand.¹¹

For all the controversy that surrounded it, Turnbull’s book was no novelty, for decades of change in Australia’s political culture had turned the revealing and sensational prime ministerial memoir into an expectation. Nearly every Australian prime minister since the 1960s has attempted to write a memoir, and since the 1980s an increasing array of ministers, Members of Parliament (hereafter MPs), advisers and journalists have done the same. These books are part of the wider “memoir boom” in contemporary culture, which has seen film celebrities and athletes, corporate chieftains and soldiers all sharing life narratives of varying degrees of candour and literary flare with a reading public.¹² Politicians have also been swept up in this wider collapse of “privacy”, the rise of “testimony” and self-revelation in public discourse, and a “contemporary culture of self-help” in which famous lives operate as exemplars.¹³ But the political memoir genre is a highly specific subset of the modern life writing boom, and its roots have been politically and cultural distinct. Why has this formerly infrequent and unusual genre,

Conference – Australian Parliament House, ACT, 16 April 2020, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/press-conference-australian-parliament-house-act-15>, accessed 9 May 2021; Neil Mitchell, Transcript of Radio Interview with Scott Morrison, 3AW, 17 April 2020, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/interview-neil-mitchell-3aw-170420>, accessed 9 May 2021; Peter Stefanovic, Interview with John Frydenberg, Sky News, 16 April 2020, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/interview-neil-mitchell-3aw-170420>, accessed 9 May 2021.

⁷ Malcolm Turnbull, *A Bigger Picture* (Richmond: Hardie Grant, 2020), p. 170.

⁸ Turnbull, *A Bigger Picture*, p. 630, p. 482.

⁹ Turnbull, *A Bigger Picture*, pp. 636–37.

¹⁰ Kylar Loussikian and Samantha Hutchinson, “Turnbull’s Memoirs Spill Beans on Murdoch ‘Hate’ Campaign”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 April 2020, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/turnbull-s-memoirs-spill-beans-on-murdoch-hate-campaign-20200416-p54kk7.html>, accessed 14 October 2020.

¹¹ Taylor and Farr, “Bigger Picture ‘a Bestseller’”.

¹² See Ben Yagoda, *Memoir: A History* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009); G. Thomas Couser, *Memoir: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Carolyn Holbrook, “The Role of Nationalism in Australian War Literature of the 1930s”, *First World War Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2014), pp. 213–31.

¹³ Yagoda, *Memoir*, p. 238; Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: Interpreting Life Narratives*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010 [2001]), p. 124.

at least in Australia, proliferated so rapidly since the late twentieth century? In confronting that question, this thesis considers both the causes and the effects of the political memoir phenomenon in Australian political culture over time. To do that work, I embrace British historian Jason Peacey's premise that "there cannot be a history of objects without a history of the influences, processes, and political forces behind their production".¹⁴ I also seek to resist reductive explanations. Stuart Kells has suggested in his history of Melbourne University Press (hereafter MUP) that public interest in politicians' memoirs is "easy to explain".¹⁵ If that were so, why had the genre been so sparse and decidedly uninteresting to most observers until the 1990s? In problematising and historicising the genre, this study will show that uncomplicated accounts tend to overlook important elements and processes in Australia's political culture. To put it bluntly, easy answers are tenable only if we fail to articulate the question in appropriately broad terms.

In this thesis, I argue that the contemporary political memoir boom in Australia was driven by transformations in Australian politics that began in the 1970s. The most important of these changes were structural and cultural in nature. Profound social, economic and ideological ruptures in the 1970s and 1980s challenged longstanding conventions of Australian political life and catalysed disruptions within the political class itself. The rise of neoliberalism, the changing status of women, the acceleration of the daily media cycle, and the sense of a dissolution of the boundary between the public and private spheres changed the nature and tenor of Australia's political culture, rendering it more overtly personal and emotional. These transformations were transnational, and they shaped an emotional regime in Western political cultures that legitimised expressiveness and confession, along with "uncomfortably high levels of emotional investment" in political contests.¹⁶ The new emotional expressiveness meant that ideological, factional and gendered conflict within the political class would be that much more culturally visible.

Social and cultural transformations were preconditions for the memoir boom, and once published, the books themselves had the effect of actuating and reinforcing their emotional imaginings of politics and power. Stories about warring factions, contested ideologies, gendered competition, marvellous men, and the occasional great woman, reframed and

¹⁴ Jason Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda During the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (London: Routledge, 2016 [2004]), p. 20.

¹⁵ Stuart Kells, *MUP: A Centenary History* (Carlton: Miegunyah Press, 2023), p. 339.

¹⁶ Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, "Emotions of Protest", in Katie Barclay, Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, and Peter N. Stearns (eds.), *Sources for the History of Emotions: A Guide* (London: Routledge, 2021), p. 198. See also Thomas Dixon, *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), introduction.

(re)presented power. Yes, they could be shallow and unattractive personal polemic, “ephemeral and commercially predicated”, and occasionally downright unseemly when considered against the “canon of autobiography”.¹⁷ But it is for these very reasons that they demand the historian’s critical attention.¹⁸ The political memoir boom has been a microcosm of larger politico-cultural disruptions and transformations, and it has fed back into and intensified those patterns. This thesis will interrogate the causes and effects of modern political life writing in Australia and, in the process, offer a holistic account of the ways Australian political culture changed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

New Politics, New Culture

Before the 1970s Australian federal politics, and the class of Anglo-Celtic men who dominated it, operated within a broadly (if tenuously) shared set of ideological and cultural conventions. Elected politicians, public servants, journalists and other influential actors worked within the parameters of “social liberalism”, which advocated centralised wage fixing and arbitration, a degree of state-sponsored welfare provision, a commitment to the White Australia ideal, and trade protectionism (though free trade liberalism always lingered on in the background).¹⁹ Fierce policy disagreements occurred, but they largely took place within the social liberal or new liberal “rules of political struggle”, which included responsible government, state interventionism, and the “institutionalization of class conflict”.²⁰ This was a political culture apparently marked by utilitarianism and rationality, and in which “intimacy and the personal were downplayed”.²¹ In fact, Australian public life, according to some commentators, was marked by collective disdain for “affectation” and “public emotion”, with Anzac

¹⁷ David McCooey, *Artful Histories: Modern Australian Autobiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 3; Eugene Stelzig, “Is There a Canon of Autobiography?”, in Ricia Anne Chansky and Emily Hipchen (eds.), *The Routledge Auto|Biography Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 62.

¹⁸ This point is also articulated powerfully in George Egerton, “The Politics of Memory: Form and Function in the History of Political Memoir from Antiquity to Modernity”, in George Egerton (ed.), *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory* (London: Frank Cass, 1994), p. 3.

¹⁹ See Stuart Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism: The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), especially chapter 5; Marian Sawer, “The Ethical State: Social Liberalism and the Critique of Contract”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 31, no. 114 (2000), pp. 67—90; Marilyn Lake, *Progressive New World: How Settler Colonialism and Transpacific Exchange Shaped American Reform* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), especially chapter 1. See also Francis G. Castles, “The Wage Earners’ Welfare State Revisited: Refurbishing the Established Model of Australian Social Protection, 1983—93”, *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1994), pp. 120—45. For the lingering free trade liberal tradition, see Frank Bongiorno, “Whatever Happened to Free Trade Liberalism?” in Paul Strangio (ed.), *Confusion: The Making of the Australian Two-Party System* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2009), chapter 9.

²⁰ Tim Rowse, *Australian Liberalism and National Character* (Melbourne: Kibble Books, 1978), pp. 9—10.

²¹ James Walter, “Political Biography”, in R. A. W. Rhodes (ed.), *The Study of Australian Politics* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 97.

commemoration the chief exception.²² After parliament decamped to the “relatively small and isolated” city of Canberra in 1927, Australia’s federal politicians and journalists spent much time “enclosed in one building”.²³ In that environment, they became a federal political class, defined in the Weberian sense as those people who “live both for, and off, politics”.²⁴ The notion of a political class is an imperfect one, but as one former politician has argued, this was a distinct social cohort with its own distinct “consciousness” and sense of “self-interest”.²⁵ These were the circumstances in which Australia’s twentieth-century political culture became entrenched.

That culture was disturbed by the economic shocks of the 1970s and 1980s. The stagflation crisis and the ensuing collapse of the post-war Keynesian consensus rendered the social liberal terms of political contest, or at least the policies identified with it, obsolescent.²⁶ Of course, political ideologies are never fixed, and there have been many debates within the Australian Labor Party and the Liberal-National Coalition (the alternate parties of government) about their philosophical *raison d’être*.²⁷ But the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and 1990s – notably the deregulation of the financial, product and labour markets – confounded the existing social liberal paradigm, and blurred the conventional left-right political spectrum.²⁸ It was not a simple matter of convergence between the parties, as Murray Goot has convincingly shown: neoliberalism “may be clothed in different garbs”, as had been the case with the Keynesian consensus.²⁹ What mattered was that Labor’s “industrial working class” and the Liberals’

²² Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005 [1958]), p. 2; Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country* (Camberwell: Penguin, 2005 [1964]), p. 103. For the emotional function of Anzac in Australian society see Carolyn Holbrook, “Making Sense of the Great War Centenary”, in Carolyn Holbrook and Keir Reeves (eds.), *The Great War: Aftermath and Commemoration* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2019), pp. 250–53.

²³ Nicholas Brown, *A History of Canberra* (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 117; Chris Wallace, *Political Lives: Australian Prime Ministers and Their Biographers* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2023), p. 53.

²⁴ Max Weber paraphrased in Peter Allen, *The Political Class: Why it Matters Who Our Politicians Are* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 45. For a rich discussion of definitions of the term “political class” itself, see pp. 19–23.

²⁵ Rodney Cavalier, *Power Crisis: The Self-Destruction of a State Labor Party* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 50. See also Jon Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 8.

²⁶ See Stephen Bell, *Ungoverning the Economy: The Political Economy of Australian Economic Policy* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997), chapter 5; Ian McLean, *Why Australia Prospered: The Shifting Sources of Economic Growth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), chapter 9.

²⁷ For significant arguments within the Australian Labor Party, see John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre (eds.), *True Believers: The Story of the Australian Federal Parliamentary Labor Party* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001). For historic splits within the conservative parties, see Ian Hancock, *National and Permanent?: The Federal Organisation of the Liberal Party of Australia, 1944–1965* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2000), pp. 61–63.

²⁸ For detailed discussion of economic change and structural adjustment in the 1980s, see Frank Bongiorno, *The Eighties: The Decade that Transformed Australia* (Carlton: Black Inc., 2015).

²⁹ Murray Goot, “Party Convergence Reconsidered”, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 39, no. 1 (2004), p. 67.

“moral middle class” were no longer stable discursive formations nor dependable political constituencies.³⁰

Those economic and political shocks occurred in a culture whose underlying precepts had rapidly changed, and where democratic politics seemed increasingly personal. The women’s and gay liberation movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s played a key role in this process, because as Michelle Arrow has shown in *The Seventies* (2019), their mantra that the “personal is political” fundamentally “destabilised a foundational concept of modern political culture: the notion that there were two separate spheres of life, public and private”.³¹ Cultural politics in the 1970s transformed “not just what was considered political, but how political debate took place”.³² Journalists reaffirmed that transformation in the form of New Journalism with its “intimacy between the reader and the writer”, as well as by expanding notions of what was reportable in the “public interest”.³³ Indeed, Frank Bongiorno has argued that the “deference” journalists had formerly shown to senior politicians appeared to dissipate from the late 1960s.³⁴ These departures created greater scope for the personalisation of political discourse and conflict, a crucial precondition for the modern memoir boom.

Just how novel was the new personal variety of politics after the 1970s? Had there not been a “fair degree of traffic” between the political and the personal all along?³⁵ British historian Amanda Vickery has questioned the exclusivity of the public and private spheres in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; “personal issues”, she argued, had always “informed

³⁰ Michael Pusey, *Economic Rationalism in Canberra: A Nation-Building State Changes Its Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Elizabeth Humphrys, *How Labour Built Neoliberalism: Australia’s Accord, the Labour Movement and the Neoliberal Project* (Leiden: Brill, 2019); David McKnight, *Beyond Left and Right: New Politics and the Culture Wars* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005); Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

³¹ Michelle Arrow, *The Seventies: The Personal, the Political and the Making of Modern Australia* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2019), p. 7.

³² Arrow, *The Seventies*, p. 171.

³³ Jackie Dickenson, “Journalists Writing Australian Political History”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 56, no. 1 (2010), p. 109; Frank Bongiorno, “Balls, Bubbles and Bosses: Australian Politics and Sex Scandal”, *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 46, no. 3 (2022), p. 295. The New Journalism of the 1960s and 1970s is not to be conflated with what English poet and critic Matthew Arnold derided as “New Journalism” in the late-nineteenth century, characterized by its conscious appeal to lower-middle and working-class readers in succinct and accessible language. See Mark Hampton, “Rethinking the ‘New Journalism’, 1850s—1930s”, *Journal of British History*, vol. 43, no. 2 (April 2004), pp. 278—90. This older iteration of ‘New Journalism’ has also been considered in the Australian context. See Bridget Griffen-Foley, *The House of Packer: The Making of a Media Empire* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000 [1999]), p. 5.

³⁴ Frank Bongiorno, *Dreamers and Schemers: A Political History of Australia* (Collingwood: La Trobe University Press, 2022), p. 260.

³⁵ Nicholas Brown, “Public Lives, Private Lives: The Fundamental Dilemma in Political Biography”, in Tracey Arklay, John Nethercote and John Wanna (eds.), *Australian Political Lives: Chronicling Political Careers and Administrative Histories* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), p. 36.

politics” and vice versa.³⁶ Historians of politics, culture and the media have shown that personal intimacy and charisma were already electorally powerful, especially when refracted through radio and television.³⁷ For the public, too, politics had long been personal. Before Australian universal suffrage (indeed before democracy had “become somewhat boring”), impassioned rhetoric and electoral violence showed that “darker emotions of hate, aggression, envy and grievance” had their place among the people.³⁸ Emotions such as grief and loss evidently mattered too, in a society that placed stories and legends about war close to its heart, even if the effect of those emotions was sometimes to place war itself outside the partisan terms of political engagement.³⁹

Nevertheless, a steadfast convention held that the implied borders between public and private spheres mattered.⁴⁰ The texture of Australian public culture clearly changed in the 1960s and 1970s as those “boundaries” were “radically renegotiated”.⁴¹ Carolyn Holbrook has suggested that in an era before “trauma and catharsis” were popular concepts, the expectation was that men would “suppress difficult emotions”, even if those emotions pertained to the sacred Anzac legend.⁴² But by the 1990s, as Bridget Griffen-Foley has shown, the “confessional genre” had become highly popular on television and in mass-market magazines.⁴³ Emotional expressiveness was now par for the course, and intellectuals along with

³⁶ Amanda Vickery, “Introduction”, in Amanda Vickery (ed.), *Women, Privilege and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 4.

³⁷ Bridget Griffen-Foley, “The ‘Fireside Chat’ on Australian Radio”, in Bridget Griffen-Foley and Sean Scalmer (eds.), *Public Opinion, Campaign Politics and Media Audiences: New Australian Perspectives* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2017), pp. 142–73. See also Bridget Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations: The Story of Australian Commercial Radio* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), p. 337; Michelle Arrow, “16 September 1956, ‘It’s Here, at Last!’: The Introduction of Television in Australia”, in Martin Crotty and David Andrew Roberts (eds.), *Turning Points in Australian History* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), p. 151. For histories of public charisma see Antoine Lilti, *The Invention of Celebrity, 1750–1850*, trans. Lynn Jeffress (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), chapter 6; Jeremy C. Young, *The Age of Charisma: Leaders, Followers, and Emotions in American Society, 1870–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). For a dated but still engaging treatment of charisma and dictatorship, see Alan Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 395–99.

³⁸ Sean Scalmer, “Containing Contention: A Reinterpretation of Democratic Change and Electoral Reform in the Australian Colonies”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 42, no. 3 (2011), p. 353; Judith Brett, “Alfred Deakin’s Political Oratory”, in Bridget Griffen-Foley and Sean Scalmer (eds.), *Public Opinion, Campaign Politics and Media Audiences: New Australian Perspectives* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2017), p. 105.

³⁹ Joy Damousi, “Why Do We Get So Emotional About Anzac?”, in Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds (with Mark McKenna and Joy Damousi) (eds.), *What’s Wrong with Anzac?: The Militarisation of Australian History* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2010), p. 96.

⁴⁰ Mark Francis, *Governors and Settlers: Images of Authority in the British Colonies, 1820–60* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1992), p. 3; Peter Mandler and Susan Pedersen, “Introduction: The British Intelligentsia After the Victorians”, in Susan Pedersen and Peter Mandler (eds.), *After the Victorians: Private Conscience and Public Duty in Modern Britain* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 4–5, pp. 12–17.

⁴¹ Bongiorno, *Dreamers and Schemers*, p. 268.

⁴² Carolyn Holbrook, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014), pp. 76–77.

⁴³ Bridget Griffen-Foley, “From Tit-Bits to Big Brother: A Century of Audience Participation in the Media”, *Media, Culture and Society*, vol. 26, no. 4 (2004), p. 543.

the wider public could expect politicians to “represent us emotionally” as well as politically.⁴⁴ This was a global trend. In his first press conference after leaving Robben Island prison in February 1990, future South African president Nelson Mandela was asked how he *felt*, rather than what he *thought*, about the import of the moment: “when I went to prison, a journalist would never have thought of asking questions about one’s wife and family, one’s emotions”, he wrote.⁴⁵ Mandela’s anecdote pithily articulated the new centring of emotional epistemologies in public discourse around the world at the end of the twentieth century.

Australia’s political class changed fundamentally in response to these structural departures and cultural pressures. First, entrenched factions emerged in Canberra’s parliamentary parties, bringing with them new forms of institutionalised conflict. Factions, rife within the trade union movement, were inherent in the Labor Party too, but the formalised national factions of the 1980s were “of a different order”.⁴⁶ Initially, they were manifestations of the sharp ideological ruptures of the 1980s within the Labor Party, but over time they became internal networks of privilege, influence and patronage.⁴⁷ Between the 1980s and the 2010s, visible factions also reshaped the parliamentary Liberal Party in Canberra, and they were predicated on disputes about leadership candidates, economic principles, and “moderate” or “conservative” values.⁴⁸ Alongside that development, and in the wake of prolific activism in the 1970s, white women began to enter Australian parliaments in significant numbers during the 1980s and 1990s, their presence challenging institutions whose cultures were rooted in what Judith Brett has described as “male rivalry, male aggression, male valour” and “male physical strength”.⁴⁹ The politics of gender became more rather than less acute in that period.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Graham Little, *The Public Emotions: From Mourning to Hope* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1999), p. 5.

⁴⁵ Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (London: Little, Brown & Company, 1994), p. 559.

⁴⁶ Michelle Grattan, “Caucus and the Factions”, in John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre (eds.), *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001), p. 251.

⁴⁷ John Daniel Encel, “National Factions in the Australian Labor Party”, PhD dissertation, Australian National University, 2002, pp. 135—62. See also Cavalier, *Power Crisis*.

⁴⁸ See for instance Paul Kelly, *Triumph and Demise: The Broken Promise of a Labor Generation* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2014), pp. 28—29; David Crowe, *Venom: Vendettas, Betrayals and the Price of Power* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2019), pp. 9—10.

⁴⁹ Judith Brett, *Doing Politics: Writing on Public Life* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2021), p. 87. See also Carol Johnson, “The Gendered Identities of Australian Political Leaders: From Hawkie to ScoMo”, in Katrina Lee-Koo and Zareh Ghazarian (eds.), *Gender Politics: Navigating Political Leadership in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2021), pp. 11—23. For historical literature on women and work in Australia, see Raelene Frances, *The Politics of Work: Gender and Labour in Victoria 1880—1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). For the state’s changing attitude toward women and work, see Melanie Nolan, “The High Tide of a Labour Market System: The Australasian Male Breadwinner Model”, *Labour & Industry*, vol. 13, no. 3 (2003), pp. 73—92. For the rise of women’s liberation in the 1970s, see Patricia Grimshaw *et al.*, *Creating a Nation* (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble, 1994), pp. 300—8. For an account of the Women’s Electoral Lobby, see Marian Sawer with Gail Radford, *Making Women Count: A History of the Women’s Electoral Lobby* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008).

⁵⁰ Julia Baird, *Media Tarts: How the Australian Press Frames Female Politicians* (Carlton North: Scribe, 2004).

The 1970s and 1980s also saw the rise of the political adviser or “staffer”, an institutional response to the perceived administrative and communicative complexities of modern politics.⁵¹ This new group of policy specialists and professional partisans constituted a major shock to the established culture in Canberra, creating further distance between representatives and the public, but also generating a new cohort of political insiders with considerable licence to disclose stories. By the end of the century, Australia’s political class was proportionately larger than at any other time in the post-war period, and chronically prone to factional, gendered and administrative conflict.

The changes in Australia’s political culture and its political class in the late twentieth century drove the political memoir boom, commencing in earnest in the 1990s. Politicians’ public performances took on a distinctly personal and revelatory quality, on the hustings, in the media and in parliament itself, and finally in the literary marketplace. Political memoirs are personal as well as political, concerned with individual feelings as well as public matters. The newly configured political culture meant that memoirs were to become a salient space in which political representatives could work through the transformations and conflicts besetting them and the polity. As Scalmer has put it, memoirs allowed authors to explain the “inner spring of outward public behaviour”.⁵² Moreover, there seemed to be a cultural and market appetite for memoirs and the controversies they precipitated.

The causal explanation I offer here is hardly unique to Australia. Political scientists and sociologists as well as historians have studied the neoliberal turn, the proliferation of partisan advisers, the rise of women in parliaments, and the changing emotional contours of public life in Britain, the United States, New Zealand and Canada.⁵³ In response to these departures, the political memoir genre flourished, a process amplified further by increasing tendencies toward

⁵¹ The definitive accounts of the rise of the political adviser are Maria Maley, “Partisans at the Centre of Government: The Role of Ministerial Advisers in the Keating Government 1991–96”, PhD dissertation, Australian National University, 2002; Anne Tiernan, *Power Without Responsibility: Ministerial Staffers in Australian Governments from Whitlam to Howard* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007).

⁵² Scalmer, “Rise of the Insider”, p. 89.

⁵³ For the global neoliberal turn in the 1970s and 1980s see David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 [2005]); Elizabeth Humphrys and Damien Cahill, “How Labour Made Neoliberalism”, *Critical Sociology*, vol. 43 (2017), pp. 669–84. For comparative studies of the rise of political advisers, see Chris Eichbaum and Richard Shaw (eds.), *Partisan Appointees and Public Servants: An International Analysis of the Role of the Political Adviser* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2010). For comparative analysis of women in these democracies, see Marian Sawyer, Manon Tremblay and Linda Trimble (eds.), *Representing Women in Parliament: A Comparative Study* (London: Routledge, 2006). Examples of histories of emotional regime change in the contemporary period include Peter N. Stearns, *Shame: A Brief History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), esp. chapter 5; Susan Lanzoni, *Empathy: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), pp. 1–18.

“disloyalty and gossip”.⁵⁴ Even those such as former British prime minister Gordon Brown who felt “uncomfortable” with displays of inner feeling would be compelled to take up the memoirist’s pen.⁵⁵ Literarily and materially, the “memoir boom” has been a global phenomenon, propelled by multinational publishing corporations and their capital, and by cultural imperatives that are fundamentally transnational.⁵⁶ I do not wish to divorce Australia’s political or literary cultures from these global processes. Australia’s experience, however, has been appreciably different insofar as the flow has been more sudden and proportionately bigger. “You can go for years without a New Zealand political figure writing a book”, Wellington-based reporter Audrey Young has recently suggested, “and then, bang, six of them appear in the space of a year”.⁵⁷ One cannot say the same of Australia, where the frequency of politicians’ memoirs has been relatively consistent for thirty years.

Australian political life writing has been significant for its capacity to bleed off the page, reflecting and refashioning political discourse and culture in striking ways. Compared with Europe and the United States, Australian life writing more broadly has been marked by “its belatedness”, but also by its capacity to stimulate “significant public debate”.⁵⁸ As Kylie Cardell and Kate Douglas suggest, autobiographies and memoirs are “a distinctive mechanism by which individuals resist, reconcile, and articulate experiences of conflict in their everyday life”.⁵⁹ When public figures have used that mechanism, it has often been with clear public effects. Some of those effects – controversy; historiographical argument and rebuttal; the projection and contestation of power – have been recognised in previous studies of the genre, but those studies have rarely been furnished with examples from Australia. When historians, literary theorists and political scientists congregated for a conference on political memoirs at

⁵⁴ Craig Fehrman, “Reagan and the Rise of the Blockbuster Political Memoir”, *American Literary History*, vol. 24, no. 3 (2012), p. 472. For more see Duncan McDowall, “Spinning the Past: Prime Ministerial Memoirs, 2007”, *Queen’s Quarterly*, vol. 115, no. 1 (2008), pp. 116–131; Andrew Gamble, “Political Memoirs”, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, vol. 4, no. 1 (April 2002), pp. 141–51.

⁵⁵ Gordon Brown, *My Life, Our Times* (London: The Bodley Head, 2017), p. 5.

⁵⁶ Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, pp. 162–65. For discussions of British and American multinational publishing corporations and the memoir boom, see Julie Rak, *Boom! Manufacturing Memoir for the Popular Market* (Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2013), chapters 1 and 3.

⁵⁷ Audrey Young, “NZ Politicians Turn Their Hand to Writing Books”, *NZ Herald*, 21 August 2021, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/nz-politicians-turn-their-hand-to-writing-books/IOEITO33PSJL6VMT4RWPI4J5QQ/>, accessed 20 October 2022.

⁵⁸ Melanie Nolan, “Biography in Australia: Different Yet the Same? All Connected Flatland?”, in Hans Renders and David Veltman (eds.), *Different Lives: Global Perspectives on Biography in Public Cultures and Societies* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), p. 114, p. 124.

⁵⁹ Kylie Cardell and Kate Douglas, “Life Writing and Conflict: Love Wins”, in Jessica Gildersleeve (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Australian Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2021), p. 344.

the University of British Columbia in 1989, Australia rated not a single mention.⁶⁰ The examples on offer in Australia, it should be said, were then still relatively few.

Today, there is much to be gained from a study of Australian political life writing with emphasis on its function in public culture, and especially its newsworthiness. Since the mid-1990s Australian media companies, challenged by the internet and its impact on their advertising revenues, have sought to produce more content with less capital and labour.⁶¹ In that environment, and with the exception of literary hoaxes such as Helen Darville's *The Hand that Signed the Paper* (1994), culture war controversies such as those relating to Keith Windschuttle's *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* (2002) and Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu* (2014), or popular biographies, politicians' books are singularly capable of capturing substantial media attention. As Ann Curthoys put it, "matters political have been a staple of print communication" in Australia.⁶² Even if politicians and parliament seemed "too dull" to make eye-catching television, their memoirs were often defined "by the need to be newsworthy".⁶³ Political stories continue to matter, particularly so when couched in personal terms, and few vehicles have been better suited for this than the political memoir.

Defining the "Political Memoir"

I use the term *life writing* in this thesis in the broadest sense, encompassing "all forms of analytical and reflective writing that take 'self' or 'selves' as their focus".⁶⁴ But the scope of this research demands that firm subgeneric boundaries are drawn where they might otherwise be more fluid. The distinction between *autobiography* (self-life-writing) and *biography* is critical to this study, for I am examining texts that constitute self-portraits, and not external portraits. There is a rich tradition of political *biography* in Australia, which has been expansively discussed and debated.⁶⁵ In Chapter 3, I examine two intimate biographical portraits of Paul Keating as prime minister, both written by former advisers, but these also fall within the wide remit of *memoir*, a subgenre of life writing often marked by their authors'

⁶⁰ See "Preface" in George Egerton (ed.), *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory* (London: Frank Cass, 1994), p. vii.

⁶¹ See Matthew Ricketson and Patrick Mullins, *Who Needs the ABC?* (Brunswick: Scribe, 2022), pp. 9–26. See also Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations*, p. 411.

⁶² Ann Curthoys, "Introduction: Histories of Journalism", in Ann Curthoys and Julianne Schultz (eds.), *Journalism: Print, Politics and Popular Culture* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999), p. 1.

⁶³ Margaret Simons, *The Content Makers: Understanding the Media in Australia* (Camberwell: Penguin, 2007), p. 109; Stuart Macintyre, "The Rebirth of Political History", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 56, no. 1 (2010), p. 2.

⁶⁴ Mary Besemeres and Maureen Perkins, "Editorial", in *Life Writing*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2004), p. vii.

⁶⁵ See Walter, "Political Biography"; Judith Brett (ed.), *Political Lives* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997); Wallace, *Political Lives*.

“emphasis on other people”.⁶⁶ I have also declined to consider the patchy tradition of political fiction and parliamentary novels in Australia, though the intersections of politics and fiction have received serious historical appraisal by others.⁶⁷

This thesis does refer to the writings of state premiers in Australia, but not in any comprehensive way. This is not because premiers’ memoirs have had no effect on political culture. In 1976, South Australians were reminded “how unusual a man” their premier Don Dunstan was when he published *Don Dunstan’s Cookbook* to much applause from women in particular.⁶⁸ (According to his biographer Angela Woollacott, Dunstan’s later political memoir *Felicia: The Political Memoirs of Don Dunstan* [1981] was an “invaluable” primary source but “not exactly a literary triumph”.⁶⁹) In New South Wales (hereafter NSW), premier Bob Carr published collections of essays, speeches and commentary, demonstrating that he did “not underestimate the intelligence of his audience”.⁷⁰ Queensland’s Anna Bligh became the first woman premier to publish a political memoir, promising to describe in personal terms what it was like to crash through “the wall that holds women back from leadership in every sphere”.⁷¹ In most cases, though, the writings of premiers (and occasionally their advisers) appealed to a more confined audience than that of a national leader, which was potentially a drawback in the eyes of publishers.⁷² And although the states were and remain an important presence in Australians’ lives, Mark McKenna has noted that “the political conversation emanating from Canberra holds the nation together more than we might be willing to acknowledge”.⁷³ I will therefore discuss but a few premiers’ memoirs in this thesis.

⁶⁶ Chris Baldick, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [1990]), p. 202.

⁶⁷ Michael Wilding, *Political Fictions* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980); John Uhr and Shaun Crowe, *Novel Politics: Studies in Australian Political Fiction* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2020). Over time, MPs have produced a few instances of “racy pulp fiction” novels. See Mike Secombe, “Kookaburra”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 December 1999, p. 38; Alex McKinnon, “A Liberal MP Has Written the Erotic Australia–Indonesia War Novel Absolutely No One Asked For”, *Junkee*, 31 March 2016, <https://junkee.com/a-liberal-mp-has-written-a-weirdly-sexual-novel-about-indonesia-and-australia-going-to-war/75396>, accessed 18 October 2020.

⁶⁸ Angela Woollacott, *Don Dunstan: The Visionary Politician Who Changed Australia* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2019), p. 201.

⁶⁹ Woollacott, *Don Dunstan*, p. 242.

⁷⁰ Beverley Kingston, *A History of New South Wales* (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 238. For Carr’s published works, see Bob Carr, *Thoughtlines: Reflections of a Public Man* (Camberwell: Penguin, 2002); Bob Carr, *What Australia Means to Me* (Camberwell: Penguin, 2003); Bob Carr, *My Reading Life: Adventures in the World of Books* (Camberwell: Penguin, 2008).

⁷¹ Anna Bligh, *Through the Wall* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2015), p. 8.

⁷² For an example of the state adviser’s memoir see Joel Deane, *Catch and Kill: The Politics of Power* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2015).

⁷³ Mark McKenna, “‘The Character Business’: Biographical Political Writing in Australia”, in Stuart Macintyre, Lenore Layman and Jenny Gregory (eds.), *A Historian for All Seasons: Essays for Geoffrey Bolton* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2017), p. 70. This point is also noted in Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations*, p. 384.

How should we define the *political memoir*? British historian George Egerton offered the most comprehensive definition, to which this thesis subscribes.⁷⁴ By his reckoning, the political memoir included “descriptive recording” and “retrospective narration of political engagement”, sometimes accompanied by “autobiographical portrayal of one’s life” in and before politics, some “revelation of the inner working of a political system”, and “in its most ambitious mode, portrayal not only of one’s political life but also of the times in which this career occurred”.⁷⁵ The term “polygenre”, Egerton suggested, was a useful shorthand for capturing the complex facets of this literary and political product.⁷⁶

The genre found its earliest cultural (if not commercial) manifestations in antiquity.⁷⁷ Classical Greek, Jewish and Roman leaders produced narratives about themselves and their public deeds on monuments and in scripts.⁷⁸ Julius Caesar’s *Gallic Wars* and Augustus’s *Res Gestae* (“what I did”) are two of the most recognisable examples.⁷⁹ Historical discourse itself emerged from this tradition, embodied by participant-narrators such as Thucydides and his *History of the Peloponnesian War*.⁸⁰ In the medieval period, there were memoirs of “religious conversion” (particularly Christian) alongside the continuing “res gestae” tradition.⁸¹ These were followed in the modern era by memoirs that purported to tell real histories of the English and American Civil Wars, the American War of Independence, the French and then Russian Revolutions, and a plethora of anti-imperial nationalist struggles.⁸² The rise of academic history in universities during the nineteenth century delegitimised the memoir form in the eyes of the academy.⁸³ But the dramatic events of the twentieth century, and the cultural impulse to bear witness to them, kept the genre alive. In Britain, wartime leaders David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill, in concert with their publishers and collaborators, produced substantial

⁷⁴ George Egerton, “Introduction”, in George Egerton (ed.), *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory* (London: Frank Cass, 1994), pp. xii—xiii.

⁷⁵ Egerton, “Introduction”, pp. xii—xiii.

⁷⁶ Egerton, “Politics and Autobiography”, p. 223.

⁷⁷ Georg Misch, *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951 [1907]), p. 17.

⁷⁸ Egerton, “Politics of Memory”, pp. 6—7.

⁷⁹ Mary Beard, *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* (London: Profile, 2016), pp. 360—74; Danielle Sloatjes, “Augustus and His Presentation of the People in the *Res Gestae*”, *Classical World*, vol. 113, no. 3 (2020), pp. 279—98.

⁸⁰ See Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (London: Penguin, 1972 [1954]).

⁸¹ Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p. 112. See also Roy Pascal, *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (London: Routledge, 2016 [1960]), pp. 22—33; Egerton, “Politics of Memory”, pp. 8—11.

⁸² For a classic overview see George Peabody Gooch, *Studies in Diplomacy and Statecraft* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1942), pp. 227—90.

⁸³ Both Gooch and Egerton discuss the challenge that professional historiography posed for political memoirs. See Gooch, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, p. 290; Egerton, “Politics of Memory”, p. 22.

accounts of their own leadership.⁸⁴ In the United States, an earlier and patchy tradition of public memoir with Ulysses S. Grant as its pinnacle in 1885—86 was supplanted by a more commercial presidential memoir lineage from Harry S. Truman to Barack Obama. American literary historian Craig Fehrman described Ronald Reagan's *An American Life* (1990) as “the first block-buster presidential memoir”.⁸⁵ Scholars have examined political memoirs produced in France, Germany, Canada, Japan, India, the Soviet Union and elsewhere throughout the twentieth century.⁸⁶

Most of these works are better understood as *memoir* than *autobiography*, though the distinction is often blurred in the marketplace.⁸⁷ The traditional typology was articulated by Roy Pascal, who argued that autobiography was primarily “focused on the self” and memoir on “others” associated with the author.⁸⁸ *Autobiography* itself has conventionally been defined by its focus on personality, subjectivity and introspection. Traditionalists contend that a *good* autobiography, in the tradition of Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782), will “fully reproduce the character, the temperament and the outlook of the author”.⁸⁹ For political historian, former Australian Labor government minister and diarist Neal Blewett, a key indicator of serious (political) autobiography is the amount of space taken up with recounting the author's childhood and personal development.⁹⁰ But autobiographies are written with hindsight, conventionally toward the end of the author's life or work. *Diaries*, by way of contrast, consist of contemporaneous impressions of events. Political diaries such as those of Richard Crossman were popular and controversial in Britain in the 1970s, and rejuvenated political life writing there.⁹¹ Though positivists celebrate the diary's “immediacy”, others have

⁸⁴ David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, 6 vols. (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1933—1936); Winston Churchill, *History of the Second World War*, 6 vols. (London: Cassell, 1948—1954). For Lloyd George, see George Egerton, “The Lloyd George ‘War Memoirs’: A Study in the Politics of Memory”, *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 60, no. 1 (1988), pp. 55—94. For Churchill, see David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (London: Penguin, 2005).

⁸⁵ Fehrman, “Blockbuster Political Memoir”, p. 469.

⁸⁶ See Zoi Lakkas, “Soviet Political Memoirs: A Study in Politics and Literature”, MA dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1992; Milton Israel, “Indian Nationalist Voices: Autobiography and the Process of Return”, in George Egerton, *Political Memoirs: Essays on the Politics of Memory* (London: Frank Cass, 1994) pp. 76—105; Robert Young, “Partial Recall: Political Memoirs and Biography from the Third French Republic”, in George Egerton (ed.), *Political Memoirs: Essays on the Politics of Memory* (London: Frank Cass, 1994), pp. 62—75; McDowell, “Spinning the Past”, pp. 116—131.

⁸⁷ See Mary Besemeres and Maureen Perkins, “Editorial”, *Life Writing*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2004), p. xii; Yagoda, *Memoir*, p. 1; Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p. 3.

⁸⁸ Pascal, *Design and Truth*, p. 5.

⁸⁹ Gooch, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, p. 227; Pascal, *Design and Truth*, p. 2. For Pascal's commentary on Rousseau, see p. 39.

⁹⁰ Neal Blewett, “No Secret Selves?”, *Meanjin*, vol. 61, no. 1 (2002), p. 10.

⁹¹ Richard Crossman, *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, 3 vols. (London: Hamilton and Cape, 1975—1977). See Kevin Theakston, “Richard Crossman: *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*”, *Public Policy and Administration*, vol. 18, no. 4 (2003), pp. 20—40.

been more wary about the post-facto imposition of coherence on seemingly authentic diurnal impressions.⁹² Although they are subject to the same editorial and literary interventions as memoirs and autobiographies, diaries are distinct insofar as they are *represented* and *read* as contemporaneous documents.

Another significant subgenre is that of the *autobiographical manifesto*, which Sidonie Smith has described as “a purposeful constitution of a future history, the projection of anamnesis into the future.”⁹³ This is a genre defined by its authors’ claims to future space and time in the public sphere. Mid-career politicians have increasingly used this genre to position themselves for future opportunities. Autobiographies are retrospective, but manifestoes are by definition *proactive*. As a subgenre of life writing, its central premise is that of a journey unfinished. I will discuss and explain the rise (and fall) of that subgenre in Australia in Chapter 7.

Approaching a Cultural History of Political Memoirs

Scalmer has noted that historians have had a long and “ambiguous” relationship with the political memoir genre.⁹⁴ Indeed, Australian researchers have been (understandably) more interested in autobiographies written by anyone other than politicians. Life writing has furnished scholars with individuals stories that reveal Australia as a “settler nation” searching for “identity and legitimacy”, and the genre has also facilitated the “preservation and transformation” of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities and knowledges in the face of homogenising colonial pressures.⁹⁵ Historians have also shown much interest in political

⁹² For a cautiously optimistic appraisal of the political diary’s reliability see Andrew Gamble, “Political Memoirs”, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2002), pp. 142—43. For a more holistic analysis of how political diaries function and issue of reliability, see Sean Scalmer and Nathan Hollier, “I, Diarist: Examining Australian Politics from the ‘Inside’”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 55, no. 2 (2009), pp. 170—89.

⁹³ Sidonie Smith, “The Autobiographical Manifesto: Identities, Temporalities, Politics”, *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1991), p. 209. Though Smith discusses the idea of *autobiographical manifesto* in the context of postcolonial and feminist political identity formations in the late twentieth century, this description is apt for the highly concentrated future-focussed autobiographical manifestoes produced by parliamentarians.

⁹⁴ Scalmer, “Rise of the Insider”, p. 82. For more on this see Egerton, “Politics and Autobiography”, pp. 221—23. For broader scholarly anxieties relating to autobiography and ‘historicity’, see Paul John Eakin, *Touching the World: Reference in Autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 141—45.

⁹⁵ David McCooey, “Autobiography”, in Peter Pierce (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 330; Michael R. Griffiths, “Indigenous Life Writing: Rethinking Poetics and Practice”, in Belinda Wheeler (ed.), *A Companion to Australian Aboriginal Literature* (New York: Camden House, 2013), p. 16. See also McCooey, *Artful Histories*; John Colmer, *Australian Autobiography: The Personal Quest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Jeremy D. Popkin, “Ego-histoire Down Under: Australian Historian-Autobiographers”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 38, no. 129 (2008), pp. 106—12; Anne Brewster, *Reading Aboriginal Women’s Autobiography* (Sydney: Sydney University Press with Oxford University Press, 1996).

biography, its qualities and its consequences.⁹⁶ “Reputation is political capital”, Chris Wallace has explained: “Biographers are among those who coin it, and who can destroy it”.⁹⁷ But since the 1990s, politicians have shown an increasing proclivity for coining and destroying their own reputational capital in the form of memoirs. Observing that trend is one thing, McKenna sagely noted, and “understanding the deluge quite another”.⁹⁸ Scalmer has argued that the boom had its roots in a new “culture of confession”, the cultural elevation of “witness” above “scholar”, and the rise of the politician as a minor celebrity.⁹⁹ The “political intentions” of the memoirists and the public effects of their books, he suggested, deserved “further examination”.¹⁰⁰ Kells has more recently suggested that political memoirs were products of the tendency of voters and media audiences to treat politics as “a spectator sport”.¹⁰¹ In pursuing those conclusions further, I seek to bring political and commercial forces more explicitly into dialogue with those productive initial conclusions. The cultural aspects of the political memoir boom are even more striking if the political conflicts and market imperatives that underscored it are also rendered visible.

Multiple historiographical and intellectual traditions are required in order for this thesis to do that work. First, this research sits at the intersection of political and cultural history, advancing a tradition that self-consciously seeks to “link the two domains”.¹⁰² The influence on this thesis of the New Cultural History and its interest in “the construction of identity” is critical, because the political memoir is above all else a political *object*.¹⁰³ My research places changing emotional regimes at the core of its inquiry, but it does so in a way that embraces Australian historiography’s cultural and emotional turns together, rather than treating them as mutually exclusive.¹⁰⁴ Second, this thesis may well be categorised as a New Political History, which strives to marry an interest in “leadership and institutions” with a focus on “the culture

⁹⁶ Chris Wallace, “The Silken Cord: Contemporaneous 20th Century Prime Ministerial Biography in Australia and Its Meaning”, PhD dissertation, Australian National University, 2015; Wallace, *Political Lives*; Patrick Mullins, “Profiling the Biography of the Contemporary Political Figure in Australia”, in Donna Lee Brien and Quinn Eades (eds.), *Offshoot: Contemporary Life Writing Methodologies and Practices* (Crawley: UWA Publishing, 2018), pp. 83—97; Kate White, “Australian Political Biography and Biographers: Revisiting Australian Political Biography”, *Australian Journal of Biography and History*, no. 5 (2021), pp. 1—20.

⁹⁷ Wallace, *Political Lives*, p. 263.

⁹⁸ McKenna, “Character Business”, p. 54.

⁹⁹ Scalmer, “Rise of the Insider”, p. 103.

¹⁰⁰ Scalmer, “Rise of the Insider”, p. 98.

¹⁰¹ Kells, *MUP*, p. 339.

¹⁰² Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019 [2004]), p. 108.

¹⁰³ Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, p. 91. See also Volker Depkat, “History”, in Martina Wagner Egelhaaf (ed.), *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction*, vol. 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019), pp. 75—76.

¹⁰⁴ For a succinct discussion of the relationship between the cultural turn and the emotional turn see Sarah Pinto, “The History of Emotions in Australia”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 48, no.1 (2017), p. 104.

of representative politics and how this related to the people at large”.¹⁰⁵ Exploring the relationship between memoirist and audience, I offer new perspectives on the cultural interface between representatives and public opinion, and an analysis of the “methods through which authority is accumulated and exercised” (and indeed ultimately dismantled) in the political arena.¹⁰⁶

Third, this thesis draws on the tradition of *political culture* studies in both history and political science. That term is often poorly defined. It does not mean background or institutional context, nor does it mean “national character”, which is necessarily a vaguer concept.¹⁰⁷ We should also avoid treating political culture as “an efficient cause in a scientific system of concepts”.¹⁰⁸ Taking my cue from Gabriel Almond (an early pioneer in this field), I understand political culture to consist of “cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientations to political phenomena”.¹⁰⁹ I understand political culture as “causing structure and as being caused by it”, though my emphasis falls on the latter.¹¹⁰ Importantly, scholars from a range of disciplines have long agreed that studies of political culture require an interpretative approach to the “network of representations” and the “webs of significance that people spin for themselves”.¹¹¹ The political memoir is an under-examined part of those webs and networks.

This thesis adopts the methods and approaches of book history, even if it does not aspire to *be* a history of the book. With its focus on the “life cycle” of books and the “middle-men” (and middle-women) of literary production – the editors, printers, publishers and traders – book

¹⁰⁵ Steven Fielding, “Looking for the ‘New Political History’”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 42, no. 3 (2007), p. 515. See also David M. Craig, “‘High Politics’ and the ‘New Political History’”, *Historical Journal*, vol. 53, no. 2 (2010), p. 475; Helen McCarthy, “Whose Democracy? Histories of British Political Culture Between the Wars”, *Historical Journal*, vol. 55, no. 1 (2012), p. 236. For a particularly incisive discussion of New Political History see Susan Pedersen, “What is Political History Now?”, in David Cannane (ed.), *What is History Now?* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 36–56.

¹⁰⁶ Sean Scalmer, *Democratic Adventurer: Graham Berry and the Making of Australian Politics* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2020), p. xii.

¹⁰⁷ Stephen Welch, *The Concept of Political Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 10; Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 1–26.

¹⁰⁸ Tim Rowse, “Political Culture: A Concept and Its Ideologues”, in Graeme Duncan (ed.), *Critical Essays in Australian Politics* (Port Melbourne: Edward Arnold, 1978), p. 27.

¹⁰⁹ Gabriel A. Almond, “The Intellectual History of the Civic Culture Concept”, in Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba (eds.), *The Civic Culture: Revisited* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1989), p. 26.

¹¹⁰ Almond, “Civic Culture Concept”, p. 29.

¹¹¹ John Frow and Meaghan Morris, *Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1989), p. viii, quoted in Carol Johnson, *Governing Change: From Keating to Howard* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000), p. 17; R. A. W. Rhodes, “Theory, Method and British Political Life History”, *Political Studies Review*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2012), p. 167.

history can powerfully illuminate facets of political history.¹¹² In that spirit, this thesis contextualises the authors of political memoirs (most of them white men from a settler colonial society historically unprepared to hear the voices of colonised or ethnic communities).¹¹³ I also examine those “middle-men”, including the researchers, advisers and speechwriters on whose labour a politician’s public voice depends.¹¹⁴ I have also attempted to examine the audience for these books, even if “the inner experience of ordinary readers may always elude us”.¹¹⁵ Academics are prominent among the readership. “One only has to look at a political scientist’s book-shelf”, Tracey Arklay has said, “to observe that political auto/biographies are read by the profession”.¹¹⁶ But readers just as often included journalists, fellow politicians, party activists, and a cohort of “political junkies” who avidly consume political content. The bulk of the audience, of course, took the form of citizens who saw the controversies surrounding these books played out in newspaper columns, television bulletins and colourful book reviews.

The lens of book history also matters because it allows us to see structure as well as contingency, and it illuminates material forces as well as cultural ones. One important contingency in this thesis is the authorial contest between journalists and politicians, the former having increasingly performed as political historians in their own right.¹¹⁷ In the tradition of Warren Denning, Canberra Press Gallery journalists from Alan Reid to Annabel Crabb have fashioned political histories for which some readers hungered.¹¹⁸ Political memoirs are products of this “narrative ecology”, an attempt to offer what may seem the “second draft” of history.¹¹⁹ We need to consider also the cultural status of the book itself in a rapidly changing communicative landscape, where print-on-demand technology, newspaper serialisation, book launches, writers’ festivals and conventional literary magazines have continued to ensure that

¹¹² Robert Darnton, “What is the History of Books?”, *Daedalus*, vol. 111, no. 3 (Summer 1982), p. 67; Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), pp. 136—37.

¹¹³ Just nine Indigenous Australians (who identify as such) have served in the Commonwealth Parliament, and none have published a political memoir or autobiography. Nova Peris, the first woman Aboriginal Senator, published a book of speeches in 2018. See Nova Peris, *Finding My Voice* (Melbourne: Wilkinson Publishing, 2018).

¹¹⁴ James Curran makes this point in relation to politicians and speechwriters in *The Power of Speech: Australian Prime Ministers Defining the National Image* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2004), p. 16.

¹¹⁵ Darnton, “What is the History of Books?”, p. 79.

¹¹⁶ Tracey Arklay, “Political Science”, in Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf (ed.), *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction*, vol. 1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), p. 125.

¹¹⁷ Dickenson, “Journalists Writing Australian Political History”, pp. 105—119; Patrick Mullins, “Chasing the Future: Journalists Writing Political History”, *Australian Journalism Review*, vol. 37, no. 2 (2015), pp. 95—107.

¹¹⁸ Patrick Mullins, “Warren Denning and the Making of *Caucus Crisis*”, *History Australia*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2021), pp. 94—111; Bridget Griffen-Foley, “A Life at the Centre”, *Griffith Review*, no. 3 (2004), pp. 59—66.

¹¹⁹ Yiannis Gabriel, “Narrative Ecologies in Post-Truth Times: Nostalgia and Conspiracy Theories in Narrative Jungles?”, in R. A. W. Rhodes and Susan Hodggett (eds.), *What Political Science Can Learn From the Humanities: Blurring Genres* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), pp. 33—56; Brown, *My Life, Our Times*, p. 31.

books matter in the culture around them.¹²⁰ Others have asked why speeches and oratory have “survived into the electronic age”, and this thesis will ask the same question of political book publishing.¹²¹ In seeking to answer it, I understand publishers and their craft not only in cultural terms, but also in material and capitalist terms. This approach owes something to the new histories of capitalism underway in Australian historiography. Scholars know “how important discourse is in asserting power”, but as Hannah Forsyth and Sophie Loy-Wilson have argued, “money matters too”.¹²² It matters especially if we are to explain the rise of “celebrity publishing”, for in the age of risk-averse corporate oligopolies, detailed sales analytics and just-in-time capitalism, the “principal reason for publishing” popular life writing titles is that the publishers can presume that a substantive market exists for them.¹²³ The utility of book history, in short, is that it makes tangible for the historian “linguistic forces” in connection with all of these “extralinguistic ones”.¹²⁴

I have consulted autobiographical theory, but with much caution. Literary theorists have long been interested in autobiographical texts and their relationship with reading cultures, but their modes of analysis were traditionally ahistorical and non-materialist. When Julie Rak examined the role of publishers and markets in the modern global life writing boom, she noted that her approach was “a far cry” from the norm in literary scholarship.¹²⁵ Granted, she and others have produced landmark studies of life writing and its real-world consequences.¹²⁶ But for many autobiographical theorists, the nature of autobiography itself lay in the (timeless) bilateral relationship between a writer and a reader. French theorist Philippe Lejeune understood the *autobiographical pact* to constitute “the affirmation in the text of [the author’s]

¹²⁰ See Millicent Weber, *Literary Festivals and Contemporary Book Culture* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Alexandra Dane, *Gender and Prestige in Literature: Contemporary Australian Book Culture* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); Melinda Harvey and Julieanne Lamond, “Literary Prizes and Book Reviews in Australia Since 2014”, in Millicent Weber and Aaron Mannion (eds.), *Book Publishing in Australia: A Living Legacy* (Clayton: Monash University Press, 2019), pp. 231–64.

¹²¹ Stephen Mills, “The Making of a Prime Minister’s Speeches”, in Julian Disney and J. R. Nethercote (eds.), *The House on Capital Hill: Parliament, Politics and Power in the National Capital* (Annandale: The Federation Press, 1996), p. 166.

¹²² Hannah Forsyth and Sophie Loy-Wilson, “Seeking a New Materialism in Australian History”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 48, no. 2 (2017), p. 186.

¹²³ John B. Thompson, *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), p. 203.

¹²⁴ Charles Walton, “Preface and Acknowledgements”, in Charles Walton (ed.), *Into Print: Limits and Legacies of the Enlightenment – Essays in Honour of Robert Darnton* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), p. viii.

¹²⁵ Rak, *Boom!*, p. 44.

¹²⁶ See for instance Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*; Paul John Eakin (ed.), *The Ethics of Life Writing* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Susanna Egan, *Mirror Talk: Genres of Crisis in Contemporary Autobiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Susanna Egan, *Burdens of Proof: Faith, Doubt and Identity in Autobiography* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011); Leigh Gilmore, *Tainted Witness: Why We Doubt What Women Say About Their Lives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

identity”.¹²⁷ He contended that there was an obligation on the author’s part to be faithful to external realities, and that readers were usually alert to authorial “breaches of contract”.¹²⁸ But what was the role for publishers, markets and shifting tastes in that temporally unbounded contract? Among literary scholars, the New Historicists have exerted a more productive influence by virtue of their wider interest in cultural texts that are “not by anyone’s standard literary”, but theirs was and remains an endeavour lacking a “repeatable methodology”.¹²⁹ Enormous respect is due to those scholars of life writing who in the late twentieth century challenged a canon dominated by “great, white, heterosexual, upper-class men” and embraced “the voices of women, people of colour, people of varying gendered and sexual identifications, and by people from beyond the Euro-Atlantic confines of high modern literature”.¹³⁰ The necessary corollary of that work, however, was that it “shunned the political memoir and the political diary” as products of masculine ego.¹³¹ In taking the political memoir as my subject, I want to problematise rather than recentralise that traditional masculine public selfhood.

Initially, I searched for a catch-all theoretical term that could encapsulate the political, cultural and market work that the political memoir has performed in contemporary Australia. Appropriating Lejeune’s *autobiographical pact*, I imagined a *political memoir compact* between the author, publisher, collaborators, reviewers and audience(s). That preliminary framework helped bring a book history lens to this research, but it was misleading in the sense that the word “compact” implied some kind of agreement between all stakeholders. This has not been so. I toyed with a variety of other terms: *industry*; *manufacturing*; even *syndicate*, a term that the historian David Reynolds deployed in order to explain the making of Churchill’s *History of the Second World War*.¹³² None seemed to do the right explanatory work.

In the end, I have found that the memoir genre is best understood as a *performance* located in the wider “theatres of politics”.¹³³ In Australian historiography, the idea of performance is closely associated with Greg Denning, who famously described the ways

¹²⁷ Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, trans. Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 11, p. 14. See also Paul John Eakin, *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 10.

¹²⁸ Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, p. 14.

¹²⁹ Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 10, p. 19. See also Ian Buchanan, *Oxford Dictionary of Critical Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 340–41.

¹³⁰ Joshua Black, “‘A Historian’s Diary’: Autobiography, Life Writing and Neal Blewett’s *A Cabinet Diary* Revisited”, *Australian Journal of Biography and History*, no. 5 (2021), p. 67.

¹³¹ Black, “‘A Historian’s Diary’”, p. 52.

¹³² Reynolds, *In Command of History*, p. 189.

¹³³ Smith, “Autobiographical Discourse”, p. viii.

historical narratives – among which I am counting the political memoir – could be understood as performative. A performance, he said, was often delivered after the “completion” of a “duty”, but it risked “cynicism” on the part of the audience if “over-acted” or “extravagantly out of place”.¹³⁴ Performances were conducted on the basis that in order to know any kind of historical truth, the performer and audience had “to experience it in some way”.¹³⁵ Moreover, although performances could be carefully staged, they were constituted in a particular moment, and were beyond the control of the performer once public.¹³⁶

For my purposes, the idea of performance fully embraces the New Cultural History’s constructivist and often materialist approach to objects, manifests New Political History’s interest in the “theatres of power”, and acknowledges the shift in autobiography studies from a documentary view of memoir to a performative one.¹³⁷ Politicians are “born actors”, and their performances “are implicated in the projection of political power”.¹³⁸ Political memoirs and autobiographies, though usually produced at the end of a political life, are no less performative than other modes of political communication, especially when publishers’ capital, an imagined audience and the judgement of posterity are all at stake.

Performance is also a distinctly gendered concept, and gender is a central analytic category in this thesis. My understanding of performance in this regard owes much to the legacy of Judith Butler’s discourse on performativity, along with the work of Australian historians such as Marilyn Lake, Judith Brett, and Bethany Phillips-Peddlesden among others.¹³⁹ The

¹³⁴ Greg Denning, *Performances* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1996), p. xiii.

¹³⁵ Denning, *Performances*, p. 101.

¹³⁶ Denning, *Performances*, p. 20.

¹³⁷ David Cannadine, “The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the ‘Invention of Tradition’, c. 1820—1977”, in Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 103; Chris Wallace, *How to Win an Election* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2020), p. 11; Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, pp. 83—91; Eakin, *Touching the World*, pp. 54—55.

¹³⁸ Graeme Davison, “The Colonial Strut: Australian Leaders on the World Stage”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 51, no. 1 (2005), pp. 6—7.

¹³⁹ See in particular Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (London: Routledge, 2011 [1993]), pp. xxi—xxiv; Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), pp. 7—9. For those gender historians who have powerfully applied theories of gender performativity to histories of Australian political culture, see Marilyn Lake, “Historical Reconsiderations IV: The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context”, *Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no. 86 (1986), pp. 116—31; Marilyn Lake, “‘The Brightness of Eyes and Quiet Assurance Which Seem to Say America’: Alfred Deakin’s Identification with Republican Manhood”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 38, no. 129 (2007), pp. 32—51; Judith Brett, *Robert Menzies’ Forgotten People* (Chippendale: Macmillan, 1992); Bethany Phillips-Peddlesden, “A Stronger Man and a More Virile Character’: Australian Prime Ministers, Embodied Manhood and Political Authority in the Early Twentieth Century”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 48, no. 4 (2017), pp. 502—18; Bethany Phillips-Peddlesden, “‘A Race of Intelligent Super-Giants’: The Whitlams, Gendered Bodies and Political Authority in Modern Australia”, in Michelle Arrow and Angela Woollacott (eds.), *Everyday Revolutions: Remaking Gender, Sexuality and Culture in 1970s Australia* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2019), pp. 261—78.

practice of politics in Australia has involved “deeply gendered constructions of political power”, and central to those constructions was the idea of manhood, which, Angela Woollacott has argued, “became a political status as well as the benchmark of social independence” in nineteenth-century settler society.¹⁴⁰ But gender ideals, Phillips-Peddlesden has shown, needed to “be performed, ritualised and regulated” by politicians over time as social and cultural expectations shifted.¹⁴¹ Political memoirs became an important cultural space where politicians and their critics would regulate and contest gender ideals and identities.

This thesis is unashamedly a contemporary political history. I assume here a definition of contemporary history as “history deemed to be within the living memory of its readers”.¹⁴² As Peter Catterall rightly noted, “our understanding of the contemporary needs to be shaped, not just by the headlines, or by the study of social, political or economic structures, but by how these have changed over time and been moulded by the past”.¹⁴³ If the contemporary historian risks accusations of presentism on account of their temporal proximity to the subject, it is worth reminding ourselves that *all* historians work from their “position in the present”, and that the “problems of contemporary history” are the “problems of history in general”.¹⁴⁴ In fact, the value of the contemporary history lies in its capacity to unshackle readers from what François Hartog has called “the tyranny of the instant” or “the treadmill of an unending now”.¹⁴⁵ In telling such a recent and unfolding story, I am attempting to re-illuminate much older and deeper characteristics in Australian political life and the ways those characteristics have altered in response to significant changes in the public sphere since the 1970s.

Sources

The intellectual approach outlined above has propelled me toward four kinds of primary source material. First, I have drawn heavily on personal papers to conduct this study. In a number of cases, politicians, literary agents, and collaborators preserved important documents that allow us to trace the making of particular memoirs and autobiographies. Held in institutions such as

¹⁴⁰ Brett, *Doing Politics*, p. 92; Angela Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: Self-Government and Imperial Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 7.

¹⁴¹ Bethany Phillips-Peddlesden, “Prime Ministers: Gender and Power in Australian Political History, 1902—1975”, PhD dissertation, University of Melbourne, 2019, p. 20.

¹⁴² Bradley W. Hart, “The ‘Journal of Contemporary History’: Fifty Years of Continuity and Change”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 50, no. 4 (2015), p. 742.

¹⁴³ Peter Catterall, “What (if Anything) is Distinctive About Contemporary History?”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 32, no. 4 (1997), p. 450.

¹⁴⁴ David Hull, “In Defence of Presentism”, *History and Theory*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1979), p. 15; Rajani Palme Dutt, *Problems of Contemporary History* (London: Lawrence and Wishart: 1963), p. 10.

¹⁴⁵ François Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time*, trans. Saskia Brown (New York: Columbia University, 2017 [2003]), pp. xiv—xv.

the National Library of Australia (hereafter NLA), the National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA), the State Library of Victoria, the University of Melbourne Archives, the Australian National University Archives, and the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Library, these materials include book proposals, draft manuscripts, correspondence between authors and publishers, speeches, royalty statements, book tour itineraries and press clippings. For the most part, these records have been collected and curated by individual authors, and the historian must be conscious that such collections are “not passive and innocent”, but were shaped by the preoccupations of a public figure.¹⁴⁶ No publishing houses opened their records to me, but their role in this history can be “pieced together” from authors’ personal papers and the records of literary agents, chiefly the papers of Hickson Associates (incorporated in the Records of Curtis Brown Australia collection at the NLA).¹⁴⁷ These archival collections are rich but uneven; as an epistemological bedrock for this research, I have appreciated and evaluated them, but I avoided “fetishizing” them as Mike Jones has recently cautioned.¹⁴⁸

Second, this thesis has made extensive use of media sources. Newspaper articles, in hard copy, microfilm and digital forms, have enabled me to reconstruct the discourses surrounding specific political memoirs in the public sphere. Television and radio sources were also significant for this thesis. Fragments from the non-print media were available at the NAA, as well as in the National Film and Sound Archive (hereafter NFSA). *YouTube* has been a particularly rich media archive offering a window into “moments of human interest”.¹⁴⁹ Given that political memoirs were so often newsworthy, media sources have been essential. Taken together, these records allow us to conceptualise politicians’ books as vehicles for mass communication, and not always in ways intended by the author.

For a contemporary history of this nature, two challenges accompany archival research: (1) many of the documents that do exist, predominantly personal papers, are still closed to researchers; and (2) the digital revolution has rendered many traditional types of documentation obsolete and therefore absent from the archive.¹⁵⁰ The third tranche of source materials for this

¹⁴⁶ Katherine Bode and Roger Osborne, “Book History from the Archival Records”, in Leslie Howsam (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 219, p. 225.

¹⁴⁷ Bode and Osborne, “Archival Records”, p. 221.

¹⁴⁸ For the tradition of aversion to “fetishizing” archives from Charles Langlois and Charles Seignobos to E. H. Carr and Keith Jenkins, see Mike Jones, “The Temple of History: Historians and the Sacralisation of Archival Work”, *History Australia*, vol. 18, no. 4 (2021), p. 691.

¹⁴⁹ Alan McKee, “YouTube Versus the National Film and Sound Archive: Which is the More Useful Resource for Historians of Australian Television?”, *Television & New Media*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2011), p. 170.

¹⁵⁰ This point is noted in John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of History* (London: Routledge, 2015 [1984]), p. 264.

thesis, then, were oral histories designed in part to overcome these archival limitations, and in part to shed light on the emotional imperatives that drove the political memoir boom. Between 2018 and 2022, I interviewed or corresponded with 46 participants (a variety of politician-authors, publishers and editors, collaborators, and journalists). This has produced a completely new archive consisting of approximately 41 hours and 18 minutes of interview recordings, and 340,091 words of transcripts and correspondence. For studies of the contemporary past, oral history is a particularly important method of acquiring “previously unrecorded evidence”, and in the context of political history and political science, it gives individuals the opportunity to “explain the meaning of their actions”.¹⁵¹ Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, this required making use of mobile phone, zoom, and email correspondence. In particular, interviews with researchers and collaborators – traditionally unseen actors in this history – helped capture, like any good oral history, “the experiences and perspectives” of those who “might otherwise have been neglected”.¹⁵²

Alistair Thomson has rightly noted that oral historians, in the process of interviewing, implicitly influence “the data” it yields and “the interpretive process” it feeds.¹⁵³ Having interviewed many of the actors in the story that I tell in this thesis, I found myself regularly pondering the nature of the research relationships I had forged with them. With just a few exceptions, the participants in this study had been political partisans for longer than I have been alive. Their perceptions of me mattered as much as, if not more than, my perceptions of them. They appeared to understand me as a polite and (comparatively) young man and diligent PhD candidate, and that had a material effect on the content and character of the conversations we had. Mia Martin Hobbs has similarly noted the important effect of age in an oral history setting, though in relation to very different interview subjects.¹⁵⁴ If my youth seemed at times to invite a deferential relationship on my part, my apparent earnestness seemingly had the effect of generating goodwill and patience for my painstaking, precise, and occasionally uncomfortable questions. I have leavened this thesis with brief reflections, which I have called “Snapshots”, designed to reinterpret the experience of some of these interviews. My attempt at intellectual

¹⁵¹ David E. Kyvig and Myron Marty, *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You*, 3rd ed. (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2010), p. 114; R. A. W. Rhodes, “Everyday Life in a Ministry: Public Administration as Anthropology”, *American Review of Public Administration*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2005), p. 20.

¹⁵² Alistair Thomson, “Unreliable Memories? The Use and Abuse of Oral History”, in William Lamont (ed.), *Historical Controversies and Historians* (London: UCL Press, 1998), p. 24.

¹⁵³ Alistair Thomson, “Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History”, *Oral History Review*, vol. 34, no. 1 (2007), p. 62.

¹⁵⁴ Mia Martin Hobbs, *Return to Vietnam: An Oral History of American and Australian Veterans’ Journeys* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 17.

transparency here owes something to the kind of autoethnography that R. A. W. Rhodes has recently advocated for political scientists. As he put it, “autoethnographies discipline the author to become critically self-aware”, and to consider “positionality” in the construction of knowledge.¹⁵⁵ In interspersing these Snapshots between the chapters, I have emulated Patrick Mullins, who skilfully augmented his “orthodox biographical narrative” of former prime minister William McMahon with reflections on the slipperiness of storytelling itself, particularly as it applied to his subject.¹⁵⁶ My hope is that these Snapshots meaningfully correspond with, but do not confound, the chapters surrounding them.

Finally, this research requires us to treat the political memoirs as primary sources in and of themselves. Literary theoreticians such as Eakin have taught us that published autobiography, to some extent, “expresses the play of the autobiographical act itself”.¹⁵⁷ Published memoirs contain residual evidence about how and why they were constructed. In some instances, this is deliberately transcribed in an “Acknowledgements” section, an introductory preface, or a reprinted afterword. But even without these deliberately reflective paratexts, the books are revealing primary sources. Blewett and Louise Adler have both pointed to the importance of images and photographs on the dustjackets of these publications.¹⁵⁸ In any event, it has been wholly appropriate in many of the following chapters to revisit the texts themselves in light of new information about how and why they were written, and in order to examine the pictures of politics and power that they have projected in the public domain.

Chapter Outline

This thesis progresses in a sequential but not strictly chronological fashion. Each chapter considers a body of political memoirs in their specific historical context, but there is some temporal overlap between them. And while this is a contemporary history, each chapter makes its own forays into the hinterland of Australian political history as far as is necessary to locate the contemporary past in its proper context.

Chapter 1 argues that 1994, the year in which several former ministers of the Hawke Labor government published memoirs, was the identifiable commencement of the Australian

¹⁵⁵ R. A. W. Rhodes, “Autoethnography as Narrative in Political Studies”, in R. A. W. Rhodes and Susan Hodgett (eds.), *What Can Political Science Learn from the Humanities: Blurring Genres* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), p. 123, p. 125.

¹⁵⁶ Patrick Mullins, “‘None of You Will Believe It’: Control, Truth and Myth in the Life of Billy McMahon”, *Australian Journal of Biography and History*, no. 5 (2021), p. 165. For the work itself see Patrick Mullins, *Tiberius with a Telephone: The Life and Stories of William McMahon* (Brunswick: Scribe, 2018).

¹⁵⁷ Eakin, *Fictions in Autobiography*, p. 5.

¹⁵⁸ Blewett, “No Secret Selves”, pp. 5—6; Louise Adler, “Political Memoirs”, *Meanjin*, vol. 74, no. 3 (2015), p. 239.

political memoir boom. I situate these texts in relation to the patchy and reserved tradition of political life writing that preceded it and explore a number of the major cultural transformations that enabled the 1994 literary “explosion”. The generations of politicians who were subject to the transformations I have outlined above began to depart the scene in the 1980s and 1990s. Most significantly, 1994 was marked by the serious efforts of former prime minister Bob Hawke and former senator Graham Richardson and their publishers to produce authoritative, competing versions of political history. Not only was this a response to particular political transformations, but also the product of a global memoir “boom” facilitated by structural changes in the industry, especially the expansion of bigger multinational publishing houses.¹⁵⁹ Public commentators distinctly recognised in 1994 the emergence of a new paradigm of political storytelling.

Chapter 2 argues that the proliferation of political life writing at the hands of former Hawke–Keating Labor Ministers in the late 1990s and 2000s was a direct response to existing generalised metanarratives, spurred on by the major ideological, gendered and factional transformations of the Labor Party in office. In their memoirs, ministers questioned and critiqued the staunchly triumphal and implicitly masculine narratives that Hawke, Richardson, Paul Kelly and others propagated about Labor in government. Spurred on by personal, social or market forces, ministers treated the memoir form as an opportunity to work through, or come to terms with, the ideological and structural revolutions inside the parliamentary Labor Party in the 1980s and 1990s and their wider ramifications for the nation’s politics.

Chapter 3 examines the rise of the political staffer and its implications for political life writing. Adopting John Edwards’ *Keating: The Inside Story* (1996) and Don Watson’s *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart* (2002) as case studies, I argue that the political memoir phenomenon was partly the outcome of a structural transformation in the makeup of the political class and a significant shift in perceptions of insider authority. Between 1990 and 2002, Australian public culture came to valorise the “inside story” of a prime ministerial office, confirming larger local and global trends toward a culture of revelation and personal disclosure. Staffers enjoyed a greater licence to tell political stories, and by 2002 publishers had come to recognise the cultural and commercial potential of these insiders.

In Chapter 4, I examine three particularly controversial political memoirs published in the 2000s. I argue that the political memoir functioned as a platform for gendered contestation

¹⁵⁹ Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p. 127.

in Australian public culture. With gender expectations contested in this period, and given the sexual dimensions of the controversies surrounding parliamentarians Mark Latham, Pauline Hanson and Cheryl Kernot, the political memoir became a vehicle for politicians' reprisal of a particular gendered identity, and a powerful weapon with which hostile and often cynical journalists could beat these authors.

Chapter 5 focusses on the year 2010, in which former Liberal prime ministers Malcolm Fraser and John Howard published their memoirs. Both memoirs offered distinct versions of liberal values in government. In that chapter, I argue that these memoirs were a platform on which competing visions of liberalism and leadership were performed and indeed critiqued. Published at a moment of acute anxiety for the Liberal Party, Fraser and Howard partly hoped to claim possession of an authentic Australian liberalism, often in defiance of one another. Moreover, they hoped that their books would literarily embody the kind of "Strong Leadership", in political psychologist Graham Little's sense of that term, that modern Liberals required if they were to regather themselves in the wake of the Howard years. I will discuss that term and its relevance in the chapter.

Chapter 6 examines the proliferation of Labor politicians' memoirs in the 2010s in the wake of the Rudd–Gillard government. In that chapter, I argue that the quantitative peak of the political memoir boom in that period was driven by the intensification of the political processes I have outlined thus far. The defining quality of Australian political culture in this period was not necessarily a new structural or cultural problem, even allowing for the fact that climate change seemed an unprecedentedly enormous policy problem. Rather, the peak of the boom owed much to the acceleration of, and new departures in, each of the fields of contestation already underway in Australian politics. The relentless personalisation of politics, the novelty of a woman prime minister, and the publishing industry's tried-and-tested celebrity formulas generated the peak of the memoir boom in this period. The 2010s saw an emotional intensity in Australian politics that could not but spill over into the pages of political memoirs, given the personal, political and commercial incentives for writing them.

Life writing has constituted a cultural interface between politicians and other members of the political class, not to mention the public at large. To mediate those performances, the politician required a resourceful publisher. Chapter 7 offers a short history of the mid-career memoir or autobiographical manifesto in Australia, with a focus on the 2000s and 2010s. In that chapter, I argue that parliamentarians' memoirs and manifestos constituted a claim on the

public's attention for their author, and certainly for their publisher. The chapter evaluates the work that MUP and its formidable CEO Louise Adler produced in their efforts to be proactive, politically engaged, and newsworthy. Inspired by American precedents, Australian MPs turned to Adler and MUP in the hope of producing books about themselves that might advance personal ambitions, intervene in leadership contests, rehabilitate or restore personal reputations, and demonstrate a seriousness about politics that might otherwise have been assumed lacking. A few of these books were commercially significant, but the eventual termination of MUP's political publishing mission suggested a clear cultural fatigue with the genre by 2019.

There will be no shortage of new political memoirs, autobiographies and diaries in the near future. Publishers are "hostages to Australia's electoral cycles" in this respect.¹⁶⁰ The scholarship adjacent to this thesis continues to evolve rapidly, too; in the four months prior to submitting this thesis, the first ever general political history of Australia was published, followed by a major new analysis of prime ministerial biography in Australia, and most recently *MUP: A Centenary History*. This thesis cannot pretend to be anything other than an incomplete treatment of the political memoir boom to the present moment, but the chapters that follow seek to accomplish two aims. First, they tell a story about the growing prominence, political salience, and commercial significance, of the political memoir as a literary performance in Australia in the recent past. Second, the chapters will illuminate from a new angle the transformations that have taken place in Australian political life since the 1970s, for it is these changes that have driven the political memoir boom, which has in turn played an underestimated role in explicating and reshaping the political culture itself.

¹⁶⁰ Joshua Black, "'Our Side of the Story': The Political Memoirs of the Rudd—Gillard Labor Cabinet", *Labour History*, no. 120 (2021), p. 94.

SNAPSHOT 1

“Are You a Ghostwriter?”

In two early interviews for this thesis, I asked participants whether or not they considered themselves “ghostwriters” for former prime minister Bob Hawke’s *Memoirs* (1994). In using that word, I hoped to prompt them to articulate how *they* understood their work on that project. But I was also conscious that the term is a distinctly unflattering one. It invites us to imagine an inarticulate or unintelligent celebrity, shadowed by an unknown literary labourer. Indeed, the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* suggests that athletes in particular are prone to this arrangement.¹ It is also, as I will show in the Conclusion of this thesis, an easy object of satire. G. Thomas Couser makes the additional point that ghost-writers are conventionally “collaborators who are not formally acknowledged”.² This at least has not been the case in most political memoir projects in Australia, where acknowledgement for work has been readily given and received, if not always on the dustjacket.

In November 2019, I interviewed Hugh White, a former defence adviser to Hawke, senior public servant, and Professor of Strategic Studies at the Australian National University (hereafter ANU). White had in 1994 drafted some material that was used in *The Hawke Memoirs*. Did that make him a ghostwriter? He politely rejected the term:

I’m not saying that it’s wrong, but for me doing that work for Bob [...] was an extension of my work for him as a staffer, and as a staffer that’s what you do all the time. [...] [F]or me, writing in his voice for him to use is the most natural thing in the world and it really was for me an extension of being a speechwriter. You know, a speechwriter’s not a ghostwriter because it’s not yours in any sense really...³

The point here was that writing on someone’s behalf was *not* to be equated with insincerity.

In the weeks before coronavirus dispatched us to our homes in early 2020, I interviewed the person with the most serious claim to the status of Hawke’s ghostwriter. Garry Sturgess worked as a barrister and then journalist before researching for Hawke and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (hereafter ABC) in the early 1990s. He subsequently worked as an oral history interviewer himself for the NLA, and produced a documentary about the life of

¹ Chris Baldick, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [1990]), p. 142.

² G. Thomas Couser, *Memoir: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 95.

³ Hugh White, interview with the author, Australian National University, Canberra, 14 November 2019.

polymath and politician Barry Jones. In late 2019, I reached out to Sturgess to inform him of my research and indicate my interest in interviewing him. Over a preliminary coffee at the NLA, he told me he wouldn't wish to be seen as "standing on a soapbox" to claim authorship of Hawke's memoirs in the wake of the former prime minister's death. But he acknowledged that the book was over 25 years old, and that if I were to tell a story about its creation, I should be well-informed. Sturgess was generous with his time and his testimony, and shared entries from his personal diary with me that proved invaluable. Our eventual interview spanned some two hours, and the transcript ran to nearly 20 pages.

Like White, Sturgess politely but firmly eschewed the term ghostwriter. For him, the term had less to do with the nature of the relationship and more to do with the style of the product:

I think it's because you usually associate that with a sporting person, someone who's got no sort of literary ability, and whoever it is takes it over in a journalistic kind of way and writes a bit of a pot-boiler. So, I guess I'd shy at the 'ghostwriter' term because in a sense this was to be a very thorough, very well-researched, very serious in one sense, account of a prime minister's life...⁴

In that telling, his work was distinct from the role of a ghostwriter in both content and form. Here was no celebrity athlete's confected reminiscences; it was a prime ministerial testament to history and it required vast intellectual labour.

In the chapter that follows, and indeed much of the thesis, I have followed the logic of the testimonies that White and Sturgess offered, and have avoided the term ghostwriter. In part, it is a matter of respecting the terms that the participants have chosen, which is what oral history sometimes demands.

But more than that, I found their comments compelling. Political memoir writing is very often a collaborative act involving a complex set of relationships. Ghostwriting may well be a "fascinating microcosm of the celebrity machine" as Hannah Yelin has put it, but White and Sturgess are right to suggest that the term has minimal explanatory power in this study.⁵ The notion of political performance, I will demonstrate in the following chapter and throughout the thesis, better reflects the collaboration and the contestation involved in politicians' memoirs.

⁴ Garry Sturgess, interview with the author, Manuka, Canberra, 7 February 2020.

⁵ Hannah Yelin, *Celebrity Memoir: From Ghostwriting to Gender Politics* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 2.

CHAPTER 1

“FOR ALL TIME”

Bob Hawke, Graham Richardson and the Making of the Political Memoir Boom

On 31 October 1994, former Labor premier of NSW, Neville Wran, stood at the lectern of the National Press Club in Canberra to launch factional colleague and former senator Graham Richardson’s memoir, the shockingly titled *Whatever It Takes*.¹ Distinguishing Richardson’s book from recent memoirs written by four other former ministers, Wran said, “This is one of the few where the author’s not really up himself”.² Though intended comically, Wran’s joke hinted at a broader question for the audience to consider:

How to reconcile the conflicting versions of history of the past twenty years? I don’t think anyone should worry about the index to this book, but should take the index of the four books, and try and match them up, and I think we’d all be very confused about this country, and its history.³

That Wran needed to distinguish Richardson’s book from a cohort of other contemporary political memoirs was, in and of itself, significant. In 1994, former prime minister Bob Hawke, former regional development and then local government minister Tom Uren, former Industry minister John Button, and Richardson all published accounts of their political lives.⁴ This was unusual in the Australian context. In the *Canberra Times* in the weeks after Richardson’s launch, Gerard Noonan wrote of “a smorgasbord of revelations” from Labor memoirists.⁵ Similarly, Ian Henderson warned that the “flow of jottings from Labor’s villains and prophets has not come to an end”.⁶ For contemporaries, the proliferation of ministerial memoirs in 1994 was noteworthy for its sheer volume, even before the substance of the books was considered.

In this chapter, I argue that 1994 was the beginning of the modern political memoir boom in Australia, an identifiable departure from a more sparse tradition of parliamentarians’ reminiscences. Sean Scalmer has shown that in the first half of the twentieth century, fewer

¹ Graham Richardson, *Whatever it Takes* (Sydney: Bantam, 1994).

² Neville Wran, Speech at the Launch of *Whatever it Takes*, National Press Club, Canberra, 31 October 1994. National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA): C475, 1718284.

³ Wran, National Press Club, 31 October 1994. NAA: C475, 1718284.

⁴ Bob Hawke, *The Hawke Memoirs* (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1994); Tom Uren, *Straight Left* (Milsons Point: Random House, 1994); John Button, *Flying the Kite: Travels of an Australian Politician* (Milsons Point: Random House, 1994).

⁵ Gerard Noonan, “The Flood of Political Memoirs”, *Canberra Times*, 10 November 1991, p. 13.

⁶ Ian Henderson, “Labor’s True Believers Read Between the Lines”, *Canberra Times*, 12 December 1994, p. 3.

than four Commonwealth parliamentarians published memoirs or diaries in any given decade.⁷ In the 1970s and 1980s, the number of publications grew, the marketing campaigns became more sophisticated, and the political and cultural preconditions for a memoir boom developed. The 1994 explosion was unprecedented, for it was the first time that so many high-profile Australian parliamentarians had simultaneously published accounts of their concurrent and intersecting political lives. This was a publishing contest in which competing visions of political power and recent history were at stake.

These memoirs were significant political performances. For Hawke and Richardson especially, political memoirs were vehicles of personal and political history-making. Though each book dealt to some extent with personal stories, the authors saw themselves contributing to or competing over the history of the Hawke Labor government (1983–1991) and its place in Australian history and political mythology. Political memoirs were a meaningful stage in the “theatre of power”, and perhaps more specifically, the theatre of historical discourse.⁸ At the same time, as this chapter will demonstrate, these were commercial performances dependent on publishers willing to invest capital and labour into the production of the books and the promotional efforts surrounding them. Hawke and Richardson also depended on plenty of editorial support, paid and voluntary. If traditional conceptions of autobiography assume the congruent identities of the author, narrator and protagonist, the notion of political performance allows us to understand political memoir authorship in a more public, fluid and collective way. In arguing for the significance of the 1994 crop, this chapter examines *The Hawke Memoirs* and *Whatever It Takes* specifically. I demonstrate that, from the onset, the political memoir boom was driven by intertwined commercial, political and historiographical imperatives. The volume of public discussion about these books mattered as much as the sales.

⁷ See Figure 1: Members of Commonwealth Parliament Publishing a Memoir or Diary, in Sean Scalmer, “The Rise of the Insider: Memoirs and Diaries in Recent Australian Political History”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 56, no. 1 (2010), p. 85.

⁸ David Cannadine, “The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the ‘Invention of Tradition’, c. 1820—1977”, in Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 103.

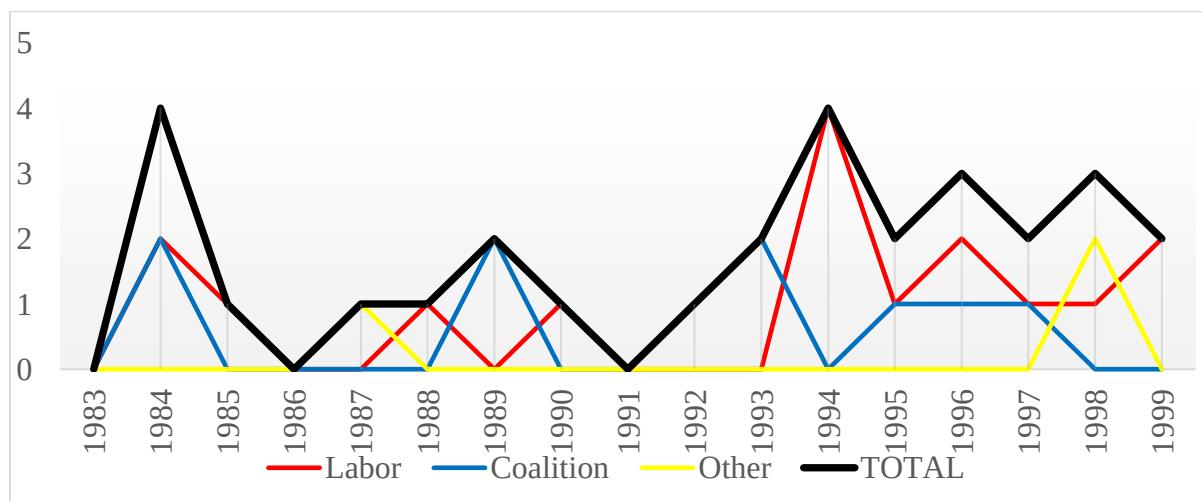


Figure 1: Annual federal political memoir publications, 1983 to 1999.

Foundations of the Boom

What did political life writing look like in Australia before the modern memoir boom? In the 1790s, English readers were “hungry for information” about Australia, and London publishers were “eager to capitalise” on the colonial venture by commissioning military officers and explorers to write journals.⁹ These books were about making history, and they contributed to the cultural colonisation of Australia.¹⁰ But political memoirs and diaries were scant in that process. The colonial governors produced diaries for posterity only, and when responsible government came after 1850, it generated a local political class with barely a memoirist among it.¹¹ Some of the reasons for this were practical in nature. Colonial and then federal liberals were highly literate, but with the odd exception usually too busy “creating and administering public institutions” to be concerned about “writing great books”.¹² Moreover, in the days when only ministers enjoyed a public salary (few of them for very long), most politicians had to maintain employment elsewhere to earn their living.¹³ Longevity mattered too: not everyone

⁹ David McCooey, “Autobiography”, in Peter Pierce (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 323; Anna Clark, *Making Australian History* (North Sydney: Vintage, 2022), p. 19.

¹⁰ The very notion of historical discourse (of which these texts were examples) was bound up with the colonial process, as Anna Clark has shown. See Clark, *Making Australian History*, p. 22. Cultural colonisation involved the delegitimisation of Aboriginal forms of culture and text in favour of Western script. See Penny van Toorn, *Writing Never Arrives Naked: Early Aboriginal Cultures of Writing in Australia* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2006).

¹¹ Gregory Melleuish, “Personal Politics and Being British: Political Rhetoric, Democracy and Their Consequences in Colonial New South Wales”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 59, no. 1 (2013), p. 3; Mark Francis, *Governors and Settlers: Images of Authority in the British Colonies, 1820–60* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), p. 36, p. 98.

¹² Marian Sawer, *An Ethical State? Social Liberalism in Australia* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2003), p. 31.

¹³ Frank Bongiorno, *Dreamers and Schemers: A Political History of Australia* (Collingwood: La Trobe University Press, 2022), p. 59.

lived to be octogenarians like Henry Parkes or Graham Berry, though as Scalmer has noted, “opportunity” did not always lead to literary “vigour”.¹⁴ And then there was the problem of Australia’s book market, which by 1900 had clearly become “an imperial cultural space”, a “reliable” dumping ground for London publishers whose interest in Australian stories had markedly waned during the nineteenth century.¹⁵ Gideon Haigh has suggested that High Court judge and future Labor leader H. V. Evatt’s 1940 biography of NSW premier William Holman was a “remarkable book”, partly because it dared make “a claim for the importance of his countrymen’s stories”, and partly because the “genre it joined hardly existed”.¹⁶ This was indeed a rare venture for its time.

Radical nationalism and the egalitarian ethos also limited the purchase that political self-portraits of greatness might have on the public. NSW premier Parkes was unique among “colonial worthies” in attempting to explain “Australian progress” as far as it had been “subjected to [his] own individual influence”.¹⁷ Regarded cynically by the public, there was perhaps little for politicians to gain from seeming to “play the part of a Cromwell or a Washington”, as Parkes seemed to be attempting.¹⁸ Melanie Nolan has suggested that Australia was always “conspicuous in the extent to which its founders [were] considered flawed”, a trope much accentuated in Manning Clark’s histories.¹⁹ Federation in 1901 was followed, Carolyn Holbrook has pointed out, by a handful of books penned “by those who participated in its achievement”, but even here the politicians themselves (Deakin aside) were less important than the “highly influential” *Annotated Constitution* of John Quick and Robert Garran.²⁰ Some reviewers judged free trader George Reid’s *My Reminiscences* (1917) “an admirable work of reference”, but the *Adelaide Register* dismissed it as a self-serving recitation of events that were “not worth more than a line of record”.²¹ Even a sympathetic biographer later found

¹⁴ Sean Scalmer, *Democratic Adventurer: Graham Berry and the Making of Australian Politics* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2020), pp. 273–74.

¹⁵ Martyn Lyons, “Britain’s Largest Export Market”, in Martyn Lyons and John Arnold (eds.), *A History of the Book in Australia, 1891–1945* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2001), pp. 22–24.

¹⁶ Gideon Haigh, *The Brilliant Boy: Doc Evatt and the Great Australian Dissent* (Sydney: Scribner, 2021), p. 194.

¹⁷ Scalmer, “Rise of the Insider”, p. 83; Henry Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1892), pp. v–vi.

¹⁸ John Hirst, *A Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 84. For a fuller account of *Fifty Years*, see A. W. Martin, *Henry Parkes: A Biography* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1980), pp. 410–12.

¹⁹ Melanie Nolan, “Country and Lives: Australian Biography and Its History”, *Cercles*, no. 35 (2015), p. 105. See Manning Clark, *A Short History of Australia*, 4th revised ed. (Camberwell: Penguin, 2006).

²⁰ Carolyn Holbrook, “Federation and Australian Nationalism: Early Commemoration of the Commonwealth”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 66, no. 4 (2020), p. 564.

²¹ “Politician and Jester—Sir George Reid’s Book”, *Sun*, 30 May 1917, p. 5; “Reminiscences—What a Veteran Remembers”, *Register*, 21 June 1917, p. 4.

Reid's detailed accounts of dinners with royalty "embarrassingly pretentious in manner and style".²² But "modesty and caution" made for unexciting books, too; former Queensland premier Sir Robert Philp hoped to leave a written record of achievement for posterity, but his testimony was so "dull" that he ultimately came across as having been "around when other people did interesting things".²³

Clearly, though, the lack of political life writing was not a consequence of egalitarian sensibilities alone. Indeed, far from "cutting down" its tall poppies and wealthy elites, Australian voters often elected them to federal and state parliaments.²⁴ Rather, Australian political (especially "liberal") culture was characterised, according to Stuart Macintyre, by the "demarcation of the private and public spheres of behaviour".²⁵ Scalmer has suggested that this demarcation constrained the stories that the early political memoirists could tell.²⁶ There were limits, too, to what one could reveal about the public sphere of behaviour itself. Political life writing, such as there was, tended to be forward looking and anchored in political communities. Labor MP and trade unionist William Guthrie Spence's book *Australia's Awakening* (1909), penned with son-in-law Hector Lamond, promised "a mirror of the past" as well as a "future outlook" for the labour movement in Australian political life.²⁷ Earle Page, the Country Party leader and a senior minister in multiple Coalition governments, wrote a (posthumously published) memoir that boasted "a cavalcade of anecdotes" but was decidedly coy about personal ambitions and political manoeuvrings.²⁸ Billy Hughes published two memoirs late in his life, both "frustratingly discreet".²⁹ Robert Menzies, for all his linguistic abilities, produced two memoirs offering "a few first-hand impressions" fashioned in his "lofty and idealistic posture".³⁰ There was nothing accidental or inadvertent about these products. Hughes and Beatrice Davis, publisher at Angus & Robertson in Sydney, agreed that the former's memoir *Crusts and Crusades* (1947) should be "seemly and sober"; Menzies stressed to his literary

²² W. G. McMinn, *George Reid* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1989), p. 274.

²³ Lyndon Megarrity, *Robert Philp and the Politics of Development* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2022), p. 4.

²⁴ W. D. Rubinstein, "Men of Wealth", *Australian Cultural History*, no. 3 (1984), pp. 30—31.

²⁵ Stuart Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism: The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 8.

²⁶ Scalmer, "Rise of the Insider", pp. 87—91.

²⁷ W. G. Spence, Preface, *Australia's Awakening: Thirty Years in the Life of an Australian Agitator* (Sydney: The Worker Trustees, 1909). See also Melissa Bellanta, "A Man of Civic Sentiment: The Case of William Guthrie Spence", *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 32, no. 1 (March 2008), pp. 63—76.

²⁸ Stephen Wilks, *"Now is the Psychological Moment": Earle Page and the Imagining of Australia* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2020), p. 15, p. 93.

²⁹ Scalmer, "Rise of the Insider", p. 88.

³⁰ Zachary Gorman and Gregory Melleuish, "Menzies and Howard on Themselves: Liberal Memoir, Memory and Myth Making", *History Australia*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2018), p. 9; Scalmer, "Rise of the Insider", p. 99.

agent in London that *Afternoon Light* (1967) would be “Not ‘The Memoirs’, but ‘Some Memoirs’” [emphasis in original].³¹ The result, Guy Rundle has recently suggested, was “a book so dull one nods off reading the title”.³² Menzies was himself a departure from the pattern of memoir publishing marked by their authors’ distance from executive power, to say nothing of posthumous publishing.³³

A series of cultural and material changes led to the late-twentieth-century memoir boom in Australia, which had some peculiar aspects when compared with the boom as it unfolded in the United States and elsewhere. First, a new vigour in Australian publishing commenced during World War II and accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s with the appearance of local publishing houses.³⁴ The picture was not entirely rosy, with local firms such as Angus & Robertson and McPhee Gribble absorbed during the 1980s and 1990s by “well-capitalised international conglomerates”, in their cases Rupert Murdoch’s HarperCollins and Penguin respectively.³⁵ But even these market titans knew that local publishing lists were now the key to competitiveness in the era of a more assertive Australian nationalism.³⁶ Non-fiction authors were well-represented on those lists and retained a presence in the market, even as fiction writers struggled against foreign competition.³⁷ Global capital remained important for Australian would-be memoirists, the favour of London executives less so. At the same time,

³¹ Beatrice Davis, Letter to W. M. Hughes, 25 November 1946, Papers of William Morris Hughes, National Library of Australia (hereafter NLA), MS 1538, Series 5, Box 31, Folder 54, Item 7213; Robert Menzies, Letter to David Higham, 10 March 1967, Papers of Sir Robert Menzies, NLA, MS 4936, Series 10, Box 362, Folder 65.

³² Guy Rundle, “Ming Vast: The Great Menzies Myth Machine Rolls On”, *Crikey*, 10 March 2023, <https://www.crikey.com.au/2023/03/10/review-the-young-menzies-zachary-gorman/>, accessed 10 March 2023.

³³ Those who published several years (or even decades) after their retirement from politics include Enid Lyons, *So We Take Comfort* (London: Heinemann, 1965); Enid Lyons, *Among the Carrion Crows* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1972); Percy Spender, *Politics and a Man* (Sydney: Collins, 1972); Arthur Calwell, *Be Just and Fear Not* (Hawthorn: Lloyd O’Neil in association with Rigby, 1972); Richard Casey, *Australian Foreign Minister: The Diaries of R. G. Casey, 1951–60*, ed. T. B. Millar (London: Collins, 1972). Among those who had their memoirs published posthumously were Alfred Deakin, *The Federal Story: The Inner History of the Federal Cause*, ed. Herbert Brooks (Melbourne: Robertson & Mullens, 1944); Alfred Deakin, *The Crisis in Victorian Politics, 1879–1881*, eds. J. A. La Nauze and R. M. Crawford (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1957); Earle Page, *Truant Surgeon: The Inside Story of Forty Years of Australian Political Life*, ed. Ann Mozley [Moyal] (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1963); John McEwen, *John McEwen: His Story*, ed. R. V. Jackson (self-published, 1983).

³⁴ Jacqueline Kent, *A Certain Style: Beatrice Davis, A Literary Life* (Ringwood: Viking, 2001), pp. 56–57; Brigid Magner, “Anglo-Australian Relations in the Book Trade”, in Craig Munro and Robyn Sheahan-Bright (eds.), *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia 1946–2005* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2006), pp. 7–10.

³⁵ Carl Reinecke, *Books That Made Us: Writers and Novels That Have Shaped Australia* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2021), p. 217.

³⁶ David Carter, “Publishing, Patronage and Cultural Politics: Institutional Changes in the Field of Australian Literature from 1950”, in Peter Pierce (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 360–90.

³⁷ Frank Bongiorno, *The Eighties: The Decade that Transformed Australia* (Carlton: Black Inc., 2015), p. 212; Patrick Buckridge, “Readers and Reading”, in Craig Munro and Robyn Sheahan-Bright (eds.), *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia, 1946–2005* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2006), p. 344.

the increasing competitiveness of the local book market meant that publishers often sought famous authors with established audiences, rather than new fiction authors with no guaranteed readership.³⁸ The market for political and current affairs publishing also benefited from the expansion of higher education, with university enrolments trebling in the decade to 1975.³⁹ Well-known public figures such as Peter Howson or Jim Killen among conservatives, and Fred Daly or Jim McClelland among Laborites, could attract an audience and spark some media interest, though perhaps none rivalled Catholic culture warrior B. A. Santamaria's memoir *Against the Tide* which, according to Frank Bongiorno, was "conspicuous on the shelves of Catholic families in Melbourne" in the 1980s.⁴⁰ By the 1990s, there was simply "an emerging market for contemporary figures".⁴¹

Second, federal politics became a more powerful platform for political theatre after the 1960s. Menzies' retirement in 1966, the dismantling of the White Australia policy, and the decline of British imperialism all created the conditions for an incipient "new nationalism" in the 1970s, with similar processes playing out in New Zealand and Canada.⁴² The 1980s and

³⁸ There are debates about whether or not the rationalization of the global book trade has led ipso facto to the demise of literary fiction. For the pessimistic view, see Mark Davis, "The Decline of the Literary Paradigm in Australian Publishing", *Heat*, no. 12 (2006), pp. 91–108. For the optimistic, or pragmatic, view, see Brigid Magner, "Behind the BookScan Bestseller Lists: Technology and Cultural Anxieties in Early Twenty-First Century Australia", *Script & Print*, vol. 36, no. 4 (2012), pp. 243–58. See also Emmett Stinson, "Small Publishers, Symbolic Capital and Australian Literary Prizes", in Millicent Weber and Aaron Mannion (eds.), *Book Publishing in Australia: A Living Legacy* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2019), p. 225.

³⁹ Stuart Macintyre, Andre Brett and Gwilym Croucher, *No End of a Lesson: Australia's Unified National System of Higher Education* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2017), p. 11; Ingrid Day, "Romancing the Reader", in Craig Munro and Robyn Sheahan-Bright (eds.), *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia 1946–2005* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2006), pp. 368–73.

⁴⁰ Peter Howson, *The Howson Diaries: The Life of Politics*, ed. Don Aitkin (Ringwood: Viking Press, 1984); Jim Killen, *Killen: Inside Australian Politics* (North Ryde: Methuen Hayes, 1985); Fred Daly, *From Curtin to Kerr* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1977); James McClelland, *Stirring the Possum: A Political Autobiography* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1989). For an insightful discussion of Howson's diaries and their impact see Patrick Mullins, *Tiberius with a Telephone: The Life and Stories of William McMahon* (Brunswick: Scribe, 2018), pp. 470–71. Killen's memoir sold nearly 15,000 copies in the months after its release: Teresa Pitt, Letter to Jim Killen, 9 May 1988, Papers of Sir Jim Killen, NLA, Class MS Acc07.071, Box 126. For the response to Daly see Gay Davidson, "Laugh in Each Daly Line, Almost", *Canberra Times*, 28 September 1977, p. 1. For reactions to McClelland see "April Best Sellers", *Canberra Times*, 7 May 1989, p. 21. For Bongiorno on Santamaria's memoir see *Dreamers and Schemers*, p. 224.

⁴¹ Judith Curr, email correspondence with the author, 4 November 2020.

⁴² Louise C. Johnson, Tanja Luckins and David Walker, *The Story of Australia: A New History of People and Place* (London: Routledge, 2021), pp. 174–77. For more on the challenge of new nationalism and the end of empire, see Neville Meaney, "Britishness and Australian Identity: The Problem of Nationalism in Australian History and Historiography", *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 32, no. 116 (2001), pp. 76–90; Stuart Ward, "The 'New Nationalism' in Australia, Canada and New Zealand: Civic Culture in the Wake of the British World", in Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw and Stuart Macintyre (eds.), *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2007), pp. 231–63; Stuart Ward and James Curran, *The Unknown Nation: Australia After Empire* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2010); Karen Fox, *Honouring a Nation: A History of Australia's Honours System* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2022), chapters 5–8.

1990s saw debates about national flags, anthems, histories, honours and other elements of national culture.⁴³ Constitutionally, the period after Menzies also saw what Patrick Mullins described as the “steady accretion of power towards the Commonwealth”.⁴⁴ And as Bridget Griffen-Foley has shown, the dominant media companies were increasingly keen to place Canberra at the centre of political reporting.⁴⁵ Despite their enduring relevance, the states began to occupy less space in the popular imagination of politics than the Commonwealth. Even that most controversial former premier of NSW Jack Lang was met with muted reception when he published his penultimate memoir in 1970, despite the serialisation of the book’s best morsels in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (no supporter of Lang’s in the 1930s).⁴⁶ *The Turbulent Years* merely supplemented Lang’s “potent and durable mythology” for those who still cared about the unrepentant 93-year-old.⁴⁷ There was still a market for books on state politics, but by the 1990s it seemed that most of the significant political actors were to be found treading the boards on what Graeme Davison called the “stage of the national capital”.⁴⁸

Third, the fading demarcation between public and private enhanced the power of “memory or memorial discourse” in the political realm, and privileged emotional expressiveness over reticence.⁴⁹ The New Journalism movement with its privileging of authorial voice and intimacy with the reader, the increasing public recognition of trauma (personal and national), and a growing curiosity about *memory* all converged in ways that made “witnessing” and “testimony” constitutive of “ethical citizenship in contemporary Australian culture”.⁵⁰ As with the United States, Holocaust discourse played a lead role in the rise of testimony in Australia. Promoting his acclaimed book *The Fiftieth Gate* on ABC Radio National in 1997, historian Mark Baker compared his mother’s Holocaust survival testimony with the written archive he found overseas: “Why do I need an historical document to validate her experiences? [...] [T]he facts aren’t the thing itself. And we often confuse that in our

⁴³ See in particular Ward, “The ‘New Nationalism’”, pp. 247—52; Fox, *Honouring a Nation*, chapters 6 and 7.

⁴⁴ Mullins, *Tiberius with a Telephone*, p. 339.

⁴⁵ Bridget Griffen-Foley, *Party Games: Australian Politicians and the Media from War to Dismissal* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2003), pp. 239—40.

⁴⁶ J. T. Lang, *The Turbulent Years* (Sydney: Alpha Books, 1970).

⁴⁷ Joan Beaumont, *Australia’s Great Depression* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2022), p. 407.

⁴⁸ Graeme Davison, *City Dreamers: The Urban Imagination in Australia* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2016), p. 230.

⁴⁹ For an effective discussion of this phenomenon, see Bain Attwood, *Telling the Truth About Aboriginal History* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005), p. 50.

⁵⁰ Jackie Dickenson, “Journalists Writing Australian Political History”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 56, no. 1 (2010), p. 109; Kelly Jean Butler, *Witnessing Australian Stories: History, Testimony and Memory in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2017 [2013]), p. 9. See also Tom Wolfe, *The New Journalism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

culture. The thing itself are the emotions”.⁵¹ This was worlds apart from philosopher R. G. Collingwood’s assertion that “emotions” and “immediate experience” were simply “not history”.⁵² Now, the personal and the emotional were valorised above strict objectivity and technocratic knowledge, and the political memoir boom would develop in the cultural space created by these developments.

In the aftermath of the Whitlam government’s dismissal, Australians saw the dress rehearsal for the political memoir boom. Aggrieved by criticism and yearning for posterity’s benevolence, former governor-general Sir John Kerr published *Matters for Judgement* in 1978, postulating in its pages that he was “bound to act” as he did in dismissing Gough Whitlam from office in November 1975.⁵³ In what Jenny Hocking called a “royal whitewash of history”, the Queen’s private secretary vetted Kerr’s manuscript.⁵⁴ *Matters for Judgement* was an odd book that offered penetrating reflections on childhood, long recitations of constitutional precedents for using the governor-general’s reserve powers, and plenty of noble rhetoric for good measure. An infuriated Whitlam responded by signing a two-book contract of his own with Penguin Australia; a deal that was the “biggest in the publishing history of the company” at the time.⁵⁵ In *The Truth of the Matter* (1979), written and published in just six weeks, Whitlam argued that the constitutional crisis had always been a “political” one, and that Kerr’s “secrecy” and “bunker mentality” were integral to the outcome.⁵⁶ Penguin sold 150,000 copies over time, and if there were initial quibbles about this conspiratorial assessment of Kerr’s actions, even Whitlam’s political opponents recognised his deep anger as “the strength of the book”.⁵⁷ The sequel, *The Whitlam Government* (1985), drafted chiefly by young adviser Mark Latham, was a comparatively dense account of the “development and implementation” of Labor policy.⁵⁸ But this too could be a publicist’s delight. Launching the book on the tenth anniversary of the dismissal “for maximum publicity”, Whitlam was judged “the hit of the decade” by those assembled at the National Press Club.⁵⁹ This was a far cry from the promotional activities of

⁵¹ Mark Baker, Interview on ABC Radio National, 28 March 1997. NAA: C100, 1647542.

⁵² R. G. Collingwood quoted in Joy Damousi, “The Emotions of History”, in Stuart Macintyre (ed.), *The Historian’s Conscience: Australian Historians on the Ethics of History* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2004), p. 29.

⁵³ John Kerr quoted in “Kerr Accuses Hayden of Disgraceful Attack”, *Canberra Times*, 18 November 1978, p. 1.

⁵⁴ Jenny Hocking, *The Palace Letters* (Brunswick: Scribe, 2020), p. 147.

⁵⁵ “Whitlam to Write 2 Books”, *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier*, 27 November 1978, p. 7.

⁵⁶ Gough Whitlam, *The Truth of the Matter* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1983 [1979]), p. 1, pp. xv—xvi.

⁵⁷ Jim Killen, “Whitlam’s Rage is No Passing Tempest”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 February 1979, NAA: A463, 1978/2604.

⁵⁸ Gough Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972—75* (Ringwood: Viking, 1985), pp. ix—x.

⁵⁹ Jenny Hocking, *Gough Whitlam: His Time* (Carlton: Miegunyah Press, 2014 [2012]), p. 450; Hugh Lunn, “Gough Returns as the Hit of the Decade”, *Australian*, 12 November 1985, p. 2.

decades past: upon discovering Hughes' *Crusts and Crusades*, one outer-Melbourne resident demanded to know of the aged politician, "Where the hades is your publicity these days?"⁶⁰

Finally, older tendencies toward political non-disclosure were dying by the 1990s. Politicians had long been purveyors of, but also subject to, censorship.⁶¹ In Britain, an earlier crop of political and military memoirs had prompted the *Official Secrets Act* 1911, later lampooned in the television satire *Yes, Minister*.⁶² The culture of official secrecy still mattered for public servants. But by the end of the 1970s British ministers felt free of constraints on insider storytelling. The Radcliffe Committee, established by the Wilson Labour government in the wake of Richard Crossman's controversial *Diaries* in 1975, asserted that cabinet ministers ought to wait 15 years before publishing their accounts, even as it noted the unenforceability of such a rule.⁶³ In Australia, the *Crimes Act* 1914 and the *Public Service Act* 1922 theoretically compelled Commonwealth officeholders and public servants to preserve all strictly confidential information.⁶⁴ But when questions in the Senate prompted bureaucrats to evaluate the rules in 1978, they concluded that nothing actually prevented ministers from "releasing other forms of information".⁶⁵ The real legal risks, to author and publisher alike, came instead from Australia's strict defamation laws and not from any obligation to official secrecy.⁶⁶ Politicians were arguably the most litigious of all Australians when it came to defamation, but there was a degree of "mutually assured destruction" preventing them from suing one another over minor trivialities.⁶⁷ Certainly by the 1990s, "libel and defamation" (as

⁶⁰ W. A. Heggie, Letter to William Morris Hughes, 25 October 1950, Papers of William Morris Hughes, NLA, MS 1538, Series 5, Box 31, Folder 54, Item 7322.

⁶¹ For literary censorship see Donald Horne, *A Time of Hope: Australia 1966–72* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1980), pp. 14–23. For regulations on politicians' discourse on radio see Bridget Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations: The Story of Australian Commercial Radio* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), pp. 359–63.

⁶² Christopher Moran, *Classified: Secrecy and the State in Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 26.

⁶³ Moran, *Classified*, p. 251. See also John F. Naylor, "British Memoirs and Official Secrecy: From Crossman to Thatcher", in George Egerton (ed.), *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory* (London: Frank Cass, 1994), pp. 330–40; David Richards and Helen Mathers, "Political Memoirs and New Labour: Interpretations of Power and the 'Club Rules'", *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, vol. 12, no. 4 (2010), pp. 503–8.

⁶⁴ Cth. *Crimes Act* 1914, s70 and s79; Cth. *Public Service Act* 1922, III, 97.1.t.

⁶⁵ G. V. Halliday, Letter to the Secretary of the Public Service Board, 14 April 1978. NAA: A432, E1978/1411 PART 1.

⁶⁶ Craig Munro, "Pulped! Why Book Publishing Can Be a Risky Business", *Inside Story*, 13 December 2021, <https://insidestory.org.au/pulped/>, accessed 7 January 2022; Natasha Cica, "You Can't Say That", *Australian Author*, August 2005, pp. 23–26.

⁶⁷ 14.8 per cent of all defamation litigants were politicians in 2004. Cited in Cica, "You Can't Say That", p. 23.

well as the “classification” system) were all that remained of an older regime of literary censorship.⁶⁸

On these bases, Labor’s 1994 explosion figures as the real onset of the political memoir phenomenon. Hawke, Uren, Button and Richardson had all been active parliamentarians just a few years – and in some cases just months – prior to their publications. Each of them proffered a particular treatment of the Hawke Labor government and its political and economic legacy. Collectively, the four books were reported to have sold 177,000 units in two years, indicating both larger market demand and increasing industry capacities.⁶⁹ Importantly, where Kerr and Whitlam had been engaged in a personal literary contest, the new memoir boom would encompass a much larger cohort of authors throughout the 1990s and beyond.

Igniting the Explosion

In the short run, the memoir boom was ignited by the collapse of the Hawke Labor government in December 1991. For one thing, several high-profile members of the Labor administration departed parliament in the aftermath of the Hawke–Keating leadership struggle, giving them the time and scope to engage in literary pursuits. More importantly, Labor ministers had already begun cultivating for themselves a unique place in Australian political history. Hawke’s government was noteworthy for the “boldness” of its economic program, particularly the float of the dollar, the licensing of foreign banks, and important taxation reforms.⁷⁰ Hawke’s four electoral victories, indebted partly to his personal popularity, can also be attributed to his government’s innovations in health and education policy, and its commitment to environmental and women’s causes among others.⁷¹ That said, his government was also associated with the high unemployment and high interest rates that accompanied the early 1990s recession.⁷² All of this was compounded by the bitter power struggle between Hawke and his treasurer, Paul Keating, who unsuccessfully challenged for the leadership in June 1991. Theirs was a dynamic relationship, the deterioration of which accelerated after the latter’s provocative informal Christmas speech at the National Press Club in December 1990, in which he dismissed wartime prime minister John Curtin as a “trier”, implied that Hawke’s leadership consisted of “tripping

⁶⁸ Patrick Mullins, *The Trials of Portnoy: How Penguin Brought Down Australia’s Censorship System* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2020), p. 259.

⁶⁹ Barry Oakley and Franz Kantor, “Famous Names, Forgettable Stories”, *Weekend Australian*, 10 August 1996.

⁷⁰ Bongiorno, *The Eighties: The Decade that Transformed Australia* (Carlton: Black Inc., 2015), p. 49.

⁷¹ Susan Ryan and Troy Bramston, “Introduction”, in Susan Ryan and Troy Bramston (eds.), *The Hawke Government: A Critical Retrospective* (North Melbourne: Pluto Press, 2003), p. 1.

⁷² For more on this, see Laura Tingle, *Chasing the Future: Recession, Recovery, and the New Politics in Australia* (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1994); George Megalogenis, *The Longest Decade* (Carlton North: Scribe, 2006).

over the TV crews' cords", and dubbed himself the "Placido Domingo" of Australian politics.⁷³ What mattered in politics, Keating inferred, was the quality of the performance rather than the popularity of the performer. The revelation of these comments in the press made conflict at the centre of government inevitable.

But even as the government unravelled before the eyes of an increasingly lethargic public, the political class was certain of its historic importance in the national story. Indeed, Labor's historiographical contest commenced even before Hawke's leadership had ended. In mid-1991 and with Keating on the backbench, Hawke began to discuss a series of legacy-building initiatives with the ABC. Philip Chubb, an esteemed ABC reporter, began conducting "background interviews" with Hawke for research purposes.⁷⁴ Eventually, these interviews evolved into a proposal to produce "a television series from within the government with the prime minister's imprimatur".⁷⁵ Garry Sturgess, an Australian legal journalist and friend of Chubb, was asked to join the project from Washington, D.C. where he was working as a columnist and reporter for the American Lawyer Group newspaper *Legal Times*. "I was to some extent reluctant to leave Washington because I was in a job and liked what I was doing", he recalled, "but at the same time, this was a big challenge".⁷⁶ Deciding to take it on, Sturgess returned to Melbourne only to find the project, and the government, engulfed in an "atmosphere of uncertainty".⁷⁷ On 19 December 1991, Keating launched a second, successful challenge against the prime minister, and the Hawke era came to a dramatic end.

Others had also begun to prepare the first drafts of the Hawke government's history too, notably journalist Paul Kelly. Within a year of Hawke's downfall, Kelly produced *The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s*.⁷⁸ Unlike the journalistic "quickies" that proliferated after more recent prime ministerial departures, Kelly's was an ambitious work of more than 700 pages, clearly intended to establish an influential narrative about the Hawke government's place in Australian history.⁷⁹ Kelly roundly attacked the "Australian Settlement" (Australia's traditional preference for a restrictive racial policy, compulsory arbitration, a paternalistic

⁷³ Paul Keating quoted in Troy Bramston, *Paul Keating: The Big-Picture Leader* (Brunswick: Scribe, 2016), pp. 355—56.

⁷⁴ Garry Sturgess, interview with the author, Manuka, Canberra, 7 February 2020.

⁷⁵ Sturgess, interview, 7 February 2020.

⁷⁶ Sturgess, interview, 7 February 2020.

⁷⁷ Sturgess, interview, 7 February 2020.

⁷⁸ Paul Kelly, *The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1992).

⁷⁹ For more on Kelly's contributions to political historiography, see Jackie Dickenson, "Journalists Writing Australian Political History", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 56, no. 1 (2010), pp. 105—19; Sean Scalmer and Jackie Dickenson, "The March of the Insider", *Overland*, no. 199 (2010), pp. 18—26.

welfare regime, a protectionist approach to industry, and a dependence on imperial benevolence).⁸⁰ In his telling, the Hawke government with Keating as treasurer had courageously overhauled a moribund policy regime founded by Alfred Deakin.⁸¹ Within that history, Keating was “de facto prime minister” for half of the 1980s, and Hawke a “de facto president” whose “refusal to honour the [Kirribilli] deal which had set a timetable for Hawke to resign in Keating’s favour [...] saw the eventual collapse of their partnership”.⁸² For Kelly, Richardson’s factional role in the Hawke–Keating contest was that of an equivocator “fully trusted” by nobody.⁸³ An angry Hawke promptly described parts of Kelly’s book as “manifest literary absurdity” and promised to “fill out the record” himself.⁸⁴ Richardson praised the book, but sought to correct Kelly’s account of Labor’s leadership challenges: “I think I’m in a position where I can correct people just on that one aspect”.⁸⁵ Clearly, Kelly’s narrative confronted these men, challenging them to consider their own conceptions of recent history, notwithstanding the journalist’s own firm belief in the reforms of the 1980s and sympathetic attitude to the government.

Hawke was a prime candidate for a publishing contract. At the height of his popularity, he was feted as the “reformed womanising and drunken larrikin who could bring Australian business and labour mates together to rebuild a prosperous Australian capitalism”, even if that capitalism now seemed anything but prosperous.⁸⁶ A graduate in Arts and Law at the University of Western Australia and a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, he seemed likely to be capable of weaving a literary tapestry.⁸⁷ Immediately following his removal from power, Hawke was approached by multiple publishers about writing a political memoir. HarperCollins and Oxford University Press both expressed strong interest.⁸⁸ Questioned by the media, Hawke’s biographer and secret lover Blanche d’Alpuget hinted that Louise Adler of William Heinemann Australia (WHA) would be the likely publisher.⁸⁹ Asked later about this tip-off, d’Alpuget explained that Adler (a longstanding friend) was “mad-keen on political biographies, and yes,

⁸⁰ Kelly, *End of Certainty*, 1–12.

⁸¹ Kelly, *End of Certainty*, 15.

⁸² Kelly, *End of Certainty*, p. 28.

⁸³ Kelly, *End of Certainty*, p. 644.

⁸⁴ Geoffrey Barker, “Bitter Hawke Still Looks to Avenge Ousting”, *Age*, 6 February 1993, p. 13.

⁸⁵ Graham Richardson, interview with the author, Sydney, 14 February 2020.

⁸⁶ Carol Johnson, *Governing Change: From Keating to Howard* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000), p. 6.

⁸⁷ Blanche d’Alpuget, *Robert J. Hawke: A Biography* (East Melbourne: Schwartz, 1982), pp. 34–35.

⁸⁸ Terry Kitson, Letter to Bob Hawke, 23 December 1991; Peter Rose, Letter to Bob Hawke, 13 January 1992, Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Library (hereafter BHPML), Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

⁸⁹ Kevin Norbury, “Publishers are Keen to Book the Former PM”, *Sunday Age*, 5 January 1992, p. 2.

she could see a dollar”.⁹⁰ Allowing the speculation to play out just long enough, Adler made her move on 9 January 1992 with a letter to Hawke that began, “This is the letter you were probably expecting”.⁹¹ Adler outlined for Hawke the stellar publishing reputation of WHA, a subsidiary of Reed Books International, and suggested a meeting with Chairman Paul Hamlyn and herself. In the second week of February, Adler publicly confirmed that she had secured a commitment from Hawke to publish with WHA. It is difficult to reconstruct exactly the events leading to that agreement, but it is clear that Adler, her publishing colleague Sandy Grant, and Hamlyn were all involved. At an excited press conference, Adler stated that the former prime minister would be supplied with a research assistant and expected to meet a publication deadline in mid-1993, and stressed that there would be no ghostwriters: ““Bob Hawke is not the sort of man to use a ghost writer. He’s always been plain-speaking and forthright””.⁹²

The ABC television series, intended to be an inside look at Hawke’s government, instead became a more “ambitious” five-part historical retrospective.⁹³ Sturgess recalled that Chubb approached him and suggested that he work as the lead researcher for Hawke’s book instead of the television series: “I really wasn’t going to come back to be the researcher of a book. And I said, ‘I’m not going to do that. I’ll do both’”.⁹⁴ Peter Redlich, a Victorian lawyer and Hawke confidant, was involved in those discussions. Sturgess signed on to work with both the ABC and WHA, and though the projects themselves evolved differently, he became a vital conduit between them. According to Sturgess, the fact that the two projects were going “in tandem” was important: “We gathered a lot of material which, from my point of view, just fed into this whole process of doing a first draft of the book.”⁹⁵ The relationship between the two history-making projects was therefore highly important for the eventual memoir that Hawke produced.

There was more at stake than legacy. In his final address as prime minister, Hawke told journalists, “I’m now a considerably poorer man”.⁹⁶ The *Age* explained his predicament: “Mr Hawke’s income has been cut from \$198,000 a year to about \$91,000 as a backbencher and he has a \$775,000 mortgage on his \$1.23 million Sydney home”.⁹⁷ Hawke’s efforts to make fast

⁹⁰ Blanche d’Alpuget, interview with the author, Sydney, 21 February 2020.

⁹¹ Louise Adler, Letter to Bob Hawke, 9 January 1992, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

⁹² Louise Adler quoted in Tony Squires, “Stay in Touch”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 February 1992, p. 24.

⁹³ K. S. Inglis, *Whose ABC? The Australian Broadcasting Corporation 1983—2006* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2006), p. 333.

⁹⁴ Sturgess, interview, 7 February 2020.

⁹⁵ Sturgess, interview, 7 February 2020.

⁹⁶ Hawke quoted in Christopher Zinn, “Hawke Retires from Politics to Take Up New Career in Television”, *Guardian*, 21 February 1992, p. 10.

⁹⁷ Norbury, “Publishers are Keen”, p. 2.

money attracted public ire; senior journalist Michelle Grattan remarked that Hawke should seek “a few tips on budgeting if he has so many money problems”.⁹⁸ Letters to the *Sydney Morning Herald* recorded heightened cynicism: “Next he’ll be flogging Persian carpets”.⁹⁹ With the national unemployment figure climbing above 11 per cent and the economy languishing, Hawke secured from his publishers an advance of over \$350,000.¹⁰⁰ WHA imagined that the memoirs would be a profitable commodity too. “[I]n those days, you could do a firm sale with a major book chain” without receiving returned stock, Adler explained, “and that gave you clout and presence in the market”.¹⁰¹ The serialisation rights were even more lucrative.¹⁰² Grant and Adler proposed a 70,000 print run of the book, in part to ensure that they broke even with Hawke’s significant advance.¹⁰³ For his part, Sturgess expected that his commitment to Hawke’s projects would be remunerated fairly. In his diary, he wrote that the publishers had “overcommitted themselves” with Hawke’s advance and were now “trying to cut costs with me”.¹⁰⁴ WHA’s contract with Sturgess was separate from that of Hawke, so it does not appear in the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Library’s (BHPML) collection, but anecdotally, it seems that Hawke’s patronage won Sturgess his fee.¹⁰⁵ For all parties, remuneration or the prospect of commercial success were essential preconditions to the memoir writing process, and each party saw their interests accommodated in the contract that was settled in June 1992.

Hawke was not the only politician signing a book contract that month. Graham Richardson had worked hard to help evict Hawke from the Lodge in 1991, but not even his Machiavellian flair could withstand the scandal that engulfed him shortly thereafter. In April 1992 he was accused of improperly contacting the president of the Marshall Islands in order to advocate on behalf of a gaoled relative by marriage, Greg Symons, who had allegedly conducted an illegal migration racket. After weeks of media controversy and parliamentary censure, Richardson resigned to avoid “inhibiting [Labor’s] electoral success”.¹⁰⁶ Left on the backbench to his own devices, and convinced that opposition leader John Hewson “would comfortably win an election”, he turned his career setback into an opportunity to write a

⁹⁸ Michelle Grattan, “Hawke Passing One Buck in Wills, Chasing Others”, *Age*, 1 February 1992, p. 2.

⁹⁹ Letter reproduced in “Bob, We Have Lost that Loving Feeling”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 February 1992, p. 8.

¹⁰⁰ Facsimile of Memorandum of Agreement for ‘Bob Hawke: A Life in Politics’, 23 June 1992, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

¹⁰¹ Louise Adler, phone interview with the author, 25 January 2022.

¹⁰² Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

¹⁰³ Memorandum of Agreement, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

¹⁰⁴ Garry Sturgess, personal diary entry, 29 February 1992.

¹⁰⁵ Sturgess, interview, 7 February 2020.

¹⁰⁶ Graham Richardson quoted in Michael Cavanagh, “Senior Australian Minister Quits Amid Controversy”, *Reuters*, 18 May 1992.

political memoir.¹⁰⁷ Reflecting later on his self-described “sabbatical”, he explained: “I didn’t really know I could write at that stage, but I thought it was worth giving it a try”.¹⁰⁸ Richardson intended his book to be a transitional project that would sustain him after the adrenaline of factional and ministerial power had ceased to govern his daily life, and perhaps earn some money on the way through.

The senator reached out to personal and political allies to initiate his project. He made his authorial pitch to Jill Hickson, a Sydney-based literary agent and wife of former premier Wran. Having established Hickson Associates in the mid-1980s, Hickson had earned a “reputation for energetic promotion of Australian authors”.¹⁰⁹ Richardson thought she was “the best agent in the business”.¹¹⁰ His factional relationship with Hickson’s husband likely made this an instinctive, natural partnership. In June 1992, Richardson confirmed his desire to produce a book about his political experiences, particularly emphasising his familiarity with the subtle art of factional power.¹¹¹ Enthused by Richardson’s proposal, Hickson set about acquiring a profitable deal. At the Australian Book Fair in Sydney on 26 June 1992, she made the proposal a major talking point. Talks with Angus & Robertson, Random Century and Penguin all failed to yield the desired financial advance; Penguin CEO Robert Sessions warned that “the book will never come even close to earning out”.¹¹² Before the end of June, however, Hickson had persuaded representatives from Transworld to sign and publish Richardson through their Bantam imprint, with an advance of more than \$150,000.¹¹³ The press reported these initiatives as “Hickson at her promotional best.”¹¹⁴ Before long, Bantam’s would seem a wise decision. When Richardson finally departed parliament in mid-1994, even a hostile columnist such as Les Carlyon could predict that the former minister (“a man for his times”) might well “produce a bestseller”.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁷ Graham Richardson, Speech at the Launch of *Whatever it Takes*, National Press Club, Canberra, 31 October 1994. NAA: C475/1718224.

¹⁰⁸ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

¹⁰⁹ Karen Lamb, *Thea Astley: Inventing Her Own Weather* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2015), p. 276.

¹¹⁰ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

¹¹¹ Graham Richardson, Letter to Jill Hickson, 25 June 1992, Records of Curtis Brown Australia (hereafter CBA), NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 176.

¹¹² Robert Sessions, Letter to Jill Hickson, 30 June 1992, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 176.

¹¹³ Judith Curr, Facsimile to Jill Hickson, 30 June 1992, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 176.

¹¹⁴ Mary Colbert, “A Love Affair with Words”, *Australian Financial Review*, 15 April 1994, p. 5.

¹¹⁵ Les Carlyon, “Graham Richardson: Man for His Times”, 4 April 1994, in *A Life in Words: Collected Writings from Gallipoli to the Melbourne Cup* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2021), pp. 125—26.

A Literary Contest

The modern memoir boom began as personal and political contest in which publishers and collaborators were materially invested. Hawke's celebrity status, no longer circumscribed by institutional proprieties, was now a tradeable commodity. His contracts, for the book and for an anticipated series of television interviews with world leaders, were managed by the International Management Group (IMG) who hoped to "cash in on Hawke's status".¹¹⁶ Personal flattery was integral to Adler's publishing pitch. In her first letter to the bruised former leader, she celebrated the "great influence" he had exercised over Australia, and stressed the "importance of expressing your view of your own life's work and Australia as a nation".¹¹⁷ Interviewed in 2022, Adler still spoke of Hawke's "strong" and "attractive personality" as a public figure.¹¹⁸ By the time the contract was settled, this highly personalised and heroic conception of the political past was entrenched in the publishers' expectations for the book, provisionally entitled *Bob Hawke: A Life in Politics*. To maximise publicity, the book would be launched alongside Chubb's ABC program, which would be followed by a two-week tour of Australia and the United Kingdom.¹¹⁹

The temptation to define the politics of the 1980s in terms of its leaders' personalities was not unique to Hawke's Australian publishers. With the victory of capitalism over communism seemingly complete in the early 1990s, political memoirs mattered as a highly personalised, individualistic vehicle for triumphalism. Former president Ronald Reagan was relatively "uninterested" in the "assembly-line compositional process" that generated his 1990 memoir *An American Life*, but his publishers at Simon & Schuster were determined that there would be a "monument to Ronald Reagan".¹²⁰ In Britain, the deposed Margaret Thatcher approached her memoirs with enormous ambition, even if she had no love for the task of writing. As well as settling personal scores and bestowing blame for her removal, she wanted her book to stand as an exposition of individualism and market freedom in the manner of Friedrich Hayek's *Constitution of Liberty* (1960), and she knew that material support from her former staff and Rupert Murdoch's HarperCollins would be forthcoming.¹²¹ Published in 1993,

¹¹⁶ Troy Bramston, *Bob Hawke: Demons and Destiny* (Sydney: Viking, 2022), p. 544.

¹¹⁷ Louise Adler, Letter to Bob Hawke, 9 January 2022, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

¹¹⁸ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

¹¹⁹ Memorandum of Agreement, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

¹²⁰ Craig Fehrman, "Reagan and the Rise of the Blockbuster Political Memoir", *American Literary History*, vol. 24, no. 3 (2012), p. 482.

¹²¹ Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher, The Authorized Biography*, vol. 3: *Herself Alone* (London: Allen Lane, 2019), pp. 751–53; David McKnight, *Rupert Murdoch: An Investigation of Political Power* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2012), p. 118.

The Downing Street Years was accompanied by a four-part British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) documentary of the same name, bearing dramatic performances from Thatcher and her former colleagues. “Wherever I went in the world”, she could be seen exclaiming, “I was known. And because *I* was known, *Britain* was known”.¹²² Even with global capitalism beleaguered by the “mood of insecurity and resentment” that accompanied recession in the early 1990s, Thatcher and Hawke looked at the world and saw the end of the Cold War, the victory of free-market economics, “an end of ideology, even the end of history” in Francis Fukuyama’s famous phrase.¹²³ This was a story to be owned in terms of visionary personal leadership, not pragmatic realpolitik or collective struggle, and when Thatcher’s memoirs were published, Australian commentators foreshadowed that Hawke’s would not be dissimilar.

Richardson and his publishers at Transworld were actively pursuing a different kind of retrospective. The backbench senator was “struck by the fact that people didn’t write” adequately about power, “maybe because they don’t understand it”.¹²⁴ Political scientists, biographers and historians who regularly study the nature of power might balk at this claim. Robert Caro’s acclaimed five-volume biography of president Lyndon Johnson, for instance, is an attempt to “explain the reality of how power works in a democracy”.¹²⁵ But Richardson’s statement attests to his particularly *factional* imagining of power. He was, after all, known to be a man who could “make and unmake” political lives “over the telephone or across restaurant tables”.¹²⁶ It was this kind of narrative potential that Hickson successfully sold to Transworld. Richardson submitted a chapter outline that emphasised “Polls”, “Factions” and “The Machine” of the Labor Party, as well as the overthrow of Bill Hayden and, later, Hawke.¹²⁷ Interviewed for this research, he remained pleased with the tenor of his book: “I think breaking down the walls around [power] and making people understand what politics is, is not a bad thing”.¹²⁸ Transworld publisher Judith Curr signed him on 24 July 1992, stressing that the book

¹²² Lateline [Series 4, Episode 141], *The Thatcher Memoirs*, 18 October 1993. NAA: C475, 1719071.

¹²³ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991* (London: Abacus, 1995 [1994]), p. 408; Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, 4th ed. (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2016 [1999]), p. 269. See also Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992).

¹²⁴ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

¹²⁵ Robert Caro quoted in Claudia Dreifus, “‘Studies in Power’: An Interview with Robert Caro”, *New York Review of Books*, 16 January 2018, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/01/16/studies-in-power-an-interview-with-robert-caro/>, accessed 8 October 2020.

¹²⁶ Craig Wilcox, “Richardson, Graham Frederick (1949 -)”, *Biographical Dictionary of the Senate: Online Edition*, 2017, http://biography.senate.gov.au/richardson-graham-frederick/#_edn01, accessed 4 September 2020.

¹²⁷ Contents Outline for Regicide, included in Graham Richardson, Letter to Jill Hickson, 25 June 1992, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 176.

¹²⁸ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

needed to offer “a main participating insider’s view point”, and asserting that “no point will be skipped or glossed over”.¹²⁹ Most tellingly, the parties agreed to the provisional title *Regicide*.¹³⁰ In correspondence for this thesis, Curr recalled that Richardson seemed to have a “big story to tell at a time when people weren’t telling those stories in entertaining and relevant ways”.¹³¹ Ultimately, Richardson’s access to Transworld’s capital and resources depended on a style of narrative that challenged the conventional “great man” mode of political history even while it focussed on the personal and intimate exercise of power.



Figure 2: Geoff Pryor, “Graham Richardson and Bob Hawke Writing Their Memoirs”, *Canberra Times*, 30 March 1992. NLA, Geoff Pryor.

These literary initiatives were shaped and driven by an acute sense of competition, and that quality separated the new memoir boom from Australia’s older tradition of leisurely political reminiscences. Sturgess wrote to Hawke in October 1992 forewarning a contest: “I see the way ahead cluttered with scribblers writing as large a place for themselves as they possibly can and paring down your contribution”.¹³² He singled out Richardson’s book as a key

¹²⁹ Judith Curr, Letter to Graham Richardson, 28 July 1992, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 176.

¹³⁰ Draft of Agreement Between Senator Graham Richardson and Transworld Publishers (Aust.) Pty. Limited, 22 July 1992, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 176.

¹³¹ Curr, email correspondence, 4 November 2020.

¹³² Garry Sturgess, Letter to Bob Hawke, 26 October 1992, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/13.

competitor. The media also knew that Hawke would have to compete with former colleagues for the historiographical upper hand; in the *Canberra Times* on 30 March 1992, cartoonist Geoff Pryor depicted a nervously-sweating Hawke peering over Richardson's shoulder as the senator handwrote "*Regicide: Memoirs of a Kingmaker*" (see figure 2).¹³³ I asked Richardson if he had imagined himself as in competition with Hawke, or indeed Button and Walsh, at the time: he responded in the negative.¹³⁴ However, a note that Hickson scrawled on a fax from Richardson's office in 1992 suggests that Hickson at least had her eye on the competition. Clearly written after a conversation about Richardson's book, likely with Richardson himself, she scribbled, "Beat Hawke to shelves".¹³⁵ When I asked Curr if she had been conscious of Richardson's literary rivals, she replied, "I was aware of everything".¹³⁶ It was known that Button, Uren, and the irrepressible former finance minister Peter Walsh would be releasing memoirs shortly, too. Above it all, prime minister Keating was recognised for his vast storytelling capacities, and his influence on Kelly's *End of Certainty* was recognised by contemporaries and by scholars in hindsight.¹³⁷

Collaborators were essential in the production of these memoirs. For Richardson, who remained an active and comparatively young parliamentarian, the two key challenges were labour and time: "when you start the operation you don't really understand how much time it's going to take."¹³⁸ The original contract gave him six months from the date of the agreement to submit his manuscript, and although this deadline was not met, much of the book was in fact drafted relatively quickly.¹³⁹ According to Richardson, the writing process became easier and "picked up" over time.¹⁴⁰ He tasked two of his staffers, Brett Gale and Michelle Macaulay, with "going back over some of the records and checking things", but stressed that "[t]hey didn't do a lot".¹⁴¹ This is a claim that demands corroboration, but attempts to interview Gale were frustrated by the onset of COVID-19. Richardson also used personal diary extracts to "give an immediacy" to certain stories, particularly that of the deterioration of the Hawke–Keating

¹³³ Geoff Pryor, "Nice Hand-writing! – Graham Richardson and Bob Hawke Writing Their Memoirs", [cartoon image], 1992, PIC/8765/233, NLA, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-156912578>, accessed 10 February 2020.

¹³⁴ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

¹³⁵ [Jill Hickson?] Marginalia, on Graham Richardson, Facsimile to Jill Hickson, 22 June 1992, p. 1, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 176.

¹³⁶ Curr, email correspondence, 4 November 2020.

¹³⁷ Scalmer and Dickenson, "March of the Insider", p. 22.

¹³⁸ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

¹³⁹ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020; Draft of Agreement Between Senator Graham Richardson and Transworld Publishers (Aust.) Pty. Limited, 22 July 1992, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 176.

¹⁴⁰ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

¹⁴¹ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

partnership in 1990.¹⁴² Following Labor's unexpected victory and Richardson's return to cabinet in March 1993, time constraints became even more difficult to manage.¹⁴³ Jacqueline Kent, one of the most respected young editors in the Australian literary scene, was instrumental in making the text saleable.¹⁴⁴ "[S]he was really expert at it", Richardson recalled.¹⁴⁵ Abandoning the provisional title, Richardson and Transworld settled on the deliberately provocative name, *Whatever it Takes*: "everybody [involved] liked that title [...] if you provoke, you get a response".¹⁴⁶ The author and his supporting team were evidently in accord throughout the production process with respect to the tone, style and factionally pragmatic picture embedded in the book.

The provocative title notwithstanding, Richardson was anxious to protect the interests of the NSW Labor Party in his narrative. "You have to balance the need to tell the truth with the need to respect people's privacy in the conversations they've had with you", he explained.¹⁴⁷ Though clearly using the full weight of his public profile, Richardson said that he sought to preserve colleagues' confidentiality in most instances. His consideration, of course, was motivated partly by a pragmatic caution about defamatory statements. For instance, he wrote in very vague terms about the book-rorting and branch-stacking practices within NSW Labor in the early 1980s: "If you went into the branch-stacking stuff [...] you wouldn't ever get a book published, you'd be sued all over the place".¹⁴⁸ Given Richardson's infamous reputation for realpolitik, one suspects that there were episodes in his own story that he hoped to avoid telling in detail.¹⁴⁹ He therefore strove to limit his retrospective criticism to specific individuals, namely those who had occupied leadership positions.

A great man view of history defined the making of Hawke's memoirs, even allowing for the heroic labour that others performed. Hawke and Sturgess agreed that the former would write the pre-parliamentary section of the book himself, while the latter developed the rest of the story.¹⁵⁰ Writing about his own early life, Hawke was able to draw from d'Alpuget's

¹⁴² Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

¹⁴³ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

¹⁴⁴ "Join Friends for an Afternoon with Jacqueline Kent", *Illawarra Mercury*, 22 February 2018, <https://www.illawarramercury.com.au/story/5245135/join-friends-for-an-afternoon-with-jacqueline-kent/>, accessed 20 May 2022.

¹⁴⁵ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

¹⁴⁶ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

¹⁴⁷ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

¹⁴⁸ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

¹⁴⁹ See Marian Wilkinson, *The Fixer: The Untold Story of Graham Richardson* (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1996).

¹⁵⁰ Sturgess, interview, 7 February 2020.

popular 1982 biography, *Robert J. Hawke*. Given her literary prowess and adroit assessment of Hawke's personality "in the tradition of the Melbourne school of psychobiography", hers was "the definitive account" of Hawke's early years and rise within the labour movement.¹⁵¹ Hawke borrowed and sanitised d'Alpuget's "warts and all" account, admitting the acute emotional challenges of public life and strained family relationships, but glossing over his alcoholism and especially his marital infidelities.¹⁵² Sturgess, meanwhile, drafted the rest of the story based on interview transcripts and press clippings accumulated during his exhaustive research for the ABC documentary. Working with that research base, he began to "write through the material" using a dictaphone.¹⁵³ In preparing the research draft, Sturgess used the first person pronoun: "I took it that I was to channel Bob and I wrote the book [...] as if I was him writing the book".¹⁵⁴ The story that emerged owed more to the tradition of nineteenth-century British intellectual Thomas Carlyle rather than Russian Marxist Georgi Plekhanov, for it was predicated on the assumption that history could function as a story of "great men" rather than "productive forces".¹⁵⁵ And a heroic history demanded a villain of appropriate proportions. When Sturgess drafted a 17-page chapter outline for the book in late 1992, the spectre of Keating loomed large in headings such as "The Recession We Could Have Done Without" and "The Leadership Battle We Could Have Done Without".¹⁵⁶ Sturgess saw Hawke's rivalry with Keating as "a necessary theme in the book".¹⁵⁷

Political and personal contingencies played their part in the making of Hawke's account. First, the Keating government's survival at the March 1993 federal election posed an immense challenge. Hawke's "inside version of history" would refer not to a defeated Keating but to "the Prime Minister and his Government" and therefore, Sturgess felt, "more exculpatory material" would be required.¹⁵⁸ (Incidentally, Sturgess himself had considered a book of his own on "the Rise & Fall of Paul Keating – 1991 – 1993", a dream that Keating's election victory promptly smothered.¹⁵⁹) Second, the ABC television series went to air under the title *Labor in Power* in

¹⁵¹ Joshua Black, "A Life Triumphant Well Written: Producing the Hawke Legacy, 1979–2019", *ANUJHJII*, no. 2 (2020), p. 88.

¹⁵² Hawke, *Memoirs*, p. 94, pp. 270–72.

¹⁵³ Sturgess, interview, 7 February 2020.

¹⁵⁴ Sturgess, interview, 7 February 2020.

¹⁵⁵ Melanie Nolan, "The Great Individual in History: Historicizing Historians' Biographical Practice", in Hans Renders and David Veltman (eds.), *Fear of Theory: Towards a New Theoretical Justification of Biography* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), p. 77, p. 81.

¹⁵⁶ Garry Sturgess, Chapter Outline of The Hawke Memoirs, 26 October 1992, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/13.

¹⁵⁷ Garry Sturgess, Letter to Bob Hawke, 26 October 1992, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/13.

¹⁵⁸ Caroline Wilson, "After the Applause", *Sunday Age*, 23 May 1993; Sturgess, diary, 1993 (date unknown).

¹⁵⁹ Sturgess, diary, 23 July 1992.

July that year. Political scientist Paul Strangio later described this revelatory and critical documentary as “a post-mortem on a living, breathing government”.¹⁶⁰ Hawke “wasn’t happy at all” about the series, perceiving its treatment of him as “dishonest and biased”.¹⁶¹ His relationship with Sturgess was unaffected, but his publishers grew impatient as that critical milestone passed them by. When the ABC released a short book based on *Labor in Power*, WHA publisher Sandy Grant confronted Hawke’s talent management team about the passing deadlines.¹⁶² Finally, Hawke separated from his IMG agents late in the year, prompting a rapid restructuring of his financial relationship with WHA. He later thanked his close friend Richard Super for easing that restructuring process, admitting that without him, “I could not have found the time nor had the peace of mind needed to produce [the book]”.¹⁶³ Each of these issues, arising at the time in which they did, proved a distraction from the task of producing the manuscript or added to the pressures constraining the story.

Competition notwithstanding, *Labor in Power* enabled former ministers to rehearse and build anticipation for the stories they would tell in their memoirs. Transworld initially hoped to protect the exclusivity of *Whatever it Takes* by encouraging Richardson not to participate in the ABC interviews.¹⁶⁴ But having decided to speak on camera, Richardson (now reinstated as a cabinet minister in Keating’s government) crafted a story about his record in the Environment portfolio as “a very happy mixture of good politics with what was right”.¹⁶⁵ In *Whatever it Takes*, he honed that narrative further, describing his environmental reforms as “a perfect convergence” of “what was right” with what was “popular”.¹⁶⁶ Similarly, Hawke used the series to refine particular stories that would appear in his memoirs. His account of the national taxation summit in July 1985 was a case in point. At the summit, Keating had been bitterly disappointed at Hawke’s decision to abandon a proposed 12.5 per cent consumption tax.¹⁶⁷ In *Labor in Power*, Hawke maintained that it was not only his “right” but his “responsibility” to make that

¹⁶⁰ Paul Strangio, “I Did It My Way”, *Inside Story*, 12 December 2008, <https://insidestory.org.au/i-did-it-my-way/>, accessed 5 July 2019.

¹⁶¹ Sturgess, interview, 7 February 2020; d’Alpuget, interview, 21 February 2020.

¹⁶² Sandy Grant, Facsimile to James Erskine, 6 September 1993, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16; Louise Adler quoted in “Hawke Memoirs Slowing”, *Daily Telegraph*, 20 September 1993.

¹⁶³ Hawke, *Memoirs*, p. xi.

¹⁶⁴ Sturgess, diary, 20 August 1992.

¹⁶⁵ Graham Richardson quoted in Sue Spencer, dir., *Labor in Power*, ep. 3, “Conserving Power”, ABC, 1993, accessed via YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60ldd5OC4Qo>, 1:29.

¹⁶⁶ Richardson, *Whatever it Takes*, p. 214.

¹⁶⁷ For more on this see Joshua Black, “‘Lessons in Statecraft’: Political Memoirs, Tax Reform, and the National Taxation Summit 1985”, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 57, no. 2 (2022), pp. 164—79.

political “judgement”.¹⁶⁸ This story would be developed further in the *Memoirs* (see below). Moreover, anticipating his memoirs, Hawke claimed that Keating had once disparaged the entire Australian nation during one of their arguments over the leadership, and promised that his memoirs would reveal the remark “in all its glory”.¹⁶⁹ Keating was aware of the accusation against him and rebutted it on camera, but subsequently requested that Chubb excise this segment from the series, claiming that it would “really reflect badly on Bob”.¹⁷⁰ In the final screening, Hawke’s tantalising allusion was all that remained, though all would be revealed before long. The series won Chubb and director Sue Spencer a Gold Walkley media award, while the press judged that Keating won the legacy contest.¹⁷¹

Former advisers played a critical role in making the stories in Hawke’s memoirs matter in political and historiographical terms. Former economics adviser Ross Garnaut read the economic policy chapters and, along with correcting empirical errors, advised Hawke to emphasise Australia’s “‘enmeshment’ in East Asia” as a central theme and acknowledge “less than unqualified triumphs” such as the “errors in monetary policy” that had led to recession in 1990.¹⁷² In April 1994 Hawke approached former defence adviser Hugh White for notes on Australia’s involvement in the first Gulf War, 1990–91. (In August 1990 Iraq under the leadership of dictator Saddam Hussein invaded neighbouring oil-rich Kuwait, inciting a global diplomatic crisis that would culminate in Western military intervention in February 1991.¹⁷³) White remembered the call:

[H]is words to me were ‘can you knock up some notes for me on it?’ I said, ‘yes, Bob, I’d be delighted to do that, but tell me, would you like me to knock up some notes, or would you like me to actually knock up a draft?’ And he said, ‘ah, well do up a draft, mate’.¹⁷⁴

After rereading his own diaries and visiting the NAA to review official papers, White spent the Easter long weekend preparing a draft chapter in Hawke’s voice. His draft included an accusation that Keating, alongside John Button, had argued against Australia’s participation in the Gulf War. The draft read: “Both Paul Keating and John Button had grave reservations [...]

¹⁶⁸ Bob Hawke quoted in Sue Spencer, dir., *Labor in Power*, ep. 2, “Taxing Times”, ABC, 1993, accessed via https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eINY3Lb_K1U&t=1977s, 32:10.

¹⁶⁹ Bob Hawke quoted in Sue Spencer, dir., *Labor in Power*, ep. 4, “The Recession We Had to Have”, ABC, 1993, accessed via <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOKW8omIkxA>, 54:50.

¹⁷⁰ Sturgess, diary, 9 March 1993.

¹⁷¹ Black, “A Life Triumphant Well Written”, pp. 90–91.

¹⁷² Ross Garnaut, Letter to Bob Hawke, 2 May 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/12.

¹⁷³ For a sound discussion, see Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 241–54.

¹⁷⁴ Hugh White, interview with the author, Canberra, 14 November 2019.

Paul Keating opposed on the grounds that we did not owe the US such support. ‘What has the US done for us?’, he asked”.¹⁷⁵ Relying on contemporaneous notes, White included the claim for historical veracity, but enclosed the paragraph “in square brackets [...] I said, ‘I’ll leave it to you whether you want to leave that in’.”¹⁷⁶ Warned about the potential political risks, Hawke left the passage, with its apparent debt to *Monty Python’s Life of Brian* (“What have the Romans ever done for us?”), in the manuscript.

In the autumn of 1994, the published product of Hawke’s memoirs took shape. In early March, Sturgess provided his final contributions, along with an upbeat letter to Hawke thanking him for his company in their final weeks: “I thought it was a great way to finish off a great project”.¹⁷⁷ Adler commended the draft but urged Hawke to give it more flavour: “Your broad brushstrokes mean that the reader is left with a very vague sense of hard work and hard play”.¹⁷⁸ In truth, there was much stylistic finessing required of the work Hawke had done. Hawke and Adler contracted d’Alpuget (to whom Hawke would become married shortly after divorcing Hazel in November that year) as the literary editor. Asked about the project, d’Alpuget described herself as a conscript: “Nobody puts themselves forward to edit another person’s book, I can tell you!”¹⁷⁹ She recalled that “he brought along some chapters of the manuscript” and that they “needed a lot of reshaping”.¹⁸⁰ Sturgess, too, urged the former prime minister to use shorter sentences.¹⁸¹ Adler vividly remembered witnessing Hawke’s “extraordinary” focus on the project in its final months.¹⁸² She and Grant eventually settled on *The Hawke Memoirs* for a title, but d’Alpuget had argued for another: “I wanted it called *It Was a Pleasure*, and Louise and perhaps Sandy didn’t think that had sufficient gravitas, but it was still an accurate description of Bob’s life”.¹⁸³ By the end of May, the final proofs had been returned to the publisher under the heading *The Hawke Memoirs*.

Parallel Pictures of Power

Treating the political memoir as a form of performance enhances our understanding of the genre in multiple ways. First, this framework helps situate these projects in their contemporaneous political and historical contexts. Second, it casts into stark relief the roles

¹⁷⁵ First Draft Manuscript, March 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/1.

¹⁷⁶ White, interview, 14 November 2019.

¹⁷⁷ Garry Sturgess, Letter to Bob Hawke, 15 March 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

¹⁷⁸ Louise Adler, Letter to Bob Hawke, 26 April 1993, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

¹⁷⁹ D’Alpuget, interview, 21 February 2020.

¹⁸⁰ D’Alpuget, interview, 21 February 2020.

¹⁸¹ Garry Sturgess, Letter to Bob Hawke, 7 April 1993, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

¹⁸² Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

¹⁸³ D’Alpuget, interview, 21 February 2020.

that actors other than the author performed in the production process. Third, each of these contributions helped shape, condition and refine the author's own narratives about the politics of the past. *The Hawke Memoirs'* Carlylean, great man view of the 1980s, for instance, needs to be understood with reference to the attitudes taken by Adler, Sturgess and others, as well as Hawke himself. Richardson's agent and publishers, by way of contrast, were committed to his initial vision of a book that pictured politics in a far craftier, Machiavellian hue. Twin forces of historiographical ambition and market imperatives informed these competing self-portraits of Labor in power.

In essence, Hawke and WHA sought to project a version of history in which Labor, under Hawke's "unity and consensus" style of leadership, dragged Australia into the modern age.¹⁸⁴ In his view, the government was driven by "a commonality of purpose", and by a remarkable "team which became the most successful long-term Labor Government" in history, led by a man who had always been 'destined for a special life'.¹⁸⁵ His prime ministerial office was, especially in the early years, "the engine room driving economic change in Australia".¹⁸⁶ The bulk of the story revolved around Hawke's "greater policy achievements", all of which involved making the Australian economy "more competitive, more sophisticated, more diversified and much bigger".¹⁸⁷ Importantly, Hawke asserted that this was the "Hawke Government, not the Hawke-Keating Government. To say otherwise is to misstate history".¹⁸⁸ That statement, handwritten into the manuscript by Hawke himself, attests to the centrality of his own personal leadership in his understanding of the 1980s.

The memoir also offered a historical account in which Hawke, as a policy actor, exerted great influence in international affairs. His account of the collapse of apartheid in South Africa was emblematic in this sense. In early drafts, Hawke set out to prove that his agitation on Nelson Mandela's behalf among Commonwealth Heads of Government had been crucial to Mandela's release and the eventual dismantling of apartheid. Describing his first meeting with Mandela in October 1990, Hawke handwrote the following extract for inclusion in the manuscript: "[Mandela] said, 'I want you to know, Bob, that I am here today, at this time, because of you.' He then thanked me for my leadership and initiatives in [Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings] which, he said, had accelerated his release and the collapse

¹⁸⁴ Hawke, *Memoirs*, p. 162.

¹⁸⁵ Publisher's Proofs, 27 May 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/12; Hawke, *Memoirs*, p. 14.

¹⁸⁶ Hawke, *Memoirs*, p. 238.

¹⁸⁷ Black, "Triumphantly Well Written", p. 92; Hawke, *Memoirs*, p. 248.

¹⁸⁸ Hawke, *Memoirs*, p. 159.

of apartheid.”¹⁸⁹ In the editing rounds, Adler or d’Alpuget made an effort to dilute the statement Hawke attributed to Mandela to read “I am here [...] because of people like you.”¹⁹⁰ Hawke evidently rejected these edits, and the publishers acquiesced.¹⁹¹ (Critics would later bristle against Hawke’s claim to having solved apartheid “by proxy”.¹⁹²) There was criticism of foreign statesmen, too. He wrote of his “contempt” for New Zealand Labour prime minister David Lange who allowed his foreign policy on American nuclear ships to be determined by the Left of his party, something he, Hawke, would never have tolerated.¹⁹³

The former prime minister was not entirely free to write world history in his own image. He carefully crafted his account of the Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing in June 1989. In the first draft, Sturgess told a rich story about the innocent protestors, the violence of the Chinese authorities, and the prime minister’s emotional response. Hawke excised most of it, and reiterated his benign view of China: “I did not then, nor do I now, share the simplistic view that we could realistically expect the immediate transformation of China into some western-style democracy.”¹⁹⁴ The changes were inspired partly by Hawke’s resumed relationship with the Chinese leadership in the 1990s, partly by his own commercial activities in the region, and certainly by his and WHA’s desire to publish *The Hawke Memoirs* in China.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, stories involving Queen Elizabeth II had to be expunged. Sturgess had included a story about Her Majesty laughing when Hawke remarked on Margaret Thatcher’s tendency to hector people in diplomatic forums.¹⁹⁶ A simple stroke of Hawke’s pen saw this passage removed. Thus, practical and diplomatic realities constrained Hawke’s account of international affairs.

Hawke and his collaborators dwelt at length on the challenge of representing Keating. In some instances, Hawke moderated others’ approaches. Sturgess compared Keating with former Labor and Nationalist prime minister Hughes, noting that both had a “crazy and irresponsible dimension to his character”; Hawke crossed out “crazy and irresponsible” and replaced it with “bizarre”.¹⁹⁷ Similarly, in channelling Hawke, Sturgess initially portrayed Keating as a “nervous” Treasurer who “applied himself well to get across” his brief.¹⁹⁸ Hawke softened that

¹⁸⁹ First Draft Manuscript, March 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/1.

¹⁹⁰ Publisher’s Proofs, 27 May 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/12.

¹⁹¹ Hawke, *Memoirs*, p. 335.

¹⁹² Carlyon, “Bob Hawke: The Love of His Life”, 5 March 1995, *A Life in Words*, p. 138.

¹⁹³ Hawke, *Memoirs*, pp. 281—82.

¹⁹⁴ First Draft Manuscript, March 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/1.

¹⁹⁵ Bob Hawke, Letter to Shen Yunao, 1 July 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

¹⁹⁶ First Draft Manuscript, March 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/1.

¹⁹⁷ First Draft Manuscript, March 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/1.

¹⁹⁸ First Draft Manuscript, March 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/1.

statement, claiming that with the help of his staff and Treasury, Keating became “undoubtedly one of best Treasurers in Australia’s history”.¹⁹⁹ Even still, Garnaut felt the need to caution Hawke against seeming “mean” by denying Keating credit for the government’s economic legacy.²⁰⁰ But Hawke was less forgiving as the narrative progressed toward his removal from office. Having alluded in *Labor in Power* to unpatriotic remarks made by Keating during a leadership argument, Hawke now openly accused the prime minister of describing Australia as “the arse-end of the world”, manually inserting the claim into the manuscript himself.²⁰¹ D’Alpuget saw the problem as essentially an emotional one: “at the time he wrote the book, he was in such bad shape actually, emotionally, from losing the prime ministership that he probably shouldn’t have written it then”.²⁰² Hawke was, she said, “a classic alpha male” for whom the trauma of losing power was hard to stomach.²⁰³ Sturgess, however, encouraged Hawke’s approach to Keating: “this is the first and, probably, last opportunity you will have to address the record of your government directly. That record is being addressed daily by Keating and his propagandists”.²⁰⁴ For Hawke in 1994, the political and the personal were truly enmeshed, and the result was a manuscript geared toward “personal score-settling” as Scalmer has put it.²⁰⁵

It was also about the primacy of prime ministerial leadership. Historian George Egerton argued in the 1980s that British prime minister Lloyd George’s *War Memoirs* “conceptualized the political process as primarily an exercise in leadership”.²⁰⁶ So too did Hawke. His account of the aforementioned 1985 tax summit a clear manifestation of this approach. Hawke described the aborted consumption tax as a “hard sell” that nobody was buying.²⁰⁷ Warming to the theme he established in *Labor in Power*, he explained his decision to axe the proposal in this way: “as Prime Minister, I not only had the right but the responsibility to exercise that judgement [...] and to give leadership”.²⁰⁸ In Hawke’s view, great leadership implied both great power and superior discernment to one’s colleagues.

¹⁹⁹ First Draft Manuscript, March 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/1.

²⁰⁰ Ross Garnaut, Letter to Bob Hawke, 2 May 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/12.

²⁰¹ First Draft Manuscript, March 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/1.

²⁰² D’Alpuget, interview, 21 February 2020.

²⁰³ D’Alpuget, interview, 21 February 2020.

²⁰⁴ Garry Sturgess, Letter to Bob Hawke, 15 March 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

²⁰⁵ Scalmer, “Rise of the Insider”, p. 97.

²⁰⁶ George Egerton, “The Lloyd George ‘War Memoirs’: A Study in the Politics of Memory”, *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 60, no. 1 (1988), p. 89.

²⁰⁷ Hawke, *Memoirs*, p. 305.

²⁰⁸ Hawke, *Memoirs*, p. 311.

By way of contrast, Richardson's book offered a very different set of narratives. Reflecting on the summit and the consumption tax proposal, the factional stalwart perceived Hawke's intervention not as an exercise in great leadership, but as simply a backroom deal: "During the summit Hawke, unknown to Keating, visited Simon Crean and Bill Kelty in their hotel to bury the consumption tax".²⁰⁹ Though he acknowledged the *realpolitik* informing Hawke's actions, Richardson's account undermined the image of noble leadership in Hawke's *Memoirs*. It was significant, for instance, that Richardson referred to Crean and Kelty's hotel room, a stereotypical "backroom" beyond the official settings of the political process. Furthermore, Richardson portrayed himself in this episode as an unseen figure with connections to both prime minister and treasurer: "Both Hawke and Keating rang me on the morning after [...] I was sympathetic to both, but it was one of those occasions where some right was on both sides".²¹⁰ Markedly different again from Hawke, Richardson's was a narrative in which policy was ultimately determined in hidden, secretive forums, with factional leaders such as himself responsible for holding the show together.

This style of historical narrative equally influenced Richardson's account of the MX Missile Crisis of 1985, in which Hawke had been forced to retract an offer to allow American missile testing in Australian waters. In this episode, Richardson adhered more closely to the wishes of his publishers by projecting himself into the centre of the narrative:

When Hawke finally called from Brussels, I was [...] sitting on the toilet; this excellent hotel had a telephone installed next to it for just such emergencies. For twenty minutes, then, I sat on the throne and accomplished two major tasks: satisfying my own immediate and urgent personal demands and those of the national interest.²¹¹

This passage offers a rich comparison with Hawke's *Memoirs*. Where Hawke saw politics as a stage on which to perform great feats of leadership and judgement, Richardson saw it as an occasionally unbecoming process involving influence, manipulation, and phone calls between faction leaders. For Hawke, politics was a grandiose endeavour; Richardson, by contrast, revelled in the cynical, the unseen, and the unpretentious, likening a bad policy to excrement demanding expulsion from his own body. This was a clever approach steeped in a long tradition of scatological comedy pioneered by Attic playwrights such as Aristophanes, and revived on

²⁰⁹ Richardson, *Whatever it Takes*, p. 181.

²¹⁰ Richardson, *Whatever it Takes*, p. 182.

²¹¹ Richardson, *Whatever it Takes*, p. 174.

the early modern Elizabethan and Jacobean stage.²¹² Like these dramatists, Richardson used humour – in this case scatology – to undercut the pomposity of politics and perform a unique combination of roles: the everyman, and the factional insider.

In his efforts to explain the significance of factional leaders like himself, Richardson directly confronted Paul Kelly's account of the Keating leadership challenge in *End of Certainty*. In response to Kelly's claim that Richardson was an equivocator trusted by nobody, the ex-minister wrote: "Paul Kelly's words have been eating away at me ever since his book was published".²¹³ He argued in reply that his attempts to urge calmness among caucus members was not due to lack of conviction, but rather to "the difficulty I was having in helping [Keating] become Prime Minister without destroying the party".²¹⁴ Asked about this feature of his book, Richardson explained: "you have to live it to really understand it, and Paul [Kelly] wouldn't have lived it, he can't have".²¹⁵ That said, he also maintained that Kelly's book was a substantial contribution to political history: "I think Kelly's book [...] changed the way we thought about politics, it changed the way people write about politics. That was a ground-breaking book".²¹⁶ Scholars such as Alan Fenna have convincingly shown that much of Kelly's analysis, far from being "ground-breaking", was developed in the 1980s by academics such as Francis Castles.²¹⁷ Though time had clearly healed much, Richardson obviously found it necessary at the time to correct Kelly's record as far as it concerned his own character and factional behaviour.

The most infamous passage of *Whatever it Takes* was the following: "to achieve that goal successfully I had to lie from time to time".²¹⁸ Taken with respect to cabinet-in-confidence, Richardson's line was perhaps unexceptional. Interrogated about this remark by journalists at the National Press Club, he calmly explained that every cabinet minister had a "duty to go out and defend" any executive decision, whether they agreed with it or not.²¹⁹ He repeated this point in an interview with me in 2020.²²⁰ However, the "lying" confession actually occurred in

²¹² For more on this, see Charles Platter, *Aristophanes and the Carnival of Genres* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007); Jeff Persels and Russell Ganim (eds.), *Fecal Matters in Early Modern Literature and Art: Studies in Sociology* (New York: Routledge, 2016 [2004]).

²¹³ Richardson, *Whatever it Takes*, p. 328.

²¹⁴ Richardson, *Whatever it Takes*, p. 328.

²¹⁵ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

²¹⁶ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

²¹⁷ Alan Fenna, "Putting the 'Australian Settlement' in Perspective", *Labour History*, no. 102 (2012), pp. 101–102.

²¹⁸ Richardson, *Whatever it Takes*, p. 328.

²¹⁹ Richardson, National Press Club, 31 October 1994. NAA: C475, 1718284.

²²⁰ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

relation to Richardson's account of his role in the Hawke–Keating leadership struggle, and therefore cannot be explained in terms of cabinet confidentiality. Instead, it pictured a politics of cynical pragmatism embodied by the NSW Labor Right faction, a form of politics that Richardson himself espoused as “rational”.²²¹ Wran reinforced that projection in his launch speech, celebrating Richardson's philosophy that “it's better to win than to lose”.²²² Ultimately, Richardson knew that the popular press would make much of this line, and of his character for writing it: “you're going to have critics, and their job is to criticise, so you've got to have a thick skin”.²²³ Again, this cynical historiographical image must be considered in part a product of the author's worldview, and in part a product of the publisher's quest for public impact. They were not to be disappointed.

For Now and Forever

The Hawke Memoirs and *Whatever it Takes* were both public performances, and they had short-term and long-term effects on political discourse. Much corporate attention was given to the promotional efforts for Hawke's book. The publishers circulated advance copies to journalists in the months before the book's official publication. As well as tilling the soil for controversy, the move was designed to entice press stables to buy “serialisation rights and television coverage”.²²⁴ Marketing strategist Rod Howard and his team produced and revised a promotional itinerary multiple times between mid-May and early August 1994 in an attempt to maximise Hawke's and their product's exposure.²²⁵ Throughout July, preparations were undertaken for the headline events of the August book tour, including a launch at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) in Sydney, an address to the National Press Club in Canberra, and an invitation-only dinner in Melbourne. A few well-known personalities declined or were unable to attend.²²⁶ A tantalising television advertisement was shot and aired, though Hawke rejected the first script.²²⁷ By August, Reed Books had committed extensive resources to the marketing campaign for *The Hawke Memoirs*.

²²¹ Wilcox, “Richardson, Graham Frederick (1949 -)”.

²²² Wran, National Press Club, 31 October 1994. NAA: C475, 1718284.

²²³ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

²²⁴ Office of the Hon. R. J. L. Hawke, Press Statement, 24 June 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

²²⁵ Reed Books, Interim Publicity Tour Outline, 26 May 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16; Meeting Agenda, 26 July 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

²²⁶ These personalities included but were not limited to former Secretary of the Department Prime Minister and Cabinet Sir Geoffrey Yeend, then-Secretary of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Michael Costello, Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Lois O'Donoghue, renowned businessman Richard Pratt, fellow memoirist John Button, former colleagues Simon Crean and Robert Ray, and popular Australian singer John Farnham.

²²⁷ Draft Television Advertisement Scripts, June 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

The media arguably attracted more public attention to *The Hawke Memoirs* by fashioning it into a news spectacle. In June, Hawke's "arse-end of the world" claim about Keating appeared in headlines. Keating responded by describing the assertion as "'deeply offensive and defamatory'" (though to the mirth of his opponents, he refused to take Hawke to court),²²⁸ and the disagreement featured in nightly news headlines for several days.²²⁹ Further controversy came with Hawke's allegation that Keating had not supported Australia's involvement in the Gulf War. Keating rejected the claim outright.²³⁰ On 24 June, having been called a liar by the prime minister, Hawke said that he was "prepared to take a lie-detector test", and that he refused to comment further on the book until its publication.²³¹ Hoping to take the colourful drama further, Clay Hitchens of the Seven Network wrote to Hawke's office to ask, "Would you be willing to undergo the test for a television story on this dispute between yourself and Mr Keating?"²³² The controversy was only just contained when Button, the other sceptic in Hawke's account, publicly claimed ownership of the Monty-Python-influenced quip.²³³ White, who had drafted that chapter but remained employed with the Department of Defence, grew anxious about his position: "I was actually very lucky and very generously treated by all sides [...] because I dropped Hawkie in it and dropped Keating in it and it was a bad fuck-up".²³⁴ Though painful for Keating and the Labor government, the media attention proved excellent for Reed Books and WHA. Adler used the controversy to reaffirm that Hawke's book would be "the most important and exciting Australian publishing event for many years."²³⁵

The Labor Party helped to publicise the book too, if not exactly in the manner some had anticipated. In early 1994 state secretaries expected that party members would be "a large section of the book's potential market".²³⁶ The leaked extracts of Hawke's allegations against the prime minister put paid to that. Further anger developed when journalists reported that Hawke had been "caught red-handed boasting to a political opponent", in this instance his

²²⁸ Paul Keating quoted in "Australia's Keating Accuses Hawke of Vilification", *Reuters*, 24 June 1994.

²²⁹ Peter Gill, "Keating Denies 'Arse-End' Remark", *Australian Financial Review*, 24 June 1994, p. 5.

²³⁰ Tony Wright, "PM Right on Gulf, Says Button", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 October 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

²³¹ Office of the Hon. R. J. L. Hawke, Press Statement, 24 June 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

²³² Clay Hitchens, Facsimile to Bob Hawke, 24 June 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

²³³ Geoff Kitney, "Button Gives Keating Another Sweet Victory", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 October 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

²³⁴ White, interview, 19 November 2019.

²³⁵ Reed Books, Press Release, 24 June 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

²³⁶ Gary Gray, Letter to Bob Hawke, 28 April 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

predecessor Malcolm Fraser, that the memoirs “would damage Paul Keating”.²³⁷ Serialised extracts in the *Australian*, sporting titles such as “Keating Closes In” and “End of a Friendship”, added to the political drama ensnaring the book and generated further partisan anguish.²³⁸ Labor Party president Barry Jones dismissed the “psychodrama” of it all, but reporters confirmed that he had phoned Hawke to express his frustrations directly.²³⁹ Queensland MP and powerbroker Wayne Swan pointed out on national radio that “making profit out of a party blue is not something that goes down too well in the Labor Party”.²⁴⁰ Whitlam irreverently described Hawke’s book as “piss and tell”.²⁴¹ Trade unionist and former national executive member Ted Gnatenco urged Hawke’s expulsion from the party.²⁴² Ministers of all factions condemned the bad press Hawke was generating.²⁴³ As Hawke’s version of history became public, figures such as Keating and Lange criticised his lack of “courage” and his tendency to disguise “somersaults” as “triumphs”.²⁴⁴ By the time of the launch, Hawke was plumbing the depths of his popularity inside the Australasian labour movement, celebrity having prevailed over solidarity.

Book reviewers saw many of the man’s vices and none of his virtues in *The Hawke Memoirs*. Perhaps 75 per cent of the major newspaper coverage in Australia and in the United Kingdom ran with critical headlines. Grattan concluded that too much of Hawke’s narrative was dedicated to “portraying Paul [Keating] as a bastard.”²⁴⁵ In the *Canberra Times*, political psychologist Graham Little (who had been an influence on d’Alpuget’s earlier biography of Hawke) condemned the “little analysis” and the “press clippings” that he felt comprised much of the book.²⁴⁶ In an interview, a reviewer asked Hawke if it really was acceptable for a “dinky-

²³⁷ Malcolm Fraser and Paul Bongiorno quoted in Title No. 267145, “Bob Hawke Offers to Take Lie Detector Test Over Claims that Keating Once Labelled Australia the Arse End of the Earth”, 20 June 1994, New 10, Perth, National Film and Sound Archive (hereafter NFSA).

²³⁸ “The Hawke Memoirs”, *Weekend Australian*, 13 August 1994; “The Light on Coronation Hill”, *Australian*, 14 August 1994; “Keating Closes In”, *Australian*, 15 August 1994; “End of a Friendship”, *Australian*, 16 August 1994.

²³⁹ Barry Jones quoted in Title No. 1090856, “Hawke PM”, June 1994, Network Ten Parliament House News, Canberra, NFSA.

²⁴⁰ Wayne Swan quoted in Title No. 267145, “Bob Hawke Offers to Take Lie Detector Test Over Claims that Keating Once Labelled Australia the Arse End of the Earth”, 20 June 1994, New 10, Perth, NFSA.

²⁴¹ Don Greenlees, “Bob Offered Gough Daily Economics Tutorials”, *Australian*, 15 August 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/10.

²⁴² Ted Gnatenco quoted in Title No. 267237, “Call for Bob Hawke to be Expelled from the Labor Party for his Damaging Row with Paul Keating”, 20 June 1994, New 10, Perth, NFSA.

²⁴³ “Labor Moves to Limit the Damage”, *Australian*, 16 August 1994.

²⁴⁴ Paul Keating quoted in Title No. 1091563, “Hawke Book”, June 1994, Network Ten Parliament House News, Canberra, NFSA; David Lange quoted in Title No. 1088835, “Hawke/Book/Keating”, August 1994, Network Ten Parliament House News, Canberra, NFSA.

²⁴⁵ Michelle Grattan, “Bob Hawke: No Warts and All”, *Canberra Times*, 17 August 1994, p. 13.

²⁴⁶ Graham Little, “Hawke Book Hard to Enjoy Even When True”, *Canberra Times*, 20 August 1994, p. 14.

di bloke” to “bang his own drum” as the book did, to which Hawke replied: “where there’s something to be genuinely modest about, then you should be modest; but if you’ve got things done then you should be proud of it”.²⁴⁷ Personally, Hawke felt that the British press were better to deal with because “they had read the book and wanted to talk about it as a whole”.²⁴⁸ The view from the pages of the London press was in fact mixed. The *Economist* deemed the *Memoirs* “not worthy of the Hawke era.”²⁴⁹ The *Independent* called these memoirs “the most vituperative in political history”, a judgement that now seems premature.²⁵⁰ More than just the book, it was Hawke’s personal respectability that was at stake in these reviews and judged to be wanting.

The launch events for *The Hawke Memoirs* reaffirmed that, for the publishing industry in particular, there is almost no such thing as bad publicity.²⁵¹ Former governor-general Sir Ninian Stephen “eloquently” launched the book at the MCA on 16 August 1994, in a speech that Hawke felt was marked by its “kindness” (Hawke “really loved Nini”, d’Alpuget recalled).²⁵² The launcher and the venue were conspicuously non-partisan. Sturgess recalled the upbeat ambience of the environment inside the venue: “It was just one of those really [...] feel-good sort of occasions on a beautiful sparkling Sydney day”.²⁵³ Hawke became visibly emotional as he spoke of the “unbelievable opportunities” his beloved country had given him.²⁵⁴ But when the former prime minister confronted journalists outside, deriding them as “sensationalists” (and “pretty bloody hopeless” ones at that), Laurie Oakes reported that “the tears soon turned to snarls”.²⁵⁵ The inference was that Hawke’s tears, driven by self-pity unlike his earlier public breakdowns, were hypocritical and unacceptable.²⁵⁶ At the National Press Club in Canberra the next day, Hawke emotionally hectorated the media over their critical

²⁴⁷ Hawke quoted in Sebastian Faulks, “Unexpurgated Bloklore”, *Guardian*, 3 September 1994, p. 25.

²⁴⁸ Bob Hawke, Letter to Sir Ninian Stephen, 21 September 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

²⁴⁹ “Keating’s Patron – The Hawke Memoirs”, *Economist*, 20 August 1994, p. 70.

²⁵⁰ Mark Lawson, “When Hawke Lets Fly”, *Independent*, 3 September 1994.

²⁵¹ See Graeme Turner, Frances Bonner and P. David Marshall, *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 105.

²⁵² Bob Hawke, Letter to Sir Ninian Stephen, 21 September 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16; d’Alpuget, interview with the author, 21 February 2020.

²⁵³ Sturgess, interview, 7 February 2020.

²⁵⁴ Bob Hawke quoted in Title No. 254213, “Bob Hawke Launches his Controversial Memoirs”, 16 August 1994, TVT 6, Hobart, NFSA.

²⁵⁵ Bob Hawke quoted in Title No. 1635330, “Hawke Book”, 16 August 1994, Capital 7, Canberra, News Master, NFSA; Laurie Oakes quoted in Title No. 254213, “Bob Hawke Launches his Controversial Memoirs”, 16 August 1994, TVT 6, Hobart, NFSA.

²⁵⁶ For more on this see Karen Downing, Weeping Politicians: The Power and Contingency of Men’s Tears, Australian Historical Association Conference, 5 July 2018, p. 7.

coverage, arguing that his anti-Keating narratives were only a “small part” of his story.²⁵⁷ Accused of improperly revealing private arguments with Keating, Hawke argued that Kelly’s book had in fact already reproduced accounts of the very same conversations from Keating’s perspective: “that was a perfectly fair and proper thing to do [...]. But when the other bloke is writing the record, and wants to put down what happened [...]. How improper!” The rage that he felt toward the journalists, along with the “precious self-appointed guardians of proper behaviour in the Labor Party”, was visceral.²⁵⁸ The controversy ensured “brisk sales”, though one reporter noted that Bookworld retailers were offering a complementary classical music CD to help shift stock.²⁵⁹ The highly personalised antagonism between Hawke and Keating had become, in the guise of the *Memoirs*, a sensational and saleable drama.

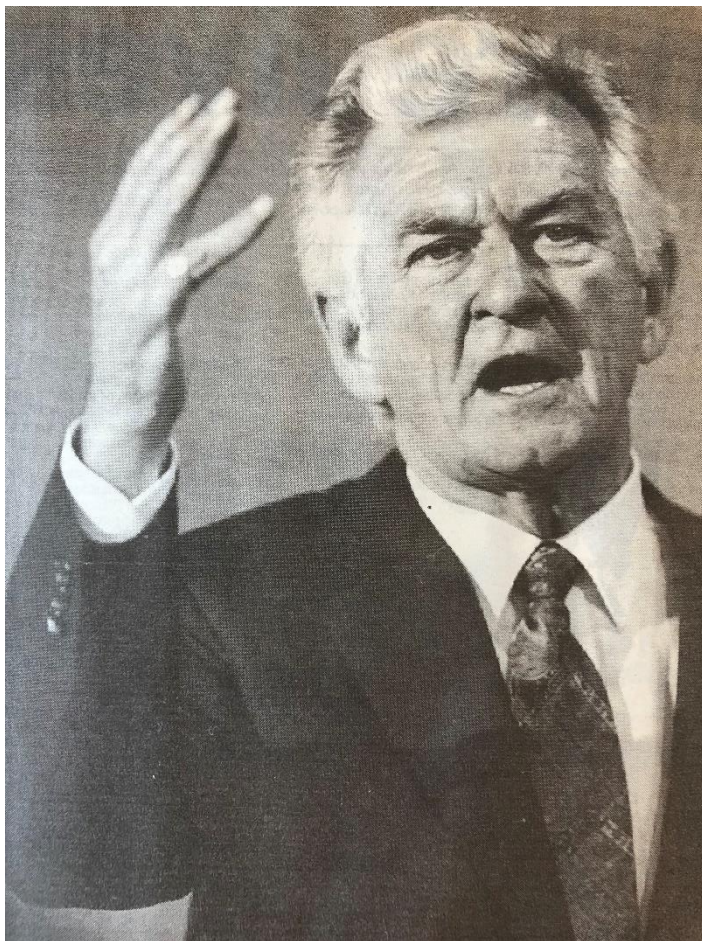


Figure 3: Bob Hawke defends *The Hawke Memoirs* at the National Press Club, 17 August 1994. BHPML, RH45/17.

Confronted with antagonism, Hawke positioned his book as a contribution to History, an account for posterity that would outlast the short-term news cycle. Repudiating any suggestion that he ought to have adapted his account in light of Labor’s 1993 victory, he argued, “Once the election result was there, I still had the obligation to relate events as they occurred”.²⁶⁰ Mocking partisans’ attempts to protect Keating, he spoke of “the theory of incumbency ... the incumbent, god bless him, and hopefully one day in the future, her, they have got all the rights but no one else”.²⁶¹ Hawke reminded audiences that in 1983,

²⁵⁷ Bob Hawke, Speech at the Launch of *The Hawke Memoirs*, National Press Club, Canberra, 17 August 1994. NAA: C475, 1718262.

²⁵⁸ Hawke, National Press Club, 17 August 1994. NAA: C475, 1718262.

²⁵⁹ Title No. 1088835, “Hawke/Book/Keating”, August 1994, Network Ten Parliament House News, Canberra, NFS.

²⁶⁰ Hawke, National Press Club, 17 August 1994. NAA: C475, 1718262.

²⁶¹ Hawke, National Press Club, 17 August 1994. NAA: C475, 1718262.

Australia had been “a country riven within itself”.²⁶² It was thanks to his government and its remarkable reforms that Australia was “now a more cohesive, competitive, equitable, better trained country than it was”.²⁶³ His responsibility as a former prime minister, therefore, was to tell that grand story of personal and collective achievement for posterity: “It’s not just for today or tomorrow” he advised, “it’s for all time”.²⁶⁴ Hawke’s book, with its leader-centric conceptions of politics, was intended to survive the visceral reactions of the news cycle and shape future historiography about the reinvention of Australia in the 1980s. In the long run, it undoubtedly did so. There would be films and documentaries about this larrikin leader, and the *Memoirs* were a crucial point of reference for each of them. But the short-term scandal had to be endured first.

What did the public make of all this in 1994? First, as I have noted elsewhere, “the 1990s saw the nadir of Hawke’s public standing”.²⁶⁵ The public response to Hawke’s book must be seen in that context. Remarkably, Newspoll bequeathed to historians an astonishing set of public opinion data on this subject. The very fact of this data’s existence reflects the extent to which the book was the subject of public controversy. The pollster asked a sample of the public two questions: (1) “Do you personally approve or disapprove of Mr Hawke publishing his memoirs?”; and (2) “Do you personally approve or disapprove of what Mr Hawke has included in the book?”²⁶⁶ The answers revealed a nuanced approach from the respondents; a clear majority approved of Hawke’s decision to write and publish his account, but 37 per cent – a solid minority – disapproved of the stories he was telling. Clearly, it was not the genre itself that respondents objected to; it was Hawke’s particular approach. Disapproval of the book’s content was strongest among those aged 35 or above, and among women, who seemingly rejected the masculine aggression of Hawke’s recent performances. Of course, critical commentary hardly precluded commercial rigour, and the book sold over 75,000 copies in two years, prompting a paperback reprint and a Chinese translation.²⁶⁷

Above all else, it was Hawke’s emotions that seemed to be on trial. Letters to metropolitan newspapers described Hawke’s book as “sour grapes” and “overrated”, its author

²⁶² Bob Hawke, Speech at the Launch of *The Hawke Memoirs*, Museum of Contemporary Arts, Sydney, 16 August 1994, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

²⁶³ Hawke, National Press Club, 17 August 1994. NAA: C475, 1718262.

²⁶⁴ Hawke, National Press Club, 17 August 1994. NAA: C475, 1718262.

²⁶⁵ Joshua Black, “A Life Triumphantly Well Written: Producing the Hawke Legacy, 1979—2019”, *ANUHI II*, no. 2 (2020), p. 89.

²⁶⁶ Newspoll survey conducted 19–21 August 1994, accessed 4 July 2019, <https://bit.ly/33e2e4E> (site discontinued).

²⁶⁷ Royalty Statement, March 1996 to September 1996, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/16.

a “sore loser”.²⁶⁸ Comedian Andrew Denton lampooned Hawke as a “messiah” whose memoir constituted a Biblical “second coming”.²⁶⁹ Using elaborate mise-en-scène and rudimentary computer graphics, Denton explored the interior of Hawke’s brain, composed of a “thick skull”, an entry fee of five dollars (“doesn’t the man do anything for free?”), the “famous Hawke tear ducts” with an on-off tap, a “bottomless pit of bile”, a group of “children living in poverty” (hidden under a rug) and, locked away in a cage, a dreadful and hairy monster embodying his ego.²⁷⁰ The satirical skit, which ran to several minutes, ended with a blank screen displaying a new word to be added to the Australian dictionary, “Hawke-ing: to cough up phlegm, bile, sputum and bad blood, and then publish it”.²⁷¹ But even without sets and props, the critics could be visceral. Carlyon did not mince words when he called the *Memoirs* “a handy text for psychiatry students studying narcissistic personality disorder”.²⁷² Audiences had expected an emotional book from an emotional man, but evidently, they expected them to be regulated and styled in a more compelling way.

In stark contrast to Hawke’s appearance at the Press Club, Sydney “mates” Wran and Richardson stood on 31 October to address a gathering that included of journalists, notable public figures, and senior Labor parliamentarians. In Richardson’s words, “[i]t was attended by the great and the powerful”.²⁷³ None of this, of course, was spontaneous, with Wran having been chosen by Richardson and secured by Transworld CEO Geoff Rumpf months prior to the launch.²⁷⁴ “I thought the event was amazing”, Curr later recalled. “The book



Figure 4: Gary Punch, Robert Ray, Leo McLeay, John Della Bosca and Kim Beazley photographed laughing during Graham Richardson's book launch, 31 October 1994. Trove, Mike Bowers.

²⁶⁸ Corey Humphreys, Jan Hales quoted in “Mixed Views on Hawke Memoirs”, *Times*, 19 August 1994, p. 85.

²⁶⁹ Channel 7 – Andrew Denton, *Inside Hawke’s Brain*, 16 August 1994. NAA: M3983, 1115246.

²⁷⁰ Channel 7 – Andrew Denton, *Inside Hawke’s Brain*, 16 August 1994. NAA: M3983, 1115246. The “children living in poverty” allusion refers to Hawke’s famous promise, uttered in his 1987 election speech, that “by 1990, no Australian child [would] be living in poverty”. Deteriorating economic conditions and the onset of recession ensured that Hawke would fail to deliver that promise. The pledge became, in Troy Bramston’s words, “an albatross”. Bramston, *Bob Hawke*, p. 388.

²⁷¹ Channel 7 – Andrew Denton, *Inside Hawke’s Brain*, 16 August 1994. NAA: M3983, 1115246.

²⁷² Carlyon, “Bob Hawke: The Love of His Life”, 5 March 1995, in *A Life in Words*, p. 133.

²⁷³ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

²⁷⁴ Geoff Rumpf, Letter to Neville Wran, 27 September 1994, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 176.

became national news, everybody was talking about it”.²⁷⁵

Side by side, the recordings of the two events make plain the real-world implications and risks of this kind of political performance. Hawke, having exposed the Labor government to new electoral and media-cycle risks, was greeted by scandal and a party boycott. Richardson was received warmly by former colleagues, who gathered to purchase his book and listen to his speech.²⁷⁶ Wran wryly remarked that the Labor MPs “almost missed their lunch”, so preoccupied were they with thumbing the index of Richardson’s book.²⁷⁷ Those Labor figures who did attend – Kim Beazley, Robert Ray, Leo McLeay and NSW general secretary John Della Bosca prominent among them – chortled to themselves throughout the proceedings. Throughout Richardson’s brief speech, which canvassed his reasons for writing the book and his approach to its narrative, the assembled media readily joined in the laughter, both with and at the author. Photographs of the launch in the *Canberra Times* pictured the event as a festival of factionalism, a celebration of the NSW Right and its major players, albeit under a headline that read, “Lies, Damned Lies ... and Richo”.²⁷⁸

Like Hawke, Richardson went on a high-profile publicity tour. The itinerary took him to every capital city and many regional hubs such as Cairns, Townsville, Launceston, Wollongong and Newcastle.²⁷⁹ Richardson recalled: “I went all over the place, every state, and often regional areas in states, you know, it was a big tour, and I think we sold 34,000 in hardcover, which was pretty good”.²⁸⁰ It was not all smooth sailing. As Ken Inglis noted, the ABC was forced to abandon its proposed “series of literary lunches” at its centres to help the former minister sell *Whatever it Takes*, so sharp was the charge of impropriety against the public broadcaster.²⁸¹ Nor were the headline interviews a breeze in all cases. Richardson recalled an interview for *60 Minutes*: “Richard Carleton interviewed me, and of course, he went straight to the ‘lying’ bit, which is annoying”.²⁸² Carleton’s line of criticism was echoed in most of the media analysis, and dominated the questions that Richardson faced at the press club; writing in the *Canberra Times*, Ross Peake described Richardson as “a self-confessed liar turned author

²⁷⁵ Curr, email correspondence, 4 November 2020.

²⁷⁶ Many colleagues from the National Right of the Labor Party are captured laughing and smiling in footage of the event: NAA: C475/1718224.

²⁷⁷ Wran, National Press Club. NAA: C475/1718224.

²⁷⁸ Ross Peake, “Lies, Damned Lies ... and Richo”, *Canberra Times*, 1 November 1994, p. 3.

²⁷⁹ Media Tour, *Whatever it Takes*, 23 September 1994, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 176.

²⁸⁰ Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

²⁸¹ Inglis, *Whose ABC?*, p. 322.

²⁸² Richardson, interview, 14 February 2020.

and media commentator”.²⁸³ Though no less cynical, Grattan described the book as “bright, breezy, frank, entertaining and, even to those hardened by seeing a lot of political atrocities, a little shocking”.²⁸⁴ All of this was welcomed by the publishers, who sold more a further 9,500 copies after the initial print run was exhausted.²⁸⁵

As Scalmer has rightly noted, Richardson’s book reflected back to the Australian polity a model of politics that was “overwhelmingly pragmatic, self-interested, and competitive”.²⁸⁶ The book’s title, as well as its factionalised and cynical conceptions of the political process, came to dominate the author’s personal reputation. As d’Alpuget put it, “that title stuck to him like mud.”²⁸⁷ *Whatever it Takes* became, in Stuart Macintyre’s terms, a “byword for unscrupulous politics”.²⁸⁸ In 2019, almost 25 years after the book was published, commentators were still using the term, in this instance to describe a scandal involving an illegal foreign donation of \$100,000 given to a successor of Richardson as general secretary of the NSW Labor Party in an Aldi shopping bag.²⁸⁹ Party figures such as Rudd–Gillard staffer Sean Kelly described Richardson’s book title as “the unofficial motto of the powerful right-wing of the party”, and said that the book had made a cynical and semi-criminal culture “inevitable”.²⁹⁰ Richardson rejected that critique, noting that his book “never urged an illegal act”, which is true.²⁹¹ Nonetheless, the many subsequent references to his book title indicate that *Whatever it Takes* has had long-run effects on popular conceptions of the political process, and likely helped occasion the decline of political trust in Australia.

Conclusion

In 1994 Australia’s tradition of political memoir fundamentally changed. Never had there been so many politicians’ memoirs available on the shelves of book retailers, nor had so many politicians at once been clamouring for the eye of a popular readership with whom to share their version of history. Contemporaries were conscious that a new paradigm, a publishing

²⁸³ Ross Peake, “Lies, Damned Lies ... and Richo”, *Canberra Times*, 1 November 1994, p. 3.

²⁸⁴ Michelle Grattan, “Richo Lets it All Hang Out”, *Canberra Times*, 5 November 1994, p. 54.

²⁸⁵ Statement of Royalties and Fees, 6 April 1996, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 176.

²⁸⁶ Scalmer, “Rise of the Insider”, p. 101.

²⁸⁷ D’Alpuget, interview, 21 February 2020.

²⁸⁸ Stuart Macintyre, “‘A Parcel o’ Rogues in a Nation’: Australian Attitudes to Politics and Politicians”, The 2002 Reid Oration, University of Western Australia, 16 October 2002, <https://bit.ly/3KjLOzG>, accessed 6 June 2022.

²⁸⁹ Michael McGowan and Christopher Knaus, “‘Red Hot Angry’: The Fallout From Yet Another NSW Labor Scandal at ICAC”, *Guardian*, 31 August 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/aug/31/red-hot-angry-the-fallout-from-yet-another-nsw-labor-scandal-at-icac>, accessed 10 May 2020.

²⁹⁰ Sean Kelly, “It Was Only Every Going to End One Way: How Richo Sealed NSW ALP’s Fate”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 September 2019.

²⁹¹ Samantha Maiden, “‘Whatever it Takes Never Urged an Illegal Act’: Richardson Bags Claims of Toxic Influence”, *New Daily*, 2 September 2019, <https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/national/2019/09/02alp-graham-richardson-icac/>, accessed 2 September 2019.

phenomenon, had commenced. Labor's rush of memoirs seemed "a breaching of the dam wall", the first in a slew of books that would "bombard the Australian literary scene".²⁹² Cynics complained of "chequebook publishing", though such accusations caused their chief target, WHA's Louise Adler, little concern.²⁹³ Even if we accept John Rickard's assessment that Parkes' *Fifty Years in the Making* (1892) and *The Hawke Memoirs* were of a piece as far as "self-justifying" tendencies are concerned, the cultural and market differences between them could not have been starker.²⁹⁴ For better or worse, the political memoir boom was in motion.

Hawke and Richardson ushered in this new paradigm of political life writing, and their books depicted the vocation of politics very differently. For the former, politics was a stage on which great leadership could be performed; for the latter, politics was the art of *realpolitik*, factional oversight and clever conspiratorial manoeuvres. Competing with one another and with journalistic accounts of their period in office, Hawke and Richardson projected their versions of history into the pages of their books, and by way of the mainstream media, into the national theatre of power. As I will show in the following chapter, the memoir contest between Hawke and Richardson was barely the beginning of Labor's literary retrospection in the 1990s and 2000s.

Commercial forces helped to make Hawke's and Richardson's memoirs matter in the public sphere, but the onset of the boom should not be understood solely as a commercial event. In fact, Hawke's contract provided for a second book. It was to be a compendium of his favourite horse-racing stories. Significant research had already been conducted in his name. The book could have been lucrative. It never materialised. Politicians' publications, then, required investments additional to the basic requirements of capitalist publishing; they required psychological and emotional investments as well. When we examine political memoirs and autobiographies through the prism of cultural performativity, we see more clearly each of those forces – emotional commitments and traumas, publishing industry imperatives, and the importance of collaborators and accomplices – that made them possible. In their literary efforts, Hawke and Richardson were not only assisted, but rather propelled and occasionally directed by their publishers, assistants, editors and critics. As the work of political celebrities, Hawke's and Richardson's books made waves, and even if they were only "briefly notorious", they

²⁹² Gerard Noonan, "The Flood of Political Memoirs", *Canberra Times*, 10 November 1994, p. 13; Fiona Harari, "Political Has-Beens Brought to Book", *Australian*, 28 June 1994.

²⁹³ Elisabeth Wynhausen, "The New Publishing Firebrand", *Sun-Herald*, 30 August 1992, p. 42.

²⁹⁴ John Rickard, "Autobiography", in Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart Macintyre (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 54.

remain substantial productions that espouse two very different conceptions of politics in Australia. Each has exercised a longer-term influence on how politics is understood, performed and practised in its Australian setting.

SNAPSHOT 2

An Archaeology of Feeling

Oral histories played an important role in helping me to understand the causes and the effects of Australia's political memoir boom. But the problems of autobiographical knowledge are also the problems of oral history. Both are conditional on the vividness of memory and the circumstances of its recall. Both have the potential to obscure earlier meanings, and both can generate nostalgia.

Oral history and autobiography are governed by the present as much as the past. Paul Thompson suggested that oral history amplifies “the voice of the past”, but John Tosh's rejoinder was that it “is inescapably the voice of the present too”.¹ Janet McCalman has articulated this problem with particular clarity:

All history is the history of the present, as each generation rewrites history in terms of its current values and preoccupations. And so it is with private oral history. We all construct inside our head an autobiography [...]. And that is the problem; for, in the formation of a personal history that is tolerable to the ego, the line between careful truth and personal myth is easily fudged.²

Scripting, rehearsal and performance of autobiographical narratives can fashion a highly complex and ambiguous memory into a simple reflection on a better time. Even the Great Depression and all of its accompanying hardship could become the subject of nostalgia in oral history interviews.³

There was much nostalgic discourse in the oral histories that I conducted with ministers from the Hawke and Keating governments. By the 2010s, conventional wisdom contended that these administrations had been driven by peculiarly “grand objectives” and achieved “remarkable success”.⁴ Even senior ministers, who had been intimately familiar with the trials, tribulations and failures of the 1980s and 1990s, had imbibed this narrative over time. I asked several former ministers why they and so many of their colleagues had published political memoirs and diaries. They spoke of “interesting characters” in cabinet running an

¹ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of History* (London: Routledge, 2015 [1984]), p. 270; Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000 [1978]).

² Janet McCalman, *Struggletown: Public and Private Life in Richmond 1900–1965* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1984), p. 182.

³ For more on this see David Potts, *The Myth of the Great Depression* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2006).

⁴ James Walter and Carolyn Holbrook, “Policy Narratives in Historical Transition: A Case Study in Contemporary History”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 49, no. 2 (2018), p. 234.

“exceptional” and “economically astute” administration.⁵ There was much proud talk about the “collective enterprise” of reform.⁶

That the Hawke and Keating governments had been highly consequential in the sweep of Australian history is surely beyond contention. That these administrations prosecuted the case for important economic and social reforms is also surely not in doubt. However, when we look beneath the public nostalgia and suspend popular imaginings of the larrikin Hawke and the mesmerising brawler Keating, there are far more ambiguous recollections to be derived. And while all of the former ministers were confident in our interviews about their government’s place in history, they had been more ambivalent when they sat down to write their memoirs years or decades earlier, as the following chapter will demonstrate.

Personal circumstances and present preoccupations shaped the content of my oral history interviews in sometimes surprising ways. In August 2020, I interviewed former minister for science Barry Jones on the subject of his 2006 autobiography *A Thinking Reed* for well over an hour via zoom. Jones is a remarkable Australian personality and polymath. Trained as a teacher, he rose to public prominence in the 1960s as a quiz champion on popular television program *Pick a Box*. A passionate campaigner against capital punishment, he worked closely with friend and broadcaster Phillip Adams in the 1970s on the development of the Australian culture and arts sector, before serving in Victorian and federal politics, and eventually publishing the bestselling book *Sleepers, Wake!: Technology and the Future of Work* (1982). Serving for seven years as minister for science under prime minister Bob Hawke, Jones was later twice selected as president of the Australian Labor Party and became a fellow of four Australian learned academies. Born in 1932, he remains an active citizen to this day. Moreover, his autobiography was among the more self-reflective of Australian politicians’ writings, opening with a promise to “explain my life to myself”.⁷ Mark McKenna has made the compelling point that such a statement marks Jones out as unique among Australian political memoirists.⁸

At the time of our interview, Jones was in the throes of finalising another book entitled *What is to be Done* (an allusion to Lenin, but without the interrogative). Beginning as a treatise

⁵ Roslyn Kelly, interview with the author, Mittagong, 10 September 2020; Susan Ryan, zoom interview with the author, 14 September 2020; John Kerin, phone interview with the author, 2 September 2020.

⁶ Gareth Evans, zoom interview with the author, 17 June 2020.

⁷ Barry Jones, *A Thinking Reed* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2006), p. 1.

⁸ Mark McKenna, “‘The Character Business’: Biographical Political Writing in Australia”, in Stuart Macintyre, Lenore Layman and Jenny Gregory (eds.), *A Historian for All Seasons: Essays for Geoffrey Bolton* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2017), p. 57.

on climate policy, the manuscript swelled and Jones reimagined the book as a discussion of “the massive global issues”, scientific and political, that had unfolded since *Sleepers, Wake*.⁹ These were very big preoccupations indeed.

Themes and issues from *What is to be Done* permeated our conversation. For example, in *A Thinking Reed*, published near the end of the Howard era and during a period of turbulence in Labor Party affairs, Jones had written about the party in distinctly jaded terms. I wanted to know about the feelings that had motivated him to write in that fashion in 2006. “Look”, he replied when I asked him about this, “this is one of the central issues in *What is to be Done*”.¹⁰ He proceeded to tell a highly analytical story about the contemporary challenges besetting the two major parties, which did not necessarily address the historical and emotive question I had asked. The problem seemed twofold. The political squalor of the recent past had clearly generated nostalgia for the Hawke—Keating years. “I had a very fraught relationship with Hawke, but I did admire him”, Jones told me. “There’s no doubt he had exceptional capacity. I admire the way in which he approached problem solving”.¹¹ But more than that, he seemed so energised by present problems that the feelings of the past were cognitively remote. “I’ve been thinking about it a lot because of the new book”, he would say.¹²

What I have tried to do with these interviews, and with the chapter that follows, is to conduct an archaeology, not of knowledge as Michel Foucault famously put it, but of feeling.¹³ This necessitated my complicating the nostalgia that pervaded many of the interviews I undertook. With Jones, this required a certain degree of bluntness. “[T]o what extent”, I ventured with him, “is the story of your ministerial life in *A Thinking Reed* a story of frustration rather than success?”¹⁴ There was a pause, followed by a considered and reflective reply: “Oh, absolutely, absolutely, yes. [...] I did feel when I actually produced [the autobiography], I thought that I understood more accurately where I’d been going, what I wanted to do, what I really stood for, and where I’d failed!”¹⁵ Katie Holmes has argued that in order to understand the *historical emotions* of an oral history interview, we need to consider “the embodied manifestation” of emotionality as evident in “tone of voice, eye contact, and the pace of

⁹ Barry Jones, *What is to be Done: Political Engagement and Saving the Planet* (Brunswick: Scribe, 2020), p. xi.

¹⁰ Barry Jones, zoom interview with the author, 26 August 2020.

¹¹ Jones, zoom interview, 26 August 2020.

¹² Jones, zoom interview, 26 August 2020.

¹³ See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 2002 [1969]).

¹⁴ Jones, zoom interview, 26 August 2020.

¹⁵ Jones, zoom interview, 26 August 2020.

narration” among other things.¹⁶ As he spoke about failure, Jones’ verbal pace slowed, the reflective pauses grew longer, and although we were in separate cities, I thought I could feel the emotional weight of the past bearing more heavily on the conversation. In the following chapter, I attempt to do this kind of emotional archaeology on a wider scale, treating all of Labor’s ministerial memoirists collectively and interrogating their feelings on the Hawke—Keating era as they stood in its immediate aftermath, rather than in the glow of nostalgia.

¹⁶ Katie Holmes, “Does It Matter If She Cried? Recording Emotion and the Australian Generations Oral History Project”, *Oral History Review*, vol. 44, no. 1 (2017), p. 75.

CHAPTER 2

A GOLDEN AGE?

Narratives of Change, Reform and Failure in Hawke–Keating Ministerial Autobiographies

In the 1990s, many people wanted Susan Ryan to write her autobiography. A former minister for education (1983–87), hers had been a life shaped by working-class Catholicism, feminist activism and social democratic advocacy in an era of “economic rationalism”.¹ John Iremonger, a Labor personality and publisher, encouraged Ryan to write that story. Angelo Loukakis, novelist and publisher at HarperCollins, did likewise. According to Ryan, “senior women in the women’s movement” were also prominent among the urgers. “[I]t’s not just your story”, they told her, “it’s our story”.² Edna Ryan (no relation), a prominent 1970s feminist activist and equal pay advocate, urged the former senator to write, and it was Edna’s pleas that spurred action: “it was clear that [Edna Ryan] wasn’t going to live very much longer, and she said, ‘Look, I want you to do this book.’ I said, ‘Alright, I will’”.³ Susan Ryan went on to publish *Catching the Waves* with Loukakis and HarperCollins in 1999 to a small but warm reception.

Ryan was part of a large cohort of former Hawke and Keating government ministers who decided to produce an autobiography, memoir or diary about their working lives. Following the 1994 explosion, in which former prime minister Bob Hawke and factional warrior Graham Richardson figured largely, many of their peers joined the rush to record their impressions of the reform project of the 1980s and 1990s.⁴ Quantitatively, this phenomenon is striking: of the

¹ See Michael Pusey, *Economic Rationalism in Canberra: A Nation-Building State Changes its Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

² Susan Ryan, zoom interview with the author, 14 September 2020.

³ Ryan, zoom interview, 14 September 2020.

⁴ The publications studied in this chapter are: Tom Uren, *Straight Left* (Sydney: Vintage, 1995 [1994]); John Button, *Flying the Kite: Travels of an Australian Politicians* (Milsons Point: Random House Australia, 1994); John Button, *On the Loose* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1996); John Button, *As it Happened* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1998); Peter Walsh, *Confessions of a Failed Finance Minister* (Milsons Point: Random House, 1995); Margaret Reynolds, *The Last Bastion: Labor Women Working Towards Equality in the Parliaments of Australia* (Chatswood: Business and Professional Publishing, 1995); Margaret Reynolds, *Living Politics* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2007); Bill Hayden, *Hayden: An Autobiography* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 1996); Susan Ryan, *Catching the Waves: Life in and Out of Politics* (Pymble: HarperCollins, 1999); Neal Blewett, *A Cabinet Diary: A Personal Record of the First Keating Government* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 1999); Paul Keating, *Engagement: Australia Faces the Asia-Pacific* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2000); Robert Tickner, *Taking a Stand: Land Rights to Reconciliation* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001); Robert Tickner, *Ten Doors Down* (Brunswick: Scribe, 2020); Barry Jones, *A Thinking Reed* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2006); Gareth Evans, *Inside the Hawke–Keating Government: A Cabinet Diary* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2014); Gareth Evans, *Incorrigible Optimist* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2017); John Kerin, *The Way I Saw It; The Way It Was: The Making of National Agricultural and Natural Resource Management Policy* (Melbourne:

74 people who served in the Hawke–Keating ministries, 22 ministers produced 42 books, of which half were memoirs, autobiographies or diaries. The first Hawke ministry was responsible for the vast bulk of them. By comparison, in the decade after 1975, Whitlam government ministers produced six memoirs or life writings (two of them Whitlam’s own).⁵

Why did so many decide to take up the challenge of political life writing with respect to the Hawke–Keating years? Tom Frame has argued that, in much political historiography, the “victors or survivors” often write the first draft.⁶ In the case of Hawke–Keating Labor, this conception of “survivors” proves particularly apt, for these insider accounts of the political past were not universally stories of celebration and success. In this chapter, I argue that Labor’s mass of memoir literature was a collective emotional reaction to grand narratives about the reinvention of the party and the nation in the 1980s and 1990s. Jean-Francois Lyotard defined grand narrative as a form of generalising “metanarrative” that by the 1990s had “lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses”.⁷ Ministers used their autobiographies and memoirs to “work through” and complicate the metanarratives that prevailed in the accounts of Paul Kelly, Hawke, Richardson, and others with their own personal experiences.⁸ Triumphal narratives contended that a “new Labor Party” (Kelly) with its “superior” personnel (Richardson) under Hawke and Keating summoned forth the “courage” (Kelly) to save Australia from its “stultifying” (Hawke) post-war “sclerosis” (Keating).⁹ In the *Labor in Power* documentary (1993), the ABC proffered a narrative (heavily featuring

Analysis and Policy Observatory, 2017); Roslyn Kelly, *Ros Kelly: A Passionate Life* (Richmond: Hardie Grant, 2017).

⁵ Gough Whitlam, *The Truth of the Matter* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1983 [1979]); Gough Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972–75* (Ringwood: Viking, 1985); Fred Daly, *From Curtin to Kerr* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1977); Fred Daly, *The Politician Who Laughed*, illustrated by Vane Lindesay (Melbourne: Hutchinson, 1982); Jim Cairns, *Oil in Troubled Waters* (Camberwell: Widescope International, 1976); Al Grassby, *The Morning After* (Canberra: Judicator Publications, 1979).

⁶ Tom Frame, “Perspectives and Polemics”, in Tom Frame (ed.), *The Ascent to Power, 1996: The Howard Government, Volume I* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2017), pp. 4–5.

⁷ Jean-Francois Lyotard, “The Postmodern Condition”, in Julie Rivken and Michael Ryan (eds.), *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004 [1998]), p. 359. Though I do not discuss postmodern theory here, I do use the term metanarrative in the postmodern sense.

⁸ Paul Kelly, *The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1992); Bob Hawke, *The Hawke Memoirs* (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1994); Graham Richardson, *Whatever it Takes* (Sydney: Bantam, 1994).

Though I do not use the term “working through” in a strictly psychoanalytical sense, it is worth recognising the loaded but potentially valuable ontology that accompanies this phrase. Initially advanced by Sigmund Freud in his 1914 article “Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through”, the notion of “working through” suggests that “remembering” is a fundamental component of resolving the lingering impacts of pain and trauma in the past. For a succinct discussion of Freud’s initial approach to this, see Adam Phillips, “On ‘Remembering, Repeating and Working Through,’ Again”, *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, vol. 52, no. 3 (2016), pp. 375–82.

⁹ Kelly, *End of Certainty*, p. 15; Richardson, *Whatever it Takes*, p. 358; Kelly, *End of Certainty*, p. 15; Hawke, *Memoirs*, p. xii; Keating quoted in Cth. House of Representatives, *Parliamentary Debates*, 26 March 1992, p. 1242.

interviews with Hawke, Keating and their colleagues) that celebrated courageous economic reform, but also dramatised the breakdown of the Hawke–Keating relationship and the traumatic 1990s recession. These were seemingly contradictory narratives about progress and suffering, reform and recession that nobody seemed to reconcile.

In their political life writing, many Labor ministers challenged pre-existing assumptions of unbridled success or economic failure and threw themselves headlong into the wider “soul-searching” that preoccupied the party, its collective “sense of purpose” having been warped by the global neoliberal turn and their own policy responses to it.¹⁰ Ministers’ stories confronted the gaps and silences in both the celebratory and more critical versions of history. They debated and reconsidered the impact of economic rationalism, on society as a whole and the Labor Party in particular. Some contested the masculine normativity of existing metanarratives by recording the rise of Labor women in parliament, and the new and novel ways in which they had negotiated the masculine federal Labor arena. Memoirists also reflected on the rise of entrenched national factions within the Labor caucus, reconsidering the ways in which this shaped their experience of politics and policymaking. The medium of life writing constituted a space in which a Labor generation could record, reflect on, and “work through” what they had done. In doing so, they carefully wrote themselves into the national political narrative, often dwelling on instances of defeat, frustration and failure, nuancing the triumphal Hawke–Keating legend. In the European and American context, Volker Depkat has suggested that political life writing “is especially relevant in historical transition periods”, for personal narratives become reflections on structural change and attempts to legitimise an ongoing program.¹¹ In Britain, a “war of memoirs” erupted in the contest to claim the credit for key neoliberal reforms and achievements.¹² In Australia, Labor figures took up the pen less often in triumph and more often with a sense of ambivalence.

It is important not to exaggerate the significance of some of these memoirs. Men such as former leader Bill Hayden and former deputy Tom Uren sold thousands of books, while others such as former finance minister Peter Walsh had their memoirs discounted within weeks of

¹⁰ Frank Bongiorno, *Dreamers and Schemers: A Political History of Australia* (Collingwood: La Trobe University Press, 2022), pp. 319–20.

¹¹ Volker Depkat, “Autobiography as Political Legacy in Transition Periods: Benjamin Franklin and Konrad Adenauer Compared”, *European Journal of Life Writing*, vol. 9 (2020), p. 53.

¹² Monica Prasad, *The Politics of Free Markets: The Rise of Neoliberal Economic Policies in Britain, France, Germany and the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 114.

release.¹³ Further, authors revealed mixed motives; a number of these books were non-commercial undertakings, intended as a “source document” for students (former minister for primary industries, overseas trade, and treasurer John Kerin), or as a personal life narrative for one’s “grandchildren” (former environment and sports minister Ros Kelly).¹⁴ But regardless of their commercial dynamics, the majority of these literary performances contributed to public discourses about the meaning of modern Labor in a period of transformation. Indeed, I am arguing here that a golden age of Labor memoir publishing occurred *in response to*, rather than in celebration of, the grand narrative of a golden age of Labor in the 1980s and 1990s.

Literary Labor

Why did so many former ministers decide to write and publish books? More specifically, why memoir, or in two instances, *diary*? Why *autobiography*? Some ministers did share their opinions through documentaries,¹⁵ newspaper columns,¹⁶ or published essays,¹⁷ but many turned to the medium of the memoir. The book itself, as a special cultural object, retained its status even in an increasingly electronic age. Keating himself argued in 2000 that there was “no better way for one person to share a view of the world” than to write a book.¹⁸ For former ministers who felt they had important stories to share, the “prestige” of the traditional hardback retained its distinct appeal.¹⁹ Like Hawke, these memoirists were mostly “tertiary-educated professionals” (with notable exceptions), who, Frank Bongiorno has argued, had constituted a “new type of Labor government”.²⁰ And many of them had lively pre-parliamentary stories to share. Reflecting on his colleagues, former minister for science Barry Jones suggested that theirs was the “last Labor government” made up of people who before politics had experienced “a life of their own” unencumbered by student politics or internal careering.²¹ Finally, Labor ministers of the 1980s and 1990s enjoyed longer life expectancies than their forebears, and

¹³ Philip A. Selth, “Political Biographies and Administrative Memoirs: Some Concluding Comments”, in Tracey Arklay, John Nethercote and John Wanna (eds.), *Australian Political Lives: Chronicling Political Careers and Administrative Histories* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), p. 104; Barry Oakley and Franz Kantor, “Famous Names, Forgettable Stories”, *Weekend Australian*, 10 August 1996; “Spy”, *Sunday Age*, 23 April 1995, 20.

¹⁴ John Kerin, phone interview, 2 September 2020; Roslyn Kelly, interview with the author, Mittagong, 10 September 2020.

¹⁵ Especially *Labor in Power* (1993), but also *Hawke: The Larrikin and the Leader* (2018), both ABC productions.

¹⁶ For instance, Peter Walsh wrote for the *Australian Financial Review*, John Button for *Age*, and Bill Hayden very briefly for *Independent Monthly* before its untimely end in 1996.

¹⁷ See Keating, *Engagement*; John Button, “Beyond Belief: What Future for Labor?”, *Quarterly Essay*, no. 6 (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2002).

¹⁸ Paul Keating quoted in Penelope DeBelle, “Keating Remains True to His Word”, *Age*, 8 March 2000, p. 4.

¹⁹ Gareth Evans, Email to Sally Heath, 15 April 2014, Australian National University Archives (hereafter ANUA), Papers of Gareth Evans, ANUA 740, Box 34, File 454.

²⁰ Frank Bongiorno, *The Eighties: The Decade that Transformed Australia* (Carlton: Black Inc., 2015), p. 54.

²¹ Barry Jones, zoom interview with the author, 26 August 2020.

were less willing to abide by the old autobiographical principle that one could not write a life story until their twilight years. Radio broadcaster Phillip Adams recalled the experience of sitting next to former post-war reconstruction minister John Dedman on a flight to Melbourne in the early 1970s: “he was regaling me with anecdotes. I said, ‘Don’t waste them on me. Write them down!’ [...] [H]e was dead in a month”.²² Hawke and Keating were spared the fate of John Curtin and Ben Chifley who enjoyed no “bucolic retirement to contemplate achievements and dispense advice” as Sean Scalmer put it, both men having died “in harness” as leader of the Labor Party.²³

Politicians enjoyed greater licence in the 1980s to display their emotions in a changing public culture. In Australia as in Britain, an emotional economy predicated on manly “self-discipline increasingly appeared to give way to self-expression”.²⁴ In the 1980s political figures such as Hawke responded with raw displays of emotion.²⁵ It was acceptable to shed paternal tears in public, or even demonstratively to kiss the dirt to show affinity with fallen soldiers in Papua New Guinea as Keating did.²⁶ Unsurprisingly, publishers felt that political memoirs should reproduce their authors’ “public/intellectual position” alongside their “personal thoughts and aims”.²⁷

That kind of personal and emotional expressiveness also revealed a marked shift in the Labor Party’s masculine culture. Early Labor politics depended on the projection of a “highly masculine cult of solidarity”.²⁸ It was the job of Labor’s leaders, Bethany Phillips-Peddlesden has explained, to cultivate an image of “working-class, but respectable, manhood”, tempering solidarity with professional sobriety.²⁹ In the late 1930s, however rough and ready Labor’s caucus seemed, Curtin could be seen wearing his “three-piece suit cut high with a stiff collar”

²² Phillip Adams, *Late Night Live*, ABC Radio, 12 October 1994. NAA: C100, 1415525. Dedman did, nonetheless, produce a three-part personal and historical reflection for the *Labour History* journal. See J. J. Dedman, “The Labor Government in the Second World War: A Memoir”, Parts 1—3, *Labour History*, no. 21—23 (1971—72), pp. 62—71, pp. 42—56, pp. 48—61.

²³ Sean Scalmer, “The Rise of the Insider: Memoirs and Diaries in Recent Australian Political History”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 56, no. 1 (2010), p. 84.

²⁴ Martin Francis, “Tears, Tantrums, and Bared Teeth: The Emotional Economy of Three Conservative Prime Ministers, 1951–1963”, *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 41 (July 2002), p. 358.

²⁵ Michelle Arrow, *The Seventies: The Personal, the Political and the Making of Modern Australia* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2019), chapter 5; Bongiorno, *The Eighties*, pp. 109—12.

²⁶ For more on Keating’s demonstration at Kokoda and its historical and commemorative context, see Carolyn Holbrook, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014), pp. 180—83.

²⁷ Sally Heath, Email to Gareth Evans, 8 June 2016, ANUA 740, Papers of Gareth Evans, Box 51, File 1051.

²⁸ Nick Dyrenfurth, “‘A Political ... as well as a Propagandist Movement’: Cultural Politics and the Rise of Fisher Labor”, *Labour History*, no. 102 (2012), p. 20.

²⁹ Bethany Phillips-Peddlesden, “‘A Stronger Man and a More Virile Character’: Australian Prime Ministers, Embodied Manhood and Political Authority in the Early Twentieth Century”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 48, no. 4 (2017), p. 516.

and “snap-brimmed hat” to sartorially communicate his party’s respectability.³⁰ This was a respectability that demanded reticence. Former prime minister James Scullin, who had governed during the depression, “had no desire to write his memoirs or keep papers that would reveal the divisions within his party” any further than was already known.³¹ Deputy leader and interim prime minister Frank Forde late in life was still describing his parliamentary peers (including opponents) as “remarkable”, “outstanding”, “capable [men]” for whom he had only “friendly feeling”.³² And even as new expressive tendencies emerged, many in the Labor Party would have concurred with former Speaker of the House of Representatives Jim Cope’s refusal to write a memoir because it would require an author to “criticise too many [...] friends”.³³ The rise of the political celebrity, the neoliberal cult of individualism (naturally the antithesis of solidarity) and a more expressive emotional regime would lower these obstacles to Labor storytelling in the 1980s.

There were also material and commercial forces facilitating this literary phenomenon. By the 1990s, Craig Munro has shown, a small number of multinational corporations were “dominating book publishing throughout the English-speaking world”.³⁴ But despite the dominance of six or seven publishing houses over the Australian market, local operations such as Allen & Unwin (an independent Australian survivor of a British firm), Text Publishing, Wakefield Press and Schwartz Publishing had largely secured their market position.³⁵ These were accompanied by several successful and esteemed university presses, particularly MUP and the University of Queensland Press (hereafter UQP). Multinational companies, perceived by some disillusioned local publishers as “not much more than marketing and sales machines”, competed with local establishments for a share of the Australian market.³⁶ Non-fiction was a crucial component of that market. Reflecting on the period, Loukakis explained that book

³⁰ Stuart Macintyre, *Australia’s Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2015), p. 55.

³¹ Graeme Powell, “The First in the Field: Prime Ministers’ Papers in the National Library of Australia”, *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2005), p. 57.

³² Frank Forde, interview with Mel Pratt, 5 March 1971, Mel Pratt Collection, NLA, ORAL TRC 121/8.

³³ James Francis Cope, oral history interview with Andrew Moore, 10 November 1983, Parliament Bicentenary Oral History Project, NLA, ORAL TRC 4900/2.

³⁴ Craig Munro, “Case-Study: 2001 Publishing Report Card”, in Craig Munro and Robyn Sheahan-Bright (eds.), *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia, 1946—2005* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2007), p. 87.

³⁵ Mark Davis, “Culture Wars and Corporatism: The Cultural Mission in Australian Non-Fiction Book Publishing, 1958—2018”, *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2020), <https://www.australianliterarystudies.com.au/articles/culture-wars-and-corporatism-the-cultural-mission-in-australian-non-fiction-book-publishing-19582018>, accessed 26 November 2020. For more on Allen & Unwin, Text, and Schwartz’ Outback Press, see Munro and Sheahan-Bright (eds.), *Paper Empires*.

³⁶ Hilary McPhee, *Other People’s Words* (Sydney: Picador, 2001), p. 285.

publishers increasingly saw politicians as “another form of marketable social and cultural identity and personality”.³⁷ Therefore, the phenomenon of Australian (political) life writing had its roots in a much larger local and global set of commercial forces.

There were also cultural imperatives informing publishers’ activities in this period. Mark Davis has demonstrated that Australian publishers pursued a “cultural mission” to “play a role in struggles over national meaning”.³⁸ As Australian public figures set about redefining the nation after empire, prominent individuals in the publishing industry, such as Iremonger (a former staffer to Whitlam government minister Kep Enderby), took their cultural mission very seriously indeed.³⁹ Iremonger established Allen & Unwin’s reputation as “a leading publisher of progressive, reformist titles”, and was central in encouraging Ryan, former science minister Barry Jones, former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs minister Robert Tickner, and former minister for local government and the status of women Margaret Reynolds, to publish their books.⁴⁰ Jones described his autobiography as “Iremonger’s book, in a way” because he was “central in the whole thing”, working on successive drafts until the final week of his life in 2002.⁴¹ The cultural mission and the marketing imperative were, of course, often interconnected. The CEO of MUP, Louise Adler, published former foreign minister Gareth Evans’ memoir *Incorrigible Optimist* in 2017, and she was adamant that the endorsement Hawke had provided would be included on the front cover alongside that of United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan. The latter without the former would not do because it smacked of “cultural cringe”, and because Hawke’s name would “encourage folks to put their hands in their pockets and cough up!”⁴²

³⁷ Angelo Loukakis, email correspondence with the author, 7 October 2020.

³⁸ Davis, “Culture Wars and Corporatism”.

³⁹ See James Curran and Stuart Ward, *The Unknown Nation: Australia After Empire* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2010).

⁴⁰ Davis, “Culture Wars and Corporatism”. See also Stuart Macintyre, “Obituary: John Iremonger, 1944—2002”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 34, no. 122 (2003), p. 387; Rolf Gerritsen, phone interview with the author, 16 June 2020; Jones, zoom interview, 26 August 2020; Ryan, zoom interview, 14 September 2020; Robert Tickner, zoom interview with the author, 29 June 2020; Reynolds, *Living Politics*, p. 228.

⁴¹ Jones, zoom interview, 26 August 2020.

⁴² Louise Adler, Email to Gareth Evans, 5:24pm, 17 June 2017; Louise Adler, Email to Gareth Evans, 2:34pm, 17 June 2017, ANUA 740, Papers of Gareth Evans, Box 51, File 1051.



Figure 5: Peter Walsh speaks at the launch of *Confessions of a Failed Finance Minister*, National Press Club, 3 April 1995. NAA: A13966, 950196.

Memoirists, publishers and their audiences were also responding to changes in the political environment around them. Those who published memoirs during the final years of the Keating government found their stories were subsumed within the short-term media cycle. When Walsh published *Confessions of a Failed Finance Minister* in April 1995, he warned that Australia was “living on ‘borrowed money and borrowed time’”.⁴³ A committed economic rationalist, he urged immediate steps to reduce the budget deficit and the current account imbalance. He also passionately attacked Keating’s *One Nation* economic statement (a semi-Keynesian stimulatory response to the 1990s recession).⁴⁴ The journalists who attended his launch had not read the book and said so, but they gleefully broadcast his controversial remarks about his own government. Conversely, when

Tom Uren released his autobiography *Straight Left* in 1994, he chose activist rock band Midnight Oil’s lead-singer Peter Garrett to launch it because he represented all the best qualities of a “young inspired public leader” in the eyes of the left-wing stalwart.⁴⁵ Uren’s choice of Garrett, a political outsider and previously a candidate for the Nuclear Disarmament Party, was itself a statement against Labor’s retreat from left-wing political activism in the corporatist 1980s. Both Uren and Walsh used their launches to make critical points about modern Labor.

The bulk of these books were published between 1996 and 2007, a period in which Labor remained in Opposition facing, for the most part, an ascendant Coalition government and a crisis of purpose. That context shaped some of these particular narratives. Hayden, who published his autobiography in the immediate aftermath of the party’s 1996 election defeat, used his book tour to contribute to Labor’s public post-mortem. He argued that the Labor Party required the kind of values-based, self-reflective exercise that he had just undertaken: “I had

⁴³ Peter Walsh, Speech at the Launch of *Confessions*, National Press Club, Canberra, 3 April 1995, National Press Club luncheon series, NLA, ORAL TRC 4484.

⁴⁴ Walsh, Launch of *Confessions*, NLA, ORAL TRC 4484; Ian Henderson, “One Nation to Blame for Economic Woes: Walsh”, *Canberra Times*, 4 April 1995, p. 3.

⁴⁵ Tom Uren quoted in “Heads Are Turning”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 June 2004, accessed 22 September 2019.

these feelings when I wrote the book, which was before the election – sooner or later, Labor would have to face this challenge.”⁴⁶ The context of the Howard ascendancy mattered in part because it fed an anxiety about Labor’s immediate past and future, as well as larger anxieties about Australian values and policy. These authors perceived some of their work – in particular Aboriginal Reconciliation and the *Native Title Act* 1993 – to be under attack. Tickner said that the collapse of the reconciliation process under Howard influenced the title of his 2001 memoir *Taking a Stand*: “[m]y original title for the book [...] was *No Turning Back*, because I genuinely believed – quite wrongly as it turned out – that the country could not turn back from those advances. Of course, it did”.⁴⁷ Political context conditioned the content of these narratives and the style of their presentation.

Those who wrote in the 2010s, by way of contrast, found themselves contributing to a discourse of nostalgia about Hawke–Keating Labor.⁴⁸ Evans claimed that, when he returned to Australia in 2010 after a decade in Europe, “[p]eople were really looking back with a sense of nostalgia” at that government.⁴⁹ In his publishing proposal to Adler, Evans emphasised the “almost universal characterization of the Hawke–Keating years as the gold standard in Australian government”.⁵⁰ Launching Evans’ *Inside the Hawke–Keating Government: A Cabinet Diary* at the ANU (where he was Chancellor) in 2014, Adler spoke about the “talent and quality” of the ministers depicted in the diary, and their “shared agenda of making modern Australia”.⁵¹ Journalist George Megalogenis assured Evans that his had been a government of “depth” unlikely to “even exist today”, although he added that he distinctly remembered their being called “heartless pragmatists” at the time.⁵² Ultimately, then, these volumes were all produced *in* and *for* specific political and historical contexts.

Slaughtering “Sacred Cows”

On the face of it, most Labor memoirists maintained the core belief that the Hawke and Keating governments had positively transformed the nation. Ministers described an Australia that

⁴⁶ Bill Hayden, Address on *Hayden: An Autobiography* at the National Press Club, Canberra, 10 April 1996. NAA: C475, 1718354.

⁴⁷ Tickner, zoom interview, 29 June 2020.

⁴⁸ James Walter and Carolyn Holbrook, “Policy Narratives in Historical Transition: A Case Study in Contemporary History”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 49, no. 2 (2018), pp. 221–25.

⁴⁹ Gareth Evans, zoom interview with the author, 17 June 2020.

⁵⁰ Gareth Evans, Email to Louise Adler, 9 October 2013, ANUA 740, Papers of Gareth Evans, Box 33, File 449.

⁵¹ Louise Adler, Speech at the Launch of Gareth Evans’ Diary, Australian National University, 27 August 2014 [audio file], *AustralianPolitics.com* – *Farnsworth Online Archive*, <https://australianpolitics.com/2014/08/27/keating-evans-cabinet-diaries-launch.html>, accessed and downloaded 28 June 2019.

⁵² George Megalogenis, Email to Gareth Evans, 22 September 2014, ANUA 740: Papers of Gareth Evans, Box 34, File 457.

“emerged from the shadows of an insular past” (former industry minister John Button) and embraced “radical and remarkable” economic reforms (Hayden).⁵³ The Labor—Union Accord allowed Labor to graft its traditionally “warm and moist social policies” on to its newfound “dry economic policies” (Evans).⁵⁴ In other words, the Accord facilitated economic “progress” while preserving “social democracy” (Kerin).⁵⁵ The social wage component of the Accord bequeathed “tax reforms, Medicare [...] and educational provision” (former minister for health, social security Neal Blewett).⁵⁶ Other aspects of social policy mattered, too. The passage of native title seemed “a defining moment in Australian history” (Tickner), “one of the most significant occasions” of that government’s lifespan (Reynolds).⁵⁷ The *Sex Discrimination Act* 1984 was, according to Ryan, “probably the most useful thing I’ve done in my life”.⁵⁸ Walsh doggedly sought to defend the Hawke government as “mainstream Labor” rather than the “aberrant departure” from tradition that its “bourgeois-Left chattering class critics” claimed.⁵⁹ In his own memoir, Hawke celebrated the slaughtering of many “sacred cows” of Labor ideology, such as banking sector regulations, preference for state-owned enterprises, and the prohibition of uranium mining.⁶⁰ According to these conceptions of history, the critics were wrong, and the agenda of the 1980s kept the faith with core Labor values without bowing to misguided ideological fashions.

Stories about the Whitlam government performed a “powerful psycho-social function” in the pages of Hawke–Keating Labor memoirs, too.⁶¹ The Whitlam experience was “seared into the minds” of the Hawke cabinet, and when Ryan’s colleagues called her an “unreconstructed Whitlam supporter”, it was “supposed to be an insult”.⁶² In 1985, at the “high point in the relationship” between Whitlam and Hawke, the latter cheerfully launched the former’s memoirs in Canberra.⁶³ But, as journalist Mungo McCallum remarked to Whitlam later that afternoon, Hawke and his ministers felt that “there was just too much enthusiasm in

⁵³ Button, *Flying the Kite*, p. 16; Hayden, *Hayden*, p. 484.

⁵⁴ Evans, *Incorrigible Optimist*, p. 88.

⁵⁵ Kerin, phone interview, 2 September 2020.

⁵⁶ Hayden, *Hayden*, p. 483; Blewett, *Cabinet Diary*, p. 24.

⁵⁷ Tickner, *Taking a Stand*, p. 220; Reynolds, *Living Politics*, p. 214.

⁵⁸ Ryan, *Catching the Waves*, p. 243.

⁵⁹ Walsh, *Launch of Confessions*, NLA, ORAL TRC 4484.

⁶⁰ Hawke, *Memoirs*. For banking deregulation, see pp. 252–53. For competition against state owned enterprises, see pp. 489–93. For uranium mining, see p. 251, p. 253.

⁶¹ Nathan Hollier, “From Hope to Disillusion? The Legacy of the Whitlam Government in Australian Policy and Culture”, in Jenny Hocking and Colleen Lewis (eds.), *It’s Time Again: Whitlam and Modern Labor* (Armadale: Circa, 2003), p. 416.

⁶² Kerin, *The Way I Saw It*, p. 134; Hannah Forsyth, *A History of the Modern Australian University* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014), p. 106.

⁶³ Hocking, *Whitlam: His Time*, p. 450.

your government”.⁶⁴ In their memoirs, economic ministers of the 1980s described the Whitlam government as a “magnificent chaos” (Button), led by “economic cranks” who served only the interests of “the white collar middle class” (Walsh).⁶⁵ Hayden, who for a short time had been Whitlam’s treasurer, tentatively dubbed Whitlam’s years in power “The Flawed Years”.⁶⁶ Those less enamoured with economic rationalism defended Whitlam’s social policy legacy. Tickner wrote favourably of the Whitlam government’s *Racial Discrimination Act* 1975, and Uren waxed lyrical about Whitlam’s investment in regional growth and urban renewal; indeed, these were part of Uren’s own “record of achievements” as minister for urban and regional development in that government.⁶⁷ Ryan, a proponent of equal pay and opponent of economic rationalism, celebrated the Whitlam program and asked the man himself, (her “hero”, she said), to launch her autobiography in Sydney in 1999.⁶⁸ But the critical assessments of Whitlam arguably prevailed in policymaking and media discourses.

These portrayals of the Whitlam government carried implicit and sometimes explicit value judgements about how, and on whose behalf, Labor should govern. The neoliberal turn in the 1980s made these debates even more acute. The Labor Party’s history is strewn with fraught debates concerning “the pledge”, protectionism, the socialist objective, and moderate labourism as opposed to socialism.⁶⁹ Dramatic splits over conscription in 1916, economic policy in 1931, and Communism in 1955 all triggered anxieties about the party’s soul.⁷⁰ There was no split in the 1980s, but the party’s internal debates were arguably even more existential in nature. Left-wing critics have treated the Accord as a mechanism that “anaesthetised the working class over a 13 year period”.⁷¹ More recently, Elizabeth Humphrys described it as an

⁶⁴ Mungo McCallum quoted in Gough Whitlam, Launch of *The Whitlam Government*, National Press Club, Canberra, 11 November 1985, National Press Club luncheon series, NLA, ORAL TRC 1885.

⁶⁵ Button, *As it Happened*, p. 160; Walsh, *Confessions*, pp. 24–25.

⁶⁶ Hayden, *Hayden*, pp. 163–232.

⁶⁷ Michael Dwyer, interview with the author, Sydney, 20 February 2020.

⁶⁸ Ryan, zoom interview, 14 September 2020.

⁶⁹ For discussion of debates over the pledge and the prospect of alliances with other parties in colonial parliaments, see Stuart Macintyre, “The First Caucus”, in John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre (eds.), *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001), p. 27. For protectionism and free trade in the 1890s see Frank Bongiorno, “The Origins of Caucus”, in John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre (eds.), *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001), p. 6. For moderate labourism v. socialism see Frank Bongiorno, *The People’s Party: Victorian Labor and the Radical Tradition, 1875–1914* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1996), p. 136; Verity Burgmann, “Premature Labour: The Maritime Strike and the Parliamentary Strategy”, in Jim Hagan and Andrew Wells (eds.), *The Maritime Strike: A Centennial Retrospective* (Wollongong: University of Wollongong and Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1992), pp. 83–96.

⁷⁰ For more comprehensive discussion of these Labor schisms, see Ross McMullin, *Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party, 1891–1991* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991); Frank Bongiorno and Nick Dyrenfurth, *A Little History of the Australian Labor Party* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2011).

⁷¹ Tom Bramble and Rick Kuhn, *Labor’s Conflict: Big Business, Workers and the Politics of Class* (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 125. For a more comprehensive and contemporaneous

instrument of “vanguard neoliberalism”.⁷² Though often praised for their record in social policy and welfare targeting, Hawke and Keating were derided by scholars such as Graham Maddox and Dean Jaensch for their “betrayal” or “hijack” of the Labor Party and its traditions.⁷³ Hawke and Keating couched their “modernising” mission in the rhetoric of patriotism and the Labor tradition, but that alone did not assuage the concerns of all members or even all ministers.⁷⁴ Further, even if theirs had been a perfect example of cabinet government (which it certainly was not by 1996), it was nonetheless a government dominated by political and bureaucratic “male age-mates” with a “shared and restricting formative training in economics”, which some thought explained the entrenched supremacy of economic rationalism.⁷⁵ These scholarly assessments are far removed from the more recent popular histories and biographies that celebrate the Hawke–Keating legacy with much enthusiasm and nostalgia.⁷⁶

Political memoirs were opportunities to bring Labor’s existential internal debate to a reading and engaged public. In *Straight Left* Uren described Labor under Hawke as “bloody awful, [lacking] real compassion for the people they should be representing”.⁷⁷ Uren’s beliefs were antithetical to the economic rationalist mission: “I was elected to govern, not to be governed by external forces.”⁷⁸ Several factors shaped Uren’s depiction of the Hawke government in this way. For one thing, Hawke excluded him from cabinet and consigned him to the lowly and largely administrative portfolio of territories and local government. (Asked to consecrate his appointment in 1983 with a prime ministerial handshake, Uren said to Hawke,

discussion of the Accord see Frank Stillwell, *The Accord and Beyond: The Political Economy of the Labor Government* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1986), p. 109.

⁷² Elizabeth Humphrys, *How Labour Built Neoliberalism: Australia’s Accord, the Labour Movement and the Neoliberal Project* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), p. 3.

⁷³ Graham Maddox, *The Hawke Government and Labor Tradition* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1989), p. 4; Dean Jaensch, *The Hawke–Keating Hijack: The ALP in Transition* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), p. 154.

⁷⁴ James Curran, *The Power of Speech: Australian Prime Ministers Defining the National Image* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2004), pp. 274–80.

⁷⁵ Pusey, *Economic Rationalism in Canberra*, p. 8. For discussion of cabinet government under Hawke and Keating see Patrick Weller, *Cabinet Government in Australia, 1901–2006: Practice, Principles, Performance* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007), pp. 159–176.

⁷⁶ Bruce Permezel, dir., *Hawke: The Larrikin and the Leader*, TV documentary, Southern Pictures/ABC, 2018. For discussion of the rise of nostalgia in treatments of the Hawke Government see Joshua Black, “A Life Triumphantly Well Written: Producing the Hawke Legacy, 1979–2019”, *ANU HJII*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2020), pp. 81–106. For examples of celebratory accounts of Hawke–Keating Labor see Blanche d’Alpuget, *Hawke: The Prime Minister* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2010); Derek Reilly with Bob Hawke, *Wednesdays with Bob* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2017); ABC, *Hawke: The Larrikin and the Leader*, ep. 1 and ep. 2, dir. Bruce Permezel, 2019; Paul Kelly, *The March of Patriots: The Struggle for Modern Australia* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2009); Kerry O’Brien, *Keating* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2015); Troy Bramston, *Paul Keating: The Big-Picture Leader* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2016).

⁷⁷ Chapter Draft, “Labor in Government, 1983–1987”, NLA, Papers of Tom Uren, MS 6055, Series 21, File 19. For the published account, see Uren, *Straight Left*, p. 342.

⁷⁸ Uren, *Straight Left*, p. 349. It is worth noting that the Keating Government figured as less *laissez faire* and more “interventionist” in his account. See Uren, *Straight Left*, pp. 460–62.

“‘No, you can shove it up your arse.’”⁷⁹ Secondly, it follows that in an autobiography covering Uren’s entire life, shaped by the depression and war (he had been a prisoner on the Burma Railway) and whose heyday was a period of ministerial activism in the new Department of Urban and Regional Development (DURD) under Whitlam, the Hawke government would constitute a disappointing coda. In 1985 Uren conducted a series of oral history interview with ABC Canberra’s Clare Martin and the National Library of Australia, producing 22 reels of audio.⁸⁰ His staffer and assistant Michael Dwyer conducted additional interviews with Uren, and later explained that “we relied pretty heavily on the interviews” in drafting the book.⁸¹ In a more material sense, Uren produced his manuscript while enjoying his final parliamentary term on the backbench with access to parliamentary resources and unburdened by ministerial duties. Dwyer’s agreement with Uren was “loose” in nature, and he brought to the table at that time a left-wing worldview shared with the likes of Carmel Tebbutt, Paul Murphy and Anthony Albanese, himself a former Uren staffer and most favoured protégé.⁸²

Others were dogged in defending economic rationalism against pejorative claims about its departure from Labor tradition.⁸³ For Walsh, Uren’s ideological nemesis, the story of the 1980s was one of rationality fleetingly trumping ideological pressure. His was a story that may not have been told in memoir form were it not for the encouragement of close friends and associates, such as ANU public policy specialist Rolf Gerritsen and bureaucrat-turned-journalist David Clark.⁸⁴ Like Walsh himself, Clark was an “economic dry” or “rationalist”, and peers claimed that *Confessions* “beautifully captured Dave’s views”.⁸⁵ As Walsh produced his manuscript, he swapped drafts with Gerritsen, who edited and returned them “like he was a bloody doctoral student or something”.⁸⁶ Indeed, Walsh thanked Gerritsen by inviting him to write a foreword, in which the latter characterised the former as “a Labor man in the traditional framework of Labor [...] a fiscal conservative” who also “believed in social expenditure to improve people’s standard of living.”⁸⁷ Walsh’s narrative became an unusually detailed and technical account of fiscal management during the Hawke government, but there were many

⁷⁹ Uren, *Straight Left*, p. 346.

⁸⁰ Uren, *Straight Left*, p. vii. For the oral history interview, see Tom Uren, oral history interview with Clare Martin, 17 April and 1 May 1985, NLA, ORAL TRC 1759.

⁸¹ Dwyer, interview, 20 February 2020.

⁸² Dwyer, interview, 20 February 2020.

⁸³ For an account of wider debates about economic rationalism from the early 1990s onward see Alex Millmow, *A History of Australasian Economic Thought* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 219—23.

⁸⁴ Walsh, Launch of *Confessions*, NLA, ORAL TRC 4484.

⁸⁵ Peter Groenewegen and John Lodewijks, “Dave Clark (1946—2008): Economist, Larrikin, ‘Critical Drinker’ and Friend”, *Agenda*, vol. 15, no. 3 (2008), p. 103.

⁸⁶ Gerritsen, phone interview, 16 June 2020.

⁸⁷ Gerritsen, phone interview, 16 June 2020.

passages subjecting Left ministers such as Uren to great scorn. Gerritsen recalled that when Uren tried to recreate the expensive DURD program under Hawke, Walsh “was influential in blocking it. That’s the basis of the animosity between them.”⁸⁸ This minor contest between Uren and Walsh was emblematic of the broader ideological fissure within the Labor Party in the 1980s.

In a way, the memoirs became a mechanism with which to debate the Labor platform itself. The party’s 1921 socialist objective and accompanying Blackburn Declaration promised the “nationalisation of banking and all principal industries” where private ownership of the means of production had produced “exploitation” or outcomes that were not “socially useful”.⁸⁹ The objective usually prompted “apology and regret rather than pride” from Labor’s leaders, whose ambivalence in turn prompted the accusation of “social fascism” from communists.⁹⁰ Evans, who helped to set in train the privatisation of government enterprises such as Qantas and Australian Airlines in the late 1980s, happily dismissed the socialisation objective in his memoir: “What matters are ends, not means.”⁹¹ Jones, by way of contrast, lamented the hostile attitude that Hawke and others took toward Labor’s “sacred cows”. “[I]t is inconceivable that State or National Conferences would have initiated selling off Qantas or the Commonwealth Bank”, he wrote in 2006.⁹²

Uranium mining and export, a major topic of debate in the party during the 1970s, also acted as a differentiating feature of these memoirs.⁹³ In their desperate quest to repair Australia’s balance of payments in 1986, Hawke and Keating had sought any measure that would earn Australia vital foreign income, and along the way, they decided to sell uranium to France, which was at that time not a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1968).⁹⁴ Hawke, in his memoir, gloated that another of Labor’s “sacred cows was culled from the herd”.⁹⁵ For Walsh too, the only thing that mattered was repairing “Australia’s

⁸⁸ Gerritsen, phone interview, 16 June 2020.

⁸⁹ Bongiorno and Dyrenfurth, *Little History of the Australian Labor Party*, p. 69.

⁹⁰ B. D. O’Meagher, “Introduction: Labor Ideology and Socialism”, in Bruce O’Meagher (ed.), *The Socialist Objective: Labor & Socialism* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1983), p. 9; Stuart Macintyre, *The Reds: The Communist Party of Australia from Origins to Illegality* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2022 [1998]), p. 200.

⁹¹ Evans, *Incorrigible Optimist*, p. 89.

⁹² Jones, *A Thinking Reed*, p. 347.

⁹³ See Ashley Lavelle, “‘Conflicts of Loyalty’: The Australian Labor Party and Uranium Policy, 1976—82”, *Labour History*, no. 102 (2012), pp. 177—96.

⁹⁴ For more on the ‘banana republic’ crisis and the government’s budget tightening, see Bongiorno, *The Eighties*, pp. 158—60. For contemporary debates, see Andrew Fraser, “ALP Row Likely on Uranium to France”, *Canberra Times*, 20 August 1986, p. 31; “France Gets Uranium While Ban in Place”, *Canberra Times*, 24 August 1986, p. 1.

⁹⁵ Hawke, *Memoirs*, p. 379.

chronic balance of payments problem”.⁹⁶ These rationalist narratives received rebuke from those of the Centre Left. Jones lamented that Labor had made “policy on the run for the sake of the \$132 million” that uranium sales to France ultimately earned.⁹⁷ And Uren criticised the decision in his autobiography as nothing less than an affront to Labor’s “traditions and history”.⁹⁸ In this fashion, particular policy debates around public enterprises and uranium exports became proxy contests over the ideological soul of the Labor Party.

The anguish exacerbated by this contest was acutely personal. Jones considered the loss of Labor’s soul under Hawke to have precipitated the death of the party as a capable fighting force. In his view, free tertiary education, a key Labor innovation of the 1970s, was the chief example. The 1988 Dawkins reforms to higher education, including the introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme and the amalgamation of universities with technical and teacher training colleges, went unmentioned in Hawke’s *Memoirs*. Jones, by contrast, described it as “the single greatest mistake” of Labor’s 13 years in office.⁹⁹ Having unsuccessfully fought against that reform, Ryan felt it to be a highly personal defeat as former education minister, the “kind of Cabinet defeat that sears the soul deeply”, replete with accusations that the preceding five years of education policy – under her tenure – had been lacking in reform: “this kind of put-down was hard to take”.¹⁰⁰ Possessing as they did a strong ideological commitment to the value of public expenditure on universities, both Jones and Ryan grieved the death of free tertiary education.¹⁰¹ At times, these ideological debates manifested in personal abuse, especially where Uren and Walsh were concerned. Walsh accused Uren of “financially disastrous” policy proposals and “moral humbug”.¹⁰² Uren described Walsh as a man of “intense hatred”, and in an early draft, labelled him as an “appalling drunk”.¹⁰³ In each case, the performers were positioning themselves as the true custodians of the Labor tradition and their opponents as a perversion of Labor values and sensibilities.

Political diaries offered Australians a vivid, if curated, picture of economic rationalism in practice. Blewett’s *Cabinet Diary* (1999) offered an account in which electoral survival dominated the government’s policy vision. Trained as a historian of Edwardian British politics,

⁹⁶ Walsh, *Confessions*, p. 34.

⁹⁷ Jones, *A Thinking Reed*, p. 367.

⁹⁸ Uren, *Straight Left*, p. 380.

⁹⁹ Jones, *A Thinking Reed*, p. 349.

¹⁰⁰ Ryan, *Catching the Waves*, p. 226, p. 254.

¹⁰¹ For a rich account of reforms and changes to higher education in the 1980s and beyond, see Forsyth, *History of the Modern Australian University*, esp. chapter 6.

¹⁰² Walsh, *Confessions*, p. 78, p. 32.

¹⁰³ Uren, *Straight Left*, p. 363.

and hoping to “leave some kind of record behind”, the social security minister decided to resume his earlier habit of keeping a diary when Keating became prime minister in December 1991.¹⁰⁴ For the next 15 months Blewett produced a detailed diary in the tradition of British diarist Richard Crossman, but he also recognised that it would not be “an easy thing to get published”.¹⁰⁵ Posted to London in the mid-1990s as Australia’s High Commissioner, Blewett discussed his diary with Professor Brian Matthews of the Menzies Centre for Australian Studies at the University of London, and his wife Jane Arms, who “in some ways became a kind of agent”.¹⁰⁶ All roads, it seemed, led to Adelaide (Blewett’s home town), where Wakefield Press and its astute publisher Michael Bollen took on the project.¹⁰⁷ Blewett and Bollen excised 70,000 words from the potentially “unwieldy” manuscript, and the Keating government’s quest for survival became the “narrative drive”.¹⁰⁸ Hoping to “improve the attitude of the public” toward its representatives, Blewett depicted ministers functioning with minimal sleep, making policy under intense media scrutiny, and prevailing over personal trials to attend cabinet meetings.¹⁰⁹ But the same ministers also figured as pragmatic, bordering on cynical. He recorded that “politics rather than social concern” dominated his own federal budget submissions in 1992.¹¹⁰ In one meeting of the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC), ministers went soft on “[a] saving that affected only bureaucratic egos”, then becoming fiscally zealous “on measures affecting thousands of ordinary people” in the hope of seeming economically responsible.¹¹¹ This was a picture of Labor as a “catch-all” party whose overriding ambition was to win; as Scalmer and Nathan Hollier put it, these were pages in which “[e]lectoral victory [was] king”.¹¹²

¹⁰⁴ Neal Blewett, phone interview with the author, 26 March 2020.

¹⁰⁵ Blewett, phone interview, 26 March 2020. Its nearest precedents, Peter Howson’s *Diaries* and Clyde Cameron’s *Diaries*, were limited to the perspective of a politician contained by the outer Ministry or the Opposition benches. See Patrick Weller, “A Political Science Professor in Cabinet”, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2000), p. 147; Sean Scalmer and Nathan Hollier, “I, Diarist: Examining Australian Politics from the ‘Inside’”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 55, no. 2 (2009), pp. 170–89. For a discussion of its relationship with the Crossman diaries see Mark McKenna, “‘The Character Business’: Biographical Political Writing in Australia”, in Stuart Macintyre, Lenore Layman and Jenny Gregory (eds.), *A Historian for All Seasons: Essays for Geoffrey Bolton* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2017), pp. 50–53.

¹⁰⁶ Blewett, phone interview, 26 March 2020.

¹⁰⁷ Michael Bollen, phone interview with the author, 29 June 2020.

¹⁰⁸ Bollen, phone interview, 29 June 2020. Also Blewett, phone interview, 26 March 2020; Blewett, *Cabinet Diary*, pp. 1–5.

¹⁰⁹ For instance he records: himself attending a meeting of the ERC immediately following his mother’s death; an extremely unwell Graham Richardson vomiting between answering questions about impropriety in the Senate; and Gareth Evans functioning with just two hours of sleep while managing his ministerial and Senate responsibilities (p. 128). Blewett, *Cabinet Diary*, p. 78, p. 115, p. 128.

¹¹⁰ Blewett, *Cabinet Diary*, p. 69.

¹¹¹ Blewett, *Cabinet Diary*, p. 200.

¹¹² Jaensch, *Hawke–Keating Hijack*, p. 158; Scalmer and Hollier, “I, Diarist”, p. 183.

Collectively, the political life writings of the Hawke and Keating governments offered competing narratives about the ideological and electoral imperatives of policymaking in the 1980s and 1990s. Against the metanarrative of an inspired government acting with popular consensus, several of these texts portrayed a party whose values were in question, and whose traditional core constituency was being taken for granted in an electoral contest focussed on the middle ground. If these books seemed at times to engage in personal squabbling, they were nonetheless engaged in an existential dialogue about the Labor Party. Where other texts pictured Hawke as the “consensus” leader, ideologically alienated ministers such as Jones perceived his leadership as a “Faustian bargain” in which Labor won four successive elections but “lost, if not its soul, then a clear sense of its core beliefs”.¹¹³ Labor’s ideological rupture in the 1980s and 1990s, and the rise of economic rationalism, prompted a flourishing of political life writing from Labor ministers in response.

The Last Bastion

For some, the problem with Hawke’s and Kelly’s metanarratives was not just that they were unambiguously in favour of economic rationalism, it was also that they were unselfconsciously masculine in nature. Australian feminist historians have noted that Labor women made “substantial new gains” in the 1980s, with fifty-three of their number seated in Commonwealth and state parliaments by the end of the decade.¹¹⁴ But women MPs’ experiences of politics were neglected in the popular histories that figures such as Kelly developed. *The End of Certainty* said nothing of Ryan’s role as Labor’s first woman cabinet minister, and referred to the women’s movement only as the “flying wedge of the new age”, whatever that meant.¹¹⁵ Male egos and ambitions were, in that kind of account, the natural order of political affairs. In their life writings, some Labor ministers described and implicated themselves in a more gender-conscious picture of politics. Some men, such as Hayden, would articulate their failures and defeats in explicitly masculine terms. Women, for their part, shared their stories with other women in print because, as Ros Kelly put it, “men have a lot of role models; women don’t have that many”.¹¹⁶ This, I stress, was not unique to the Australian Labor Party, for women parliamentarians globally were turning to the political memoir genre to establish a feminine parliamentary tradition and “create an alternative history that emphasizes female

¹¹³ Jones, *Thinking Reed*, p. 345.

¹¹⁴ Patricia Grimshaw *et al.*, *Creating a Nation* (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble, 1994), p. 308; Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999), p. 262.

¹¹⁵ Kelly, *The End of Certainty*, p. 21.

¹¹⁶ Ros Kelly, interview, 10 September 2020.

perspectives”.¹¹⁷ In Australia, life writing allowed Labor women to repurpose a masculine genre for a feminist audience, asserting on behalf of all Australian women the right to a space in Labor’s conversation with and about itself.

Labor’s women were, by the 1990s, extremely conscious of their absence from the prevailing metanarratives about the party and its history. Having written extensively about Labor women during the Party’s centenary in 1991, and again during its debate on affirmative action targets for preselecting women in 1994, senator Margaret Reynolds decided to produce a book about prominent women in the party’s history.¹¹⁸ Importantly, this project was pitched against the official history of the Labor Party (Ross McMullin’s *Light on the Hill*), in which women were mostly absent: “I realised how fragmented was the story of Australian Labor women. I decided that the record had to be corrected”.¹¹⁹ Reynolds’ book became a collective biography of the many women who had stood for election to Australia’s national and state parliaments. She felt that the book had to “tell the other side of the story, that women were always there often with their men fighting for the same principles of the Labor movement”.¹²⁰ A decade later, Reynolds published her political autobiography, *Living Politics*, with a view to placing herself within that story of Labor women: “I wanted to write the story of my experience of politics as a woman who got involved because of issues that were important to me”.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Amanda Reaume, “Embodying History: The Memoirs of Canadian Female Political Trailblazers”, MA dissertation, University of British Columbia, 2009, p. 2. See also Annie Devenish, “Performing the Political Self: A Study of Identity Making and Self Representation in the Autobiographies of India’s First Generation of Parliamentary Women”, *Women’s History Review*, vol. 22, no. 2 (2013), pp. 280—94.

¹¹⁸ Reynolds, *Last Bastion*, pp. xiii—xiv.

¹¹⁹ Reynolds, *Last Bastion*, p. xiii.

¹²⁰ Margaret Reynolds, oral history interview with Martin Thomas, Canberra, 26 and 27 November 2014, Old Parliament House Oral History Project, NLA, ORAL TRC 6100/92.

¹²¹ Reynolds, *Living Politics*, p. 238.

Feminism was also central to Ryan's decision to write and publish her book. In committing to the project, Ryan decided that it should hinge on what she felt to be an "important story", namely the "breakthrough of feminism into parliamentary politics".¹²² In doing so, she sought to redress the gaps in the historic record as far as she saw it. In *Catching the Waves*, she pointed out that the "historical significance of my entry as the first woman into a Labor Cabinet escaped just about everybody".¹²³ More importantly, though, she recorded the immense effort she exerted to turn women's aspirations into Labor policy in the 1980s:



Figure 6: Susan Ryan signing *Catching the Waves* at the University of Newcastle, 1999. Cae Pattison.

"there was a lot of dismissal of it, and I felt amongst the younger, aspirational corporate types [...] there was very little understanding that the gains were so hard to make".¹²⁴ Margaret Henderson, in a study of the genres of feminist history making, suggested that Ryan's performance in *Catching the Waves* reflected that of a feminist parliamentarian in a "difficult subjective location", caught between the demands of feminist politics and the neoliberal agenda of the Hawke government.¹²⁵

Labor women also used their books to explain to themselves and their readers the challenges of negotiating a male-dominated vocation. Australian publisher and feminist Hilary McPhee, in reviewing Ryan's book in 1999, reiterated that the Labor government had been "a world of blokes and mates" among which women were conspicuous.¹²⁶ Ryan recorded the grudging respect that she earned from factional operatives for her ability to interpret and anticipate numbers in factional and preselection ballots: "'That woman's libber, she can count,' they said".¹²⁷ It also meant modulating her appearance to suit the expectations of her male Labor peers who figured in her account as the "clothes police", full of "unsolicited advice" about hair, make-up and aesthetic presentation.¹²⁸ Ros Kelly, for her part, recalled being told

¹²² Ryan, zoom interview, 14 September 2020.

¹²³ Ryan, *Catching the Waves*, p. 213.

¹²⁴ Ryan, zoom interview, 14 September 2020.

¹²⁵ Margaret Henderson, *Marking Feminist Times: Remembering the Longest Revolution in Australia* (Berlin: Peter Lang and European University Studies, 2006), p. 83.

¹²⁶ Hilary McPhee, "No So Private Ryan", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 August 1999, p. 10.

¹²⁷ Ryan, *Catching the Waves*, p. 152.

¹²⁸ Ryan, *Catching the Waves*, p. 158.

by party operatives to “soften” her presentation and to “lose the image of being the big tough woman”.¹²⁹ She also recorded the sheer awkwardness of her attempts to negotiate the masculine environment of Old Parliament House on her first day as a parliamentarian; the “heavy double doors with their thick glass” and the “enormous green chairs, designed on a heroic scale” all figured as obstacles against women’s seamless entry into the parliamentary space.¹³⁰ These symbols appeared to represent not only the gendered exclusiveness of parliament itself, but also the traditional style of Labor politics in a society that, according to Melanie Nolan, had experienced “increasing contestation” over the sexual division of labour since the 1950s.¹³¹

Long after their retirement from politics, women ministers recalled the ways gender shaped their policymaking experiences. It did not explain everything, of course, and Ryan herself said in an interview for this thesis that she “wasn’t really that conscious of day-to-day sexism”.¹³² Nonetheless, she remained conscious of the gender dynamics that informed these political spaces. Political scientist Carol Johnson suggested that, for successful ministers such as Keating, “alpha maleness was asserted through [...] mastery of economic discourse”.¹³³ In Ryan’s account, the ERC was an especially gendered forum where the “hard men” responsible for the budget would strive to “wear a minister down until resistance [seemed] futile”.¹³⁴ The rationalists’ “irritations” with Ryan were, she felt, “compounded” by her femininity.¹³⁵ Flanked occasionally in ERC meetings by Helen Williams, the first woman departmental secretary in Australia, the pair faced rebukes such as ““Oh, here come the women””.¹³⁶ But men could feel the effects of that gendered dynamic as well. Ryan claimed that Barry Jones “used to get a worse going over” by the ERC, an assessment with which Jones agreed.¹³⁷ Cabinet also appeared as a forum dominated, in Reynolds’ account, by “overgrown schoolboys jostling for attention”.¹³⁸ Blewett recorded in his diary a cabinet debate about Kelly’s *Endangered Species*

¹²⁹ Kelly, *A Passionate Life*, p. 41.

¹³⁰ Kelly, *A Passionate Life*, p. 47, p. 49.

¹³¹ Melanie Nolan, “The High Tide of a Labour Market System: The Australasian Male Breadwinner Model”, *Labour & Industry*, vol. 13, no. 3 (2003), p. 89.

¹³² Ryan, zoom interview, 14 September 2020. For more on the question of parliament as gendered space, see Judith Brett, *Doing Politics: Writing on Public Life* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2021), pp. 87—95.

¹³³ Carol Johnson, “The Gendered Identities of Australian Political leaders: From Hawkie to ScoMo”, in Zareh Ghazarian and Katrina Lee-Koo (eds.), *Gender Politics: Navigating Political Leadership in Australia* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2021), p. 13.

¹³⁴ Ryan, *Catching the Waves*, p. 238, p. 236, p. 256.

¹³⁵ Susan Ryan, radio interview with Ray Naughton, 2BL, 1 January 1996. NAA: C100, 1203792.

¹³⁶ Ryan, zoom interview, 14 September 2020.

¹³⁷ Ryan, *Catching the Waves*, p. 237; Jones, *A Thinking Reed*, p. 363.

¹³⁸ Reynolds, *Living Politics*, p. 148.

Protection Act 1992 in the following terms: “Ros was determined not to appear to be done down by the boys, while the boys were equally determined not to be done down by Ros.”¹³⁹ Asked about this description, Kelly suggested that “if it was ‘the boys’, it was those who had Industry-type portfolios”.¹⁴⁰ She also pointed out that, as the sole woman in cabinet, “everyone was ‘the boys’, basically”.¹⁴¹ Labor policymaking, in these accounts, was a vocation in which power and struggle were refracted through gendered prisms of experience.

Masculinity did other kinds of explanatory work in these accounts. In his autobiography, Hayden described the humiliating experience of resigning as Labor leader in favour of Hawke in February 1983. He wrote that to “surrender is, in its effect, to abase yourself before someone else” and become “discredited and unmanned”.¹⁴² The wounded masculine ego was explicit on the page. But Hayden was all too willing to question Hawke’s manhood in return. Describing an encounter with a naked Hawke at a hotel during the Labor Party national conference in 1988, Hayden wrote: “I couldn’t help thinking how far from impressive were the dimensions of the apparatus which he displayed with such evident pride”.¹⁴³ There were pointed questions about this at Hayden’s book launch in 1996, to which he replied, “I have this tendency to make molehills out of mountains”.¹⁴⁴ Reporting on these exchanges, journalists were in no doubt that such a story was intended to undermine Hawke’s sense of manliness. “In the strange world of the male ego”, Richard Glover wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, “these are moral equivalents.”¹⁴⁵ Though not referring to this anecdote specifically, Loukakis (who enthusiastically supported and published Hayden’s autobiography with HarperCollins) told me in general terms that he encouraged Hayden to “hold nothing back” in any of the “character assessments that are sprinkled throughout the book”, and HarperCollins (along with Hayden himself) sought legal advice before publishing.¹⁴⁶ If Hayden’s jibe at Hawke seemed embittered, it was more specifically an expression of the masculine ways Labor men internalised political power and leadership. Notwithstanding his own progressive commitment to social justice in matters of homosexuality, family planning and single parenthood, Hayden’s

¹³⁹ Blewett, *Cabinet Diary*, p. 246.

¹⁴⁰ Ros Kelly, interview, 10 September 2020.

¹⁴¹ Ros Kelly, interview, 10 September 2020.

¹⁴² Hayden, *Hayden*, pp. 362–63.

¹⁴³ Hayden, *Hayden*, p. 499.

¹⁴⁴ Bill Hayden quoted in Sally Loane, “Hayden: Wit and a Mailed Fist”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 April 1996, p. 4. For press commentary on this barb, see Doug Aiton and Adrian Rollins, “Revenge of the Drover’s Dog – Conversations”, *Sunday Age*, 21 April 1996, p. 1; Michael Gawenda, “Have We No Shame?”, *Sunday Age*, 26 April 1996, p. 13; Alan Ramsey, “All in All, Not a Fair Cop, Bill”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 April 1996, p. 11; Paul Daley, “Naked Truths About a Parliamentary Member”, *Sunday Age*, 7 April 1996, p. 6.

¹⁴⁵ Richard Glover, “Small Talk no Joking Matter – News Review”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 April 1996, p. 16.

¹⁴⁶ Loukakis, email correspondence, 7 October 2020; Hayden, *Hayden*, p. xiii.

own masculine emotional economy was tied up with power in physical and political terms.¹⁴⁷ Paradoxically, Hayden was doing much the same work that Ryan was doing, which was to make gendered identities visible in stories about the recent political past. Their autobiographies represented a challenge to stories about the 1980s and 1990s in which patriarchal power was both everywhere and invisible.

“We Lost the Battle”

At the heart of these divergent accounts of the Hawke and Keating governments lay a preoccupation with modern Labor’s relationship with the political process itself. Craig Wilcox suggested that the formalised factions of the 1980s “reduced the number of arguments about policy and promotions while also increasing their bitterness”.¹⁴⁸ Scalmer and Hollier have elsewhere argued that Australian political memoirs and diaries have had the effect of “reproducing” and “reinforcing” the public’s negative perceptions of political processes.¹⁴⁹ In their accounts, former ministers questioned the nature of the parliamentary process under Labor and the rise of formalised factions within the party itself.

If Hayden considered his downfall a personal and gendered experience, he also understood it in the context of increasingly rampant factionalism within the Labor Party. In *Hayden: An Autobiography*, he confronted Graham Richardson’s triumphal version of history head-on and mocked his reputation as a factional master. Recalling a dinner with Richardson in the early Hawke period, Hayden said that the faction leader gleefully offered “an account of the little ploys and plots his team set in my path”.¹⁵⁰ If Hayden imagined himself an honourable Labor figure, it was in direct contrast to the dishonourable factional manipulators he saw around him. “They won because they were better at what they were doing” Hayden wrote, “which was not quite the thing I was doing”.¹⁵¹ With a keen eye to broader trends, he remarked that “[Hawke’s] prime ministership prospered under [the NSW Right’s] patronage, until they decided it was time for a change”.¹⁵² Hayden’s autobiography therefore constituted a vehicle with which to destabilise narratives of a golden age, emphasising instead the rise of national factions and their use of relentless, unyielding tactics to make and unmake the Labor parliamentary leadership.

¹⁴⁷ Hayden, *Hayden*, pp. 576—77.

¹⁴⁸ Craig Wilcox, “Richardson, Graham Frederick (1949 -)”, *Biographical Dictionary of the Senate: Online Edition*, 2017, http://biography.senate.gov.au/richardson-graham-frederick/#_edn01, accessed 4 September 2020.

¹⁴⁹ Scalmer and Hollier, “I, Diarist”, p. 188.

¹⁵⁰ Hayden, *Hayden*, p. 366.

¹⁵¹ Hayden, *Hayden*, p. 371.

¹⁵² Hayden, *Hayden*, p. 369.

For many of his colleagues, factionalism was both a central feature of their experience of government and a challenge to Labor's fortunes. In the introduction to his diary, Evans claimed that the "factional system, for better or worse [...] is the backdrop to almost everything that happens within the Australian Labor Party".¹⁵³ Jones saw factionalism as the preferred "instrument of internal management in the [Labor Party] during the Hawke years".¹⁵⁴ Many nominated the NSW Right as the chief cause of entrenched factions, often citing Richardson's book *Whatever it Takes* as evidence of that group's approach to politics. However, these memoirs and autobiographies collectively indicated that other ministers understood their politics in faction-specific terms too. Uren, a veteran of the NSW Left, wrote specifically of "the Left struggle", reflecting a form of factional behaviour predicated on moral rectitude if not numerical success.¹⁵⁵ And sub-factions within those larger power blocs mattered a great deal too. In *Straight Left*, Uren attacked his Victorian factional colleague Brian Howe, then-deputy prime minister, for "[throwing in his] lot with the economic rationalists" and undermining "commitment and solidarity within the Left".¹⁵⁶ Dwyer recalled that the "animosity" in this narrative was the product of a larger "soft/hard Left divide" in the 1980s.¹⁵⁷ Further, Uren's conception of policymaking often amounted to a zero-sum contest between the Right and the Left. Recalling a passionate ministry debate about shareholder dividend imputation (better known as franking credits) in 1985, he summarised the meeting in these terms: "We lost the battle".¹⁵⁸ Making good policy appeared to depend above all else on the triumph of one faction or even sub-faction over another. In this particular instance, policy was made by the national Right prevailing over the Left's commitment to redistributive values.

It was significant that a large number of these memoirists were members of the small Centre Left faction, mainly representing states such as South Australia, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. Though it often voted with the Right on economic matters, Mike Steketee rightly noted that it "included many of the figures who made the Hawke Cabinets especially talented", such as Hayden, Ryan, Walsh, Blewett and Dawkins.¹⁵⁹ Noteworthy for producing some of the most capable ministers, this faction also produced the bulk of Hawke–Keating Labor's political memoir output. Hayden, the vanquished leader,

¹⁵³ Evans, *Cabinet Diary*, p. xvii.

¹⁵⁴ Jones, *A Thinking Reed*, p. 348.

¹⁵⁵ Uren, *Straight Left*, p. 349.

¹⁵⁶ Uren, *Straight Left*, p. 369.

¹⁵⁷ Dwyer, interview, 20 February 2020.

¹⁵⁸ Uren, *Straight Left*, p. 378.

¹⁵⁹ Mike Steketee, "Labor in Power, 1983–96", in John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre (eds.), *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001), p. 146.

considered the Centre Left a safe house for the “moderates occupying the middle ground”, offering protection from the “predators” of the ascendant Right.¹⁶⁰ Jones considered the faction a “defensive combination of talented individuals”.¹⁶¹ Blewett’s diary pictured it partly as a “social gathering, with little serious political discussion”, partly as a vehicle for individual “promotion”, and partly as an “incubus” that preserved life separate from the other major factions.¹⁶² All agreed that it housed substantial ministerial talent, and that it held the balance of power inside the caucus under Hawke and Keating. These authors offered readers an image of non-tribal, ideologically flexible but intellectually rigorous political conduct.

What, in the end, did these ministers think about the factional structure that held the Hawke–Keating government together? Confronted with this question, several ministers judged that it acted as a force for stability in the 1980s and 1990s. In Ros Kelly’s view, faction leaders were gifted in their capacity to “corral the troops”.¹⁶³ Comparing the Hawke government with the Whitlam precedent, Kerin evaluated that faction leaders like Richardson ultimately “made it a bit easier for Hawke and Keating to govern”.¹⁶⁴ By way of contrast, Jones saw the rise of entrenched factionalism as a cause for concern.¹⁶⁵ Ultimately, it is clear that the hardened factional system of the Hawke–Keating period contributed to a relative stability within the government. Nonetheless, when ideological distinctions between the factions waned, they became mere “employment mechanisms” for operatives and MPs.¹⁶⁶ Over time, the discipline and rigidity of the factional system limited internal opportunities for philosophical discussion and debate, which ultimately found other outlets, including autobiography.

Confessing Frustration and Failure

The chief virtue of political life writing was that it enabled ministers to situate themselves within the complex and countervailing political forces of the period. In doing so, they were able to take stock of the government’s policy legacies in self-reflective and critical ways. Autobiography is a literary mode steeped in a tradition of introspection and confession. Indeed, literary theorists and historians recognise the *Confessions* of St. Augustine (c. 397) and of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1782) as landmarks in the genre’s evolution, the latter especially so given

¹⁶⁰ Hayden, *Hayden*, p. 497.

¹⁶¹ Jones, *A Thinking Reed*, p. 348.

¹⁶² Blewett, *Cabinet Diary*, p. 56, p. 66.

¹⁶³ Ros Kelly, interview, 10 September 2020.

¹⁶⁴ Kerin, phone interview, 2 September 2020.

¹⁶⁵ Jones, zoom interview, 26 August 2020.

¹⁶⁶ See Rodney Cavalier, *Power Crisis: The Self-Destruction of a State Labor Party* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 49–58.

its commercial popularity.¹⁶⁷ Historically, Australian political life writing offered sanitised public narratives with little in the way of introspection, but they seemed more revelatory and confessional in the late twentieth century, largely due to this particular cohort of Labor authors acknowledging their frustration and, in some instances, their policy failure.¹⁶⁸ In doing so, they not only added new insights to public understandings of recent political history; they also confronted and interrogated the triumphal metanarratives about the Hawke–Keating period. As Loukakis puts it, politicians “welcomed the chance these forms offered to ‘set the record straight’”.¹⁶⁹

Surveying the writings of his colleagues, Blewett concluded that readers were “unlikely to find many revelations of the private self”.¹⁷⁰ But there was some earnest personal retrospection. In 2020 Tickner published an adoption memoir called *Ten Doors Down*, partly because he knew that discovering and meeting his birth parents while serving as a government minister made for “a cracker of a story”, and partly because he wanted to “broaden people’s understanding” of his life and its circumstances.¹⁷¹ Both Hayden and Button recorded their experiences of paternal bereavement during their political lives. Button, whose son David had died of a heroin overdose, recalled falling “into an emotional morass, too much of it self-pity”.¹⁷² Hayden, whose daughter was killed by a motor vehicle, found it easier to write than speak about her death given the old cultural precept “that ‘real men don’t cry’”.¹⁷³ Loukakis recalled encouraging Hayden to record his “human feelings at times of distress or failure, private or public”; describing the book later, Blewett likened it to “a psychiatrist’s couch”, such was its self-revelatory scope.¹⁷⁴ But even in Blewett’s own diary, the sudden death of his mother could not help but manifest on the page.¹⁷⁵ These personal and emotional narratives did not dominate media headlines, but they did confirm an existing trend toward a highly personalised and “confessional” mode of parliamentarians’ discourse in Australia.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, even if these participants maintained that the personal sacrifices were worth the policy successes, their autobiographies and memoirs undercut the triumphal histories of

¹⁶⁷ See Roy Pascal, *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (London: Routledge, 2016 [1960]), pp. 21–22; Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), p. 146.

¹⁶⁸ Scalmer, “Rise of the Insider”, pp. 87–91.

¹⁶⁹ Loukakis, email correspondence, 7 October 2020.

¹⁷⁰ Neal Blewett, “No Secret Selves?”, *Meanjin*, vol. 61, no. 1 (2002), p. 18.

¹⁷¹ Tickner, zoom interview, 29 June 2020.

¹⁷² Button, *As it Happened*, p. 4.

¹⁷³ Hayden, *Hayden*, p. 118.

¹⁷⁴ Loukakis, email correspondence, 7 October 2020; Blewett, phone interview, 26 March 2020.

¹⁷⁵ Blewett, *Cabinet Diary*, p. 78.

¹⁷⁶ Scalmer, “Rise of the Insider”, pp. 87–91. See also McKenna, “‘Character Business’”, pp. 65–70.

Richardson and Hawke, for whom the exercise of power seemed all-consuming, and political success synonymous with personal success.¹⁷⁷

Even if most of Labor's life writing was public rather than private in essence, that in itself could still be transgressive in the 1990s. Before publishing his *Cabinet Diary*, Blewett forewarned the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet as a matter of courtesy. Government lawyers advised the department that, although the book might technically contravene the *Crimes Act* 1914, successful prosecution would be "highly unlikely".¹⁷⁸ The secretary, Max Moore-Wilton, issued Blewett a "stern" and "severe" letter of caution, but the diarist remained "resolute" about publishing, and enjoyed his publisher's support.¹⁷⁹ Blewett's *Diary* emboldened other ministers to push back against any lingering conventions of secrecy. Having preserved all of his own cabinet documents, Tickner used them to tell the story of native title in his own memoir. "I knew that writing using cabinet materials was naughty", he recalled, "[b]ut once Neal Blewett had given a ball-by-ball description of what happened in a cabinet meeting [...] I reckon there was some room for me to make a contribution to the commonwealth criminal statues".¹⁸⁰ By challenging cabinet confidentiality in this manner, Blewett, Tickner and others were ensuring a space for disclosure in a culture formerly governed by conventions of secrecy.

Life writing enabled former ministers to reflect on and reveal the frustrations and failures in their political lives, particularly those which they felt had been products of the ideological, factional or gendered environment of the day. Though highly critical of Hawke's leadership in *A Thinking Reed*, Jones located the origins of many policy failures within his own performance, and particularly his inability to compete in the factional and masculine environment of the ERC. In his own telling, he was often "ambushed" and his policies "destroyed" by colleagues.¹⁸¹ In 1988, hoping to secure greater funding for science initiatives in the budget, Jones found himself ailing with an eye affliction, "acute photophobia", and asked for a deferral of his submission; the famously harsh ERC refused. The result, he believed, was a weak physical and intellectual performance, followed by a myopic funding commitment.¹⁸² More

¹⁷⁷ This is not to say that either Hawke or Richardson entirely excluded their private selves from their memoirs. Indeed, Hawke wrote revealingly about the impact of his daughter's personal crisis in 1984 upon his own political and personal wellbeing. See Hawke, *Memoirs*, pp. 263—78.

¹⁷⁸ Robert Orr, Letter of Legal Advice to Martin Bonsey, 11 May 1998. NAA: A1209, 1998/1219.

¹⁷⁹ Blewett, phone interview, 26 March 2020; Bollen, phone interview, 29 June 2020; Letter from Max Moore-Wilton to Neal Blewett, 9 June 1998. NAA: A1209, 1998/1219.

¹⁸⁰ Tickner, zoom interview, 29 June 2020.

¹⁸¹ Jones, *A Thinking Reed*, p. 358.

¹⁸² Jones, *A Thinking Reed*, p. 386, p. 387.

widely, Jones described his vision of politics as impaired by his incapacities as a political operative and factional player: “I acknowledge having failed to network adequately with my colleagues and with rare exceptions did not cultivate journalists in the press gallery and the ABC. I paid a personal price. More seriously, science paid a price too.”¹⁸³ This was the kind of failure he had reflected on in our interview. Failure, in his conception, was the product of his incapacity to negotiate successfully the ideological, factional and gendered dynamics of the political landscape around him.

The social cost and occasional failure of economic reform in the 1980s weighed on some ministers’ minds, and political life writing gave them opportunities to work through those personal doubts. Button’s writings exemplify this process. His travel memoir, *Flying the Kite* (1994) (replete with humorous travel stories that he had been “storing up [...] for years”), was published with Random House in 1994 as a low-cost “working class-style paperback”.¹⁸⁴ By his own account, it was “cheap” but “not nasty”.¹⁸⁵ Launching that book, prime minister Keating spoke of its “lightness of touch” but “gravity of purpose” in celebrating the new Australia.¹⁸⁶ The book was, in Button’s words, an attempt to “document change in the 1980s”, specifically “the growth of confidence in Australia”.¹⁸⁷ Interviewed for this research, Button’s son James (an author and journalist) mused that “institutional loyalty” to the incumbent administration might have shaped the book.¹⁸⁸ *Flying the Kite* sold well (allegedly 26,000 copies), but offered little insight into the human costs of that newfound confidence.¹⁸⁹

The fuller autobiographical mode demanded greater self-awareness on Button’s part. Terminating his contract with Random House in 1996, he signed a new commission with Text Publishing in Melbourne, and began writing his autobiography, *As it Happened* (1998).¹⁹⁰

¹⁸³ Jones, *A Thinking Reed*, p. 393.

¹⁸⁴ James Button, zoom interview with the author, 3 November 2020; Ian Henderson, “Labor’s True Believers Read Between the Lines”, *Canberra Times*, 12 December 1994, p. 3.

¹⁸⁵ John Button, Speech at the Launch of *Flying the Kite*, Windsor Hotel, Melbourne, 14 October 1994. NAA: M3983, 1264854.

¹⁸⁶ Paul Keating, Speech at the Launch of *Flying the Kite*, Windsor Hotel, Melbourne, 14 October 1994. NAA: M3983, 1264854.

¹⁸⁷ Button, Launch of *Flying the Kite*. NAA: M3983, 1264854.

¹⁸⁸ James Button, zoom interview with the author, 3 November 2020.

¹⁸⁹ John Button, “Writing Political Autobiographies”, in Tracey Arklay, John Nethercote and John Wanna (eds.), *Australian Political Lives: Chronicling Political Careers and Administrative Histories* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), p. 98.

¹⁹⁰ John Button, Letter to Jane Palfreyman, 28 February 1996. State Library of Victoria (hereafter SLV), Australian Manuscripts Collection, Papers of John Button, MS 13728, Series 1, Subseries 4; Memorandum of Agreement between John Button and Text Publishing, 26 April 1996. SLV, Papers of John Button, MS 13728, Series 1, Subseries 11, File B. The title was almost certainly an allusion to British Labour prime minister Clement Attlee’s memoir of the same name. Clement Atlee, *As it Happened: An Autobiography* (London: Heinemann, 1954).

Button's son James described Text's publisher Michael Heyward as "interventionist in the right ways".¹⁹¹ Heyward encouraged the elder Button to include a variety of stories, regardless of whether they vindicated his policies or otherwise.¹⁹² The former minister, by his own admission, found the book "pretty honest" and "hard [...] to write".¹⁹³ He wrote wistfully about the impact of tariff reductions and structural adjustment on Australia's Textiles, Clothing and Footwear (TCF) industries, using one visiting European businessman as a metonym of local failure: "There was not much I could show a discerning visitor like Mr Benetton. The investment cheque remained in his pocket".¹⁹⁴ If anything, the unsigned cheque was a symbol of the untold lost manufacturing opportunities for Australian TCF workers in the new free trade political economy. Simple anecdotes like this one communicated policy failure and a personal sense of responsibility. The former minister later explained that good political autobiographies, in his view, offered "a personal but more rounded" account of any particular government.¹⁹⁵ James Button recounted to me a conversation between his wife May and his father: "she asked him what's the hardest thing he ever had to do in politics, and he said, 'telling textile workers they were going to lose their jobs'. And then he didn't say anything else".¹⁹⁶ Despite a strong sense of pride in his successes in reforming the steel and car manufacturing industries, his account of TCF industries reflected personal frustration and the social cost of economic reform. *As it Happened* sold fewer copies than the earlier travel memoir, but still more than enough to be a significant publication (between 12,000 and 14,000 copies).¹⁹⁷

It wasn't always the case that publishers prodded ministers to admit frustration or failure. Having written an 800-page manuscript, Kerin sought advice from the ANU Press before printing with Melbourne's Analysis and Policy Observatory. As he put it, "I didn't think it was commercially publishable".¹⁹⁸ The tome recorded Kerin's successful reforms in the Queensland sugar industry, and the enduring value of the government's investments in industry research and development. Nonetheless, his chapters recorded his bitter experience with specific policy issues, not least of all the collapse of the Reserve Price Scheme (RSP) (designed in the 1960s to protect against weak commodity prices) and its impact on the wool industry in

¹⁹¹ James Button, zoom interview, 3 November 2020.

¹⁹² Michael Heyward, Letter to John Button, 24 October 1997. SLV, Papers of John Button, MS 13728, Series 1, Subseries 4.

¹⁹³ John Button, radio interview with Phillip Adams, Late Night Live, ABC Radio, 27 August 1998. NAA: C100, 1620638.

¹⁹⁴ Button, *As it Happened*, p. 342.

¹⁹⁵ Button, "Writing Political Autobiographies", p. 99.

¹⁹⁶ John Button, zoom interview, 3 November 2020.

¹⁹⁷ Button, "Writing Political Autobiographies", p. 98.

¹⁹⁸ Kerin, phone interview, 2 September 2020.

the late 1980s. Though regulated by government legislation, in 1987 Kerin devolved more power over the RPS to the industry peak body, the Australian Wool Corporation, taking what he described as the “economically rational freer market approach”.¹⁹⁹ That decision, he later said in an interview about his autobiography, was his “biggest mistake”.²⁰⁰ The reserve price grew to an unsustainable peak in 1990, at which point the scheme collapsed, triggering a “train wreck” within the industry.²⁰¹ That industry-specific crisis – a flooded market with no interested buyers – was perceived by some as “one of the worst mistakes of the Hawke era”, a failure to change the culture of primary producers, and indeed to oversee properly the maturation of the industry in a deregulated economy.²⁰² (Though he didn’t write about it in the book, Kerin also perceived his short tenure as Treasurer from June to December 1991 as a political failure.)

These autobiographies also pictured policy failure as the product of prime ministerial hubris. The removal of many financial controls in the 1980s meant that monetary policy became a less predictable instrument with which to influence wider economic activity. According to Button, at the end of “the indulgent 1980s”, Labor placed too much faith in monetary policy, though “[n]obody seemed to have much idea” about its effects in the deregulated economy.²⁰³ Hawke and Keating were, in his view, directly responsible for the high interest rates that led to recession in 1990: “I was seriously pissed off with these two men. It was mutual and compounded by the fact that they were seriously pissed off with each other”.²⁰⁴ In Button’s account, the climax of the dramatic history of the Hawke government came with the 1990s recession, induced by punishing interest rates imposed by the prime minister, treasurer and Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA), with minimal input from cabinet. Conscious of the fact that Hawke had largely airbrushed the recession from history in his *Memoirs*, Button wrote: “He must have believed it couldn’t happen under his prime ministership”.²⁰⁵ In Button’s version of Labor’s history, the government began to atrophy in the late 1980s, driven in part by clumsy monetary policy and in part by a corrosive and distracting personality contest.

¹⁹⁹ Kerin, *The Way I Saw It*, p. 230.

²⁰⁰ Kerin, phone interview, 2 September 2020.

²⁰¹ Kerin, *The Way I Saw it*, p. 253.

²⁰² Kelly, *End of Certainty*, p. 642.

²⁰³ Button, *On the Loose*, p. 72; Button, *As it Happened*, p. 327.

²⁰⁴ Button, *As it Happened*, p. 331.

²⁰⁵ Button, *As it Happened*, p. 337.

Even for the strongest proponents of economic rationalism, Labor's legacy could be interpreted as one of personal and collective failure. In *Confessions of a Failed Finance Minister*, Walsh offered a rise-and-fall portrayal of the Hawke government. The book conceptualised the politics of the 1980s as a struggle for fiscal prudence that was briefly won, and then ultimately lost in the early 1990s. Walsh's thought was that his was a story of struggle but not success: "the substance of it is that the government didn't do all the things I wanted".²⁰⁶ When published, the book's idiosyncratic title attracted much attention. Launching the book at the National Press Club in April 1995, Hayden said, "*Confessions of a Failed Finance Minister* is misnamed, but it is an excellent work".²⁰⁷ For Walsh, the title had alliterative as well as self-deprecatory potential, but it clearly reflected an anxiety that the "Balmain Basket Weavers" of the Left were now directing public policy under Keating, signifying his government's potential failure to "change permanently the nation's political/economic culture".²⁰⁸ "[I]f we have failed", he declared dramatically at the launch, "[then] the 1980s was time wasted".²⁰⁹ Despite the battles he had won against left-wing ministers such as Uren to preserve "fiscal rectitude", Walsh shared with Uren a profound pessimism about the final meaning and policy legacy of the Hawke–Keating Labor administration. Both narratives suggested that their efforts to shape Labor policy and philosophy had ended in failure.

Others felt that the preoccupation with economic reform had minimised the space and time available for other significant policy agendas. In *Incorrigible Optimist* (2017), Evans discussed his long ministerial career, pursuing "economic efficiencies" and making Australia a "good international citizen".²¹⁰ One of the core themes of his earlier *Cabinet Diary*, though, was the death of legal and constitutional reform under Hawke. Like Blewett, Evans had to take into account the material concerns of his publishers, who preferred a "very short" diary to a long one.²¹¹ In cutting the manuscript, he decided to bookend it with entries about the embattled High Court judge Lionel Murphy, former attorney general under Whitlam and source of much controversy in the 1980s. Though "compelling [...] from a writer's point of view", it was also a prescient frame, reflecting his own thwarted reformist aspirations as attorney-general (1983–

²⁰⁶ Peter Walsh, oral history interview with Daniel Connell, Canberra, 18 and 19 August 2010, Old Parliament House Oral History Project, NLA, ORAL TRC 6100/28.

²⁰⁷ Bill Hayden, Speech at the Launch of *Confessions*, National Press Club, Canberra, 3 April 1995, National Press Club luncheon series, NLA, ORAL TRC 4484.

²⁰⁸ Walsh, *Confessions*, p. 251, p., 269; Walsh, Launch of *Confessions*, NLA, ORAL TRC 4484.

²⁰⁹ Walsh, Launch of *Confessions*, NLA, ORAL TRC 4484

²¹⁰ Evans, *Incorrigible Optimist*, p. 88, p. 109.

²¹¹ Evans, zoom interview, 17 June 2020.

84).²¹² Interviewed for this research, he recalled the “huge agenda of unfinished Whitlam/Murphy business” and a host of new initiatives (a Bill of Rights foremost among them), all of which “ebbed and slipped away” in the early life of the Hawke government.²¹³ Evans is today one of the most staunch proponents of the Hawke and Keating governments and their legacy, but remains aggrieved at the failure of law reform: “I still lament the extent to which the bottom dropped out of the law reform market with my demise”.²¹⁴ Evans’s diary was, in large part, an account of the triumph of economics and pragmatism over activist law reform, a triumph that was personally disappointing for the diarist.

Labor’s memoirs and autobiographies confronted and contested triumphal metanarratives of success. For Blewett and for Evans, the cabinet diary appealed as a genre because it resisted the perils of hindsight and certainty.²¹⁵ Ministers recorded their disappointments during their time in government, and some explicitly grieved the loss of the traditional values and tenets that had driven the labour movement up to the 1980s. For traditionalists within the Hawke–Keating ministries, this was an administration that contradicted the party’s social democratic instincts. For the pragmatists and economic rationalists of the Right and Centre Left, the 1980s was a period of strong economic management that that steadily decayed and deteriorated into fiscal weakness in the 1990s in response to the recession. In either case, these accounts contested the great-man triumphalism or back-room enthusiasm of the Hawke–Keating–(Paul) Kelly versions of modern Labor’s history.

Conclusion

The leading figures of the Hawke and Keating Labor governments were largely committed to the view that their administration had been historic and transformative. In their books and in discussions for this research, ministers maintained an exceptionalist narrative in which Hawke and Keating had modernised their party and the country. But Labor’s political life writing boom was also a product of uncertainty and upheaval rather than triumph. More specifically, the Labor memoir arose as a response to, and in some cases a reaction against, prevailing grand narratives of triumph and success. Even as they celebrated their reforms, ministers reflected on ideological discontinuity and public policy errors. Women rejected the absence of their voices

²¹² Evans, zoom interview, 17 June 2020.

²¹³ Evans, zoom interview, 17 June 2020.

²¹⁴ Evans, zoom interview, 17 June 2020.

²¹⁵ Neal Blewett, “The Personal Writings of Politicians”, in Tracey Arklay, John Nethercote and John Wanna (eds.), *Australian Political Lives: Chronicling Political Careers and Administrative Histories* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), p. 94.

from blindly masculine triumphalism by writing themselves into the history of Hawke–Keating Labor. Ministers also reflected upon the rise of entrenched national factions in the Labor caucus. In each direction, these authors offered a challenge to the less-reflective, less critical versions of Labor’s legacy. Whether these books were purchased in large quantities or read only by a select few, they contributed to the existential debate about Labor’s ethos and purpose through various channels of communication, including newsprint and television broadcasts. At one level, the launches and speeches that accompanied these books were ephemeral; at another, they facilitated the more profound reflections that the authors sought to communicate.

The personal and the political were inextricably connected in the confessional form of the Labor memoir or autobiography. This cohort of authors deployed stories of their personal failure and disillusionment to diagnose key challenges within their party. For Uren and for Jones, the failure to refashion public policy under Hawke was a symptom of the party’s new neoliberal direction and its abandonment of traditional socialist or social democratic values. Hayden associated his downfall as Labor leader with the rise of factional manipulation of the parliamentary party. For Evans, the failure of law reform revealed the absence of a spirit so characteristic of the earlier Whitlam Labor government, though his commitment to economic reform was unyielding. Though they perceived themselves and their administration as exceptional by Australian standards, their books did not unquestioningly propagate stories of a golden age of politics under Hawke and Keating. Instead, they crafted narratives that enabled them better to comprehend the ideological and institutional changes through which they had lived, and to which they had contributed. For them, as for so many other memoirists and autobiographers, the best way to “make meaning of the past was to inhabit it” for a second time.²¹⁶

Ryan was certainly wrong to claim in 1999, at the beginning of *Catching the Waves*, that “the high tide of economic rationalism [was] out”, for economic rationalism survived many a long year afterwards.²¹⁷ But the kinds of anti-neoliberal narratives that she and others advanced in their political memoirs did eventually find some purchase among the public. Keynesian policies were deployed at moments of macroeconomic stress during the Global Recession 2008–09 and the COVID-19 recession 2020 by both major parties. By the late 2010s, neoliberal policy narratives were deemed by James Walter and Carolyn Holbrook to be in “historical transition”, with even former high priests of economic rationalism declaring the

²¹⁶ Mark McKenna, *An Eye for Eternity: The Life of Manning Clark* (Carlton: Miegunyah Press, 2011), p. 640.

²¹⁷ Ryan, *Catching the Waves*, p. ix.

dogmatic free market project to be dead.²¹⁸ And when Whitlam died in 2014, it was his administration that would be lionised by eulogists as the “textbook case of reform trumping management”.²¹⁹ We are left, then, with bifurcated imaginings of Labor under Hawke and Keating. For much of the public as for many former ministers, distance from events made the heart grow fonder. The pages of ministerial memoirs told a markedly different story, and provided much grist to the mill for the historical transition that Walter and Holbrook have described.

²¹⁸ Walter and Holbrook, “Policy Narratives in Historical Transition”, pp. 221—36.

²¹⁹ Noel Pearson quoted in ABC News (Australia), “In Full: Noel Pearson Remembers Gough Whitlam”, *YouTube*, 5 November 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JsXmYHiuJ8s>, accessed 9 January 2023. For more on the symbolism of Whitlam’s funeral service see Bongiorno, *Dreamers and Schemers*, pp. 1—3.

SNAPSHOT 3

The Papers are Closed

Oral histories are more than just “a means of filling gaps in extant documentary records”.¹ But they do take on a deeply urgent quality in the absence of accessible papers and archives. In the chapter that follows, I have relied heavily on two oral history interviews with the individuals at the centre of the account I offer. That reliance was due not to the total absence of papers, but to their inaccessibility.

John Edwards and Don Watson were both advisers/speechwriters in prime minister Paul Keating’s office in the 1990s. Both men were already distinguished writers before joining Keating’s team, the former as a journalist and monetary policy specialist, and the latter as an historian, biographer and political satirist. Both eventually published portraits of the man for whom they had worked. Watson’s, in particular, was a cultural landmark, and has recently been described by James Walter as “the most extensive testimony of a historian working ‘inside the tent’” of politics.² Both authors preserved a wealth of papers relating to these biographical labours.

Edwards’ papers, housed at the NLA, contain thirty boxes of “research files”, “cabinet documents”, and “diaries and notebooks detailing interviews” with Keating and others for the book. In 2005 Watson followed suit by donating a collection of papers relating to his acclaimed *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart: A Portrait of Paul Keating PM* (2002). In addition to “loose notes”, “letters”, and “tapes”, those papers contain no less than 19 instalments of a diary that Watson kept while working as Keating’s speechwriter from 1992 to 1996. There are also papers relating to the publishing process, the book launch, and most tantalisingly, “correspondence with Paul Keating” about the book.

Seven months before the onset of COVID-19, I began to seek access to both collections. The pandemic rendered it largely impossible for Watson, a Melbourne resident, to visit the NLA through 2020 and inspect the papers in order to re-evaluate the restrictions. When our research correspondence resumed in earnest in early 2021, it became clear that the very

¹ Robert Crawford and Matthew Bailey, “Cousins Once Removed? Revisiting the Relationship Between Oral History and Business History”, *Enterprise & Society*, vol. 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 7.

² James Walter, “Historians: Bridging the Divide with Policymakers”, in Carolyn Holbrook, Lyndon Megaritty and David Lowe (eds.), *Lessons from History: Leading Historians Tackle Australia’s Greatest Challenges* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2022), p. 43.

sensitive personal papers would remain closed. For his part, Edwards had intended to inspect his papers before opening them to me and other researchers, but again, pressing deadlines and pandemic lockdowns got in the way.

I was enormously grateful, then, to be able to conduct research interviews with Edwards and Watson. At the same time, I worried that the quality of the eventual chapter would depend on the quality of these interviews. That stress had the potential to disrupt rather than enhance the interview experience. Early on in my interview with Watson, I caught myself watching the time and making rash judgements about how and where I could use each piece of the testimony as it unfolded in front of me. It almost felt that I had to pack as much into the hour as I possibly could. But a moment of self-awareness was helpful here. I had to make the conscious decision to set aside other concerns and immerse myself in a conversation that, given the ongoing pandemic (this was April 2021), I was fortunate to be having at all.

There were other good reasons for immersing myself in the conversation. Alistair Thomson has described the experience of interviewing a World War I veteran who had carefully honed and shaped his stories over time, and who would “retell” old stories “with great glee and with little regard for my questions”.³ Don Watson seemed a little like that soldier, though without the glee, and with some regard for my questions. He has for the past decade rehearsed his version of what happened to his friendship with Keating in the wake of *Recollections*, including in a long afterword to a special tenth anniversary edition of the book.⁴ I had listened to a recording of Watson’s 2002 book launch, and watched a 2012 public conversation with journalist James Button at the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne. There were recurring metaphors and familiar figures of speech in these exchanges. I watched Button’s attempts to dig deeper into those stories than Watson perhaps wanted to go. “But what was it, Don?” Button implores in the middle of the conversation.⁵

Knowing that the papers were closed to me, I hoped to disrupt some of Watson’s familiar stories. I asked some predictable questions, and then pursued others that seemed to have been rarely asked of him. The interview did unearth some information that I had not gleaned elsewhere, and which I have used in the following chapter. But I also knew, as I left the Fitzroy

³ Alistair Thomson, “The Use and Abuse of Oral History”, p. 29.

⁴ Don Watson, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart: A Portrait of Paul Keating PM*, 10th anniversary ed. (North Sydney: Vintage, 2011), pp. 733—43.

⁵ James Button in WheelerCentre, “Don Watson”, *YouTube*, [published online 23 January 2015], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3HyHeQQ0Ro&t=502s>, accessed 15 January 2021.

café where we met, that Watson had once again been master of his own performance. Perhaps at some time in the future, the papers will disrupt the script again.

CHAPTER 3

COOL HEADS AND BLEEDING HEARTS

Advisers, Speechwriters and the Right to Write

When former prime minister and treasurer Paul Keating joined journalist Kerry O'Brien on stage at the Sydney Opera House in October 2015, the pair were received with rapturous applause. Taking their seats, Keating and O'Brien began to discuss the product they were there to promote, a book of "free-wheeling conversations" between the pair produced as a sequel to their four-part television series (2013).¹ O'Brien began by noting that, unlike so many others, Keating refused to write a complete political memoir or autobiography, and had chosen partly to "relinquish control" over the "chronicling of [his] place in history" by collaborating with others. "Why do it this way?" the journalist enquired.² The question was loaded with possibilities. Indeed, the lingering feud with former prime minister Bob Hawke occasionally caused Keating to wield the prospect of a memoir like a weapon. "If I get around to writing a book", he had warned the media in 2010, in responding to a Hawke biography written by Blanche d'Alpuget, Hawke's wife, "I will be telling the truth; the whole truth."³ Though publishers were reportedly "licking their lips" in anticipation, no such memoir has ever been forthcoming.⁴ Responding to O'Brien's question, Keating dismissed the "self-serving" nature of autobiography, which would inescapably "reflect your view of the world, the rationality of your thought processes". By way of conclusion, he provocatively declared, "anyone who's any good never wrote about themselves."⁵ For anyone who remembered *The Hawke Memoirs* (1994), the inference was sharp.

Keating, of course, continued to carefully curate his public legacy, but in the absence of an autobiography or memoir, his former advisers played an important role in shaping and crafting the narrative around him. The first of these efforts was *Keating: The Inside Story*

¹ Kerry O'Brien, *Keating* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2015), p. x; Justin Stevens, prod., *Keating: The Interviews*, eps. 1—4, TV documentary, ABC, 2013.

² Kerry O'Brien quoted in SOH Talks and Ideas, "Paul Keating in Conversation with Kerry O'Brien", *YouTube*, 20 October 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6Y_p9dXZGE, accessed 8 August 2019.

³ Paul Keating quoted in Jason Steger, "After Hawke's Version, Publishers Look to Keating", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 July 2010, p. 6.

⁴ Steger, "Publishers Look to Keating", p. 6. That said, Keating has published the following: Paul Keating, *Engagement: Australia Faces the Asia-Pacific* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2000); Paul Keating, *After Words: The Post-Prime Ministerial Speeches* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2011).

⁵ Paul Keating quoted in SOH Talks and Ideas, "Conversation with Kerry O'Brien".

(1996), written by former economic adviser John Edwards, and the second – and historiographically dominant – account, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart: A Portrait of Paul Keating PM* (2002), came from former speechwriter Don Watson. Others, then and since, have produced accounts based on public statements, archival materials (including Keating’s own collection of annotated newspapers articles), and interviews with the subject, but Edwards and Watson produced close-up portraits, both of which belong somewhere along the slippery boundary between *biography* and *memoir*. Whether Keating liked it or not, Edwards and Watson each strove to produce the compelling account that he himself refused to write.

How did two former advisers come to write these portraits of Australian prime ministerial power? More specifically, why did publishers and readers alike value the subjective or partisan perspective of the adviser or speechwriter at this time?⁶ In this chapter, I argue that Australia’s political life writing boom was exacerbated by the rise of the adviser within the political class. Through the twentieth century, in Australia and in comparable democratic spaces, the practice of politics became ever more complex, and the demands of the daily and weekly media cycle more relentless.⁷ In structural terms, this led to the increasing professionalisation of politics, and the rise of the politically appointed adviser or “staffer”.⁸ This well-educated, publicly unaccountable and lightly supervised cohort became central to the practice of politics, and in the 1990s Australian political culture shifted to accommodate them, affording staffers the status of an “insider” and the authority to explain politics as they saw it.⁹ Located physically and structurally at the heart of government, but beyond many of the constraints and conventions of the public service, the political staffer became an authority on Australian political and parliamentary affairs in their own right and, increasingly, also the subject of insider or journalistic commentary by others. The rise of political life writing in Australia has been enabled and amplified by the rise of the political staffer.

⁶ Glyn Davis, for instance, suggests that Watson’s account of the Keating prime ministership is both an “Australian classic” and “the most cited work on the Keating years”. See Glyn Davis, “Keating’s Speechwriter as Black Box or Hand-held Camera”, *Australian Book Review*, no. 336, 2011, <https://www.australianbookreview.com.au/about/61-november-2011/618-don-watson-recollections-of-a-bleeding-heart-second-edition> accessed 18 March 2021.

⁷ Jon Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 249; Bridget Griffen-Foley, *Party Games: Australian Politicians and the Media from War to Dismissal* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2003), epilogue.

⁸ See Chris Eichbaum and Richard Shaw, “Prime Ministers and Their Advisers in Parliamentary Democracies”, in R. A. W. Rhodes and Paul ‘t Hart (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Leadership* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 517–31.

⁹ Sean Scalmer, “The Rise of the Insider: Memoirs and Diaries in Recent Australian Political History”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 56, no. 1 (2010), pp. 85–86.

Considering *Keating* and *Recollections* as political performances is productive for two key reasons. First, an account of their construction and publication reminds us to be wary of agent-centric understandings of the political memoir boom more broadly. Both volumes owed their genesis to a complex set of arrangements and relationships. Second, the history of these texts illuminates the increasing cultural premium attached to subjectivity, testimony and insider status during the 1990s. Following a brief account of the evolution of ministerial advisers and speechwriters in Australia, I re-evaluate these texts and detail their complex paths to publication. These stories and the efforts to publish them reveal much about changing attitudes and assumptions toward political advisers in this period, and about the heightened value of insider status in Australian political culture. Emphasising the relationships between Edwards, Watson, their publishers, their audiences, and their common subject, Keating, this chapter illuminates the shifting public perception of advisers, and the rise of the political “insider” as a cultural phenomenon.

The Political “Staffer”

The rise of the political adviser in Australia, at the federal level at least, took a novel form compared with other Westminster democracies. In the late nineteenth century and for much of the twentieth, public servants performed most of the advisory and administrative labour in Australian governance in the manner of the British civil service.¹⁰ Staffed in the late 1930s with highly skilled economists and administrators, the Commonwealth public service faced no serious threat to its policy supremacy from ministerial advisers, who were few in number and concerned chiefly with media liaison.¹¹ However, with the economic challenges of the 1970s and growing hostility between the treasury and the Whitlam and Fraser governments, the number of ministerial advisers expanded significantly.¹² The increasing complexity of professional politics saw that trend continue, with the number of ministerial staff rising from approximately 179 in the mid-1970s to almost 450 by 2006 (compared with 201 in Canada and

¹⁰ For the history of the public service see Gerald E. Caiden, *Career Service: An Introduction to the History of Personnel Administration in the Commonwealth Public Service of Australia 1901–1961* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1965); John Hirst, “Bureaucracy”, in Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart Macintyre (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 96.

¹¹ Economists, bankers and other skilled administrators profoundly shaped the firepower of the CPS from the 1940s to the 1960s. See Stuart Macintyre, *Australia’s Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2015). For the relationship between politicians and the press, see Caryn Coatney, *John Curtin: How He Won Over the Media* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2016); Griffen-Foley, *Party Games*; Sally Young, *Paper Emperors: The Rise of Australia’s Newspaper Empires* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2019), pp. 114–25.

¹² Anne Tiernan, *Power Without Responsibility: Ministerial Staffers in Australian Governments from Whitlam to Howard* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007), chapter 3.

51 in New Zealand).¹³ Clearly, the proliferation of Australian staff has been disproportionate with the wider population and the number of elected parliamentarians. Departing from the Westminster tradition, the *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act* 1984 quarantined political advisers from the remit of the Public Service, giving MPs the freedom to “authorise another person to exercise, on [their] behalf, a power conferred on” them.¹⁴ By the time of the Keating government, ministerial staff enjoyed a “central location” at the heart of government, tasked with “personal support, political support, communication, steering policy and executive coordination”.¹⁵ By the turn of the century political advisers in both major parties were, in Rodney Cavalier’s account, also performing partisan political work at the expense of the taxpayer.¹⁶

Employed in the same fashion, the emergence of the professional speechwriter spoke to different pressures on the political class. In the 1940s Robert Menzies bemoaned the professional speechwriter as an “insult to the audience”, but the growing speed of the media cycle and the rise of television, followed by the internet, meant that his successors required more sophisticated “media control and management” strategies.¹⁷ As one speechwriter put it, the brief was to “write the speeches that the Prime Minister would have written himself, if he had the time”.¹⁸ Speechwriting could generate a “long and intimate” relationship as occurred in the case of Graham Freudenberg and Gough Whitlam, or become an “enormously laborious” experience as in the case of Malcolm Fraser and his writers.¹⁹

Australian intellectuals have been uneasy about the rise of advisers and speechwriters.²⁰ Often, they contend, advisers simply make politicians “less reliant on their parties, the

¹³ For 1970s figures, see Royal Commission on Australian Government Administration, *Report* (Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service, 1976), p. 104. For more contemporary figures, see Figure 2.1 in Anne Tiernan, *Power Without Responsibility*, p. 22.

¹⁴ See Tiernan, *Power Without Responsibility*, pp. 39—51; Malcolm Fraser with Margaret Simons, *Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs* (Carlton: Miegunyah Press, 2010), pp. 352—54; Cth. *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act* 1984. For more on this see Maria Maley, “Understanding the Divergent Development of the Ministerial Office in Australia and the UK”, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 53, no. 3 (2018), pp. 325—27.

¹⁵ Maria Maley, “Partisans at the Centre of Government: The Role of Ministerial Advisers in the Keating Government 1991—96”, PhD dissertation, Australian National University, 2002, p. 273.

¹⁶ Rodney Cavalier, *Power Crisis: The Self-Destruction of a State Labor Party* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 49, p. 51.

¹⁷ Curran, *The Power of Speech*, p. 16; Tiernan, *Power Without Responsibility*, p. 20.

¹⁸ Stephen Mills, “The Making of a Prime Minister’s Speeches”, in Julian Disney and J. R. Nethercote (eds.), *The House on Capital Hill: Parliament, Politics and Power in the National Capital* (Annandale: The Federation Press, 1996), p. 170.

¹⁹ Graham Freudenberg, oral history interview with John Farquharson, 8 and 9 March 2000, 13 and 14 July 2000, and 23 July 2001, Sydney, NLA, ORAL TRC 3994; Patrick Weller, *Malcolm Fraser PM: A Study in Prime Ministerial Power in Australia* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1989), p. 32.

²⁰ See Michael Richardson, “Ghosting Politics: Speechwriters, Speechmakers and the (Re)crafting of Identity”, *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 23, no. 2 (2017), pp. 3—17.

grassroots, or the community” and modern governments “more fortress-like” in their culture.²¹ The tendency of advisers to stand for election themselves has fed a “broader narrative” about the political class being “detached from the public”.²² Most seriously, in recent years ministerial offices became sites of tawdry behaviour exempt from “best-practice” standards of workplace conduct, and Watson suggested that “the seeds of it” were already present in the 1990s.²³ Taxpayers funded that professionalisation, Keating as treasurer having set aside \$9.2 million in his 1984 budget to provide for rising staff numbers.²⁴ In 2001–02, the total cost of federal political staff employed under the Act (including electoral office staff) was \$101.38 million.²⁵ In short, by the twenty-first century, Australian taxpayers were paying more for political labour that was not consistently productive, was sometimes siphoned into party work, and which supported a structure with the capacity to generate a toxic culture.

Most advisers simply wanted to “get on with their careers”, but they nonetheless enjoyed a licence for disclosure that public servants lacked.²⁶ Notwithstanding the healthy tradition of diplomats’ memoirs in Australia, “very few accounts” of public servants’ “administrative routine” have been published.²⁷ In the twentieth century, a small handful of senior figures – Sir Robert Garran, Sir John Bunting, Sir William Dunk, L. F. Crisp, H. C. ‘Nugget’ Coombs and John Menadue among them – produced selective and cautious memoirs. Bunting’s portrait of Menzies was favourable but decidedly distant.²⁸ Coombs, author of *Trial Balance: Issues of My Working Life* (1981), argued that “people who hold public offices [...] have a responsibility to put things on paper”.²⁹ Carolyn Holbrook has noted that *Trial Balance* helped to propagate a myth of policymaking as a “happy confluence of personalities and ideologies” among

²¹ James Walter, *Tunnel Vision: The Failure of Political Imagination* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996), p. 84; Michelle Grattan, “Foreword”, in Anne Tiernan, *Power Without Responsibility*, p. vii.

²² Peter Allen, *The Political Class: Why it Matters Who our Politicians Are* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 24.

²³ Don Watson, interview with the author, Melbourne, 16 April 2021.

²⁴ Commonwealth of Australia, *Budget Statements 1984–85*, Budget Paper No. 1 (Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service, 1984), p. 230.

²⁵ Figure 1.2 in Australian National Audit Office, *Report on Administration of Staff Employed Under the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2003), p. 38.

²⁶ John Edwards, phone interview with the author, 22 March 2021.

²⁷ Philip A. Selth, “Political Biographies and Administrative Memoirs: Some Concluding Comments”, in Tracey Arklay, John Nethercote and John Wanna (eds.), *Australian Political Lives: Chronicling Political Careers and Administrative Histories* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), p. 112.

²⁸ Selth, “Political Biographies and Administrative Memoirs”, p. 112. See Sir John Bunting, *R. G. Menzies: A Portrait* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988).

²⁹ Herbert Cole Coombs, oral history interview with Heather Rusden, 16 February 1989–14 December 1990, Australian National University, NLA, ORAL TRC 2392. See H. C. Coombs, *Trial Balance: Issues of My Working Life* (South Melbourne: Sun Books, 1981).

politicians and public servants in the 1940s.³⁰ But Coombs’ “measured and judicious prose” was also a powerful reminder that in Australia, as in Britain, the state’s historic tendencies toward secrecy and censorship demanded careful negotiation.³¹ Those tendencies have remained strong in the more recent past. When James Button, son of the late industry minister James Button, departed Canberra after working as a speechwriter for Kevin Rudd and then as a public servant in the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, he felt that his “really interesting” experiences were worth writing about.³² But before he could publish *Speechless: A Year in My Father’s Business* (2012), Button was told “in no uncertain terms” that he “risked breaching” non-disclosure laws, which “had criminal kinds of consequences”.³³ Button’s was a marvellous book, but the pressure surrounding his literary testimony ultimately reaffirmed the non-disclosure rule among public servants.

The overwhelming silence of public servants meant that journalists had been the supreme source of insider stories in Australia until the end of the twentieth century. Warren Denning’s *Caucus Crisis* (1937), an intimate study of the Scullin government’s disintegration during the great depression, was in Patrick Mullins’ estimation “the inaugurating work of the genre of the contemporary political history in Australia”.³⁴ Prolific Canberra Press Gallery authors such as Alan Reid, Laurie Oakes and Paul Kelly continued this tradition through to the early 1990s.³⁵ They were also the first to produce biographies of Paul Keating, as Chris Wallace has shown.³⁶

In time, political advisers and speechwriters demonstrated a new cultural willingness to speak from the inside of executive government. Freudenberg’s biography of Whitlam, *A Certain Grandeur* (1977), premised largely on intimate knowledge of the subject, broke new ground.³⁷ This was not, Wallace has argued, merely a “political operator’s close analysis” but

³⁰ Carolyn Holbrook, “The Collaboration of Intellectuals and Politicians in the Postwar Reconstruction: A Reassessment”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 47, no. 2 (2016), p. 279.

³¹ Holbrook, “Collaboration of Intellectuals and Politicians”, p. 279. For secrecy see Christopher Moran, *Classified: Secrecy and the State in Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). See also Keith Hamilton, “Addressing the Past: The Foreign Office and the Vetting of Diplomatic and Ministerial Memoirs During the Years Between the World Wars”, in Christopher Baxter, Michael L. Dockrill and Keith Hamilton (eds.), *Britain in Global Politics, vol. 1: From Gladstone to Churchill* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 99—131.

³² Button, zoom interview, 3 November 2020.

³³ Button, zoom interview, 3 November 2020.

³⁴ Patrick Mullins, “Warren Denning and the Making of *Caucus Crisis*”, *History Australia*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2021), p. 95.

³⁵ For more on this see Jackie Dickenson, “Journalists Writing Australian Political History”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 56, no. 1 (2010), pp. 105—119; Patrick Mullins, “Chasing the Future: Journalists Writing Political History”, *Australian Journalism Review*, vol. 37, no. 2 (2015), pp. 95—107.

³⁶ Chris Wallace, *Political Lives: Australian Prime Ministers and Their Biographers* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2023), pp. 222—40.

³⁷ Graham Freudenberg, *A Certain Grandeur* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1978 [1977]).

rather an earnest attempt to illuminate “the powerful political and economic forces that buffeted an idealistic administration”.³⁸ Button remarked that Freudenberg’s book “reflected the traditional speechwriter’s code” insofar as it “kept the writer out of the picture and betrayed no confidences”.³⁹ American presidential speechwriters, by way of contrast, asserted their right to reveal the characters of their employers, be it favourably (as with Ted Sorensen’s portrait of John F. Kennedy), or otherwise. In an article for the *Atlantic* in 1979, speechwriter James Fallows described his erstwhile boss, Jimmy Carter, as a “good man” but lacking “sophistication” and “passion”.⁴⁰ He published the piece knowing that Carter and his staff considered it politically “wrong” to do so.⁴¹

The dramatic and public unravelling of the Hawke government incited a more assertive form of insider account in Australia. As a “witness and a fringe participant” in the leadership battles of June 1991, Hawke’s speechwriter Stephen Mills decided that he had a “responsibility” to record what he saw for posterity.⁴² Advisers, he reasoned, could “sometimes see the politicians better than the politicians can see themselves”.⁴³ Launching his book in 1993, Mills emphasised that *The Hawke Years* did “not carry any authorisation” from Hawke, and simply used a “privileged vantage point” in order to “appraise Hawke in an informed and in a candid fashion”.⁴⁴ (*The Hawke Years* offered a favourable treatment of Hawke’s impact on Australia, but not without qualifications.) A draft of the book sits among Hawke’s personal papers at the BHPML, his approving ticks and disconcerted crosses etched into the margins, but Mills did not acquiesce in all of Hawke’s editorial opinions.⁴⁵ Mills was quickly followed by other speechwriters and advisers, who published party histories and spoke on camera in

³⁸ Wallace, *Political Lives*, p. 153.

³⁹ James Button, zoom interview with the author, 3 November 2020. To this, I would add that *A Certain Grandeur* belongs to a much older traditional of Thucydidean historical writing that asserts its first-hand knowledge but also strives for accuracy by way of research and corroboration. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (London: Penguin, 1972), 1.22.

⁴⁰ James Fallows, “The Passionless Presidency: The Trouble with Jimmy Carter’s Administration”, *Atlantic*, May 1979, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1979/05/the-passionless-presidency/308516/>, accessed 6 January 2021.

⁴¹ James Fallows, Letter to Hamilton Jordan, 27 April 1979. Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Office of the Chief of Staff Files, Hamilton Jordan’s Confidential Files, Fallows, Jim, Container 34a (see https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/digital_library/cos/142099/34/cos_142099_34a_23-Fallows_Jim.pdf).

⁴² Stephen Mills, Speech at the Launch of *The Hawke Years*, National Press Club, Canberra, 31 May 1993, National Press Club luncheon series, NLA, ORAL TRC 4379.

⁴³ Stephen Mills, Draft of *The Hawke Years*, Preface, p. 1, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, Records Relating to The Hawke Memoirs, RH45/17.

⁴⁴ Stephen Mills, Speech at the Launch of *The Hawke Years*, National Press Club, Canberra, 31 May 1993, National Press Club luncheon series, NLA, ORAL TRC 4379.

⁴⁵ Draft Manuscript, *The Hawke Years*, BHPML, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45/17.

ABC documentaries.⁴⁶ Some, such as Labor's Bob Ellis and Liberal John Hyde Page, took liberties that were tested in court, with the former spectacularly defaming treasurer Peter Costello's wife Tanya.⁴⁷ Others, such as Melbourne insider Peter Blazey, who worked for both Liberal and Labor ministers in the late 1960s and early 1970s, used pseudonyms to avoid near-certain defamation actions, even where some of his characters would have been easily recognisable to anyone with access to a newspaper archive.⁴⁸ Collectively, these authors represented a particular breed of advisers and insiders: tertiary educated, equipped to write at length, and often assertive enough to invoke History itself as justification for disclosure.

For the most part, one had to be a man to be an insider. Women worked in the public service in increasing numbers after the dismantling of the "marriage bar" in the 1960s.⁴⁹ They also worked in ministerial offices. Ainsley Gotto attracted controversy as private secretary to John Gorton (1968–1971), as did Elizabeth Reid as women's adviser to Whitlam (1973–75).⁵⁰ Even more controversial was Junie Morosi's appointment as private secretary to Jim Cairns (1974–1975). All encountered a deeply sexist – and, in Morosi's case, racist – backlash.⁵¹ (Morosi was unusual insofar as she wrote explicitly about her bruising experience in the public eye, and further controversy came when Cairns abandoned Labor's 1975 campaign launch to help launch her book instead.⁵²) Between 1979 and 2010, increasing numbers of women worked in ministerial offices, but they largely experienced "lower rank" and "less upward

⁴⁶ Graham Freudenberg, *Cause for Power: The Official History of the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Labor Party* (Leichardt: Pluto Press, 1991); Bob Ellis, *Goodbye Jerusalem: Night Thoughts of a Labor Outsider* (Milsons Point: Vintage, 1997); Gerard Henderson, *Menzies' Child: The Liberal Party of Australia, 1944–1994* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1994). For documentaries see Sue Spencer, dir., *Labor in Power*, eps. 1–5, TV documentary, ABC, 1993; Bruce Belsham and Tim Clark, dirs., *The Liberals: Fifty Years of the Federal Party*, eps. 1–5, TV documentary, ABC, 1994.

⁴⁷ Costello and Abbott took issue with Ellis' claim that Tanya Coleman, Costello's wife, had in fact "wooded" both men to the Young Liberals. The passage carried clear sexual undertones. See Susan Wyndham, "Bob's Book Turns into a Short Story", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 March 1997, p. 4.

⁴⁸ David Marr, "The Eternal Charmer Goes Out in a Blaze of Glory", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 August 1997, p. 9; Padraic P. McGuinness, "The Outrageous Life and Times of Peter Blazey", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 August 1997, p. 15. For the text itself, see Peter Blazey, *Screw Loose: Uncalled-For Memoirs* (Sydney: Picador, 1997).

⁴⁹ For discussion of women's work in the APS, see Caiden, *Career Service*, p. 15; Desley Deacon, "The Employment of Women in the Commonwealth Public Service: The Creation and Reproduction of a Dual Labour Market", *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 41, no. 3 (1982), pp. 238–41. For more on the rationales used to sustain the marriage bar, see Linda Colley, "For Better or for Worse: Fifty Years Since the Removal of the Marriage Bar in the Australian Public Service", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 64, no. 2 (2018), pp. 227–40.

⁵⁰ For more on Ainsley Gotto, see Ian Hancock, *Ainsley Gotto* (Redland Bay: Connor Court, 2020). For more on Elizabeth Reid, see Michelle Arrow, *The Seventies: The Personal, the Political and the Making of Modern Australia* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2019), chapters 3 and 4.

⁵¹ Alan Reid, *The Gorton Experiment* (Sydney: Shakespeare Head Press, 1971), p. 382; Paul Strangio, *Keeper of the Faith: A Biography of Jim Cairns* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2002), pp. 310–12, pp. 318–22.

⁵² Junie Morosi, *Sex, Prejudice and Politics* (Camberwell: Widescope, 1975); Strangio, *Keeper of the Faith*, p. 346.

career progression” than their male counterparts.⁵³ Anne Summers, a pioneering feminist historian, editor and formerly head of the Office of the Status of Women in the mid-1980s, worked in Keating’s office in 1992, and journalists credited her with holding “a lot of clout”.⁵⁴ But in her 2018 memoir *Unfettered and Alive*, she wrote that her influence was often exaggerated: “I was under no illusions that I was an office insider”.⁵⁵ Despite the substantive contribution that women have made to the practice of professional politics since the 1970s, their insider stories remain limited because so few have been admitted to the inner circles of prime ministerial power.

Entering the Inner Circle

It was not inevitable that insider accounts of Keating’s office would be written or published, nor that Edwards or Watson would be their authors. Those who had entrenched themselves in with Keating, such as principal adviser Don Russell and press secretary Tom Mockridge, had said little on the public record. In their efforts to write about Keating, Edwards and Watson helped to entrench a political culture that increasingly valued literary expressions of insider subjectivity and personal testimony. The history of their Keating biographies is in fact a study of that insider culture and the newfound privilege of advisers within it in the 1990s.

Edwards worked as a meat union research officer in the late 1960s, and then served for three years with the *Australian Financial Review* before a brief interregnum as a press secretary for Whitlam government minister Clyde Cameron (himself a diarist and storyteller).⁵⁶ Returning to journalism, he worked for News Limited through much of the 1970s. Keating, as shadow minister for minerals and energy, emerged at this time as “a player in that space” in Edwards’ recollection.⁵⁷ In the 1980s, Edwards undertook a PhD on monetary policy at George Washington University, while working successively as foreign correspondent for the *National Times*, the *Bulletin*, and the *Sydney Morning Herald*.⁵⁸ In that capacity, he penned a succession of articles about Keating, each whetting his appetite for a book-length biography.⁵⁹ Deciding in early 1990 to write a Keating biography that might explain how a deregulated Australia “fits

⁵³ Marija Taflaga and Matthew Kerby, “Who Does What Work in a Ministerial Office: Politically Appointed Staff and the Descriptive Representation of Women in Australian Political Offices, 1979–2010”, *Political Studies*, vol. 68, no. 2 (2020), p. 480.

⁵⁴ Michelle Grattan, “The People Who Advise Paul Keating”, *Sunday Age*, 27 March 1993, p. 18.

⁵⁵ Anne Summers, *Unfettered and Alive: A Memoir* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2018), p. 299.

⁵⁶ Clyde Cameron, *The Cameron Diaries* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990); Clyde Cameron and Daniel Connell, *The Confessions of Clyde Cameron 1913–1990* (Crows Nest: ABC Enterprises, 1990).

⁵⁷ Edwards, phone interview, 22 March 2021.

⁵⁸ Biographical sketch of John Edwards in ‘Final Examination of John K. Edwards for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy’, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

⁵⁹ John Edwards, Letter to Jill Hickson, 12 March 1990, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

into a changing world”, he reasoned that it was “the right book to be doing” and the “right time to be doing it”.⁶⁰ After one earlier false start, he wrote to Sydney literary agent Jill Hickson. Eyeing the March 1990 federal election, at which the Labor Party sought an unprecedented fourth term, Hickson wrote to Edwards saying, “I look forward to getting your material at election time – and to the right result”. She meant a Labor victory.⁶¹

Despite Hickson’s Labor affiliations (see Chapter 1), Edwards’ proposal was initially predicated on claims to journalistic rigour and literary quality rather than political familiarity. In the book proposal, he noted his association with NSW Labor and with Canberra politics, and told Hickson it was likely that “Paul will give me his version of events”.⁶² That said, he promised meticulous primary research into the economic story, and pledged that the book’s success would hinge on “how it is written”, not on “insider dope”.⁶³ He also acknowledged that his PhD in economics would count for naught unless he proved his capacity to write an engaging narrative.⁶⁴ In her pitch to the major publishing houses, Hickson emphasised Edwards’ press experience, and referred to the “great deal of admiration among his peers”.⁶⁵ She also praised his commitment to achieving “consistency” and “a balanced structure” in any Keating biography.⁶⁶ Edwards’ familiarity with Keating and with the Labor Party, though useful, were not the essence of the project. This was to be no insider account.

Edwards hoped that rigour and flair would make his book competitive against another recently published biography of Keating written by financial journalist Edna Carew. Based heavily on interviews with the treasurer and his associates, Carew’s *Keating* (1988) remained the sole biography of Keating on the market until journalist Michael Gordon’s later campaign biography, *A Question of Leadership* (1992).⁶⁷ Carew’s concise and punchy biography followed the arc of Keating’s life from its “no frills” childhood in the 1940s to the leadership “momentum” surrounding the treasurer at the time of her writing.⁶⁸ Though Carew’s book is not widely circulated today, Keating later confessed that it offered a “better understanding” of

⁶⁰ John Edwards, Letter to Jill Hickson, 12 March 1990, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

⁶¹ Jill Hickson, Facsimile to John Edwards, 15 March 1990, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

⁶² John Edwards, Letter to Jill Hickson, 12 March 1990, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

⁶³ John Edwards, Letter to Jill Hickson, 12 March 1990, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

⁶⁴ John Edwards, Letter to Jill Hickson, 12 March 1990, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

⁶⁵ Jill Hickson, Letter to Matthew Kelly, 27 April 1990, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

⁶⁶ Jill Hickson, Letter to Bob Sessions, 9 April 1990, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

⁶⁷ Edna Carew, *Keating: A Biography* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988); Michael Gordon, *A Question of Leadership: Paul Keating, Political Fighter* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1993). Carew also updated her book when Keating became prime minister. See Edna Carew, *Paul Keating, Prime Minister* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992).

⁶⁸ Carew, *Keating: A Biography*, p. 8, p. 227.

his essential personality than any other biography of him.⁶⁹ But Edwards, in his pitch to Hickson, promised that there was room for “a much better book on Keating and Australia”.⁷⁰ Hickson, for her part, pointed to the precedent established by Hawke’s biographers in the early 1980s, among whom “Blanche’s – the only one still selling – was published last”.⁷¹ Edwards’ book, Hickson assured prospective publishers, would be *the* definitive study of Keating.

The commercial fortunes of Edwards’ proposal depended to a great extent on the political prospects of its subject. Writing to Hickson before the March 1990 elections, Edwards noted that “if Labor gets back Keating is likely to be Prime Minister in a few years”.⁷² Hickson’s reply – the aforementioned jest about the “right” election outcome – reflected both Labor loyalism and a pragmatic awareness of publishers’ market sensibilities. For some, it was too risky. Sandy Grant, future publisher of Hawke’s own *Memoirs*, told Hickson he would publish Edwards’ book if the author could “guarantee [Keating] will become PM”.⁷³ In the end, Penguin remained the last bidder in the field, offering Edwards a decent advance. Penguin publisher Robert Sessions recalled in 2021, “We were persuaded by John [...] that Keating’s influence was on the rise”.⁷⁴ As an author, Edwards saw Penguin as a solid option given their stellar reputation and hardback imprint: “I’d say, why not Penguin?”⁷⁵ It is crucial, though, to note the ways in which prospective publishers connected their stake to the political fortunes of the biographical subject. Relevance, rather than historiographical merit alone, mattered in the decision to sign the journalist.

The fate of the project fundamentally changed when, against the backdrop of the Gulf War and his deteriorating relationship with Hawke, Keating offered his would-be biographer a job. Recently returned from Washington, Edwards spoke with Keating via a hotel phone in the early hours of 10 November 1990: “If I really wanted to know how it all worked, he said, I should come and work for him”.⁷⁶ The offer was earnest, and one that the young economist had no hesitation in accepting: “to get a PhD and be offered the next day a job as an economics adviser [...] was absolutely fabulous”.⁷⁷ For Edwards, the opportunity to be an insider would

⁶⁹ Paul Keating quoted in Chris Wallace, *Political Lives: Australian Prime Ministers and Their Biographers* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2023), p. 233.

⁷⁰ John Edwards, Letter to Jill Hickson, 12 March 1990, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

⁷¹ Jill Hickson, Letter to Craig Munro, 30 April 1990, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

⁷² John Edwards, Letter to Jill Hickson, 12 March 1990, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

⁷³ Sandy Grant, facsimile to Jill Hickson, 2 May 1990, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

⁷⁴ Robert Sessions, email correspondence with the author, 15 February 2021.

⁷⁵ Edwards, phone interview, 22 March 2021.

⁷⁶ Edwards, *Keating*, p. xi.

⁷⁷ Edwards, phone interview, 22 March 2021.

enrich his biographical and economic study in a way that had not been the case while working for Cameron in the 1970s: “I’d been very hesitant to make notes or discuss things with Clyde”, he recalled. “I lost a good deal of inhibition about those sorts of things. It didn’t fuss Paul”.⁷⁸ Not everyone lost their inhibitions, though, with Penguin publishers telling Hickson that the book was now a “less attractive proposition” and demanding contractual review.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, Edwards began working as an economic adviser for Keating in January 1991, a position he would hold for three years.

Edwards’ insider status afforded him privileged access to a vast archive of Keating’s papers. In addition to the treasurer’s cabinet documents and policy papers, Edwards enjoyed access to personal communications between the treasurer, his staff, and senior Treasury and Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) personnel, and personal file notes, many of them concerned with economic policy in the years before the recession that was then unfolding. Following Keating’s first failed leadership challenge in June 1991, Edwards departed for a fellowship at the ANU where he worked until the former treasurer won the prime ministership in December. The economic historian Graeme Snooks agreed to house “all of Keating’s personal office and Treasury files in the economic history library at the Institute of Advanced Studies, which was [...] very convenient” for Edwards.⁸⁰ The strictures of the *Archives Act* 1983 notwithstanding, copies of cabinet documents and submissions figured among the papers.⁸¹ In this case as in so many others, the thin line between personal and Commonwealth records would be fateful to the biographer’s quest to explicate the political past.⁸² Edwards’ use of these documents mattered all the more when, in February 2003, a fire at Keating’s Alexandria storage facility destroyed many of them. Sydney’s *Daily Telegraph* reported that “the Australian equivalent of a presidential library was lost”, but assured readers that rock musician Johnny Diesel’s instruments and equipment in the adjoining storage unit were safe.⁸³

The shifting foundations of Edwards’ project reflect the increasing value associated with “insider” knowledge and testimony in Australian political culture. Keating perceived scholarly

⁷⁸ Edwards, phone interview, 22 March 2021.

⁷⁹ Jill Hickson, file note, 21 November 1990; Bob Sessions, Letter to Jill Hickson, 26 November 1990, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

⁸⁰ Edwards, phone interview, 22 March 2021.

⁸¹ The evidence for this is borne out in the endnotes of the volume, which included references to actual cabinet documents and draft submissions.

⁸² See for instance Gideon Haigh, “The Rise and Rise of the Prime Minister”, *Meanjin*, vol. 72, no. 1 (2013), pp. 55–59; Jenny Hocking, *The Palace Letters* (Brunswick: Scribe, 2021); Patrick Mullins, “‘None of You Will Believe It’: Control, Truth and Myth in the Life of Billy McMahon”, *Australian Journal of Biography and History*, no. 5 (2021), esp. pp. 149–54.

⁸³ “Keating Library Lost in Fire”, *Daily Telegraph*, 22 February 2003, p. 3.

knowledge of monetary policy in particular as “‘bullshit [...] You have to be able to feel what is happening’”.⁸⁴ The novelty of the adviser as insider, though, was still contentious for those investing in it. In his correspondence with Hickson, Sessions expressed concern about the “loss of perceived impartiality/objectivity” [emphasis in original].⁸⁵ With the benefit of hindsight, Sessions recognised “that a better book would result” from Edwards serving “time [...] in Keating’s inner circle”.⁸⁶ Initially, though, the possible rewards were less evident than the risks.⁸⁷ For her part, Hickson saw Edwards’ position as entirely advantageous, especially in the wake of Keating’s infamous Plácido Domingo speech on 6 December 1990, widely interpreted as a broadside against Hawke’s leadership (see Chapter 1). Hickson told Sessions that “it may turn out that having a man ‘inside’ the government over the next year or so makes for a more not less commercial book”.⁸⁸ In these exchanges, Sessions and Hickson were ultimately debating the cultural and market value of a political insider’s voice.

His Master’s Voice

Having finally wrested the prime ministership from Hawke in December 1991, Keating required a full-time speechwriter. Mark Ryan, Keating’s political adviser, quickly approached Watson, with whom he had previously worked in the office of Victorian Labor Premier John Cain. In the weeks before Ryan’s call, Watson had decided to abandon “all speechwriting, satire writing, bullshit writing”, and he pre-emptively “signed a contract with Henry Rosenbloom of Scribe to co-write with Stuart Macintyre a history of Australia since the war”.⁸⁹ While holidaying at Mogg’s Creek, Victoria, Watson rejected Ryan’s proposal, but was subsequently harangued by his family who argued that working for Keating would be a “fabulous experience” and likely “all over in a year” given that an election had to be held in 1993, Labor seeming unlikely to win a fifth consecutive term.⁹⁰ Watson visited Keating in person to discuss the offer: “I was impressed by a lot of things [...] including this strange melancholic sense”.⁹¹ The prospect of writing for a politician reputed for his “extraordinary use of language” enticed him further.⁹² Watson committed to joining the team with a view to helping Labor win the next election. Keating in turn promised the writer, “[w]hatever else

⁸⁴ Keating quoted in Edwards, *Keating*, p. 320.

⁸⁵ Bob Sessions, Letter to Jill Hickson, 26 November 1990, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

⁸⁶ Sessions, email correspondence, 15 February 2021.

⁸⁷ Bob Sessions, Letter to Jill Hickson, 26 November 1990, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

⁸⁸ Jill Hickson, Letter to Robert Sessions, 12 December 1990, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

⁸⁹ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

⁹⁰ Watson, *Recollections*, p. 18.

⁹¹ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

⁹² Tony Stephens, “Don Watson”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 May 1993, p. 39.

happens, we will have some fun”.⁹³ He commenced work in January 1992, and remained at the heart of Keating’s office until Labor lost office in March 1996.

Watson was eminently qualified to craft words for Keating, and well prepared for the ideological battles within the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO). By 1992 his credentials as a writer were unimpeachable. Born in Gippsland in rural Victoria and trained in Melbourne and Canberra as a historian with a New Left worldview, his doctorate in history followed the life of Australian civil libertarian, Marxist and historian Brian Fitzpatrick.⁹⁴ In the 1980s, as the Hawke government pushed onward with its rationalist mission, Watson wrote satirical pieces for comedian Max Gillies, who regularly impersonated Hawke and Keating (the latter under the heading “hubris”).⁹⁵ Later in the decade, Watson found himself working for Cain, whose relations with federal Labor were notoriously strained: “Cain resented Keating for starving Victoria of funds, and [...] for unleashing economic rationalism and all its attendant villains on the country”.⁹⁶ While his literary abilities and command of Australian historiography would be a prized asset, his ideological leanings placed him at odds with key members of the PMO who, trained in classical economics, sought to preserve the ascendancy of economic rationalism in Canberra.

Watson’s role in the office was mediated largely through the prism of an expected book. His then-partner, the renowned publisher Hilary McPhee, told him at the outset that the job would furnish him with material for a book.⁹⁷ Watson commenced a personal diary within the first month, partly because he perceived it as “a good discipline” and partly “as a way of dealing with the frustration” inherent to a workplace that was simultaneously frantic and “becalmed”.⁹⁸ He ensured that Keating knew about the diary, and the intended book it would serve, but the prime minister responded only with vague words and empty looks.⁹⁹ Edwards and Watson were not alone in considering the prospect of a book at this time. Employed on Keating’s staff in 1992, journalist and adviser John Miner also considered preparing a book about Keating, until he found that Edwards was already doing so.¹⁰⁰ When Keating’s principal adviser Don Russell began to tire of working for Keating in 1993, he too flirted with the notion of writing a tell-all

⁹³ Paul Keating quoted in Stephens, “Don Watson”, p. 39.

⁹⁴ Stephens, “Don Watson”, p. 39. See Don Watson, *Brian Fitzpatrick: A Radical Life* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1979).

⁹⁵ Stephens, “Don Watson”, p. 39.

⁹⁶ Watson, *Recollections*, p. 18.

⁹⁷ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

⁹⁸ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

⁹⁹ Watson, *Recollections*, p. x.

¹⁰⁰ John Miner, “Creative Tension – When Poetry Met Policy Under Keating”, *Australian*, 15 August 1996, p. 11.

account. According to Watson, Russell revelled in the prospect of an in-house contest.¹⁰¹ A picture emerges here of a cohort of senior male advisers who were conscious of their own policy influence, their insider status, and their increasing cultural authority to tell audiences about Australia's contemporary politics.

Watson became one of the most publicly recognisable members of Keating's staff, with the possible exception of Summers. As a noteworthy and independent non-fiction author, he continued to give the occasional interview or public address at cultural events and book launches.¹⁰² Writing for the *Age* newspaper in 1993, conservative commentator Gerard Henderson criticised Watson's tendency to revile "public criticism" while simultaneously making "occasional and invariably controversial appearances in the public debate".¹⁰³ Over time, Watson was credited with unique influence over Keating's policy agenda and political outcomes. Speaking to the ABC on election night in March 1993, reflecting on a fifth consecutive defeat, president of the Victorian Liberal Party Michael Kroger specifically remarked that "Don Watson's probably an asset in Mr Keating's office".¹⁰⁴ But the sword of public recognition cut both ways, with Watson sometimes held personally accountable for key policy decisions, most famously the 1994 *Creative Nation* statement on culture, information policy and the arts.¹⁰⁵ By 1995 journalists claimed that Keating's "real emotional and intellectual sustenance" derived solely from his wife, Annita, and from Watson.¹⁰⁶ Such mystic influence was overstated, but James Curran has rightly concluded that the historian became "a significant intellectual influence on the Keating prime ministerial persona".¹⁰⁷

Clearly, though, Watson enjoyed a dual status as a Melbourne intellectual among a group of political insiders from Sydney. That duality gave him a unique cultural and political status with which to write about Keating. I asked Watson if he considered himself an outsider or insider during his time in the PMO: "I wanted to maintain, I guess, up to a point, a sort of outsider status [...] I mean, you very quickly become and begin to feel like an insider, and that's something that if you had it over again, you'd resist mightily".¹⁰⁸ Though conscious that

¹⁰¹ Watson, *Recollections*, p. 385.

¹⁰² Gerard Henderson, "Backroom Maestro Find the Limelight", *Age*, 19 October 1993, p. 13.

¹⁰³ Henderson, "Backroom Maestro Find the Limelight", p. 13.

¹⁰⁴ Michael Kroger quoted in George Stenhouse, "1993 Australian Federal Election Night Part 1", *YouTube*, [published online 11 November 2011], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQrNpZju894>, accessed 29 December 2020.

¹⁰⁵ Tom Burton, "The Artless Culture Policy", *Australian Financial Review*, 18 October 1994, p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ Sally Loane and Tony Wright, "Inside Keating's Magic Circle", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 April 1995, p. 31.

¹⁰⁷ Curran, *Power of Speech*, p. 283.

¹⁰⁸ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

there was relatively little precedent for a prime ministerial portrait of such intimacy, Watson explained that he was confident about his capacity to write it partly because he did not expect to produce “anything that a hardened politician couldn’t handle”, and partly because, in his words, “I was an historian”.¹⁰⁹ Following Labor’s victory in 1993, Watson quickly signed a contract with Transworld to write a compelling narrative account of Keating’s first year in office. Transworld publicists claimed that the book would be “strangely friendly, amusing, affectionate and accessible”.¹¹⁰ Announcing the acquisition to the book trade, Transworld celebrated Watson’s authority as “a distinguished historian, scriptwriter, reviewer and political satirist”. Moreover, they trumpeted the fact that Watson’s “vantage point” was that of “one inside the Prime Minister’s office”.¹¹¹ For their part, Penguin eyed the new project warily, concerned that it would threaten Edwards’ exclusivity in the market.¹¹² Transworld’s enthusiasm and Penguin’s alertness tell us that in the wake of the unwinnable election, with Keating at the height of his personal power, the inside story was an increasingly enticing commodity for the publishing industry.

As a speechwriter, Watson’s voice was intimately folded in with that of Keating. The standard relationship between politician and speechwriter was one of mutual dependence and minimal disclosure. Freudenberg recalled that in the 1960s and 1970s, “there was a gentleman’s agreement that [...] the role of the speechwriter would never be acknowledged”.¹¹³ Respectful of those cultural boundaries, Watson was nonetheless more visible. He publicly reflected on and wrote about speechwriting as a craft. “Speech writers are value-adders”, he wrote in the *Age*: “they take the raw material and cook it”.¹¹⁴ Keating, too, spoke publicly about the relationship, saying that it was “a very personal sort of matter to have someone who writes for you because anyone who writes for you is thinking for you, too”.¹¹⁵ In large measure, then, Watson’s authority to speak *about* Keating in a book was derived from the fact that he had already spoken *with*, *for* and arguably *through* Keating in his speeches. In the absence of a Keating memoir, it seemed, readers and spectators could hope to get no closer to the centre of

¹⁰⁹ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

¹¹⁰ “Spotlight”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 May 1993, p. 24.

¹¹¹ Highlighted Note, “Classifieds”, June 1993, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

¹¹² Robert Sessions, Facsimile to John Edwards, 9 June 1993, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

¹¹³ Graham Freudenberg, oral history interview with John Farquharson, 8 and 9 March 2000, 13 and 14 July 2000, and 23 July 2001, Sydney, NLA, ORAL TRC 3994.

¹¹⁴ Don Watson with Michelle Grattan, “Keating Speaking”, *Age*, 23 November 1995, p. 13.

¹¹⁵ Paul Keating quoted in Luke Slaterry, “Past Master”, *Weekend Australian*, 13 December 1997, p. 28.

the prime ministerial psyche than Watson. The result, it should be said, would reveal as much about himself as it did about Keating.

Visions of Paul Keating

Unsurprisingly given their distinct interests and preoccupations, Edwards and Watson drew very different portraits of Paul Keating. In *Keating: The Inside Story*, Edwards described Keating's working-class Irish Catholic heritage and the "impregnable personal security" of his childhood.¹¹⁶ Though interested in personality, the bulk of the book concerned Keating's economic reforms, supported by interviews with other advisers and the exclusive documents over which Edwards presided. The former journalist concluded that financial deregulation might not have succeeded "[h]ad it not been for the persistence of the Treasurer", and painstakingly retraced Keating's contribution to reforms such as the entry of foreign banks into the Australian financial system, the herculean challenge of tax reform in 1985, and tariff cuts in 1988 and 1991.¹¹⁷ Drawing on the documentary record, Edwards held Keating and Treasury responsible for the "errors of policy" that led to the 1990s recession.¹¹⁸ Edwards' Keating was a "charming, modest man" who "loathed falsity of all kinds", with character quirks that were hard to explain.¹¹⁹ This was a Keating who could be seen jumping on trampolines because he felt that the "apex of a jump" could prevent cancer.¹²⁰ Despite close proximity to events, Edwards told a brief story about Keating's prime ministership centred on economic policy and labour market reform, though in the adviser's view, it was a less important story because the "dollar could only be floated once, banks only be deregulated once", and little could rival those reforms in magnitude.¹²¹ Edwards did not dramatise his own role, but he did appear in the story in several instances through the use of the first-person pronoun "I".

Watson's was a very different kind of account. Geoffrey Bolton saw it as "neither quite autobiography nor quite biography", and Rod Rhodes perceptibly described it as an "accidental ethnography of 'being there'".¹²² *Recollections* began with a biographical sketch of subject and

¹¹⁶ Edwards, *Keating*, p. 52. Historian David Day has since noted that Keating's paternal Irish Catholic roots are at least counterbalanced by a Protestant English convict past in the form of his mother's grandparents. See David Day, *Paul Keating: The Biography* (Sydney: Fourth Estate, 2015), pp. 2—3.

¹¹⁷ Edwards, *Keating*, p. 265.

¹¹⁸ Edwards, *Keating*, p. 394.

¹¹⁹ Edwards, *Keating*, p. 450.

¹²⁰ Edwards, *Keating*, p. 9.

¹²¹ Edwards, *Keating*, p. 513.

¹²² Geoffrey Bolton, "The Art of Australian Political Biography", in Tracey Arklay, John Nethercote and John Wanna (eds.), *Australian Political Lives: Chronicling Political Careers and Administrative Histories* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), p. 10; R. A. W. Rhodes, "Theory, Method and British Political Life History", *Political Studies Review*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2012), p. 170.

author alike, establishing a narrative in which each was fundamentally distinct yet intimately connected.¹²³ Watson reconstructed at length the “rabbit burrow” that constituted the PMO, as well as the “battle lines” of ideological conflict within it.¹²⁴ He recorded in detail the lively and spirited debates that Keating engendered over national identity, particularly with respect to the Australian flag and the proposal for a Republic, all set against the backdrop of the “economic mire” of the early 1990s.¹²⁵ The Redfern Speech, an important oration on the history of white oppression of Indigenous people in 1992 and certainly one of Keating’s finest speeches, was described as “one of those moments when to write for him was an unqualified privilege”.¹²⁶ And yet, despite this, the narrative was pitched largely in terms of tragedy. Watson dramatised the tension between “progress” on Native Title, the “historic” initiative of the APEC Leaders’ Summit, and the mundane political heartaches of the 1993 budget and other miseries.¹²⁷ Keating, in this account, appeared “paradoxical”, “gentle in one environment, savage in another”, a man who loved the practice of politics but could no longer “get excited until the stakes were very high”.¹²⁸ This was a tragic Keating, whose political energies were waning with the “drying up” of his marriage.¹²⁹ The final 150 pages of the book moved morosely and inevitably towards the 1996 election defeat. The entire narrative was refracted through the lens of Watson’s own emotional experiences of the PMO, coloured by enthusiasm, exhaustion and despair in varying degrees.

Edwards and Watson crafted and presented their portraits of Keating from substantively different ideological perspectives. As Miner explained in an op-ed in 1996, they embodied “two competing principles, the economic and what, for want of a better term, was called sometimes in the office the bleeding heart”.¹³⁰ The publications, in this sense, were direct products of that ideological tension. Watson described the economists in Keating’s office who “were devout free-marketeers” and who “were lean and looked hungry”, among whom Edwards had “the edge in zealotry”.¹³¹ For his part, Edwards argued that in the lead-up to the 1993 election, Keating had “not talked nearly enough about the economy” and that Labor’s “strong issues were tariffs, industrial relations, and [opposition to] the [GST]”.¹³² When Russell

¹²³ Bolton, “Australian Political Biography”, p. 10.

¹²⁴ Watson, *Recollections*, p. 35, p. 38.

¹²⁵ Watson, *Recollections*, p. 112.

¹²⁶ Watson, *Recollections*, p. 291.

¹²⁷ Watson, *Recollections*, p. 395.

¹²⁸ Watson, *Recollections*, p. 61, p. 225.

¹²⁹ Watson, *Recollections*, p. 647.

¹³⁰ Miner, “Creative Tension”, p. 11.

¹³¹ Watson, *Recollections*, p. 37.

¹³² Edwards, *Keating*, p. 494.

left Keating's office to serve as Ambassador to the United States, Edwards claimed that the "balance of power" in the PMO "shifted markedly away from cool heads to warm hearts".¹³³ In their accounts, then, Watson and Edwards effectively reprised their original ideological roles in the PMO. The books, like the speeches, were attempts at formulating a set of words that would ultimately affix to Keating a specific ideological meaning.

In writing their notes and recording their experiences, both Edwards and Watson faced the challenge of narrating their own role in the PMO. Their respective approaches to this issue, about which I say more below, shaped their books in fundamental ways. Edwards would ultimately divide his book into sections distinguished by the "different kind of narrative styles" he employed, including political journalism, biographical portraiture, and detailed policy history. "And then, at the end of the book, when I'm actually in the office, it switches more to – I wouldn't say memoir – what I would think of as reporting".¹³⁴ Watson encountered the same challenge. "I think that was the hardest thing, to cope with the voice", he explained.¹³⁵ Reflecting on Freudenberg's *A Certain Grandeur*, a volume that he admired, he nonetheless concluded, "I couldn't pretend, in the way that Graham did, that I was this sort of amanuensis sitting in a corner observing".¹³⁶ In a cultural landscape increasingly inclined towards revelation and testimony, Edwards and Watson determined that they would write themselves into the Keating story, though with markedly different emphases and consequences.

What the Book is Worth

For different reasons, *Keating* and *Recollections* were difficult books to publish. Both volumes involved complex relationships between the authors, publishers, public audiences, and the employer-turned-subject. Having assumed a significant structural position among the political class, ministerial advisers and speechwriters emerged as substantial political storytellers in their own right. Publishers, seeking a lucrative space at the centre of contemporaneous political discourse, made the new kind of insider that Edwards and Watson represented materially and literarily possible.

After three years with Keating, Edwards' book remained subject to competing demands on his time. A short period of respite in the wake of the 1993 election gave him the opportunity to update his proposal and seek a revised contract with Penguin. "There is still the economic

¹³³ Edwards, *Keating*, p. 526.

¹³⁴ Edwards, phone interview, 22 March 2021.

¹³⁵ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

¹³⁶ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

thread”, he advised, “but there is also now a much broader narrative about our values and about Australia’s direction – quite apart from the essential and exciting vehicle of the whole book, which is the story of Paul Keating”.¹³⁷ He proposed a book nearer to 200,000 words, drawing more heavily on his own proximity to the levers of power. For Penguin, Edwards’ experience inside the PMO and his commitment to resign prior to publication seemed “the best of all possible worlds”.¹³⁸ Having helped to secure the expansion of enterprise bargaining in the Australian labour market in 1993, Edwards duly resigned from Keating’s office in March 1994 and commenced a part-time, “low-level” role with Macquarie Bank: “I used to say, it’s the only time in human history in which somebody has used a book advance to subsidise their work in an investment bank”.¹³⁹ Alongside those commitments, the Keating project carried forward slowly. By the time of its publication, Edwards had become chief economist for Société Générale in Australia.

Edwards and his publishers understood the utility of the Keating portrait in conflicting terms. Edwards was committed to using his privileged perspective to understand Keating’s Australia and its newfound place in the world.¹⁴⁰ In November 1995, the last contractual deadline having passed and another election looming, Penguin became increasingly anxious about the delays, with Keating’s cultural currency seemingly dimming. Sessions outlined a series of urgent deadlines that would allow for distribution before the anticipated March 1996 election, but Edwards balked at the impossible timeframes required.¹⁴¹ While Edwards’ access to the Keating office and intimate familiarity with the subject were now perceived as an asset, the prospect of publishing the book after Keating’s departure from politics was, for Sessions, the “least attractive of outcomes”.¹⁴² Penguin warned that neither a hardback print run nor the full advance payment would be appropriate if the election came to pass and Keating lost.¹⁴³ Edwards disputed the publishers’ evaluation of “what the book is worth in the

¹³⁷ John Edwards, Letter to Bob Sessions, 25 March 1993, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

¹³⁸ Bob Sessions, Letter to John Edwards, 30 March 1993; John Edwards, Letter to Bob Sessions, 25 March 1993, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

¹³⁹ Edwards, phone interview, 22 March 2021. See also Tom Burton, “Keating Loses Another Adviser”, *Australian Financial Review*, 4 February 1994, p. 5.

¹⁴⁰ John Edwards, Letter to Bob Sessions, 25 March 1993, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

¹⁴¹ Bob Sessions, Letter to John Edwards, 17 November 1995; John Edwards, Letter to Bob Sessions, 21 November 1995, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

¹⁴² Bob Sessions, Facsimile to John Edwards, 12 December 1995, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

¹⁴³ Bob Sessions, Facsimile to Jill Hickson, 4 December 1995, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

circumstances”.¹⁴⁴ In defence of her client, Hickson cautioned Sessions that the contract with Edwards “was never conditional upon Keating being PM”.¹⁴⁵ Interviewed for this research in 2021, Edwards remembered the “sour mood” of early 1996, but happily explained that he and Sessions “became pals again” afterward.¹⁴⁶ They have since published several volumes together, including Edwards’ two-volume study of John Curtin’s leadership during World War II.¹⁴⁷

At face value, this debate about deadlines, advance payments and release dates is par for the course in commercial publishing, reflecting the risks that publishers carry in a large-scale venture. At a more fundamental level, though, these tense exchanges indicate the heightened social and market value of an insider account in the 1990s. Having gained the experience and the documents, Edwards had little to lose, but Penguin’s commercial prospects were directly related to the electoral politics of the biographical subject. These panicked exchanges are testament to the rise of the adviser as a cultural authority on contemporary political affairs, and the premium placed on the adviser as a direct window into the inner circles of prime ministerial power in Australia. Initially sceptical of the value of an inside man, Penguin was now loath to lose its claim to authorial proximity with power.

In the end, even when the “least attractive of outcomes” came to pass, Edwards’ insider status became the unique selling point of the book. In light of “Keating’s sudden and almost complete disappearance from the scene” after the March 1996 election, Penguin began to target a July or August launch date and therefore the “‘Father’s day’ market” in

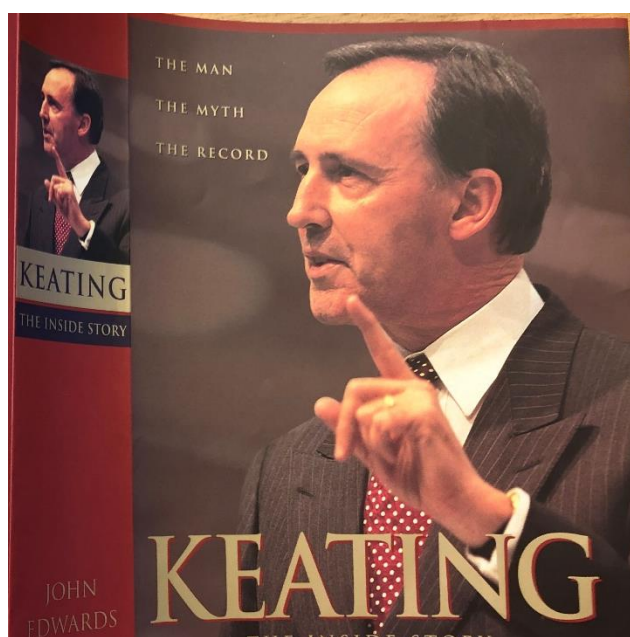


Figure 7: Prototype of the dustjacket for *Keating: The Inside Story*, 1996. Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

¹⁴⁴ John Edwards, Letter to Bob Sessions, 21 November 1995, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

¹⁴⁵ Jill Hickson, Facsimile to Bob Sessions, date unknown, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

¹⁴⁶ Edwards, phone interview, 22 March 2021.

¹⁴⁷ John Edwards, *John Curtin’s War*, 2 vols. (Melbourne: Viking, 2017—2018).

September.¹⁴⁸ Abandoning the provisional title *Running the Country*, Sessions decided on the more marketable *Keating: The Inside Story*. “I am something of a title freak”, Sessions explained to me, “and I can imagine wanting Keating’s name in the title during the discussions – and everyone likes to be let in on ‘the inside story’”.¹⁴⁹ The title, it seemed, was one part of a larger marketing approach predicated on the author’s unique vantage point. The pre-publicity focussed on extracts that revealed the idiosyncrasies and hypochondria of the Keating persona, particularly his penchant for unorthodox medicine; for several days, metropolitan newspapers ran headlines about his belief in “Chinese herbal medicine”, as well as the purportedly cancer-preventative trampoline.¹⁵⁰ Reporting on the book launch for the *Daily Telegraph*, conservative commentator Miranda Devine noted that the “scene was set for meaningful conversation about economics and politics” but the only real fascination was with “Paul Keating’s health”.¹⁵¹ In later media interviews, Edwards intimated that the prominence of these extracts in the publicity drive was less than accidental.¹⁵²

Edwards and Sessions were careful to manage Keating’s interests in and expectations of the project. Keating told journalists in 1996 that it was “a bit uncomfortable” being a biographical subject, likening it to the dissection of a frog in a laboratory.¹⁵³ Edwards was bound by his loyalty and indeed his contract to ensure the “accuracy of the contents”, and to guarantee Penguin “freedom from libel”.¹⁵⁴ In his preface, Edwards described Keating as an interested but dispassionate onlooker to the biography. “At no point”, he wrote, “did he seek any right to excise material. He did not even ask to review the material before it was published”, though he did find time to “make many valuable suggestions”.¹⁵⁵ That calm exterior concealed some disagreement. Edwards dissented from Keating’s account of the float of the Australian dollar in December 1983, which placed “too little weight” on the RBA’s support and Treasury’s opposition.¹⁵⁶ In the end, Edwards recalled, Keating “wrote his own account which I published

¹⁴⁸ Bob Sessions, Facsimile to John Edwards, 15 March 1996, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

¹⁴⁹ Sessions, email correspondence, 15 February 2021.

¹⁵⁰ See for instance, Fia Cumming, “Inside Story on Keating”, *Sun-Herald*, 11 August 1996, p. 19; John Hamilton, “Paul and the Butler and a Herbal Brew at the Lodge”, *Daily Telegraph*, 12 August 1996, p. 11; Laura Tingle, “Revealed: The Private Pains of a Former PM”, *Age*, 13 August 1996, p. 6; Miranda Devine, “Unmasked Keating a Spellbinder”, *Daily Telegraph*, 13 August 1996, p. 10.

¹⁵¹ Devine, “Unmasked Keating a Spellbinder”, p. 10.

¹⁵² See Peter Cotton, “No Thanks for the Memoirs”, *Weekend Australian*, 22 July 2000.

¹⁵³ Paul Keating quoted in Devine, “Unmasked Keating a Spellbinder”, p. 10.

¹⁵⁴ John Edwards, Letter to Bob Sessions, 21 November 1995, Records of CBA, NLA, MS 10063, Series 2, File 252.

¹⁵⁵ Edwards, *Keating*, p. xii.

¹⁵⁶ Edwards, *Keating*, p. 217.

as an Appendix, rather than change my own”.¹⁵⁷ Edwards also potentially courted anger with his argument about Keating’s culpability in the 1990s recession: “He disagrees with that”, Edwards explained later.¹⁵⁸ These debates notwithstanding, Edwards and Penguin managed the relationship with Keating skilfully. Keating’s acceptance of Edwards’ right to publish his account reflected – and possibly accelerated – a broader increase in the cultural status and authority of the political adviser in the public domain.

The response of reviewers confirmed the adviser’s apparent right to write recent political history. Several critics and journalists took the opportunity of the book to lash the former treasurer for the monetary policy missteps of the late 1980s using the evidence that Edwards presented.¹⁵⁹ Other reviewers focussed on the uniquely intimate picture of Keating’s personality, with all its contradictions and surprising foibles.¹⁶⁰ None doubted the authenticity of Edwards’ account. Press Gallery journalist Michelle Grattan concluded that Edwards had avoided the “sin” of hagiography. “The book”, she wrote, “contains critical assessments. But it does see the world from the Keating office window”.¹⁶¹ Just one review stood out as particularly critical. Writing for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Keating’s former treasurer John Dawkins eviscerated Edwards’ account and contested his privileged perspective on Keating. “The inside story it may be”, Dawkins wrote with a sharp tone of sarcasm, “but inside what I am not sure [...]. The man Edwards sees is rather different from the one I know”.¹⁶² Dawkins judged that, by virtue of being “a participant”, Edwards’ “independence is compromised”.¹⁶³ In part, Dawkins’ visceral reaction to the book reflected a personal anxiety about his own reputation as a former treasurer, and specifically his poorly handled 1993 budget. “I think Dawkins, with other people, sort of picked up the book with the expectation that he was going to get bagged”, Edwards recalled, whereas in fact, “he hardly got mentioned”.¹⁶⁴ More importantly, Dawkins’ review attests to the ways the political adviser’s authority to tell an insider story impinged on those whose executive privilege had formerly dominated the political culture.

¹⁵⁷ Edwards, phone interview, 22 March 2021.

¹⁵⁸ Edwards, phone interview, 22 March 2021.

¹⁵⁹ See Edwards, *Keating*, chapter 13: “Into Recession”. See Max Walsh, “Fiscal Baton Passed to the RBA Elitists; The Bottom Line”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 February 1997, p. 31; Tim Colebatch, “Below Zero”, *Age*, 26 July 1997, p. 19.

¹⁶⁰ Valerie Lawson, “Life at the Lodge Had Its Little Ups and Downs”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 August 1996, p. 5; Alan Ramsey, “A Leaf Out of Keating’s Book”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 August 1996, p. 35.

¹⁶¹ Michelle Grattan, “Looking Through Keating’s Window”, *Australian Financial Review*, 16 August 1996, p. 8.

¹⁶² John Dawkins, “Keating: The Wrong Goodbye”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 August 1996, p. 13.

¹⁶³ Dawkins, “The Wrong Goodbye”, p. 13.

¹⁶⁴ Edwards, phone interview, 22 March 2021.

The greatest endorsement of Edwards' insider status came with the book launch. At the State Library of NSW on 12 August 1996, Edwards was flanked by Sessions and Keating. In response to the media interest in his health, Keating acknowledged that he had indeed "jumped on a trampoline to help 'clean out his arteries'" and similar eccentricities.¹⁶⁵ Given that this was just the second of Keating's major public appearances following Labor's election loss, reporters closely studied his body language for signs of political grief. Writing for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Alan Ramsey wrote, "[h]e looked and sounded like a man with all the stuffing gone".¹⁶⁶ In his speech, Keating reiterated his earlier view that it was better for a biographer to get the inside picture than to wait for the "who cares then" kind of historical account thirty years later.¹⁶⁷ For his part, Sessions hinted toward the novelty, as well as the challenges, of publishing an insider account like this: "We got a call from John saying 'there's good news and bad news'. The good news was that [...] he had a new job as Keating's chief economic adviser, the bad news..."¹⁶⁸ In the end, the performance of the book launch, with the subject's support, was such that it affirmed Edwards' licence to speak about the recent political past, further enhancing the trends initiated by people such as Freudenberg and Mills.

There is a curious postscript to the story of Edwards' biography. Sessions took the opportunity of the *Keating* book launch to announce that Penguin had signed two significant personalities to write a biography of incumbent prime minister John Howard for its Viking imprint. Weeks later, the two personalities were revealed as David Barnett, a former adviser to Malcolm Fraser, and his partner Pru Goward, a Liberal insider and Howard associate.¹⁶⁹ It seemed as if Penguin were determined to get an incumbent prime ministerial biography published, come what may. In the end, Penguin's commercial assumptions proved somewhat misguided. Edwards' *Keating*, published after the defeat of the subject, reportedly sold more than 35,000 copies in two years, while *John Howard* was remaindered within a year after approximately 5,000 sales.¹⁷⁰ As Sessions reflected later, Edwards' biography came "at a time when interest in Keating the man and the politician was at its height".¹⁷¹ Received well by the

¹⁶⁵ Lawson, "Life at the Lodge", p. 5.

¹⁶⁶ Ramsey, "Leaf Out of Keating's Book", p. 35.

¹⁶⁷ Lawson, "Life at the Lodge", p. 5.

¹⁶⁸ Bob Sessions quoted in Lawson, "Life at the Lodge", p. 5.

¹⁶⁹ Lawson, "Life at the Lodge", p. 5; Gerard Henderson, "A Historical Oversight", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 August 1996, p. 13.

¹⁷⁰ Stephen Lunn, "Writing's on the Wall for Howard's Life Story", *Australian*, 30 September 1998, p. 12.

¹⁷¹ Sessions, email correspondence, 15 February 2021.

press and book buyers, *Keating* was a sure indication that ministerial advisers had the right and the perceived authority to tell the nation its own recent political history.

A Door Hitherto Locked

For his part, Watson remained at the heart of the PMO until the government's defeat at the 1996 federal election. In the aftermath, he failed to summon the energy and grit required to confront the immediate past in a sensible way. He took a room at the Standard Hotel in Fitzroy, and he recalled 25 years later the "strange smell" in the carpets and the "smell of the schnitzels" during the lunchtime rush.¹⁷² Though ostensibly there to write the book, he dedicated more time in that first year to writing film scripts, such as *The Man Who Sued God* (which became a box office success starring Scottish comedian Billy Connolly), and one about Ned Kelly that was later aborted.¹⁷³ In an interview for the *Australian* newspaper in 1997, Watson said, "'I'd never been so stuffed in my life. You couldn't really separate the depression from the exhaustion'".¹⁷⁴ Intriguingly, by late 1996 reports were already describing Watson's project as a psychobiography rather than a traditional political portrait. "'[W]e write political history'", Watson mused to a journalist, "'as though we know nothing of psychology. Shakespeare without psychology is unbelievable. History without psychology is not possible'".¹⁷⁵ In order to write such a psychologically perceptive and at times piercing account of Keating, Watson first needed to be psychologically restored himself.

The book that became *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart* owed its eventual style – and length – to a series of formative choices and contingencies. The first involved the transition to a new publishing house, Random House Australia. When Transworld's Judith Curr departed for a new role in the United States, Watson recalled that managing director Geoffrey Rumpf lost interest.¹⁷⁶ McPhee advised Watson to have his agent, Rose Creswell, shop the book around once again: "Well, it happened that Rose was in New York at the time, with Jane Palfreyman, who was the publisher at Random. They were actually going to meet Sonny Mehta [...] who was the overall international managing director of Random House, and he bought it at once".¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

¹⁷³ Kendall Hill, "Metropolitan", *Age*, 19 November 1996, p. 10. See also Michelle Grattan, "Keating's People", *Australian Financial Review*, 7 February 1997, p. 1; Michael Gordon, "Pointy Heads and Bleeding Hearts", *Age*, 3 May 2002, p. 13.

¹⁷⁴ Don Watson quoted in Slattery, "Past Master", p. 28.

¹⁷⁵ Don Watson quoted in Tony Stephens, "Enigma Variations", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 August 1996, p. 5.

¹⁷⁶ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

¹⁷⁷ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

Watson's relationship with Palfreyman and Random House would prove critical in the final throes of the publication process.

The second contingency was the decision to commence writing in earnest at the Humanities Research Centre at the ANU in early 1999. He spent two months revisiting his original diaries, striving for a manuscript that was detached, omnipresent and magisterial. "Who was speaking", he asked himself, "a historian, an insider, or both?"¹⁷⁸ Watson was given the chance to present his work before an audience of academic scholars at the Centre. He credited Barry Smith, a respected social and medical historian of Britain, with encouraging him to consider positioning his book as a diary rather than a hasty attempt at magisterial history. "[Smith] would not read the book I was proposing, he said, but a diary was a different matter".¹⁷⁹ At dinner with journalists Michael Gordon (another Keating biographer), and Jim Middleton that evening, Watson considered the conundrum, and decided that he would write the book from the perspective of a roving camera rather than "the camera on the wall".¹⁸⁰ He described this elsewhere as the difference between "a big Constable landscape and a Jackson Pollock – and this is much more like a Jackson Pollock, I suppose".¹⁸¹ Influenced by his time at the ANU, and having chosen to write in this reflective and expressive, decidedly non-academic or magisterial manner, Watson embraced his own subjectivity and dramatised it as fully as possible.

The decision to withhold the draft manuscript from Keating was also crucial. Watson claimed that "a very senior Australian journalist" warned him that if he showed Keating the proofs, he would "never get it published".¹⁸² In his tenth anniversary afterword, he suggested that allowing Keating to interfere with the manuscript would have fundamentally compromised the work's historical value. "[I]f I had written it according to his lights rather than mine", he mused, "I would have betrayed myself; and, for want of a more clinical term, history – the bit I saw at least – would have been betrayed as well".¹⁸³ In our interview, Watson explained that he perceived some level of intervention on Keating's part in the Edwards book, and that in deciding not to show Keating his own manuscript, the "Edwards book sort of came back to

¹⁷⁸ Watson, *Recollections*, 10th anniversary ed., p. 737.

¹⁷⁹ Watson, *Recollections*, 10th anniversary ed., p. 738.

¹⁸⁰ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

¹⁸¹ Don Watson quoted in Gordon, "Pointy Heads and Bleeding Hearts", p. 13.

¹⁸² Don Watson quoted in WheelerCentre, "Don Watson", *YouTube*, [published online 23 January 2015], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3HyHeQQ0Ro>, accessed 15 January 2021, 15:37.

¹⁸³ Watson, *Recollections*, 10th anniversary ed., p. 743.

me”.¹⁸⁴ Without access to Edwards’ own papers, we cannot find certainty in these recollections, but in any event, Watson made the consequent decision not to share a draft with Keating. He was able to press ahead with a version of history as he saw it, without Keating’s authorisation. The cost to their professional and personal relationship, as I demonstrate below, was enormous.

Watson’s literary performance was fraught with risk. The first flashpoint came when the former first couple’s marriage ended, and Annita worried over how Watson might depict her in the book. He recalled several long meetings with Annita Keating’s lawyers, who eventually realised that the book was Watson’s own account and not a ghostwritten memoir in Keating’s name: “So, literally, they slid back their chairs and we all stood up and walked out”.¹⁸⁵ But a far greater challenge came when Paul Keating, having read the manuscript on a homebound flight from the United Kingdom, began sending Watson and his publishers a series of “hideous faxes” denouncing the book.¹⁸⁶ These documents are safely sequestered in the archives, but the general nature of Keating’s grievances remain vivid to Watson. First, there were the speeches, which mattered for the “big picture” legacy Keating claimed. Keating, and indeed some others, felt that for Watson to describe writing the speeches was in fact to contravene “the deal” of speechwriting itself. Indeed, it is possible that the book contained just a bit too much of Watson himself for Keating’s taste. ““The trouble for Paul”, former secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) Bill Kelty told Watson, ““is that it’s about you and not him””.¹⁸⁷ Joy Damousi has recently suggested that “[a]ny biography is a dual biography” of author and subject, but Watson was in a league of his own.¹⁸⁸ And the version of Keating that did appear in the book was a highly emotional figure, replete with “depression” as Watson diagnosed it.¹⁸⁹ Keating, having expected a grand historic Churchillian account, was outraged to find so much of the “black dog” in its pages.¹⁹⁰ Watson had enjoyed unconditional access to Keating’s Sydney office and its resources, and wondered if this compounded the former prime minister’s sense of betrayal.¹⁹¹ When Keating tired of berating Watson, he began to call Palfreyman and, as she put it, “give me the spray that he wanted to give Don”.¹⁹² He imagined Random House

¹⁸⁴ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

¹⁸⁵ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

¹⁸⁶ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

¹⁸⁷ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

¹⁸⁸ Joy Damousi, “A Biographer’s Journey of Revelation: Stuart Macintyre on Ernest Scott”, in Peter Beilharz and Sian Supski (eds.), *The Work of History: Writing for Stuart Macintyre* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2022), p. 136.

¹⁸⁹ Watson, *Recollections*, p. 212.

¹⁹⁰ Watson, *Recollections*, p. 151.

¹⁹¹ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

¹⁹² Jane Palfreyman quoted in Stephanie Wood, “The Book Makers”, Sydney Magazine, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 April 2010, p. 64.

to be “in on the betrayal”. In that context, Watson greatly appreciated their support: “Jane was a person of incredibly ferocious loyalty [...] if you were her author, she would stick by you.”¹⁹³ A steadfast publisher with wellsprings of capital was a good asset to have when the stakes seemed so high.

The launch of *Recollections* in May 2002 encapsulated the contested authority of the type of book Watson had produced. Rather than withdrawing from the event, Keating seized the opportunity to attend Sydney Town Hall and subtly questioned the book’s authority in person.



Figure 8: Noel Pearson, Paul Keating and Don Watson at the launch of *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart*, Sydney Town Hall, 6 May 2002. AAP Photos, Guy Wilmot.

The first speaker, Cape York Aboriginal leader Noel Pearson, spoke at considerable length at Watson’s invitation, discussing controversial topics such as the challenge of curbing Aboriginal “grog and drug addiction” among other things.¹⁹⁴ Looking on, federal parliamentarian Mark Latham deemed Pearson’s performance “a lecture, not a book launch”.¹⁹⁵ All the while Keating stood beside Watson “just seething”.¹⁹⁶ When it was his turn, the former

¹⁹³ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

¹⁹⁴ Noel Pearson, edited speech transcript, “Pearson Puts the Challenge to Labor”, *Australian*, 9 May 2002, p. 10.

¹⁹⁵ Mark Latham, *The Latham Diaries* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2005), p. 190.

¹⁹⁶ Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

prime minister delivered a “mesmerising black performance”.¹⁹⁷ Keating likened Watson’s book to a black-box recorder in an airplane. “[T]he interesting thing about this recorder”, he told those gathered, “is that it only records one conversation – and that’s with the pilot, not the crew or the passengers”.¹⁹⁸ In Keating’s estimation, *Recollections* was limited by perspective in a way that Edwards’ *Keating* had not been, perhaps due to the more interventionist nature of the author’s own voice and personality. “Don has the inclinations of a fruit bat”, he said: “he always heads back to the darkness”.¹⁹⁹ For Pearson, who sensed the rage, it was “like watching a sea hawk pin its kill with its talons on the perch and slice live fish into still-quivering sashimi”.²⁰⁰ Concluding the event, Watson defended the book and asserted that “people of great passion and conviction” like Keating were naturally “prone to melancholy”.²⁰¹ The bulk of the audience knew nothing of the tension between the author and subject. Busy enjoying a quintessential Keating performance, they missed the deliberate and savage assault on the author and the legitimacy of his contribution to Australian political culture.

Despite Keating’s critical appraisal, the book became one of the most significant and culturally renowned publications in Australia’s history. Indeed, Watson recalled that the launch concluded with an “enormous queue of people” buying the book, even as Keating departed the scene.²⁰² Reportedly selling between 75,000 and 100,000 copies, it remains one of the most widely circulated political (auto)biographies in Australia.²⁰³ Political commentator and scholar Robert Manne described it as “one of the most intelligent and seductive books about Australian politics”.²⁰⁴ Others praised it as “a classic”, “wonderfully readable [...] in its own right”, and if it was “a touch too long, the quality of the writing saves it”.²⁰⁵ Struggling to classify the book, reviewers described it variously as “tragedy” and “legend”, a piece of “political anthropology” and “memoir” from a “historian who is activist”.²⁰⁶ All were agreed that it was

¹⁹⁷ Noel Pearson, “Action Only Way Forward”, *Weekend Australian*, 7 July 2007.

¹⁹⁸ Paul Keating quoted in Michael Gordon, “A Keatingesque Launch for a Bleeding Heart”, *Age*, 7 May 2002, p. 3.

¹⁹⁹ Paul Keating quoted in David Penberthy, “Keating Lashes at Cash-Crazy Town”, *Daily Telegraph*, 7 May 2002, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ Pearson, “Action Only Way Forward”.

²⁰¹ Don Watson quoted in Kylie Williams, “NSW – Keating Speechwriter Releases Book on Former PM”, *Australian Associated Press*, 7 May 2002.

²⁰² Watson, interview, 16 April 2021.

²⁰³ Katrina Strickland, “Allen & Unwin to Publish Jonestown”, *Australian Financial Review*, 8 July 2006, p. 5.

²⁰⁴ Robert Manne, “Loneliness of the Vision Splendid”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 May 2002, p. 11.

²⁰⁵ Evan Williams, “The Enigma We Had to Have”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 May 2002, p. 10; Dianna Simonds, “A Brush With Fame”, *Sunday Telegraph*, 30 June 2002, p. 110; Les Carlyon, “Watson on Keating”, 4 June 2002, in *A Life in Words: Collected Writings from Gallipoli to the Melbourne Cup* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2021), p. 178.

²⁰⁶ Mike Steketee, “The Making of Tragedy and Legend”, *Weekend Australian*, 1 June 2002; Noel Turnbull, “Four in One”, *Courier Mail*, 8 June 2002.

not a standard political biography, and most felt his emotional subjectivity gave the text its quality. In Adelaide's *Advertiser*, Tony Baker rejoiced that readers could see and hear Keating "through a door hitherto locked and bolted, now slightly ajar".²⁰⁷ *Recollections* co-won the National Biography Award for 2003 (alongside a family memoir, *The Rose Boys*, by poet and editor Peter Rose), was awarded Book of the Year by the *Age* and *Courier Mail* newspapers, and won a smattering of other awards.²⁰⁸ Scholars of biography spoke of it as "cutting-edge" more than a decade later.²⁰⁹ Keating's ministerial colleagues, some of whom were initially shocked, came to appreciate it over time. Former health minister Carmen Lawrence, who initially dismissed Watson's "therapy" as a very "lopsided" account, later wrote a foreword for the tenth anniversary edition praising "the value" of what Watson had done.²¹⁰ Neal Blewett, former social security minister and himself a cabinet diarist (see Chapter 2), said in *Australian Book Review* that Watson's portrait revealed "the Keating I knew, but had never been able to capture in words".²¹¹

Public success begat a personal cost to Watson. After 12 months of distance, the former speechwriter reached out to Keating and suggested that they meet for a drink. "It wasn't a happy phone call", he later recalled.²¹² As late as 2010 Keating was still fighting to maintain his authorial claim over the historic Redfern speech. In *Recollections*, Watson did not claim ownership of the speech as such, but said that Keating first read the speech "with his breakfast and went to Redfern Park with every word intact, and I think knowing better than I did what it would mean to say them".²¹³ When, in an act of political and postcolonial commemoration the Redfern Speech was added to the National Film and Sound Archive's library, Keating was angered at the recognition that Watson received in public commentary for its authorship. Keating declared that "Watson was not the author of the speech. The sentiments of the speech [...] were mine".²¹⁴ Perhaps recognising the unseemliness of bickering over the minutiae of such an important act of reconciliation, Keating claimed that speechwriting only became a problem "when the speechwriter steps from anonymity to claim particular speeches or

²⁰⁷ Tony Baker, "Deeper Reasons to Admire, Pity Keating", *Advertiser*, 25 May 2002.

²⁰⁸ Jennifer Moran, "Joint Winners Claim Biography Award", *Canberra Times*, 15 March 2003, p. 10.

²⁰⁹ Melanie Nolan, "Country and Lives: Australian Biography and Its History", *Cercles*, no. 35 (2015), p. 108.

²¹⁰ Carmen Lawrence, "Talented Artist Sells His Subject Short", *Australian Financial Review*, 19 July 2002, p. 10; Carmen Lawrence, "Foreword", in Don Watson, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart: A Portrait of Paul Keating PM*, 10th Anniversary ed. (North Sydney: Vintage, 2011), p. xi.

²¹¹ Neal Blewett, "Review: Recollections of a Bleeding Heart", *Australian Book Review*, June – July 2002, no. 242.

²¹² Don Watson quoted in WheelerCentre, "Don Watson", *YouTube*, [published online 23 January 2015], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3HyHeQQ0Ro>, accessed 15 January 2021, 3:08.

²¹³ Watson, *Recollections*, p. 290.

²¹⁴ Keating, "Historic Day in Redfern".

words”.²¹⁵ The following year, Penguin released the tenth anniversary edition of *Recollections*, in which Watson neutralised Keating’s accusation by explaining that he had always agreed with the notion of a “contract” of anonymity: “I don’t recall Paul Keating ever uttering a word that he did not want to utter. Under the ‘contract’ all of [the speeches] are his and he is welcome to them”.²¹⁶ Despite the emotional contours and reverent tone of the initial book, Watson’s afterword reflected the embittered nature of the breakdown in their friendship, and his indignant perception of Keating’s enduring animosity toward him. Keating would never come to accept the legitimacy of Watson’s right to write about him as he did in *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart*, but cultural curators and consumers had already judged that this would be a definitive publication, not just on Keating, but on Australian politics more broadly.

Conclusion

Though written from different ideological positions, Edwards’ and Watson’s books revealed much about the functioning of modern government and the culture of the PMO under Keating. They also offered vivid and not-uncontroversial portraits of their former employer, the “enigma we had to have”.²¹⁷ True to form, Keating surprised friends and associates by accepting one text and taking extreme umbrage at the other, despite both Edwards and Watson representing themselves as political actors in their own right. Indeed, both drew complex and contradictory pictures of Keating’s personality, and both claimed authorship of particular speeches, though Watson drew particular ire for explicating his role in the drafting of the Redfern Speech. Keating seemed able to stomach public knowledge of Edwards’ role in the crafting of rational economic speeches, but not Watson’s emotional investments in the big-picture speeches that the former prime minister cherished. Keating maintains a friendship with Edwards; Watson has been exiled for 20 years from the inner circle he first joined in January 1992. But to make matters worse for Keating, Watson’s book is largely perceived as one of the best ever written on Australian politics, and certainly the defining portrait of Keating. Having largely “given” Edwards the economic story of the 1980s and 1990s, Keating was surprised that Watson wrote “something else entirely”, an intimate psychosocial portrait that probably rendered any memoir Keating might write largely redundant.²¹⁸ As Bolton put it, Watson had “given a decisive turn to future historiography”.²¹⁹ Therein, perhaps, lay Keating’s real grievance.

²¹⁵ Keating, “Historic Day in Redfern”.

²¹⁶ Watson, *Recollections*, 10th anniversary ed., p. 734.

²¹⁷ Williams, “Enigma We Had to Have”, p. 10.

²¹⁸ Day, *Paul Keating*, pp. 476—77.

²¹⁹ Bolton, “The Art of Australian Political Biography”, p. 10.

The historic significance of these accounts lies not in their treatment of the subject, nor their window into the office, nor their critical examination of the Keating government and its policy legacies. These texts were products of a marked shift in Australian political structures and culture. The rise of the ministerial adviser and speechwriter in post-war Australia constituted a major restructuring of the Canberra political elite, formerly dominated by parliamentarians, public servants and journalists. With advisers came a new kind of “insider”, conscious of their own political agency and at liberty to tell the story as they saw it. Edwards’ and Watson’s stories reflected the new cultural status of the male political staffer among the Canberra elite. Formerly a generator of some controversy, federal political staff were by the end of the 1990s no longer assumed to be forever discreet about political life as they saw it. The popularisation of an insider culture gave them the freedom, and more importantly the authority, to speak with their own voice and not that of their master.

SNAPSHOT 4

“They’re Doing You a Favour”

Oral histories require a “specific kind of readiness” on the part of the researcher.¹ Wendy Lowenstein once powerfully likened her interviewing technique to that of a “vacuum cleaner”, deliberately indiscriminate in the information she consumed.² I admired but did not emulate that approach. My interviews more readily drew on the practice of some interpretative political scientists, for whom the standard interview is a “recorded, one-hour conversation” with largely predetermined questions.³ R. A. W. Rhodes has rightly pointed out that even here, “trust and rapport” still matter enormously.⁴ But this is a far cry from Lowenstein’s vacuum. At times, I worried that I had betrayed the ethos of the oral history method itself, although such fears and anxieties have apparently been common among practitioners.⁵

Each relationship began with an email, either from me or an intercessor known to the recipient, introducing myself and the nature of the research. I was polite to politicians, and more demonstrably deferential to their staff. By and large, participants responded well to these approaches, but it meant that when the interviews commenced, the subject position I had adopted was sometimes reflected back at me in distorted ways. Some interviewees, particularly older ones, seemed to speak to me as if I were a curious child whom one might benignly indulge. In a handful of instances, it became clear that I was perceived as something of a fan or groupie. “I’m going to talk to Josh now”, one participant explained to their spouse before closing the sitting room door. “He’s from the ANU, and he’s a big fan of my book”. This wasn’t exactly the way I’d have described myself.

That subject position made it difficult at times to strike the necessary balance between rapport and probity. Could I ask inconvenient, uncomfortable questions and still be the polite

¹ Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, “Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses”, in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006 [1998]), p. 140.

² Wendy Lowenstein, *Weevils in the Flour: An Oral Record of the 1930s Depression in Australia* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1979 [1978]), p. xiv.

³ R. A. W. Rhodes, *Interpretive Political Science: Selected Essays*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 46.

⁴ Rhodes, *Interpretive Political Science*, p. 46.

⁵ Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, “Who’s Afraid of Oral History? Fifty Years of Debates and Anxiety About Ethics”, *Oral History Review*, vol. 43, no. 2 (2016), pp. 338—66.

and respectful young scholar they imagined me to be? After all, as Studs Terkel reminded oral history practitioners, participants are not there by compulsion: “they’re doing you a favour”.⁶

I transcribed all the interviews manually. This proved to be a rich mechanism for reflecting on the interviewing process itself. Listening to the recordings, I was not always impressed with the way I heard myself approaching difficult questions. For example, there has been much speculation that Mark Latham, onetime leader of the Australian Labor Party (2003–2005), fabricated his infamous diaries before their controversial publication in 2005. It would have been disingenuous of me not to ask his literary agent, Mary Cunnane, about that speculation, but it certainly involved diverting the story she was telling. Preparing the transcript, I was surprised by the faltering and circular way I articulated my question: “I wonder if you can recall your first impression of what those diaries looked like when you first saw them?” Little wonder that Cunnane replied, “What do you mean, ‘looked like’?”

In February 2022, I interviewed Cheryl Kernot, former leader of the Australian Democrats (1993–97) and famously a high-profile defector to the Australian Labor Party, an episode that I will discuss in the next chapter. Twenty years ago, she published a memoir describing that defection and its aftermath, but chose not to reveal the intimate nature of her personal relationship with Labor colleague Gareth Evans. As I will show, that became the basis of a significant scandal. I knew that I would need to ask her about this in the interview, but I dreaded doing so. Again, when I transcribed the interview, I could hear myself summoning the courage to ask someone who was being so generous with their time such an intrusive question. As it happened, Kernot immediately deduced the nature of the question when I began to stammer about “public-private balance” and “privacy” and so on. Graciously, she spared me the trouble of finishing the question.

It says something about the nature of the stories I deal with in the next chapter that, two decades on, they remain uncomfortable. Valerie Yow has explained the importance of empathy in oral history interviews, but in a political history, the desire for critical distance complicates that empathy.⁷ I believe I usually struck the right balance between respect and inquisitiveness, even if the best form of words occasionally eluded me.

⁶ Studs Terkel with Tony Parker, “Interviewing an Interviewer”, in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006 [1998]), p. 124.

⁷ Valerie Yow, “‘Do I Like Them Too Much?’: Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-Versa”, *Oral History Review*, vol. 24, no. 1 (1997), p. 78.

CHAPTER 4

(EN)GENDERING DISBELIEF

Gender, the Media and Public Perceptions of Politicians' Memoirs

In the first decade of the new millennium, even as commentators speculated about the death of the printed word in a digital age, Australians could be in no doubt that a political memoir was potentially a powerful and dangerous object. Three examples here are telling. In 2002, Cheryl Kernot published a memoir about her four years with the Labor Party, following her longer career as an Australian Democrats senator and leader. Just days after she launched it, and with a throng of journalists besieging her hotel room, she was forced to cancel the rest of her book tour following a controversy concerning the secrets she had chosen to conceal. Her onetime colleague Mark Latham, a man who briefly led the Labor Party but resigned in January 2005 in failure and disillusionment, also produced a book that caused a frenzy among journalists as well as former colleagues (*The Latham Diaries*, 2005). Latham sought the agreement of media providers that the publicity surrounding his diaries would mark the end of his family's presence in public life. Not four months later, Latham's literary agent found herself answering press inquiries about why her client had allegedly assaulted a cameraman at a fast food outlet in Western Sydney. His aspiration to mark a clean break from politics with the publication of the book was spectacularly shattered. And then in 2007, reactionary populist and "perpetual candidate" Pauline Hanson published a book whose most newsworthy feature was the claim of a sexual dalliance with onetime adviser David Oldfield.¹ When challenged to take a lie detector test, Hanson refused and asked the public to trust her word over the weak denials of her former staffer.

¹ Elizabeth Wynhausen, "Burbs-Eye View of the Battlers Below", *Weekend Australian*, 27 October 2007, p. 25.

I will detail in this chapter the personal, political and publishing dynamics that generated those controversies, but in doing so I want to situate them in the context of a political culture whose gendered characteristics were subject to increasingly explicit debate. White women had

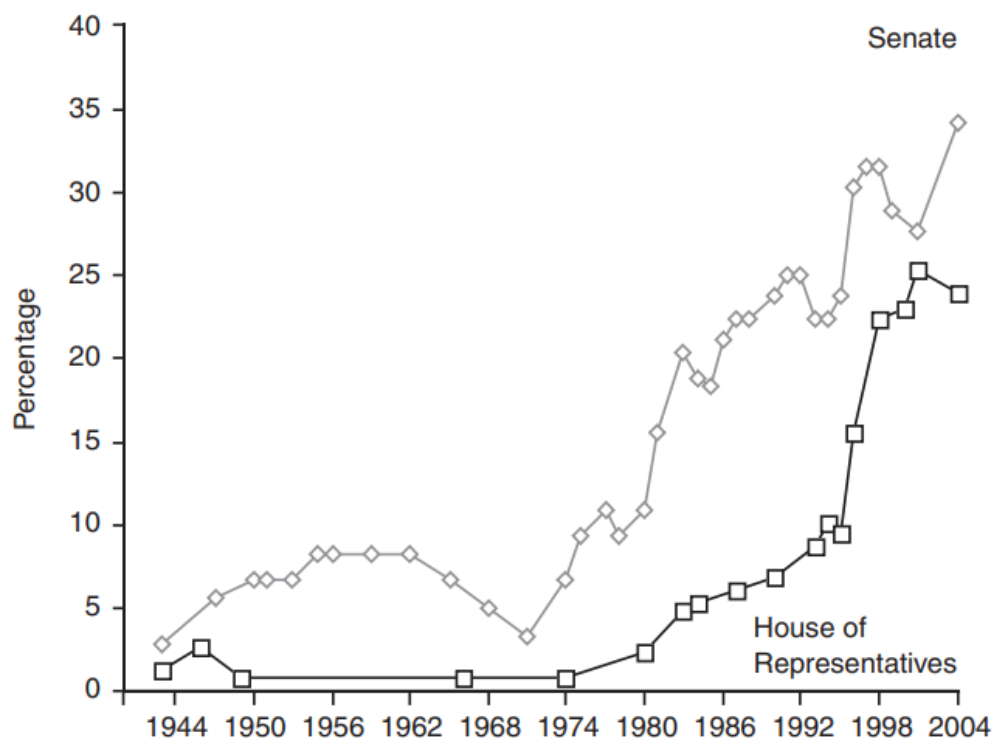


Figure 9: Women Members of the Australian Parliament by House, 1943-2004 (%). McAllister, 2006.

by 2000 clearly become part of the political class in any understanding of that term, though they remained a minority. Between 1980 and 1998 the proportion of Senate seats held by women tripled, and women's share of House of Representatives seats rose from a meagre two per cent to more than 22 per cent.² In the 1990s, with heightened global interest in getting women in parliaments, some Australian women MPs such as Carmen Lawrence (Labor) and Bronwyn Bishop (Liberal) were occasionally touted in the press as prospective prime ministers.³ This period also saw the emergence of Emily's List and affirmative action quotas to increase women's representation in the parliamentary Labor Party, along with the ascension of the first women premiers and chief ministers, beginning with Rosemary Follett in the

² Figure 2.1, Women Members of the Australian Parliament, by House, 1943—2004 (%), in Ian McAllister, "Women's Electoral Representation in Australia", in Marian Sawer, Manon Tremblay and Linda Trimble (eds.), *Representing Women in Parliament: A Comparative Study* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 33.

³ Marian Sawer, Manon Tremblay and Linda Trimble, "Introduction: Patterns and Practice in the Parliamentary Representation of Women", in Marian Sawer, Manon Tremblay and Linda Trimble (eds.), *Representing Women in Parliament: A Comparative Study* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 1.

Australian Capital Territory in 1989, and followed by Western Australia's Lawrence and Victoria's Joan Kirner in 1990.⁴

The corollary was that gender became an increasingly visible and fraught component of Australian political culture and conflict. Masculinist assumptions about political leadership and representation had once been less contested. But thirty years after the heyday of the women's liberation movement, "gender and sexuality" continued to play "very important roles in the constitution of Australian political discourse".⁵ Journalists played a key role, and not always a progressive one, in making that discourse. As Julia Baird has shown, newspapers could make women MPs seem hard-working, impressive and promising, and could just as easily make them "topple like ten pins" by delegitimising their character in gendered terms.⁶ Women parliamentarians' sexual conduct was particularly liable to media censure where men's had formerly been obscured by self-serving silences and convenient appeals to a narrow conception of what was in the public interest. But even for them, as Bethany Phillips-Peddlesden has shown, gender had "long been used as an interpretive framework for political authority" and was perhaps more explicitly so in this environment where the numbers were evidently changing.⁷

So, in what ways did gender shape the political memoir boom in the early twenty-first century? In this chapter, I argue that the political memoir operated as another public site of gender performativity, as well as visible gendered contestation, in Australian political culture. That is to say, one of the key functions of the political memoir was to allow authors to construct, and more importantly to allow audiences and critics to interpret, sanction, and censure, different kinds of masculine and feminine political performances. Although hegemonic ideals about masculinity and femininity had long shaped the practice of professional politics, the increasing visibility of gender conflict in Australian politics in the 1990s and 2000s directly contributed to the rise of the political memoir, which itself exacerbated gendered political controversies. But the line between public and private selves was harder than ever to draw, and the gendered subjectivities of these authors became objects of political debate. When

⁴ Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonisation of Women in Australia* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2016 [1975]), pp. 88—89.

⁵ Carol Johnson, *Governing Change: From Keating to Howard* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000), p. 83.

⁶ Julia Baird, *Media Tarts: How the Australian Press Frames Female Politicians* (Carlton North: Scribe, 2004), p. 4.

⁷ Bethany Phillips-Peddlesden, "Prime Ministers: Gender and Power in Australian Political History, 1902—1975", PhD dissertation: University of Melbourne, 2019, p. 3.

journalists wrote about politicians' memoirs, they were evaluating the authenticity of the man or woman whose character purported to be expressed in its pages. At every turn, sex and (hetero)sexuality were integral to understandings of acceptable political identities and their narratives.

In this chapter, I examine three pieces of political life writing as gendered performances, and as gendered scandals. Thus far, I have used the word performance in a literary and cultural sense in the hope of rendering the complex effects of political memoirs on the political stage more intelligible. In gender studies, ideas of performance and performativity are grounded in a distinct intellectual tradition. Famously, Judith Butler outlined the importance of performativity for understanding gender in everyday life and culture. Butler argued in the 1980s that gender was a “performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief”.⁸ Gender performativity, others have since suggested, involves “a form of protective mimicry” that necessarily requires “an audience” and “needs to be witnessed” to be enacted.⁹

To perform transgressively, even in a memoir, risked *scandal*.¹⁰ Scandals, according to Anna Clark, are best understood as episodes of “widespread public controversy” in which matters of personal reputation and conduct become “intertwined with the politics of the day”.¹¹ These controversies tend to rely on the existence of “freedom of speech”, “an open and aggressive media” and “strong political competition” within and between parties.¹² In Australia’s “opportunistic” media landscape, it has not necessarily been the severity of the transgression that guarantees scandal, but rather “the standing of the politician” and assumptions about their significance.¹³ Sex and sexuality have generated many scandals in recent Australian political history, and as Frank Bongiorno has suggested, sex scandals helped to separate the “respectable” from the “disreputable” in political life.¹⁴ Therein lay the

⁸ Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”, in Philip Auslander (ed.), *Performance: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol. 4 (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 98.

⁹ David Buchbinder, *Studying Men and Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 55—56.

¹⁰ Rodney Tiffen, *Scandals: Media, Politics and Corruption in Contemporary Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1999).

¹¹ Anna Clark, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 2.

¹² Scott Brenton, “Ministers and Scandals”, in Keith Dowding and Chris Lewis (eds.), *Ministerial Careers and Accountability in the Australian Commonwealth Government* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2012), p. 138.

¹³ Frank Bongiorno, “Balls, Bubbles and Bosses: Australian Politics and Sex Scandal”, *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 46, no. 3 (2022), p. 293; Brenton, “Ministers and Scandals”, p. 146.

¹⁴ Bongiorno, “Balls, Bubbles and Bosses”, p. 296.

significance of gendered and sexual scripts in media reactions to political memoirs.¹⁵ If the gendered and sexual identities performed by the politician on the page did not conform to societal expectations as imagined by the press, then scandal could ensue.

Australian journalists and news proprietors had their reasons for investing in scandals of this nature. Theirs had long been a highly masculine culture of pleasure and power.¹⁶ As one former press gallery journalist put it, “[t]here were few teetotallers in the Old Parliament House”.¹⁷ Though always present in the media workforce, women made significant gains in the 1970s and 1980s. Some attained seniority, but many more remained in lower-paid roles, enjoying fewer opportunities for promotion and experiencing sexual harassment.¹⁸

The “competitive market” for news – accentuated by the rise of computer technology and the pressure that the internet placed on advertising revenue – meant that there were strong commercial incentives as well as socio-cultural motives for generating gendered and sex scandals.¹⁹ Reacting to those pressures, the male editors and columnists of the old broadsheet newspapers took their stories down-market in a process that has been described as “tabloidization”.²⁰ With the gendered order of their own workplaces rapidly changing, journalists evaluated politicians against a surprisingly fixed and inflexible set of assumptions about masculinity and femininity. Women journalists, many of them conscious of the masculine structures around them, were often complicit in this, but it was predominantly male reporters whose conservative ideas of manhood and womanhood were called on to evaluate politicians and their memoirs.

Modesty in Women, Rectitude in Men

The respectable white man was historically the normative actor on the Australian political stage. In reality, colonial men fell well short of expectations, and the public was prone to holding them in contempt.²¹ But Australia arguably shared with the United States a culture

¹⁵ See William Simon and John H. Gagnon, “Sexual Scripts”, in Richard Parker and Peter Aggleton (eds.), *Culture, Society and Sexuality: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2014 [1999]), pp. 29–38.

¹⁶ Sally Young, *Paper Emperors: The Rise of Australia’s Newspaper Empires* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2019), p. 6;

¹⁷ Rob Chalmers, *Inside the Canberra Press Gallery: Life in the Wedding Cake of Old Parliament House*, eds. Sam Vincent and John Wanna (Canberra: ANU Press, 2011), p. 90.

¹⁸ Louise North, “Australia: A Case of Systemic Inequity for Women Journalists”, in Carolyn M. Byerly (ed.), *The Palgrave International Handbook of Women and Journalism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 342.

¹⁹ Paolo Mancini, “Corruption Scandals and the Media System”, in Howard Tumber and Silvio Waisbord (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Media and Scandal* (London: Routledge, 2019), pp. 157–58.

²⁰ Brenton, “Ministers and Scandals”, p. 147.

²¹ Frank Bongiorno, *Dreamers and Schemers: A Political History of Australia* (Collingwood: La Trobe University Press, 2022), p. 54; Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, 4th ed. (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2016 [1999]), p. 97.

which assumed that “God had ordained modesty in women, rectitude in men, and thrift, sobriety, and hard work in both”.²² That gendered order was underscored by a highly distinct sexual division of labour driven by what Melanie Nolan has called “informal segregation” as well as industrial and arbitration law.²³ Politically, Stuart Macintyre explained, “manliness” became a prime virtue, celebrated through a “language of independence, honour, chivalry, resolution and mastery”.²⁴ Rooted in an older Christian ontology of “knightly conduct”, “honour” constituted a core virtue for high office (consider the designation of *the honourable* for executive officer-holders).²⁵ Men were deemed “the protectors” and “the reasoners” of civic life, though political culture could be “tolerant of male weakness and forgiving of men’s sins”.²⁶ This protective style of masculinity would long remain a key facet of politicians’ gendered identities.²⁷ Masculinity had to be styled carefully, of course. Stanley Melbourne Bruce’s defeat in 1929 illustrated that “patrician hauteur and conceit” were electorally hazardous.²⁸ Conservative men were better received when they offered a rhetoric of protestant work ethic and individuality underpinned by a sense of shared consciousness that was not bound by class.²⁹ John Howard’s notions of “battlers” and “practical mateship” were redolent of that tradition.³⁰ Labor men historically appealed to a more Catholic sense of loyalty and service, with the lone wolf or the more anthropologically unpalatable rat as its antithesis.³¹ Masculinity was also racially exclusive, the composition of Labor’s first caucus reflecting the

²² Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), p. 4.

²³ Melanie Nolan, “The White Blouse Revolution: Heroic and Anti-Heroic Interpretations of the Feminisation of Work”, *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 21, no. 52 (1997), p. 61.

²⁴ Stuart Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism: The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 196.

²⁵ Jacqueline Dickenson, *Renegades and Rats: Betrayal and the Remaking of Radical Organisations in Britain and Australia* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2006), p. 31.

²⁶ Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism*, p. 207; Bongiorno, *Dreamers and Schemers*, p. 65.

²⁷ Carol Johnson, “The Gendered Identities of Australian Political Leaders: From Hawkie to ScoMo”, in Zareh Ghazarian and Katrina Lee-Koo (eds.), *Gender Politics: Navigating Political Leadership in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2021), pp. 11–23.

²⁸ Alex Millmow, “The Patrician and the Orator”, in Benjamin T. Jones, Frank Bongiorno and John Uhr (eds.), *Elections Matter: Ten Federal Elections that Shaped Australia* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2018), p. 51. See also David Lee, *Stanley Melbourne Bruce: Australian Internationalist* (London: Continuum, 2010).

²⁹ Judith Brett, *Robert Menzies’ Forgotten People* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 1992), pp. 59–65; Judith Brett, “‘The Fortunes of My Own Little Band’: The Dilemma of Deakin and the Liberal Protectionists”, in Paul Strangio and Nick Dyrenfurth (eds.), *Confusion: The Making of the Australian Two-Party System* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2009), pp. 28–30.

³⁰ Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 188, p. 206.

³¹ Brett, “‘My Own Little Band’”, pp. 28–30. For a powerful example of the Lone Wolf mode of Labor masculinity and its consequences, see Carolyn Rasmussen, *The Blackburns: Public Lives, Private Ambition* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2019), p. 268. For more on Labor and betrayal see Dickenson, *Renegades and Rats*.

“white brotherhood” of the wider movement.³² In time, the “larrikin”, a formerly suspect stereotype representing social disorder, became instead a neat masculine archetype that could transcend class boundaries if performed properly.³³ Bob Hawke best exemplified the larrikin’s electoral appeal.³⁴

Political manliness was malleable and changed over time, but it remained enclosed within an often restrictive spectrum of emotional style. In the late nineteenth century, Victorian liberal George Higinbotham was known for his “emotional spontaneity”, a quality that made him richly empathetic but clashed with social expectations of “masculine restraint”.³⁵ This emotional economy was a constitutive component of the “demarcation of the private from the public sphere” in political culture, and a defining feature of manly “respectability”.³⁶ In the mid-twentieth century, even as that dichotomy was renegotiated, emotional self-control was deemed a fundamental component of politicians’ masculinity. Judith Brett has argued that Robert Menzies’ lofty ideals were psychological tools with which to hold in check his “envy and anger towards anything or anyone who made him feel small”.³⁷ Respectability and self-restraint were what set Menzies apart from someone like Latham, about whom there lingered a fear “that there was something elemental, unruly and dangerous about his masculinity”.³⁸ The failure to adhere to ideals of manly comportment could incite public shame, a powerful political emotion marked by a “fear of failing not only one’s valued community, but through that one’s sense of self”.³⁹

The rise of women in parliament and the press in the 1980s, and more acutely in the 1990s, changed the composition of the political class and challenged the cultural and emotional parameters of its discourse. Jürgen Habermas argued that the “exclusion of women had structuring significance” for the emergent public spheres of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for “its structure and relation to the private sphere [was] determined in a gender-

³² Stuart Macintyre, “The First Caucus”, in John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre (eds.), *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001), p. 29.

³³ Melissa Bellanta, *Larrikins: A History* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2012), introduction.

³⁴ Lech Blaine, “Top Blokes: The Larrikin Myth, Class and Power”, *Quarterly Essay*, no. 83 (Carlton: Black Inc., 2021), pp. 26–30.

³⁵ Macintyre, *Colonial Liberalism*, pp. 24–25.

³⁶ Macintyre, *Colonial Liberalism*, pp. 24–25; Marilyn Lake, “Historical Reconsiderations IV: The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context”, *Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no. 86 (1986), pp. 116–31.

³⁷ Brett, *Robert Menzies’ Forgotten People*, p. 237.

³⁸ Frank Bongiorno, “Good Blokes? Gender and Political Leadership in the Australian Labor Party”, in Zareh Ghazarian and Katrina Lee-Koo (eds.), *Gender Politics: Navigating Political Leadership in Australia* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2021), p. 33.

³⁹ Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash: Britain, Ireland and Australia, 1890–1920* (New York: Routledge, 2018), p. 15.

specific fashion”.⁴⁰ Australian women in the twentieth century were politically active citizens, but as Phillips-Peddlesden has noted, that fact alone did not change the public-private dichotomy on which party and parliamentary politics was predicated.⁴¹ Moreover, while the private sphere was a contested site of meaning for men as well as women, the public sphere remained a space of scarcely curtailed male privilege.⁴² Australia’s early women parliamentarians, elected between 1921 and the 1940s, were often daughters or wives of public men, and that “halo effect” marked them as fit for office.⁴³ A number of women were elected in the 1980s, and significantly more in the 1990s, and their arrival in parliament had the potential to disrupt existing assumptions about gender roles and power in Australia. So often elegised as God’s police in settler colonial Australia, women did not single-handedly clean up the untidy and undignified world of men’s politics, as many had expected them to do.⁴⁴ However, their presence arguably accentuated the renegotiation of the boundary between public and private life that was already underway.

In their efforts to perform political power in the public sphere, women searched for a new set of gendered scripts. For much of the twentieth century, women’s claims to political citizenship were predicated on “maternal feminism”, a political recognition of their importance as mothers and home-makers.⁴⁵ As late as the 1970s, the Australian media framed women candidates and MPs as political “housewives” whose authority emanated from the kitchen.⁴⁶ The new feminist activism of the 1970s eschewed those maternal roles and expressed “dissatisfaction” with the existing public-private dichotomy that relegated women to subordinate social roles.⁴⁷ But when these feminists engaged with formal politics, either as “femocrats” (advisers and public servants) or as elected representatives, they found themselves criticised equally by those who repudiated the feminist project entirely and by other feminists who claimed that they had “compromised their politics” by working *with* the state.⁴⁸ Moreover,

⁴⁰ Jurgen Habermas, “Further Reflections on the Public Sphere”, in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996 [1992]), p. 428.

⁴¹ Phillips-Peddlesden, “Prime Ministers”, p. 38. For discussions of women’s political activities in the twentieth century, see Marian Simms and Marian Sawyer, *A Woman’s Place: Women and Politics in Australia* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993); Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999).

⁴² See John Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies’ Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000), pp. 31—41.

⁴³ This ‘halo effect’ is discussed in Simms and Sawyer, *A Woman’s Place*, pp. 39—40.

⁴⁴ Summers, *Damned Whores and God’s Police*; Baird, *Media Tarts*, pp. 49—50.

⁴⁵ Lake, *Getting Equal*, pp. 72—86.

⁴⁶ Baird, *Media Tarts*, pp. 58—59.

⁴⁷ Michelle Arrow, *The Seventies: The Personal, the Political and the Making of Modern Australia* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2019), p. 48.

⁴⁸ Arrow, *The Seventies*, pp. 134—35.

women MPs had to prove that they could manage “the tightrope of gendered expectations” in their efforts to marry “toughness and compassion”.⁴⁹ Personal emotions were suspect; if they complained about gendered disadvantage, women MPs were derided as “precious princesses”, lacking the grit to succeed in the necessarily tough world of politics.⁵⁰ Conservative or populist women, such as Queensland’s Hanson, could succeed if they channelled the anger or indignation that their electors apparently felt toward the political class more broadly and the “globalisation” agenda that they seemed to represent. Theirs was a politics of “white masculine agency” to which Hanson’s political persona directly appealed.⁵¹ As Fiona Probyn has argued, the metropolitan media flagellated itself for turning this “misfit into a megastar”, but Hanson’s “feminised battler” persona drew on lingering conceptions of a traditional white masculine settler colonial society, and an audience for these performances evidently existed.⁵²

The two most serious threats to women’s projections of power in the public sphere were sexuality and ambition. Naturally, all candidates required some level of ambition to succeed in politics, but *personal* ambition – particularly if it was exercised at the expense of a man – could prove politically lethal. In Britain, Margaret Thatcher’s rise to power was marked by performances that carefully combined masculine “[h]ardness, competitiveness, abrasiveness” with “soft, sensitive” and, on occasions, “sexy” feminine attributes.⁵³ There was curiosity in Australia about the “hardworking housewife” who also relished her reputation as the “Iron Lady”, but that moniker also reflected undertone of unease about her authoritative tendencies.⁵⁴ For an Australian woman MP to seem “vain” or “ambitious” was to risk brief media fascination or searing censure, or both.⁵⁵ Having challenged her predecessor to become Australia’s first woman prime minister in June 2010, Julia Gillard found that the Lady Macbeth archetype was wielded against her often.⁵⁶ Questions of sex and sexuality were fundamentally tied up with

⁴⁹ Carol Johnson, “From Obama to Abbott: Gender Identity and the Politics of Emotion”, *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 28, no. 75 (2013), p. 14.

⁵⁰ Virginia Haussegger, “The Gender Agenda”, in Mark Evans, Michelle Grattan and Brendan McCaffrie (eds.), *From Turnbull to Morrison: The Trust Divide* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2019), p. 188.

⁵¹ Robert Mason, “‘Pitbulls’ and Populist Politicians: Sarah Palin, Pauline Hanson and the Use of Gendered Nostalgia in Electoral Campaigns”, *Comparative American Studies: An International Journal*, vol. 8, no. 3 (2010), p. 189.

⁵² Fiona Probyn, “‘That Woman’: Pauline Hanson and Cultural Crisis”, *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 29 (1999), p. 163, p. 167.

⁵³ Ian Kershaw, *Personality and Power: Builders and Destroyers of Modern Europe* (London: Allen Lane, 2022), pp. 297–98.

⁵⁴ Baird, *Media Tarts*, p. 20.

⁵⁵ Baird, *Media Tarts*, p. 10.

⁵⁶ Sally Young and Matthew Ricketson, “Gillard, Her Government and the Media”, in Chris Aulich (ed.), *The Gillard Governments: Australian Commonwealth Administration 2010 – 13* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2014), p. 284; Bethany Phillips-Peddlesden, “‘Entitled to a Better Standard Than This’: *Strong Female Lead*, Julia Gillard and Sexism in Australian Politics”, *History Australia*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2022), p. 396.

these anxieties about women's ambition. In British politics, it had long been the case that sex scandals involved cultural assumptions that "linked traditional ideas of women as insatiably sexual with the fear of female political power".⁵⁷ In the 1990s, American sex scandals proved powerful in their capacity to undermine a man or woman's perceived trustworthiness in the public sphere chiefly to the detriment of women such as harassment survivor Anita Hill and former White House intern Monica Lewinsky.⁵⁸ "Divergence from morality in private life" had cost plenty of men their ministerial jobs too, but on the whole women received "less generous treatment" from the media.⁵⁹ Women parliamentarians could apparently be attractive, but not sexual.

Gendering the Political Memoir

Political memoirs before the 2000s seemed usually to perpetuate a form of politics that normalised masculinity as a marker of authority and authenticity. These books were historically recognised as expressions of "wilful leadership" produced by "the ruling elite, kings, generals, and emperors".⁶⁰ In the modern British tradition, the genre was bound up with the "club rules" of Whitehall and Westminster, in which "gentlemanly honour" and executive privilege conditioned the stories that could be told.⁶¹ In Australia, they often became "public and emotionless creations" as Sean Scalmer has suggested.⁶² The public and the private were assumed to be divisible. "I have been persuaded", former conservative minister Percy Spender begrudgingly wrote in the preface of *Politics and a Man* (1972), "to say something about myself and my life".⁶³ What mattered to politicians with a healthy sense of their own manliness, like Jim Killen, was that they had been honest, independent, and willing to challenge the party line where principle compelled them to do so.⁶⁴ Independent MPs such as Phil Cleary and Peter Andren could make these kinds of claims with added force in their political memoirs, which

⁵⁷ Clark, *Scandal*, p. 10.

⁵⁸ Clark, *Scandal*, p. 221.

⁵⁹ Sean Scalmer, *Democratic Adventurer: Graham Berry and the Making of Australian Politics* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2020), p. 82; Bongiorno, "Balls, Bubbles and Bosses", p. 303.

⁶⁰ George Egerton, "Politics and Autobiography: Political Memoir as Polygenre", *Biography*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1992), p. 224; Margaret Henderson, *Marking Feminist Times: Remembering the Longest Revolution in Australia* (Berlin: Peter Lang and European University Studies, 2006), p. 80.

⁶¹ David Richards and Helen Mathers, "Political Memoirs and New Labour: Interpretations of Power and the 'Club Rules'", *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, vol. 12, no. 4 (2010), pp. 503–4.

⁶² Sean Scalmer, "The Rise of the Insider: Memoirs and Diaries in Recent Australian Political History", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 56, no. 1 (2010), p. 87.

⁶³ Percy Spender, *Politics and a Man* (Sydney: Collins, 1972), p. xi.

⁶⁴ Jim Killen, *Killen: Inside Australian Politics* (North Ryde: Methuen Hayes, 1985).

journalists praised as “straightforward” and “often disarming” in their candour.⁶⁵ The genre, then, generally projected both emotional reticence and manly independence.

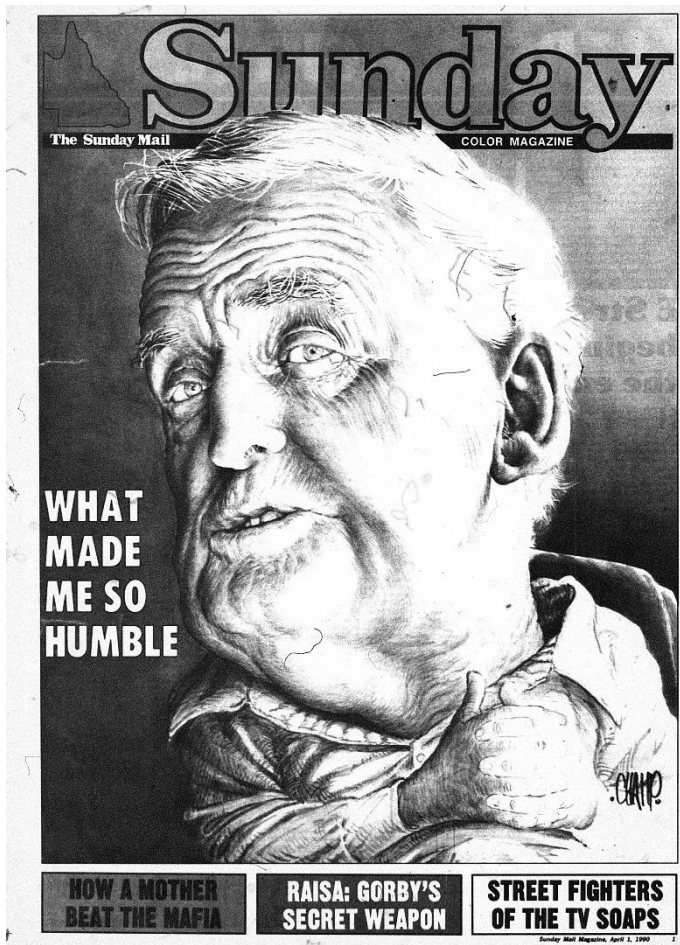


Figure 10: Cartoon of Joh Bjelke-Petersen on the cover of the *Courier Mail's* Sunday magazine, 1 April 1990. NLA, *Courier Mail*.

masculine self-respect. Journalists were quick to question Bjelke-Petersen’s “extraordinary” life story and his “selective memory”, while cartoonists depicted him with a small body and nefariously large head under the tagline “What Made Me So Humble”.⁶⁷ In an infamous interview with the former premier, esteemed host of *A Current Affair* Jana Wendt questioned the memoir, challenged Bjelke-Petersen’s profession of Christian values, and accused him of

Political memoirs could also illuminate a politician’s failure to be sufficiently manly and upright. Following the exposure of systematic and “high-level corruption” in Queensland during the 1987 Fitzgerald Inquiry, the “morally bankrupt” premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen was removed from office by his National Party colleagues.⁶⁶ He promptly enlisted freelance journalist Phil Derriman and publishers at Angus & Robertson to help him defend his legacy in a memoir called *Don’t You Worry About That!*, eventually released in early 1990. The book offered a tale of humility, Christian values and commitment to public service imbued with a sense of

⁶⁵ Shaun Carney, “Secrets of an Independent’s Success”, *Age*, 10 May 2003, p. 4. See Phil Cleary, *Cleary Independent* (Pymble: HarperCollins, 1998); Peter Andren, *The Andren Report: An Independent Way in Australian Politics* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2003).

⁶⁶ Ross Fitzgerald, Lyndon Megarrity and David Symonds, *Made in Queensland: A New History* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2009), p. 185; Frank Bongiorno, *The Eighties: The Decade that Transformed Australia* (Carlton: Black Inc., 2015), p. 269.

⁶⁷ Greg Roberts, “Stone the Crows, Joh”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, p. 76; Peter Morley, “Joh’s Selective Memory Ignores Errors”, *Courier Mail Monitor*, 7 April 1990, p. 2; “What Made Me So Humble”, *Sunday Mail Magazine*, 1 April 1990, p. 1.

accepting bribes while in office.⁶⁸ Bjelke-Petersen's incoherent denials (including calling Wendt "wrong" nine times and threatening to take her "people" to court six times) were so risible that they inspired a satirical sketch on the popular comedy program *Fast Forward*.⁶⁹ Bjelke-Petersen had failed to uphold the creed of "moral manliness" long valorised in public culture, and the responses to his memoir hinged on that failure.⁷⁰

In Australia as in Britain, the eventual rise of women parliamentarians meant that "the political memoir could no longer remain the preserve of the male politician".⁷¹ But it was assumed that a woman would write with a more personal touch. Indeed, even the dogmatic Thatcher had to articulate her economic worldview in personal terms. "Before I read a line from the great liberal economists", she wrote in *The Downing Street Years* (1993), "I knew from my father's accounts that the free market was like a vast sensitive nervous system, responding to events and signals all over the world".⁷² Having published one volume, Thatcher was contractually obliged to produce another, *The Path to Power* (1995), which would cover her upbringing and life before Downing Street.⁷³ The normative cultural and commercial expectations were that a woman – even one so "constitutionally averse to retrospection" as Thatcher – should articulate her political life in distinctly personal terms.⁷⁴

Australia had no Thatcher, but it had in Dame Enid Lyons one example of the challenging dynamics of women's political life writing. "[Women's and minority authors'] autobiographies are inherently political", Anne Brewster has suggested, "because the writer's experience is read as representative of a group rather than as personal and unique".⁷⁵ In *Among the Carrion Crows* (1972), Lyons noted that as the first woman elected to the federal House of Representatives, she knew that onlookers saw her as "a risky political experiment!"⁷⁶ Viewed by some as Australia's "pre-eminent maternal citizen", Lyons wrote and spoke in this book "as a

⁶⁸ Jana Wendt quoted in Matthew Carden, "ACA – Jana Wendt and Premier Joh Bjelke Peterson" [sic], *YouTube*, [published online 31 March 2014], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuAVO0jSW5U>, accessed 11 February 2022.

⁶⁹ Joh Bjelke-Petersen quoted in Carden, "Jana Wendt and Premier Joh Bjelke Peterson".

⁷⁰ Phillips-Peddlesden, "Prime Ministers", p. 128.

⁷¹ Krista Cowman, "The Political Autobiographies of Early Women MPs, c. 1918–1964", in Julie V. Gottlieb and Richard Toye (eds.), *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender, and Politics in Britain, 1918–1945* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 220.

⁷² Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 11.

⁷³ Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography*, vol. 3: *Herself Alone* (London: Penguin Random House, 2019), p. 752.

⁷⁴ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher*, vol. 3, p. 752.

⁷⁵ Anne Brewster, *Reading Aboriginal Women's Autobiography* (Sydney: Sydney University Press with Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 38.

⁷⁶ Enid Lyons, *Among the Carrion Crows* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1972), p. 2.

representative citizen”, but one who had applied “the touchstone” of domestic life to politics.⁷⁷ She bestowed approval on the activities of the women who were then campaigning for equal pay and empowerment in the public sphere.⁷⁸ Published at a moment of feminist mobilisation, the book helped to render Lyons a symbol of women’s empowerment, a “pioneer in parliament”, whose “important book” was marked by “charm as well as frankness”.⁷⁹

Gendered identities are, Gillian Whitlock reminds us, products of “adjacency”, and in that sense it was Lyons’ portrait of and relationship with her late husband that mattered most for some reviewers.⁸⁰ Displeased with the “intolerable” neglect of her husband’s prime ministerial legacy by historians, she described Joe Lyons’ good nature, defended his autonomy against accusations of her own undue influence, and reaffirmed his unerring trust in the ambitious attorney-general Robert Menzies.⁸¹ The “grand old lady of Australian politics”, one reviewer remarked, had “thrown new light” on the Lyons-Menzies relationship.⁸² Radio listeners heard that Dame Enid had provided “delectable titbits” for historians and political scientists about the two men.⁸³ (In time, the spousal memoir would become a small subgenre of its own, describing the difficulties of managing the “department of home affairs” while their husbands strutted the political stage, but equally outlining their own independent identities).⁸⁴ In its intent and reception, Lyons’ memoir epitomised the challenge of describing women’s politics from such a vantage point.

The relatively few Australian women MPs who produced memoirs in the 1990s and 2000s found it to be a platform still constrained by virtue of their sex. Prominent conservative women such as Dames Annabelle Rankin and Margaret Guilfoyle opted not to follow Lyons’ literary example. A pioneer among Labor ranks, Susan Ryan was unique in publishing her political autobiography in 1999, and there was no successor until Margaret Reynolds followed suit in 2006 (see Chapter 2). These books were well-regarded by thoughtful reviewers (chiefly

⁷⁷ Catherine Fisher, *Sound Citizens: Australian Women Broadcasters Claim Their Voice, 1923—1956* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2021), p. 86; Lyons, *Among the Carrion Crows*, p. 167, p. 36.

⁷⁸ Lyons, *Among the Carrion Crows*, p. 167.

⁷⁹ Suzanne Baker, “There is Nothing Like This Dame”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 April 1973; J. S. Burns, “A Rare Woman in the House”, *Mercury*, 3 March 1973, Papers of Dame Enid Muriel Lyons, NLA, MS 4852, Box 24.

⁸⁰ Gillian Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women’s Autobiography* (London: Cassell, 2000), p. 7.

⁸¹ Lyons, *Among the Carrion Crows*, “Prologue”, n. pag.

⁸² Tony Stephens, “The Menzies-Lyons Rift, by Dame Enid”, Papers of Dame Enid Muriel Lyons, NLA, MS 4852, Box 24.

⁸³ Marius Webb, Katharine West, “This Week in Books”, radio broadcast, 26 April 1973, 5:15 pm, pp. 1—2, Papers of Dame Enid Muriel Lyons, NLA, MS 4852, Box 24.

⁸⁴ Hazel Hawke, “The Minister for Domestic Affairs”, *Age*, 2 May 1993, p. 1. See Zara Holt, *My Life and Harry: An Autobiography* (Melbourne: The Herald, 1968); Hazel Hawke, *My Own Life: An Autobiography* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1992); Margaret Whitlam, *My Other World* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2001).

feminist activists of a similar vintage), but they were not bestsellers. In NSW, Liberal opposition leader Kerry Chikarovski published an eponymous memoir in 2004, but reportedly sold less than 400 copies.⁸⁵ As the women of the 1980s and 1990s departed parliament, publishers kept those kinds of sales in mind. Louise Adler, the foremost political memoir publisher in Australia, suggested that few women had commanded the kind of audience to whom publishers looked: “where are the women who are leading voices, or leading protagonists? [...] some of them are interesting writers, thoughtful and intellectually engaged, politically and analytically sophisticated, but their books sell modestly”.⁸⁶ At the same time, Adler laughingly acknowledged, public men were often less reticent about penning their opinions in the first place: “I’ve never met a man who didn’t say, ‘Oh yes, that’s a good idea!’”⁸⁷ In the 2000s, the memoir boom (now in its second decade) would remain a deeply gendered phenomenon.

Whingeing for Herself Again?

The cohort of popular, indeed famous, women MPs who rose to prominence in the 1990s were largely gone by the mid-2000s, disillusioned by the valorisation and then fierce condemnation they received at the hands of the media. Foremost among them was Kernot, whose defection as leader of the Australian Democrats to the Labor Party in 1997 with the hope of becoming a government minister had been highly controversial. Bongiorno has suggested that when Kernot “dared display conspicuous ambition”, her “gender suddenly mattered a great deal more than it had when she was only the leader of a minor party”.⁸⁸ The defection was reported as a stunning coup for Labor and its leader Kim Beazley, a man widely perceived as a “good bloke”, though perhaps an “unduly timid” one.⁸⁹ Criticising the divisive politics of the Howard government, Kernot openly told the public on the day of her defection that she wanted to “make a bigger contribution” to politics and policymaking in a future progressive government.⁹⁰ But she was instantly framed as a Demo-Rat, no longer a Saint but a “scarlet woman” who would now face tough questions about past relationships and present conduct.⁹¹ Elected to the outer-Brisbane seat of Dickson representing Labor in 1998, she endured three years of vicious and

⁸⁵ Figures reported in Murray Waldren, “Latham Memoirs a Hard Sell”, *Australian*, 29 April 2005, p. 3.

⁸⁶ Louise Adler, phone interview with the author, 25 January 2022.

⁸⁷ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

⁸⁸ Bongiorno, *Dreamers and Schemers*, p. 339.

⁸⁹ Marija Taflaga, “2001: Boats, Terror and Legacy”, in Benjamin T. Jones, Frank Bongiorno and John Uhr (eds.), *Elections Matter: Ten Federal Elections that Shaped Australia* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2018), p. 190; Bongiorno, *Dreamers and Schemers*, p. 358.

⁹⁰ Transcript of Kernot’s Statement, 15 October 1997, in Cheryl Kernot, *Speaking for Myself Again* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2002), p. 42.

⁹¹ Baird, *Media Tarts*, p. 179.

invasive media coverage before being defeated by Liberal candidate Peter Dutton in 2001. Reacting on live television to the news of her defeat, a bruised Kernot promised that she would write a political memoir about her four years with the Labor Party.⁹²

Gender conflict was the defining feature of the literary and commercial vision for Kernot's memoir.⁹³ She was attracted to the idea of articulating "the things that are far too long to say in a press conference", and exercising "control" of her story.⁹⁴ Hers would be an account of sexist treatment at the hands of the media, and it had as its imagined audience a cohort of Australians "who had followed me and had [emotionally] invested in women in politics", she explained in an interview for this thesis.⁹⁵ Importantly, the book was to be a *memoir*, a window into her defection and her years as the Member for Dickson, and not a full autobiographical self-portrait. With the help of literary agent Trish Lake, Kernot secured a contract with HarperCollins. Notwithstanding her antipathy to the men of the Murdoch empire to which HarperCollins belonged, Kernot was confident that Shona Martyn and the predominantly female team at HarperCollins Australia "weren't going to seek to seriously remove" her freedom of expression.⁹⁶ Importantly, HarperCollins could afford to pay for a significant book tour, which would allow Kernot to discuss her experiences of sexist treatment in politics further: "I was looking forward to having lunches with, they would have been mostly women, and having that question-and-answer session".⁹⁷ And at the most personal level, the project seemed to offer the prospect of emotional healing as she sat at her desk, overlooking the Gold Coast, seeking to come to terms with the chaos of her final years in parliament: "it wasn't cathartic, but it was part of the grieving process to understand [...] what I thought had happened to me".⁹⁸ Early on, Kernot decided to call the book *Speaking for Myself Again*, a clear nod to the anti-masculinist sensibilities underwriting the project.

The book itself told a relatively tragic narrative of reputational destruction and institutional neglect. Dispelling the myth that she had been a "blushing innocent wooed by her pushy male suitors" in the Labor Party, she maintained that her defection to Labor was about the hope of actually implementing policy rather than just amending it as a minor party leader.⁹⁹

⁹² Scott Emerson, "Kernot's Book has Labor Hearts Racing All Over Again", *Weekend Australian*, 4 May 2002, p. 4.

⁹³ Emerson, "Racing All Over Again", p. 4.

⁹⁴ Cheryl Kernot, zoom interview with the author, 18 February 2022.

⁹⁵ Kernot, zoom interview, 18 February 2022.

⁹⁶ Kernot, zoom interview, 18 February 2022.

⁹⁷ Kernot, zoom interview, 18 February 2022.

⁹⁸ Kernot, zoom interview, 18 February 2022.

⁹⁹ Kernot, *Speaking for Myself Again*, p. 219.

But she regretted that she “meekly accepted male terms of reference” during and after her agreement with Beazley.¹⁰⁰ Their deal, she said, included promises to induct her into Labor’s internal processes, which she said were never honoured.¹⁰¹ Dickson, the electorate for which she was preselected, was essentially a “leftover seat” on which she was “imposed”.¹⁰² Significant space in the memoir was dedicated to countering the media’s framing of her as a “Precious Princess”: “This, of course, is how men start the subtle process of turning women with legitimate reason to complain into ‘whingers’”.¹⁰³ Kernot nominated senior journalist Laurie Oakes as the embodiment of the media’s gendered undermining of her. The heart of the book explored a litany of specific examples of gross mistreatment at the hands of journalists and photographers, including misleading photoshoots, intrusions of privacy, and trespass on her own property. “Even allowing for my mistakes”, she wrote, “I think I was done over”.¹⁰⁴ Her final chapter advocated dismantling the “dominant male political style” that characterised Canberra.¹⁰⁵ In Blair Williams’ estimation, Kernot’s memoir illustrated the “damaging effect” of sexist cultural conditioning on “all women in politics”.¹⁰⁶

Feminist, or more specifically anti-masculinist, expression quickly became the memoir’s chief vulnerability. Sensing scandal well ahead of the publication date, the male operatives in the Labor Party and their media contacts mobilised against Kernot’s book. These men hoped, as has often been the case in political scandals, to “reverse the plot” and render the plaintiff an “unreliable narrator”.¹⁰⁷ Queensland Labor figures told the press that Kernot’s book would depict her as the “victim of a ‘boys club’”, and boldly pronounced that it would be “on the remainder stands by Christmas”.¹⁰⁸ The medium, its message, and its author came in for much sarcasm. “Several pages of the book will be taken up with blaming many people”, the *Daily Telegraph*’s Malcolm Farr predicted: “It is not hard to predict who the heroine of the tome will be”.¹⁰⁹ Pre-empting Kernot’s criticisms of Beazley, Phillip Coorey wrote in the *Advertiser* that any attacks on the former leader would be “unfair”, given all of “Ms Kernot’s self-inflicted

¹⁰⁰ Kernot, *Speaking for Myself Again*, p. 48.

¹⁰¹ Kernot, *Speaking for Myself Again*, p. 197.

¹⁰² Kernot, *Speaking for Myself Again*, p. 53.

¹⁰³ Kernot, *Speaking for Myself Again*, p. 60.

¹⁰⁴ Kernot, *Speaking for Myself Again*, p. 157.

¹⁰⁵ Kernot, *Speaking for Myself Again*, p. 223.

¹⁰⁶ Blair Williams, “Where are the Great Women? A Feminist Analysis of Australian Political Biographies”, *Australian Journal of Biography and History*, no. 5 (2021), p. 38.

¹⁰⁷ Clark, *Scandal*, p. 209.

¹⁰⁸ Emerson, “Racing All Over Again”, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Malcolm Farr, “Kernot Book Sorts Friends from Foes”, *Daily Telegraph*, 6 May 2002, p. 14.

excesses”.¹¹⁰ “Whingeing for Myself Again”, was the *Herald Sun* view of things.¹¹¹ The *Courier Mail*, for which Kernot had utmost contempt, dismissed her as her “own worst enemy”, an “emotionally fragile” politician, a “lady” who “just doesn’t get it”.¹¹² Asked about this 20 years later, Kernot suggested that much of the pre-emptive coverage constituted an “advanced hit on me” from Beazley’s acolytes in particular.¹¹³ Conscious of the risks, she had already removed more incendiary material about Labor in response to legal advice during the drafting process.¹¹⁴ But in the pages of metropolitan newspapers, Kernot was framed as a whinger whose self-serving narratives of gendered political inequality could not be trusted.

In truth, the media still saw Kernot as a lucrative and newsworthy commodity. There were bitter disputes about the exclusivity of serialisation and extract rights before the book was published. Murdoch’s *Australian*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Courier Mail* newspapers unsurprisingly won the serial rights from HarperCollins. But the first chapter of the book, which detailed Kernot’s recollections of her defection, was accidentally published on HarperCollins’ website on 27 June, weeks ahead of the rest of the book.¹¹⁵ That allowed Fairfax newspapers to publish stories about the book, fatally undermining News Limited’s exclusive serial rights.¹¹⁶ Rumours briefly abounded that News Limited newspapers would refuse to pay HarperCollins for excerpts.¹¹⁷ But News Limited found other ways of making money out of Kernot’s story. “Betrayal, Harassment and That Red Dress”, ran the headline above the first extract in the *Australian*, an allusion to a highly controversial photoshoot she had once sat for wearing (briefly) an exquisite red dress and feather boa.¹¹⁸ Her longstanding antagonists at the *Courier Mail* trivialised her by summarising one of the extracts as Kernot speaking out “about her political foes, her hounding by the media, her strained marriage and the time she almost killed [Labor senator] John Faulkner with a stale lamington”.¹¹⁹ Kernot controversies, it seemed, could still sell papers.

Above all, Canberra media veteran Oakes saw an opportunity to capitalise on the book by alleging that Kernot had deliberately withheld inconvenient parts of the story she purported

¹¹⁰ Phillip Coorey, “Kernot Has Them Running for Cover”, *Advertiser*, 24 June 2002, p. 19.

¹¹¹ Paul Gray, “Whingeing for Myself Again”, *Herald Sun*, 2 July 2002, p. 19.

¹¹² Peter Charlton, “Her Own Worst Enemy”, *Courier Mail*, 29 June 2002, p. 27.

¹¹³ Kernot, zoom interview, 18 February 2022.

¹¹⁴ Michael Gordon, “Setting the Record Straight – Perspective”, *Age*, 1 July 2002, p. 9.

¹¹⁵ Michael Harvey, “Kernot Tells of Condom Jibe”, *Herald Sun*, 28 June 2002, p. 4.

¹¹⁶ Emma Macdonald, “Kernot Book Promises Very Dirty Laundry”, *Canberra Times*, 29 June 2002, p. 20.

¹¹⁷ Annabel Crabb, “News Blushes Over Kernot K. O.”, *Age*, 29 June 2002, p. 1.

¹¹⁸ See Baird, *Media Tarts*, pp. 179–80.

¹¹⁹ “Why me?”, *Courier Mail*, 29 June 2002, p. 27.

to tell. Scheduled to review it in the *Bulletin*, Oakes and his assistant pursued HarperCollins publicist Christine Farmer until they received a copy of the book, along with a confidentiality agreement.¹²⁰ With his *Bulletin* column due Tuesday 1 July, Oakes was determined to secure enough time to read the book on Sunday before writing his piece about Kernot's secret on Monday. The controversy that followed served as a reminder that men exercised disproportionate control over political discourse.



Figure 11: Cheryl Kernot and former premier of Victoria Joan Kirner at the launch of *Speaking for Myself Again*, Sofitel Hotel, Melbourne, 1 July 2002. AAP Photos, Julian Smith.

On Monday 1 July, the Reverend Tim Costello (brother of then-treasurer Peter Costello) launched *Speaking for Myself Again* at the Sofitel hotel in Melbourne. Political allies such as Labor's affirmative action champion Kirner, senator John Faulkner and ACTU president Sharan Burrow were joined by personal friends such as the musician Daryl Braithwaite.¹²¹ Melbourne's *Herald Sun* caustically remarked that Kirner and her "band of Emily's List followers" were present in force, their badges symbolising "solidarity in a world where men have much to answer for".¹²² Casual sexism aside, the collective mood was coloured by the knowledge that Oakes might imminently reveal painful material about Kernot: "many people

¹²⁰ Baird, *Media Tarts*, pp. 187–88.

¹²¹ Barbara Adam, "Kernot's ALP Days an Open Book", *Courier Mail*, 2 July 2002, p. 4.

¹²² John Hamilton, "Kernot Holds Court", *Herald Sun*, 2 July 2002, p. 10.

in the room already knew about the hit-job that was coming”, she recalled.¹²³ As Kernot commenced her book tour the following morning, the *Bulletin* publicised that Oakes’s column would reveal a “serious distortion” in Kernot’s account, namely its silence over her “biggest secret” surrounding the 1997 defection.¹²⁴

The secret was that Kernot had been in an extra-marital relationship with Labor’s deputy leader Gareth Evans for a number of years before her defection. In March 1998, provoked by a Liberal MP making accusations against the pair under parliamentary privilege, Evans told the House of Representatives that the rumour was “baseless” and “beneath contempt”.¹²⁵ Unwilling to undermine his testimony, Kernot reasoned that hers was “a memoir” and “not an autobiography”, which covered “just a little snippet” of her public and personal life: “I wrestled with that terribly”.¹²⁶ Kernot initially tried to dismiss the alleged “big, deep, dark secret”, telling the Seven network’s *Sunrise* program, “It could be that I’ve got flabby arms”.¹²⁷ On Thursday 3 July, Oakes’s “secret” headlines appeared in the *Bulletin*, prompting a day of acute public speculation, culminating in the small news website *Crikey* breaking news of the affair just hours before Oakes himself reported it in his Nine News bulletin.¹²⁸ As press gathered outside Kernot’s hotel room in Sydney, she discussed the next steps with Martyn, Farmer, close friend Peter Thompson and indeed Evans, who phoned in from Belgium. “[W]e had to decide how we were going to get anywhere else”, she recalled. “It was horrible”.¹²⁹ A decoy car was used, but journalists promptly discovered the decoy and took chase.¹³⁰ Cowed by the intensity of the media frenzy, HarperCollins cancelled the remainder of the tour, and Kernot’s public platform was briefly pulled from beneath her.

There was a clear disjuncture between media and public reactions to Kernot’s book. News Limited journalists reported that Kernot, “by her wilful refusal to accept the truth and take responsibility for her actions, [had] held herself up to ridicule”.¹³¹ To add insult to injury, the now backbencher Beazley told journalists that Kernot would probably never have been

¹²³ Baird, *Media Tarts*, p. 188; Kernot, zoom interview, 18 February 2002.

¹²⁴ Baird, *Media Tarts*, pp. 188–89; “Kernot Ignores Her Biggest Secret, Says The Bulletin”, Australian Associated Press, 2 July 2002.

¹²⁵ Gareth Evans, Cth. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives Hansard, 23 March 1998, p. 1255.

¹²⁶ Kernot, zoom interview, 18 February 2022.

¹²⁷ Cheryl Kernot quoted in Sue Dunlevy, “Secret Affair”, *Daily Telegraph*, 4 July 2002, p. 1.

¹²⁸ Jamie Walker, “Harsh Light Shone on Secret Passion”, *Australian*, 4 July 2002, p. 1; Baird, *Media Tarts*, p. 190.

¹²⁹ Kernot, zoom interview, 18 February 2022.

¹³⁰ Annabel Crabb, Louise Dodson, Peter Fray, “Kernot and Evans Must Explain, Says Crean”, *Age*, 4 July 2002, p. 1; Dunlevy, “Secret Affair”, p. 1.

¹³¹ Peter Charlton, “Truth Behind Kernot’s Sins of Omission”, *Courier Mail*, 4 July 2002, p. 17.

welcomed to the Labor Party if the affair had been known to his colleagues.¹³² Martyn and HarperCollins, it should be said, tried to defend their author and her narrative decisions.¹³³ Interviewed on radio some weeks later, Kernot said that the secret relationship had “about [one] per cent” to do with the defection, and that the Oakes revelation had probably been “Labor Party payback”.¹³⁴ The journalistic criticisms of Kernot were hardly universal across the community. “Hers is a classic tale”, one reviewer opined in the *Australian*’s pages, “of how the unreconstructed, male-dominated Labor Party chews up and throws away fresh ideas and young talent”.¹³⁵ “The tragedy is”, a Mudgeeraba woman remarked in the letters section of the *Courier Mail*, “these same blokes seem quite happy to go down with the ship rather than allow someone to plug the leak and sail it to calmer waters”.¹³⁶ Women’s groups defended her, arguing that when it came to politics, “Kernot clearly could think separately to what was going on in her private life”.¹³⁷ Monitoring of the letters pages of metropolitan newspapers suggested that almost 85 per cent of letter writers supported Kernot and disputed Oakes’s right to reveal the affair.¹³⁸ HarperCollins and Kernot received warm and supportive letters, some of which postulated a degree of hypocrisy on Oakes’s part.¹³⁹ Reflecting on the episode twenty years later, Oakes agreed that his decision to expose the affair was wrong.¹⁴⁰

The Kernot memoir controversy powerfully illuminated the fraught status of women’s autobiographical testimony in Australian political culture. “Cheryl chose to write a book ... which was based on a falsehood”, Oakes argued when questioned on *60 Minutes* about his exposé.¹⁴¹ Feminist literary scholar Leigh Gilmore has suggested that in the age of testimony, women’s stories have been doubted because “they seek to bear witness to inconvenient truths, and because they possess less symbolic and material capital than men”.¹⁴² The critique of

¹³² Kim Beazley quoted in Title No. 555086, “Kim Beazley Says Cheryl Kernot’s Defection Would Have Been Rejected if He’d Known About Her Affair with Gareth Evans”, 10 July 2002, Sky News Australia, Canberra, NFSA.

¹³³ Steve Lewis, “Evans Lied About Kernot Affair”, *Australian*, 4 July 2002, p. 1.

¹³⁴ Cheryl Kernot quoted in Title No. 555806, “Cheryl Kernot has Spoken Publicly for the First Time About Her Affair with Gareth Evans”, 21 July 2002, ABC, Sydney, NFSA.

¹³⁵ “Thin-Skinned Kernot Teaches Labor a Lesson”, *Australian*, 1 July 2002, p. 10.

¹³⁶ Dalla Fraser, Letter, *Courier Mail*, 1 July 2002, p. 10.

¹³⁷ David Speers quoted in Title No. 555086, “Kim Beazley Says Cheryl Kernot’s Defection Would Have Been Rejected if He’d Known About Her Affair with Gareth Evans”, 10 July 2002, Sky News Australia, Canberra, NFSA.

¹³⁸ Lucy Clark, “London Calling – Regrets, Sure, I’ve had a Few, But ...”, *Daily Telegraph*, 21 December 2002, p. 35.

¹³⁹ Kernot, zoom interview, 18 February 2022.

¹⁴⁰ “Laurie’s Long Luncheon Laments”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 February 2020, p. 35.

¹⁴¹ Laurie Oakes quoted in Annabel Crabb, Louise Dodson, Peter Fray, “Kernot and Evans Must Explain, Says Crean”, *Age*, 4 July 2002, p. 1.

¹⁴² Leigh Gilmore, *Tainted Witness: Why We Doubt What Women Say About Their Lives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), p. 18.

Speaking for Myself Again, and the justifications for Oakes's story, rested heavily on the assumption that Kernot's sexuality, integrity and authenticity were all fundamentally connected. If she had kept the Evans story secret, the argument ran, how could her feminist exposé of Labor and media cultures be trusted? Above all, the cancellation of Kernot's book tour intimated that women politicians (particularly feminist women politicians) could be shamed into silence. Her memoir became a synonym for the perils of women's autobiographical performance in Australian politics.

A Firestorm of Publicity

Kernot's advocacy for a less masculine form of politics went unheeded as the Labor Party sought new leadership. Beazley's successor Simon Crean proved unable to unite his colleagues and resigned under duress in December 2003, at which point Sydney frontbench MP Latham was elected leader against Beazley by a single vote. A child of Sydney's western suburbs, Latham had been a research assistant to former prime minister Gough Whitlam and a staffer for NSW Labor leader Bob Carr before serving as mayor of Liverpool and winning preselection for Whitlam's former electorate of Werriwa. Despite a number of personal controversies, including fallout from the collapse of his first marriage, and an infamous altercation with a Sydney taxi driver, Latham had a reputation as "a bit of a maverick, but a very bright one".¹⁴³ In early 2004 Latham "fared very well" against the ageing Howard government, but this was short-lived.¹⁴⁴ His leadership was marked by party disharmony along with "sometimes vicious and usually salacious" stories in the press suggesting extra-marital affairs, sleazy bucks party shenanigans, and allegations of sexual harassment.¹⁴⁵ In an infamous press conference, Latham denied all allegations against him and attributed them to his ex-wife Gabrielle Gwyther, his former peers on Liverpool Council, and a "special government unit" that specialised in political rumour-mongering.¹⁴⁶ Privately, he ultimately blamed Beazley and other enemies inside the Labor Party for spreading these rumours.¹⁴⁷

But it was ultimately a series of policy missteps that saw Latham and Labor defeated comprehensively at the October 2004 election in a result "worse than anyone had expected".¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Bernard Lagan, *Loner: Inside a Labor Tragedy* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005), p. 54.

¹⁴⁴ Frank Bongiorno, "The Latham Factor", Tom Frame (ed.), *Trials and Transformations, 2001–2004: The Howard Government*, vol. 3 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2019), p. 182.

¹⁴⁵ Bongiorno, "The Latham Factor", p. 186. See also Bongiorno, "Balls, Bubbles and Bosses", pp. 303–04.

¹⁴⁶ Lagan, *Loner*, pp. 117–18.

¹⁴⁷ Mark Latham, *The Latham Diaries* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2005), p. 310.

¹⁴⁸ Annabel Crabb, *Losing It: The Inside Story of the Labor Party in Opposition* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2005), p. 267.

In January 2005, suffering from pancreatitis and alienated from the press and his colleagues during the Boxing Day tsunami in Southeast Asia, Latham resigned from the leadership and from parliament. Beazley (viewed by Latham as a “stand-for-nothing type of leader” befitting a political party run by “conservative machine men”) returned to the leadership.¹⁴⁹ Latham quickly became a scapegoat for the party’s difficulties, derided by revisionist critics as (inevitably) a “terrible failure” and a “nightmare” of a man.¹⁵⁰ Members of the public, presented with footage of his infamously aggressive handshake with Howard on election-eve, were not inclined to dismiss these narratives out of hand.¹⁵¹ Political men were allowed to behave combatively and sometimes aggressively, but conventions of respectability demanded that these behaviours be constrained and counterbalanced by other qualities.

When Latham revealed the existence of his political diaries, the first wave of commentary hinged on implicit critiques of his masculine respectability. With unconstrained cynicism, Melbourne’s *Herald Sun* reported that Latham “hope[d] to earn up to \$100,000 by spilling the beans”.¹⁵² The more popular line of reporting concerned Latham’s personal volatility and thirst for retribution. It was expected that he would fiercely criticise his former colleagues such as shadow foreign minister Kevin Rudd, shadow treasurer Wayne Swan, and especially Beazley, along with a select cohort of journalists. “I don’t think anything he wrote in those diaries about certain individuals would have surprised people within the Labor Party”, his literary agent remarked to me in an interview.¹⁵³ But the press was sceptical of his motives. “[I]t is tempting”, the *Herald Sun* opined, “to draw parallels between the exiled Napoleon and the brooding Mark Latham”.¹⁵⁴ The *Townsville Bulletin* soberly proclaimed that Latham “was never politically mature enough to lead a major party”.¹⁵⁵ As far as the *Australian* saw it, the real question was “whether spleen and invective will sell”.¹⁵⁶ The controversy later hinged on whether the entries were real or concocted post facto, but the initial criticisms were about the motives rather than the manufacturing of the diaries.¹⁵⁷

¹⁴⁹ Mark Latham quoted in Lagan, *Loner*, p. 223.

¹⁵⁰ Crabb, *Losing It*, p. 269.

¹⁵¹ Bongiorno, “Good Blokes?”, p. 34.

¹⁵² Gerard McManus, “Latham to Spill Beans”, *Herald Sun*, 29 April 2005, p. 7.

¹⁵³ Mary Cunnane, phone interview with the author, 16 December 2021.

¹⁵⁴ “Thank God He’s Gone”, *Herald Sun*, 18 September 2005, p. 36.

¹⁵⁵ “Tested by Bitter Memoir”, *Townsville Bulletin*, 30 June 2005, p. 18.

¹⁵⁶ Waldren, “Latham Memoirs a Hard Sell”, p. 3.

¹⁵⁷ For scepticism about the contemporaneity of the diaries see Sean Scalmer and Nathan Hollier, “I, Diarist: Examining Australian Politics from the ‘Inside’”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 55, no. 2 (2009), p. 173.

Latham's independence and intellect made him a particularly attractive literary proposition. Mary Cunnane, formerly an American publisher and at that time a literary agent in Australia, wrote to Latham shortly after his resignation as Labor leader in January 2005 encouraging him to "put [his] case directly to the Australian public in the form of a book".¹⁵⁸ He replied with the news that he was in the process of corralling his political diaries, and the pair subsequently decided to meet over lunch in Campbelltown to "suss one another out, as it were".¹⁵⁹ Reading the full diary manuscript, Cunnane was impressed by the material, with the natural caveat that "repetitions" and "unclear" anecdotes required editing.¹⁶⁰ Though interested in Latham's critiques of Labor's culture, she felt that "the personal revelations" about the private challenges of public life were "what made the diaries compelling".¹⁶¹ Upon their reaching an agreement that she would represent him, Cunnane sent a 25,000 word sample (dismissed by some as "salacious", "explosive" and "unpublishable"¹⁶²) to interested publishers ahead of a series of confidential meetings in the Sydney apartment of a friend of hers.¹⁶³ Louise Adler, who had been appointed CEO of MUP (now rebranded as Melbourne University Publishing) in 2003, emerged as the successful (though not the highest) bidder: "I felt like [...] it was a rapport, that he responded to the way I understood the book", Adler recalled.¹⁶⁴

That rapport was tested when Latham's manuscript was submitted to lawyers for defamation liability assessments. "There were probably at least three or four days spent in our defamation lawyers' offices", Adler recalled, "very intense days".¹⁶⁵ Cunnane remembered there being "periods of extreme tension, which I had to do my best to mediate".¹⁶⁶ I suggest here that the book was, for Latham, an object of something resembling masculine pride. He repeatedly stressed to his audiences that he had the "courage" to tell his story (with his name emblazoned on the dustjacket around it) while others anonymously smeared his reputation and legacy using "background quotes" to journalists.¹⁶⁷ Adler has noted elsewhere that politicians have "learned the hard way that bland is best", even when it comes to their post-political

¹⁵⁸ Mary Cunnane, letter to Mark Latham, 2005, quoted in Cunnane, phone interview, 16 December 2021.

¹⁵⁹ Cunnane, phone interview, 16 December 2021.

¹⁶⁰ Cunnane, phone interview, 16 December 2021.

¹⁶¹ Cunnane, phone interview, 16 December 2021.

¹⁶² McManus, "Latham to Spill Beans", p. 7.

¹⁶³ Cunnane, phone interview, 16 December 2021.

¹⁶⁴ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

¹⁶⁵ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

¹⁶⁶ Cunnane, phone interview, 16 December 2021.

¹⁶⁷ Mark Latham, Transcript of interview with Andrew Denton, *Enough Rope*, ABC, 15 September 2005, *AustralianPolitics.com – Farnsworth Online Archive*, <https://australianpolitics.com/2005/09/15/latham-denton-interview-airs-after-court-challenge.html>, accessed and downloaded: 28 June 2019.

books.¹⁶⁸ Latham's resistance to editorial caution, though "not untypical" according to Cunnane, arguably tells us something about his own sense of masculinity; to be anything other than frank and forthright was to risk an emasculated kind of shame. Cognisant of the risks, his associates knew that his candour would sell.

The Latham Diaries essentially charted one man's "journey to disillusionment" with the Labor Party.¹⁶⁹ Spanning mid-1994 to early 2005, the entries traced Latham's involvement in Labor policymaking and the difficulties of leadership. His was a story of media intrusion, torturous separation from family, and the impossibility of transforming a "sick society" and its "sick political system".¹⁷⁰ Figures such as Beazley and Stephen Conroy (the "machine men") fared poorly in these pages, and Latham's own efforts to win the 2004 election were marred, he felt, by the "shallow" approach of a "machine party" over which he had failed to gain sufficient control.¹⁷¹ By January 2005 he felt that he had "wasted [his] time" in Canberra.¹⁷²

His perceptive critiques about the problems of the Labor Party in the twenty-first century were leavened with colourful, and sometimes shocking, testimony and opinion. He was at pains to show his intellect, not least in an insightful introductory essay on social democracy's interminable challenges in the wealthy 2000s. In one entry from early 2001, he mused that he might have "pursued an academic career" instead of politics.¹⁷³ There were domestic dimensions to his masculinity in these pages, too. The whole story was haunted by Latham's late father, with whom he hadn't "spent enough time", and by his own sons who were left waiting for him at home while he was "racing around the country" as opposition leader.¹⁷⁴ In one memorable scene, Latham described playing in his parliamentary office with his son Isaac, "rolling him up in the curtains" to hide: "I would have happily stayed there", he wrote wistfully.¹⁷⁵

But a more unruly masculinity was also performed in words of outright aggression and occasionally latent sexism. He was gleeful at being described as both a "gregarious 'blokey bloke'" and "a loner".¹⁷⁶ His attitude to journalists was, "If they whack in, whack back".¹⁷⁷

¹⁶⁸ Louise Adler, "Political Memoirs", *Meanjin*, vol. 74, no. 3 (2015), p. 238.

¹⁶⁹ Latham, *The Latham Diaries*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁰ Latham, *The Latham Diaries*, 19 July 2004, p. 319.

¹⁷¹ Latham, *The Latham Diaries*, 18 October 2004, p. 360.

¹⁷² Latham, *The Latham Diaries*, 17 January 2005, p. 410.

¹⁷³ Latham, *The Latham Diaries*, 11 January 2001, p. 152.

¹⁷⁴ Latham, *The Latham Diaries*, p. 19.

¹⁷⁵ Latham, *The Latham Diaries*, 13 May 2004, p. 285.

¹⁷⁶ Latham, *The Latham Diaries*, 13 September 1997, p. 67.

¹⁷⁷ Latham, *The Latham Diaries*, 6 April 1999, p. 102.

He described the taxi driver with whom he famously had a physical altercation in 2001 as “a mad bastard”.¹⁷⁸ He wrote glowingly about the impressive women of the Labor Party such as Julia Gillard, Penny Wong and Tanya Plibersek, but he had no time for feminist politics, which did nothing for the average “poor bloke with the arse hanging out of [their] pants”, a type of voter who he had been at pains to identify with.¹⁷⁹ At times, women were highly sexualised in Latham’s story. An entry in 1997 recounted his impressions of a Christian youth leadership forum organised by Liberal MP Ross Cameron at Parliament House. “I rather suspect it’s a front for mobilising young Christian soldiers”, Latham wrote, “plus some quality box for Ross”.¹⁸⁰ Women in Latham’s rhetoric could be compelling and strong figures but could just as easily be reduced to sexual objects. Men, on the other hand, were judged by their capacity to be mates and uphold the “Australian mateship culture”.¹⁸¹ When Latham blamed Beazley for purveying salacious stories about his sexual history, it was Beazley’s failure of mateship that seemed most egregious: “It breaches the code of honour [...] among Australian men. Be frank and upfront with your mates”.¹⁸² Virility and masculine solidarity mattered immensely in the way that Latham understood politics and people, not least himself.

Like Kernot’s memoir, Latham’s diary was quickly recognised as a valuable commodity by the same media companies that editorialised it in cynical terms just months earlier. The *Australian* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* competed for the serialisation rights and first exclusive interview, both lucrative for Latham and MUP.¹⁸³ The winners of that bid, the *Australian*, wanted new photographs of Latham for publicity, which the diarist fiercely resisted. When Latham finally agreed to sit for a photograph, it was on the crucial condition that News Limited photographers never bother his family again (here the seeds of subsequent controversy were sown).¹⁸⁴ “It required a bit of diplomacy”, Cunnane wryly recalled.¹⁸⁵ MUP also forged separate agreements with the ABC, which would air a feature interview with television host Andrew Denton on his conversational program *Enough Rope*. When Latham then gave an interview to *Lateline*, another current affairs program produced by the ABC, Denton threatened to break the embargo on his program and air it four days early.¹⁸⁶ If anyone was more furious

¹⁷⁸ Latham, *The Latham Diaries*, 14 July 2001, p. 162.

¹⁷⁹ Latham, *The Latham Diaries*, 29 June 1995, p. 37.

¹⁸⁰ Latham, *The Latham Diaries*, 14 February 1997, p. 57.

¹⁸¹ Latham, *The Latham Diaries*, 18 December 2004, p. 401.

¹⁸² Latham, *The Latham Diaries*, 22 November 2003, p. 244.

¹⁸³ Cunnane, phone interview, 16 December 2021; Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

¹⁸⁴ Brad Norington, “Prickly Author Drives a Hard Deal”, *Weekend Australian*, 17 September 2005, p. 10.

¹⁸⁵ Cunnane, phone interview, 16 December 2021.

¹⁸⁶ Norington, “Prickly Author Drives a Hard Deal”, p. 10.

than Denton, it was News Limited, which had paid so much for exclusive interview rights in the first instance and now threatened an injunction to stop Denton's interview from airing early.¹⁸⁷ Cunnane, a veteran of the American publishing scene, told me she had "never experienced such a firestorm of publicity before".¹⁸⁸ In response to the media conflagration, book retailers purchased the entire first print run before its release on 19 September, and consumer demand exhausted that stock rapidly.¹⁸⁹



Figure 12: Television host Andrew Denton interviewing Mark Latham on *Enough Rope*, 15 September 2005, Sydney. AAP Photos, ABC Television.

In the media, *The Latham Diaries* quickly became a metonym for their author's failure of manly respectability. On the release date, ABC television viewers saw a mother holding a copy of the *Diaries* in one hand, and a children's picture-book entitled *My New Potty* in the other. "I don't know which one would be better", she mused to reporters.¹⁹⁰ In letters to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, a woman from Paddington wondered if Latham's wife Janine could use the empty pages at the back of the diaries to "add some lessons in humility" for the reader,

¹⁸⁷ Norington, "Prickly Author Drives a Hard Deal", p. 10.

¹⁸⁸ Cunnane, phone interview, 16 December 2021.

¹⁸⁹ Dawn Cohen, "Shelf Life of the Aussie Book", *Australian Author*, December 2005, p16; "Latham Diaries a Lunchtime Sell-Out", *Age*, 20 September 2005.

¹⁹⁰ Title No. 678692, "Labor Leader Kim Beazley Says Labor Will Move On United After Attacks Contained in The Latham Diaries", 19 September 2005, ABC, Sydney, NFSA.

and a man from Berowra quipped that “[e]ven a boy from a housing commission estate in Green Valley” enjoyed equal opportunity in modern Australia to “grow up to be a spoilt brat”.¹⁹¹ Conservative commentator Gerard Henderson likened Latham to former Labor leader H. V. Evatt, who had also demonstrated “an infatuation with the self”, an “evident verbal aggression” and an unwillingness to accept responsibility.¹⁹² Foxtel’s *SkyNews* invited viewers to participate in the spectacle by using their television remotes to vote on whether Latham’s comments about the Labor Party were “relevant” or just “bitter”.¹⁹³ The *Herald Sun* told its readers that the “paranoid and self-delusional diaries” revealed their author to be a “deeply flawed” and “puny man”.¹⁹⁴ Writing for the *Age*, Michelle Grattan described the diarist as “intellectually bright but by nature baleful”.¹⁹⁵

Politicians echoed the media’s criticisms and the gendered terms in which they were articulated. Prime minister John Howard referred to the diaries in a radio interview, pontificating that Labor made “a terrible mistake choosing him” as their leader having known “what a temperamental person he was”.¹⁹⁶ There were a few hundred callers wanting to talk about the diaries on talkback radio, two-thirds of them critical of Latham’s character.¹⁹⁷ Beazley defended himself against Latham’s attacks on his character, arguing that any suggestion of his having spread sexual slurs were “absolutely untrue”. The leader’s adult daughters also defended their father as “a man of decency and integrity”, the none-too-subtle inference being that Latham lacked those qualities.¹⁹⁸ “Mark Latham really has a problem with the truth”, said Rudd, whom Latham accused of backgrounding and dishonesty, despite having pledged loyalty on his recently-deceased mother’s grave.¹⁹⁹ “It’s beyond the pale for Mark to

¹⁹¹ “A Brat Among the Pigeons Makes Feathers Fly”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 September 2005, <https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/a-brat-among-the-pigeons-makes-feathers-fly-20050917-gdm30a.html>, accessed 21 March 2023.

¹⁹² Gerard Henderson, “No Harm in Some Valuable Introspection”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 September 2005, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/no-harm-in-some-valuable-introspection-20050920-gdm3jg.html>, accessed 21 March 2023.

¹⁹³ Title No. 675679, “Controversial ABC Interview with Former Leader of the Australian Labor Party, Mark Latham, Goes to Air Despite News Limited Trying to Prevent the Broadcast”, 15 September 2005, Sky News Australia, Canberra, NFSA.

¹⁹⁴ “Thank God He’s Gone”, *Herald Sun*, p. 36.

¹⁹⁵ Michelle Grattan, “The Lessons From Latham”, *Age*, 21 September 2005, <https://amp.theage.com.au/national/the-lessons-from-latham-20050921-ge0wmo.html>, accessed 21 March 2023.

¹⁹⁶ John Howard quoted in Title No. 678692, “Labor Leader Kim Beazley Says Labor Will Move On United After Attacks Contained in The Latham Diaries”, 19 September 2005, ABC, Sydney, NFSA.

¹⁹⁷ Grattan, “Lessons From Latham”.

¹⁹⁸ Title No. 678692, “Labor Leader Kim Beazley Says Labor Will Move On United After Attacks Contained in The Latham Diaries”, 19 September 2005, ABC, Sydney, NFSA.

¹⁹⁹ Kim Beazley and Kevin Rudd quoted in Title No. 675679, “Controversial ABC Interview with Former Leader of the Australian Labor Party, Mark Latham, Goes to Air Despite News Limited Trying to Prevent the Broadcast”, 15 September 2005, Sky News Australia, Canberra, NFSA.

drag my Mum's death into his political polemic", Rudd said with indignant fury.²⁰⁰ In her landmark study of masculinities, Raewyn Connell suggested that cultural media are influential in their capacity for "setting standards, claiming popular assent and discrediting those who fall short" of particular masculine modalities.²⁰¹ The media surrounding *The Latham Diaries* had the overt effect of discrediting their author's masculine respectability.

Latham himself was partly culpable for the criticism. Initially, public demand for his story was overwhelming and some media pockets of media sentiment ran in his favour. According to the *Age*, the public had "finally backed Mark Latham".²⁰² Speaking to reporters as she left Dymocks bookstore on Collins Street in Melbourne, one buyer said that she was unwilling to be "dictated to by the press" on the subject of Latham's book.²⁰³ Further, a few select journalists and Labor operatives were prepared to judge the diary on its merits. "Step back from all the self-defeating venom", one *Sydney Morning Herald* reviewer intoned, "and, in the big picture, Latham has got a lot right".²⁰⁴ Fellow diarist Neal Blewett praised the book's "profound understanding" of Labor's problems without condoning Latham's "rancorous" and "rancid" character assessments.²⁰⁵ But when the inevitable party backlash came, Latham's aggression outshone his intellect. Responding to Beazley's daughters in a radio interview, Latham clumsily threatened to "get [his] four-year-old on the phone", as if that would sufficiently prove his decency and integrity.²⁰⁶ Speaking with Denton on *Enough Rope*, Latham tenderly spoke about fatherhood as "the best thing" to have happened in his emotional life, before forcefully and colourfully criticising Labor operatives for spreading "fiction" and "sexual fantasy" about him.²⁰⁷ Beazley, he argued, should have confronted him directly with any allegations about his sex life, "Australian male to Australian male".²⁰⁸ Latham also defended his infamously aggressive handshake with Howard by accusing the prime minister of having intimidated his wife Janine in the same manner; Latham was simply showing the "little man" who was boss.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁰ Kevin Rudd quoted in Title No. 675679, "Controversial ABC Interview with Former Leader of the Australian Labor Party, Mark Latham, Goes to Air Despite News Limited Trying to Prevent the Broadcast", 15 September 2005, Sky News Australia, Canberra, NFSA.

²⁰¹ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 214.

²⁰² Meaghan Shaw, "He's no PM, but Readers Love the Book", *Age*, 20 September 2005, p. 4.

²⁰³ Elizabeth Sjogren quoted in Shaw, "Readers Love the Book", p. 4.

²⁰⁴ "String of Truth in this Suicide Mission", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 September 2005.

²⁰⁵ Neal Blewett quoted in Mike Steketee, "Blewett Praises Latham Diary", *Australian*, 1 November 2005, p. 2.

²⁰⁶ Mark Latham quoted in Title No. 678692, "Labor Leader Kim Beazley Says Labor Will Move On United After Attacks Contained in The Latham Diaries", 19 September 2005, ABC, Sydney, NFSA.

²⁰⁷ Latham, Transcript of Interview with Andrew Denton, 15 September 2005.

²⁰⁸ Latham, Transcript of Interview with Andrew Denton, 15 September 2005.

²⁰⁹ Latham, Transcript of Interview with Andrew Denton, 15 September 2005.

When Latham damaged a reporter's camera outside a Hungry Jacks fast-food outlet in Western Sydney in January 2006, Cunnane found herself acting as his spokesperson: "in effect I was kind of at that point working as an all-round agent for him *de facto* – I was fielding all kinds of inquiries from the press about that".²¹⁰ Attempting to prevent the photographer from taking footage of his children playing in a playground, Latham allegedly attacked the photographer and forcibly confiscated the \$10,000 camera.²¹¹ Writing on the first anniversary of his resignation from parliament, journalists now referred to the "disgraced former MP" and his "history of violence", an allusion to the aforementioned taxi driver.²¹²

The responses to Latham and his *Diaries* demonstrated that influential actors in the Australian public sphere continued to uphold older expectations about masculine respectability and discretion. There had been significant transformations along the way, and a male politician could, within limits, now shed tears or perform for a public audience in demonstratively emotional ways. But particular behaviours and emotions, such as vindictiveness, bitterness and unchecked aggression, were still liable for public censure. In this respect, the backlash against *The Latham Diaries* had much in common with the backlash against *The Hawke Memoirs* a decade earlier. In both cases, displays of misery and anger on the published page and in the press had galvanised public and party sentiment against a man who was seen to be wanting in respectability and grace in political defeat. (All the more galling for Latham when, in September 2005, Hawke publicly called for him to cancel his party membership.²¹³)

To the extent that public opinion makers were criticising the crude sexist language that occasionally surfaced in the diary, or Latham's insistence on a narrow ideal of Australian manhood, there was clear justification for doing so. Indeed, the very form of the diary itself made these critiques more compelling: if the entries contained Latham's truths and feelings, how else was a reader to understand sexist remarks as anything other than truly sexist? (As I was submitting this thesis, the mainstream press were once again excoriating Latham, quite rightly, for offensive and graphically homophobic, public statements.²¹⁴) But the condemnation of Latham's *Diaries* in 2005 can hardly be considered a triumph for progressive understandings of gender in the public sphere, and much less an indication of the feminisation of politics. With

²¹⁰ Cunnane, phone interview, 16 December 2021.

²¹¹ Elizabeth Gosch, "It's a Camera-Crunching Moment as Latham Loses It", *Australian*, 20 January 2006, p. 3.

²¹² Luke McIlveen, "Punchy Latham's Street Clash", *Herald Sun*, 20 January 2006, p. 5.

²¹³ "Fed: Latham Never Should Have Been Leader: Hawke", Australian Associated Press, 27 September 2005.

²¹⁴ Alexandra Smith, "'Disgusting': Pauline Hanson Slams Latham's Homophobic Comments", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 March 2023, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/disgusting-pauline-hanson-slams-latham-s-homophobic-comments-20230330-p5cwsv.html>, accessed 31 March 2023.

gendered contestation increasingly visible in professional politics, the criticisms of Latham's behaviour in and surrounding *The Latham Diaries* reflected the efforts of an established male-dominated political class to reassert its hegemony over its unrulier elements, not in the name of a healthier polity, but merely with a view to valorising one constrictive code of masculine respectability over another.

Untamed and Unashamed

If the political class was quick to condemn literary performances of feminist complaint or unbridled masculinity, it was more ambiguous in its treatment of women politicians whose gender politics eschewed mainstream feminism. Indeed, the press were singularly confounded by the feminine performances of the reactionary Hanson. Despite her controversial and avowedly xenophobic rhetoric, Hanson remained (and remains) a significant figure in Australian popular and political culture. A local fish-and-chip shop owner in Brisbane, she won preselection as the Liberal candidate for the seat of Oxley in 1996, and was disendorsed by the Liberal Party in the weeks before polling day on account of her racist comments in the press. She was, of course, elected as an Independent nonetheless, subsequently establishing the One Nation party.²¹⁵ As others have rightly noted, perceptions of femininity have been absolutely central to her reception in the public sphere.²¹⁶ An avowed non-feminist, Hanson cultivated a politics of white masculine victimhood that lamented the feminist revolution of the 1970s and the dissolution of the male breadwinner model.²¹⁷ Careful analyses have shown that unemployed Australians did not necessarily perceive Hanson as the answer to their problems.²¹⁸ Rather, One Nation voters were “older” than those of other parties, “more likely to be men”, were “more likely to come from rural Australia” and were “more likely to be in blue collar jobs”.²¹⁹ Even if those male voters were partly mobilised by economic anxieties and racial prejudices, Hanson's own version of feminised identity clearly mattered. According to Julia Baird, Hanson's “sex appeal” helped to win some of these voters.²²⁰

Nonetheless, Hanson had every reason to be concerned about her public reputation by 2007. The One Nation experiment had earlier foundered when faced with policy dilemmas such

²¹⁵ Bongiorno, *Dreamers and Schemers*, p. 334.

²¹⁶ Probyn, “‘That Woman’”, especially pp. 165—66; Baird, *Media Tarts*, pp. 255—65.

²¹⁷ George Megalogenis, *The Longest Decade* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2006), pp. 25—26.

²¹⁸ Mark Peel, *The Lowest Rung: Voices of Australian Poverty* (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 89—92; Murray Goot and Ian Watson, “One Nation's Electoral Support: Where Does It Come From, What Makes It Different and How Does It Fit?”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 47, no. 2 (2001), p. 191.

²¹⁹ Goot and Watson, “One Nation's Electoral Support”, p. 186.

²²⁰ Baird, *Media Tarts*, p. 262.

as tax reform rather than racial politics.²²¹ Defeated at the 1998 elections by virtue of major party preference deals, Hanson was convicted of electoral fraud in 2003 and spent three months in jail before her sentence was overturned. A brief period of “martyrdom” failed to secure her path back into politics.²²² She stood for federal and state elections three times between 2001 and 2004, each of them ending in failure. Finally, there was speculation about Hanson’s sex life, including rumoured liaisons with former confidant David Oldfield.²²³ An appearance on popular Channel 7 program *Dancing with the Stars* in 2004 seemed contrived to revive her celebrity status, but this alone failed to catalyse electoral success.

The production of an autobiography was intended to ensure that Hanson remained, in the eyes of her constituency, an honest woman in a dishonest man’s vocation. Well ahead of the 2007 federal elections, Hanson began work on an autobiography called *Untamed and Unashamed*. That book, produced with the support of small Melbourne outfit JoJo Publishing, was an unusual product. Reviewers were critical of Hanson’s “poorly edited” story, which was “littered with silly mistakes”, its tone swinging “uncomfortably between an authentic voice of wonder and anger, and a dull repetition of dates and documents”.²²⁴ Barry Dorr, publisher at JoJo, told reporters: “We love publishing stuff that makes a difference [...] she has been misunderstood by a lot of people”.²²⁵ Dorr, journalists later claimed, was in fact a vanity publisher who often charged authors to work with JoJo, and his entire operation was placed into voluntary administration in 2015 in the face of legal action from 30 disaffected authors.²²⁶ But in 2007, Hanson’s political brand was appropriately aligned with Dorr and JoJo Publishing, which “[specialised] in self-help books”.²²⁷ Despite the poor quality of the text, it was clear that the publishers invested some degree of editorial labour to support Hanson, given that the woman famously unfamiliar with the word “xenophobic” used terms such as “pusillanimous” in her work.²²⁸

²²¹ See Zareh Ghazarian, “Minor Parties: Dealing with the Greens, Democrats and One Nation”, in Tom Frame (ed.), *Back From the Brink, 1997 – 2001: The Howard Government Volume II* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2018), pp. 66–67.

²²² Baird, *Media Tarts*, p. 256.

²²³ Baird, *Media Tarts*, p. 262.

²²⁴ Norman Abjorensen, “The New Pauline Hanson, Uncowed and Unbranded”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 April 2007, p. 32; Mary Delahunty, “Please, Don’t Explain, Pauline”, *Age*, 12 May 2007, p. 22.

²²⁵ Barry Dorr quoted in Sian Powell, “Strewth!”, *Australian*, 21 February 2007, p. 13.

²²⁶ ABC Radio National, “The Vanity Presses” [Podcast Audio], Background Briefing, 13 September 2015, <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/the-vanity-presses/6759616>, accessed 14 April 2022.

²²⁷ Sian Powell, “Strewth!”, *Australian*, 21 February 2007, p. 13.

²²⁸ Hanson, *Untamed & Unashamed*, p. 60.

For all its shortcomings, the book told a revealing story about Hanson's life. Framed by "the indignity of being locked up" in 2003, the autobiography described her happy upbringing, her complex personal life and her controversial political experiences culminating in her legal battles.²²⁹ She wrote of her family history, including her British grandfather who proved himself a "proud Australian" by being shot at Gallipoli in 1915.²³⁰ She described the "respect" for her country she learned at school, her first job as a café waitress, and her first sexual relationship which would lead to her first marriage (a story excerpted widely in newspapers).²³¹ The book traced the birth of her two eldest sons, the failure of the marriage, and the commencement of the next to Mark Hanson, a plumber whose "excessive drinking" and "cruelty" to her eldest sons eventually became unbearable.²³² She told the story of her fish and chip shop in Ipswich, her first forays into local and federal politics, and her refusal to be cowed by the politically correct "bully boys or elites" of the Liberal Party and the media.²³³ Her political stories were somewhat evasive, blaming a series of men – advisers John Pasquarelli, David Ettridge and David Oldfield foremost among them – for mistakes and failures. Spectacularly, Hanson affirmed the decade-old rumour that Oldfield had briefly seduced her, and then used their relationship to "get a foot in the door" of the NSW parliament.²³⁴ There was a chapter on federal minister Tony Abbott, whom she blamed for facilitating the legal actions against One Nation in Queensland that led to her imprisonment, and whom she deemed "a very serious threat to the democratic process of our country".²³⁵ For good measure, she concluded by promising to continue "rocking the boat" of Australian politics.²³⁶

²²⁹ Hanson, *Untamed & Unashamed*, p. 16.

²³⁰ Hanson, *Untamed & Unashamed*, p. 21.

²³¹ Hanson, *Untamed & Unashamed*, p. 25, p. 29.

²³² Hanson, *Untamed & Unashamed*, p. 47.

²³³ Hanson, *Untamed & Unashamed*, p. 75.

²³⁴ Hanson, *Untamed & Unashamed*, p. 108.

²³⁵ Hanson, *Untamed & Unashamed*, p. 220.

²³⁶ Hanson, *Untamed & Unashamed*, p. 259.



Figure 13: Pauline Hanson pictured with Sydney radio broadcaster Alan Jones at the launch of the former's autobiography, Sydney, 29 March 2007. AAP Photos, Tracey Nearmy.

Despite its editorial imperfections, Hanson's autobiography afforded her a powerful platform from which to perform for voters. Twenty-eight thousand copies of the book were distributed to bookstores, and Hanson enlisted Sydney's conservative 2GB radio broadcaster Alan Jones to launch it in a Sydney discount bookstore.²³⁷ A man renowned for exploiting "the mood of resentment" among middle- and working-class Australians in the 1990s and 2000s, Jones enjoyed a "large audience" (if an ageing and socially conservative one congruent with One Nation's target demographic) and a capacity to "take [that] audience with him" wherever he went.²³⁸ Along with that endorsement, Hanson enjoyed the opportunity of a two-part exclusive interview with the Nine network's *A Current Affair* to discuss the book, her life, and her continuing political ambitions. Her admirers (such as Jones) were interviewed, as were her detractors (Oldfield foremost among them). But the overwhelming sentiment in these interviews was one of sympathy with her "hard luck" political life, her romantic failures, and her ordinariness. Viewers saw Hanson waving a copy of her book in the air while sitting next

²³⁷ Susan Wyndham, "Undercover", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 March 2007, p. 30; Neil McMahon, "Claiming to Lay Ghosts, She Raised a Ruckus", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 March 2007, p. 5.

²³⁸ Macintyre, *Concise History of Australia*, p. 300; Bridget Griffen-Foley, *Changing Stations: The Story of Australian Commercial Radio* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), p. 415.

to a pile of other books written by journalists and political insiders about her. Tapping her autobiography with her index finger, she told the interviewer, “That’s my favourite, because it’s straight from the horse’s mouth”.²³⁹ This scene, broadcast into thousands of Australian homes, gave Hanson the advantage of visibility and her book some semblance of authenticity.

As with Kernot, sexuality was the weapon with which critics trivialised the book and its author. Much was made of the infidelities and abusiveness of her ex-husbands in newspapers and on television, though she was never asked about how this experience contradicted her trenchant criticisms of domestic abuse survivors and her championing of the politics of male victimhood.²⁴⁰ Some commentators did take umbrage with the “pathetically sad childhood” she had allowed her children to endure: “It’s the cruelty I can’t take”, *Herald Sun*’s Sally Morrell fulminated.²⁴¹ But for the most part, it was Hanson’s alleged dalliance with Oldfield that earned headlines and stories. Drawing explicit comparisons with Kernot and occasional references to former United States president Bill Clinton, commentators pointed to Hanson and declared that “sex sometimes explains a lot in politics”.²⁴² “[Oldfield] did everything to get on board, literally”, Hanson’s former adviser Pasquarelli sensationally told reporters.²⁴³ “Oldfield Seduced Me in Motel Room”, the headline in Sydney’s *Daily Telegraph* ran.²⁴⁴ “He Said, She Said, All Over a Motel Bed” was the feature line in Adelaide’s *Sunday Mail*.²⁴⁵

Once again, Hanson defied the media’s attempts to delegitimise her not by raging against sexist stereotypes and conventions, but rather “by playing to them”.²⁴⁶ For his part, Oldfield dismissed Hanson’s claim as a commercial fabrication: “It’s urban myth, but it’s a good way of selling books”.²⁴⁷ Oldfield’s wife, television host Lisa Oldfield, attempted to delegitimise Hanson’s account by slut-shaming her: “her suggestion is that they slept together on what was essentially a first date, so very poor form and a really bad reflection on her, I think”.²⁴⁸ Offered the chance to take a polygraph test on the Seven network’s *Today Tonight* program to support

²³⁹ Pauline Hanson quoted in Title No. 735142, “A Current Affair. 2007.03.27”, 27 March 2007, NWS 9, Adelaide, NFS.A.

²⁴⁰ Alison Broinowski, *Please Explain: The Rise, Fall and Rise Again of Pauline Hanson* (Sydney: Viking, 2017), p. 68.

²⁴¹ Sally Morrell, “Still more Perils of Pauline”, *Herald Sun*, 23 March 2007, p. 28.

²⁴² Morrell, “Still More Perils of Pauline”, p. 28.

²⁴³ John Pasquarelli quoted in Luke McIlveen, “Please Sexplain”, *Daily Telegraph*, 20 March 2007, p. 7.

²⁴⁴ Ellen Connolly, “Oldfield Seduce me in Motel Room”, *Daily Telegraph*, 18 March 2007, p. 3.

²⁴⁵ Frances Whiting, “He Said, She Said, All Over a Motel Bed”, *Sunday Mail*, 1 April 2007, p. 82.

²⁴⁶ Baird, *Media Tarts*, p. 265.

²⁴⁷ David Oldfield quoted in Title No. 735136, “A Current Affair. 2007.03.26”, 26 March 2007, NWS 9, Adelaide, NFS.A.

²⁴⁸ Lisa Oldfield quoted in Title No. 735136, “A Current Affair. 2007.03.26”, 26 March 2007, NWS 9, Adelaide, NFS.A.

his denial of a sexual relationship with Hanson, Oldfield failed it.²⁴⁹ But on *A Current Affair* Hanson ostentatiously refused to take the test: “I’m not playing his games. I don’t have to. I think he’s a weak excuse for a man”.²⁵⁰ Bringing her thumb and forefinger together to indicate smallness, Hanson made a lewd inference about the size of Oldfield’s manhood. All of this was a great boon to *A Current Affair*, whose producers had been dealing with market pressure over the previous decade by deliberately going “down-market in their choice of stories”.²⁵¹ In their interview, reporter Chris Allen asked Hanson a series of shallow questions about whether she was destined to be “unlucky in love”, or simply “chose the wrong guys”.²⁵² The excessive focus on Hanson’s purported sexual partners rendered her harmless and laughable, a figure in a real-life soap opera and disreputable representative in the eyes of the political class, but for those sympathetic to her politics, the whole performance was a reaffirmation of her authenticity and unwillingness to be scripted in the fashion of other politicians.

Untamed & Unashamed did not lead to electoral success for Hanson in November 2007, but it was still a powerful cultural object. As Scalmer suggested, “the book certainly renewed Hanson’s celebrity” at a critical moment of political change.²⁵³ Moreover, although she retained the hostility of urban journalists and the political class, Hanson still knew which anxieties in the settler colonial consciousness to which she could appeal. She used the book and promotional opportunities to campaign against Muslim immigration, an increasingly contentious subject during the War on Terror. “They will not assimilate into our society”, she said menacingly: “They have a different way of life and a different culture”.²⁵⁴ “Christian Muslims”, though, were not a problem.²⁵⁵ Overlooking that theological confusion, Jones was quick to support her. “I think Pauline’s a great Australian, and I think she’s a courageous woman, and she’s been very much victimized”, he told *A Current Affair*.²⁵⁶ On tour, Hanson reminded radio listeners that she was “the real thing”, an authentic Australian whose voice

²⁴⁹ Tracy Ong, “Oldfield Fails Lie Test Over Sex With Hanson”, *Australian*, 29 March 2007, p. 5.

²⁵⁰ Pauline Hanson quoted in Title No. 735136, “A Current Affair. 2007.03.26”, 26 March 2007, NWS 9, Adelaide, NFSA.

²⁵¹ Graeme Turner, “A Current Affair”, in Bridget Griffen-Foley (ed.), *A Companion to the Australian Media* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2014), p. 1.

²⁵² Chris Allen quoted in Title No. 735136, “A Current Affair. 2007.03.26”, 26 March 2007, NWS 9, Adelaide, NFSA.

²⁵³ Scalmer, “Rise of the Insider”, p. 98.

²⁵⁴ Pauline Hanson quoted in Title No. 735136, “A Current Affair. 2007.03.26”, 26 March 2007, NWS 9, Adelaide, NFSA.

²⁵⁵ Ben Packham, “Here We Go Again”, *Herald Sun*, 30 March 2007, p. 11.

²⁵⁶ Alan Jones quoted in Title No. 735142, “A Current Affair. 2007.03.27”, 27 March 2007, NWS 9, Adelaide, NFSA.

could all too easily be drowned out by the establishment.²⁵⁷ In Hobart and Brisbane, admirers lined up for hours to meet a woman who, at the very least, piqued their curiosity.²⁵⁸ In the *Sunday Mail*, the travelling author was described as “well-tailored, manicured and strangely sexy”.²⁵⁹ Her racial politics were clearly out of step with the sentiment of mainstream urban Australians, some of whom made their feelings known by protesting outside the bookstores where she was conducting signing sessions.²⁶⁰ But her performances appealed to those with grievances about their prospects in a changing economic and cultural landscape, and a desire to find convenient scapegoats. Using the tour to make her pitch for the 2007 election, she promised that she did not want to keep “the bastards” in Canberra “honest” as the Democrats had formerly pledged to do: “I want to *get rid* of the bastards”.²⁶¹ For her audience, Hanson was no feminist upstart or celebrity candidate, but rather an “intoxicating mix of vulnerability and steel” that appealed to conservative gender roles and racial ideals.²⁶²

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the political memoir is not, and has never been, a gender-neutral political platform. The memoir “polygenre”, as George Egerton called it, allowed politicians to deliver a range of narrative performances, ranging from the highly thematic memoir or the more politically ambiguous woman’s autobiography, through to the relentless and intimate political diary. These subgenres enabled distinct kinds of gendered performativity; the memoir form facilitated Kernot’s explicit feminist argumentation, counterpoised against Latham’s diurnal self-portraits of independent and unbowed masculinity, and Hanson’s life narrative of tough conservative womanhood. And each of these performances found their audience. Progressive women were still reading and writing to Kernot years later. Those who actually read *The Latham Diaries* still spoke of its “excellent discussion of the parliamentary Labor Party in the wildness years” 10 years after its publication.²⁶³ Disaffected voters in regional, and indeed in urban, communities queued to meet Hanson and procure her signature on a copy of *Untamed & Unashamed*.

²⁵⁷ “Not All’s Fair and Dinkum”, *Sunday Times*, 15 April 2007, p. 67.

²⁵⁸ Linda Smith, “Alice Walks the Talk ... For the Love of Pauline”, *Mercury*, 4 April 2007, p. 5; Anooska Tucker-Evans, “Untamed Pauline Wins Young Admirers”, *Sunday Mail*, 1 April 2007, p. 23.

²⁵⁹ Amanda Blair, “The Pauline Puzzle”, *Sunday Mail*, 8 April 2007, p. 15.

²⁶⁰ Title No. 735632, “Pauline Hanson Interrupted by a Heckler at a Book Signing in Melbourne Today”, 2 April 2007, HSV 7, Melbourne, NFSA.

²⁶¹ Pauline Hanson quoted in Title No. 735142, “A Current Affair. 2007.03.27”, 27 March 2007, NWS 9, Adelaide, NFSA.

²⁶² Broinowski, *Please Explain*, p. 55.

²⁶³ Natalie Mast, “The Latham Diaries, Ten Years On”, *The Conversation*, 9 April 2015, <https://theconversation.com/book-review-the-latham-diaries-ten-years-on-38086>, accessed 3 March 2022.

None of these books, though, led inexorably to political renewal or personal re-election. In 2010, with public trust in the major parties rapidly declining, Kernot stood for election as an independent senator.²⁶⁴ This candidacy, in her words a “rush of blood to the head”, was unsuccessful.²⁶⁵ Hanson contested and lost another Queensland state election in 2009, amid a furore involving a confected pornographic image of her published in metropolitan newspapers.²⁶⁶ After briefly taking up residence in London, where she was appalled to find ““immigrants and refugees””, Hanson returned to Australia and was eventually elected to the Senate representing Queensland and One Nation in 2016.²⁶⁷ Most spectacularly, Latham spent a decade trenchantly criticising the Labor Party and producing biting public commentary before his brand of politics took a more overt reactionary turn. Having colourfully described politics in his diary as “the theatre of the absurd”, he showed his willingness to continue treading the boards by joining the Liberal Democrats (a minor libertarian party) for a brief spell and then allying himself with Hanson and representing One Nation in the NSW Legislative Council.²⁶⁸ Political life writing played little part, if any, in these later candidacies, though gender and sexual politics certainly did.

Journalists and opportunistic politicians were responsible for manufacturing and engendering mistrust in these books. Prior to Kernot’s defection, the media had fashioned her into a noteworthy celebrity with political substance. When feminist disclosure came in the form of a book, the journalists dismissed her as a whinger whose memoir was guilty of omission. Latham, too, was the product of a media culture that historically valorised the hard-working and hard-playing independent Australian male. He seemed a thinker and a larrikin, until he suddenly seemed a volatile threat instead. Hanson, more than anyone else, owed her notoriety to a mainstream media that repeatedly singled her out for attention. It was the prerogative of journalists to report on these political memoirs and diaries in the language of salaciousness and scandal. The authors and their books were judged according to a relatively stable set of views about how public men and women ought to behave, and which stories they could legitimately tell. Journalists were putting former politicians back in their place. They could be emotionally vulnerable and expressive, but they were censured for threatening existing gender norms. The

²⁶⁴ Carol Nader, “Kernot Sets Her Sights on Senate Seat”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 July 2010, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/kernot-sets-her-sights-on-senate-seat-20100730-10zwv.html>, accessed 17 December 2021.

²⁶⁵ Kernot, zoom interview, 18 February 2022.

²⁶⁶ Broinowski, *Please Explain*, p. 15.

²⁶⁷ Broinowski, *Please Explain*, p. 15.

²⁶⁸ Latham, *The Latham Diaries*, p. 339.

implied criticism in much of their commentary was that the politicians had deviated from acceptable gendered and sexual scripts. In Kernot's case, the gendered double standard was especially stark, for Evans and his publishers received minimal pushback when, in 2017, he omitted Kernot from his own memoir. It was, he said, a "thematic memoir" and not a "conventional autobiography".²⁶⁹ It would be some time yet before traditional models of political masculinity and femininity were properly disrupted in Australia's political culture.

²⁶⁹ Gareth Evans, Email to Troy Bramston, 10 November 2017. ANUA 740: Papers of Gareth Evans, Box 52, File 1055.

SNAPSHOT 5

Disclosing Non-Disclosure

In some ways, the most ethically challenging interviews I conducted for this thesis were those involving publishers and editors. Contemporary commercial publishing thrives on confession and revelation, but like all forms of public relations, it demands secrecy from those who perform the work. The central job of a publicist in a publishing house is to “confer visibility onto houses and authors alike”.¹ That is equally true of editors, fact-checkers, and others whose labour is essential for the successful prosecution of a significant book project. And in so many cases, the people who are asked to be silent are women. Louise Adler recalled that when she became publishing director at Reed Books in the late 1980s, the “marketing manager was a bloke. The sales director was a bloke. Everyone around me were blokes. The ‘housekeeping’ [the unseen and non-executive labour] was done by women”.²

In 2021, I interviewed Anne Reilly twice via zoom. Formerly a teacher, Reilly was a freelance editor for educational and legal publications before joining HarperCollins, and later Random House Australia. She is a highly accomplished editor and a consummate professional, a quality that she values in others. Between 2008 and 2020, she had the unique experience of editing three Australian prime ministerial memoirs. She worked closely with John Howard – always “Mr Howard” – during the production of his memoir *Lazarus Rising*, about which I will say more in the following chapter. She then worked closely with Julia Gillard and her staff on the book that became *My Story* (2014). Finally, in 2019, during Hardie Grant’s “scramble” to produce Malcolm Turnbull’s *A Bigger Picture*, she was conscripted to that project. In each case, Reilly noted her distinct responsibilities to different stakeholders. It was her role, she felt, to “serve the reader” in an editorial sense, but also to support the author in their effort to craft their narrative and their “historical record” in a fashion that “they feel comfortable with”.³

As is customary for commercial publishing projects, non-disclosure agreements governed the making of these memoirs. Reilly explained with reference to Howard’s *Lazarus Rising* (2010):

¹ Claire Parnell, Alexandra Dane and Millicent Weber, “Author Care and the Invisibility of Affective Labour: Publicists’ Role in Book Publishing”, *Publishing Research Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 4 (2020), p. 650.

² Louise Adler, phone interview with the author, 25 January 2022.

³ Anne Reilly, zoom interview with the author, 6 May 2021.

Everybody on the project team at HarperCollins – as well as external people like printers and people in the supply chain – was subject to a specific non-disclosure agreement, so I guess everybody knew their part. We weren't in a situation where we could really discuss much about it. That's normal, too.⁴

Eleven years later, Reilly still took those obligations seriously. I was highly conscious of the need to respect the professional and legal constraints within which she spoke. At the same time, I was dependent on interviews with her and a few other key individuals for any insight into the process of constructing *Lazarus Rising*. There are no public archives relating to its production or reception, and inquiries with HarperCollins concerning corporate archives led to naught. In our conversations, Reilly was careful not to fall foul of those ethical responsibilities. Often, I would ask about a specific passage from the book, or advance a question designed to explore a point that she had raised in the conversation. Her responses were as effusive as they could be without breaching those obligations.

The chapter that follows is concerned largely with two public men, their senses of authority and their contested philosophies. But significantly, these platforms depended on the editorial and commercial labour of women like Reilly. These women are bound by firm ethical obligations and structures of silence, but I am attempting here to ensure that their labour is more visible in the historical record.

⁴ Reilly, zoom interview, 6 May 2021.

CHAPTER 5

“ENTER, STAGE RIGHT”

Performances of Liberalism and Leadership in

Malcolm Fraser and Lazarus Rising

On 25 October 2010, Newcastle resident and activist Peter Gray took a seat in the live audience of public affairs television program *Q&A*, on which one of Australia’s former prime ministers was booked to promote a new political memoir. The broadcast began at 9:35 pm and midway through, Gray rose to ask his prepared question, a provocative one about Australia’s overseas military commitments in Iraq (2003–2008). Deeming the reply that followed unsatisfactory, he stood, removed his shoes, and threw them one at a time in an arc that terminated wide of their intended target. As he did so, he shouted, “[t]hat’s for the Iraqi dead [...] and that’s for the Iraqi living!”¹ Gray and partner Naomi Hodgson were quickly removed from the audience and lost custody of the shoes forever. This intervention, evidently inspired by a similar gesture from an Iraqi journalist toward American president George W. Bush two years earlier, was intended to be theatrical rather than threatening. Nevertheless, Tony Jones, the usually imperturbable host, offered the guest an unconditional apology on behalf of the public broadcaster. But flashing a smile and pointedly patting Jones’ arm, John Howard replied, “Just relax”.²

Howard’s political memoir, *Lazarus Rising*, may seem invisible in this exchange, but it mattered enormously because it occasioned the broadcast, and Gray’s stunt as well. In this chapter, I argue that the contemporary Liberal memoir has been a powerful platform on which ideas about liberalism and leadership were debated, not only by former leaders themselves, but also by their media interlocutors. In their memoirs, former prime ministers Malcolm Fraser and John Howard struck ideologically assertive tones that had been absent from inaugural leader Robert Menzies’ own writings decades earlier. In *Australian Liberalism and National Character* (1978), Tim Rowse suggested that image-making was fundamental to the practice of liberal expression in Australia, for liberals felt that “the truthfulness of their work depended on their own independence”, a comfortable “unity of intellect and statesmanship”.³ Rowse had

¹ Peter Gray quoted in Phillip Hudson, “John Howard Says Q&A Shoe Attack ‘All in a Night’s Work’”, *PerthNow*, 26 October 2010, <https://www.perthnow.com.au/news/wa/john-howard-says-qa-shoe-attack-all-in-a-nights-work-ng-063e3d39e8284094264583bd40a1686c>, accessed 23 April 2021.

² John Howard quoted in ABC TV & iview, “Q&A | Man throws shoe at former Prime Minister, John Howard | ABC1”, *YouTube*, 26 October 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RplZI0r35Y>, accessed 23 April 2021.

³ Tim Rowse, *Australian Liberalism and National Character* (Melbourne: Kibble Books, 1978), pp. 29–30.

liberal intellectuals and thinkers rather than politicians in his mind, but it pays to approach the literary performances of Fraser and Howard with the same critical eye for conscious image-making. Moreover, media providers were critical agents in the process of image-making, and influential organisations such as Rupert Murdoch’s News Limited, or in a different sense the ABC, played a key role in staging or contesting the performances that Fraser and Howard were offering.

This chapter takes the context in which Fraser and Howard wrote and published, rather than the contexts in which they governed, as its focus. It mattered enormously that public memory of the Fraser years had dimmed by the late 2000s, while the end of the Howard era remained vivid. *Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs* and *Lazarus Rising* were both shaped by the politics of the Howard government and the debates of the 2000s – about asylum seekers, the Iraq War, and Aboriginal affairs – that brought ideals of “freedom” and “concern” into direct contention.⁴ To the extent that Fraser still figured in public consciousness at all (beyond the memory of the dismissal), it was because of his “limited taste” for the radical economic prescriptions of Thatcher and Reagan, his role in the global campaign against apartheid, and his advocacy with former adversary Gough Whitlam to prevent “a crime against the Australian people” in the form of media proprietor Kerry Packer’s bid to take over the Fairfax newspapers.⁵ Examining the production and especially the reception of Fraser’s and Howard’s memoirs, we can discern the personal and political functions of the Liberal memoir in that particular moment. Some of their successors in parliament also continued to debate and write about the meaning of liberalism, but I will give greater attention to these texts – namely former treasurer Peter Costello’s *Memoirs* (2008) and former minister Tony Abbott’s book *Battlelines* (2009) – in Chapter 7.

To understand the stories contained within Fraser’s and Howard’s memoirs and the ways they were created, this chapter draws on political psychologist Graham Little’s notion of Strong Leadership, a style of leadership that “reveres will and authority – the Leader’s freedom of action – in a world of due process”.⁶ This form of leadership constituted the place where “two opposite tendencies, one towards individual will and freedom, the other towards moral and

⁴ These terms are given clear expression as often conflicting principles in liberal philosophy in David Kemp, “A Leader and a Philosophy”, *Politics*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1973), pp. 48–59.

⁵ Frank Bongiorno, *Dreamers and Schemers: A Political History of Australia* (Collingwood: La Trobe University Press, 2022), p. 277, pp. 287–88; Paul Barry, *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer* (Sydney: Bantam, 1993), p. 440.

⁶ Graham Little, *Strong Leadership: Thatcher, Reagan and an Eminent Person* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 8.

legal restraint”, met in a dynamic and personal way.⁷ In Little’s theory, Strong Leaders were crisis-orientated, often required to trade-off idealist thinking for pragmatism, and prided themselves on simple answers and decisive action.⁸ Moreover, Strong Leadership was a gendered phenomenon, associating “strong with masculine, weak with feminine”.⁹ As a social psychologist belonging to the Melbourne Psychosocial Group, based at the University of Melbourne and led by Alan Davies, Little’s studies rested on a formidable body of psychoanalytic theory.

Psychobiography was largely out of fashion by the turn of the century, and it is not my intention to revive it here. For my purposes, Little is useful because, as Judith Brett has said, his Freudian theory “helps us to think about the pervasiveness of leadership in modern democracies”, and to study individual leaders as “public symbolic formations” of cultural and emotional paradigms.¹⁰ It was significant that Fraser and Howard published their memoirs in an environment where leadership – as an office and as a politico-cultural practice – were the subject of much speculation and anxiety, particularly in the Liberal Party.

Strong Leadership has been particularly important to the Liberal Party because it subsumes the acute tensions in liberal thought within the figure of the authoritative leader, and thereby renders itself electorally palatable. Evidently, the Australian public have also been responsive to this style of leadership. Neither of these political memoirs could have been created without an enormous effort from researchers, editors, publishers and in Fraser’s case a co-author, and many of these personnel were women. But both men approached the task of memoir writing in the fashion of a Strong Leader acutely conscious of the power of self-image. *Malcolm Fraser* and *Lazarus Rising* need to be understood, therefore, as products of and textual performances of Strong Leadership, intended for public and partisan audiences alike. These books were more than just books, of course; they occasioned larger opportunities for big, and sometimes deeply bitter, public exchanges about modern liberalism and the performance of leadership in Australia. How many people actually read these books, we cannot be sure. But they mattered because they were occasions for staging political and personal debate, inviting onlookers to enter the theatre of Liberal political power and make judgements about what they saw.

⁷ Little, *Strong Leadership*, p. 9.

⁸ Little, *Strong Leadership*, pp. 12—27.

⁹ Little, *Strong Leadership*, p. 28.

¹⁰ Judith Brett, “Graham Little’s Theory of Political Leadership”, *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2009), p. 109.

Making Liberal History

The internal tensions that characterise the modern Liberal Party were present in Australian political culture long before that party's formation in 1944.¹¹ As Marian Sawer succinctly put it, colonial liberals often rejected traditional Lockean or Benthamite notions of freedom and embraced "[e]qual opportunity" as the "watchword" of a more social liberalism.¹² At the turn of the twentieth century, individualism and free trade liberalism thrived in NSW, but social liberalism and tariff protection, strongest in Victoria, took centre stage in the political contest for "the design of new national institutions".¹³ In the Commonwealth parliament's formative debates, new liberalism and its mix of "xenophobia and idealism" largely prevailed.¹⁴ However, Australia's "most durable political doctrine" was marked by institutional impermanence.¹⁵ Each of the federal political parties with claims to the liberal creed – the Protectionists and Free Traders until 1909, the Commonwealth Liberal Party until 1917, the Nationalist Party until 1932, and the United Australia Party (UAP) until 1944 – were short-lived compared with their primary opponent.¹⁶ Joan Beaumont has suggested that the UAP, for example, was little more than "the creation of its finance committees".¹⁷ At its formation in 1944, the new Liberal Party of Australia internalised generations of philosophical tension and ambiguity. As Ian Hancock noted, the "heirs and successors of Sir George Reid and Alfred Deakin were both represented" in the organisation, as were the new "centre-of-the-road" disciples of British liberal economist John Maynard Keynes.¹⁸

¹¹ For more on the history of liberalism in Australia see Stuart Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism: The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Gregory Melleuish, *Cultural Liberalism in Australia: A Study in Intellectual and Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Judith Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2017).

¹² Marian Sawer, *An Ethical State? Social Liberalism in Australia* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2003), p. 23.

¹³ Sawer, *An Ethical State?*, p. 35. For more on colonial ideological formations in NSW, Victoria and SA, see Peter Loveday and Allan Martin, "Colonial Politics Before 1890", in P. Loveday, A. W. Martin and R. S. Parker, *The Emergence of the Australian Party System* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1977), pp. 28–30, pp. 38–39. For more on New South Wales, see Beverley Kingston, *A History of New South Wales* (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 69.

¹⁴ Melleuish, *Cultural Liberalism in Australia*, p. 40.

¹⁵ Stuart Macintyre, "Liberalism", in Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart Macintyre (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 388.

¹⁶ For histories of these parties see Stuart Macintyre, "Nationalist Party", in Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart Macintyre (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 460; Sylvia Marchant, "Things Fall Apart: The End of the United Australia Party, 1939 to 1943", Master of Letters dissertation, Australian National University, 1998, p. 74; Ian Hancock, *National and Permanent? The Federal Organisation of the Liberal Party of Australia 1944–1965* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2000), pp. 11–12.

¹⁷ Joan Beaumont, *Australia's Great Depression* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2022), p. 271.

¹⁸ Hancock, *National and Permanent?*, pp. 61–62.

A new national organisation offered Australian Liberals, as Hancock put it, a “permanent element in Australian politics” and a general body of values, but no firm philosophical resolution to the existing tensions of Australian liberalism.¹⁹ The Canberra and Albury Conferences in 1944 established general unanimity in favour of the rule of law, freedoms of “speech, religion and association”, “constant employment” and the importance of “family life”.²⁰ Most importantly, the Liberals clearly opposed “Socialism with its bureaucratic administration and restriction of personal freedom”.²¹ Despite its free market rhetoric, the new party promised to retain “proper living minimum wages”, the great macroeconomic “stabiliser” of social security, and “[e]quality of opportunity” for all.²² Though it won office in 1949, the parliamentary party largely adhered to its Deakinite tradition, and in the 1950s operatives such as federal president William Anderson despaired that MPs were unable or unwilling to “fight the enemies of liberalism” in Canberra.²³ A new organisational force, for all of its successes in the 1950s and 1960s, could not reconcile the fundamental philosophical contradictions within.

Strong Leadership was in Frank Bongiorno’s view the “most valued, and most electorally successful” style of leadership for the Liberal Party.²⁴ Lacking Labor’s formidable organisational structures, Liberals deferred to “the powers of one individual to rise above the ruck and resolve within himself the competing tendencies and values at play in any issue”.²⁵ As staffer and future minister David Kemp explained in 1973, the “philosophy and platform of Liberalism and the authority of the Liberal leader [...] were closely linked” in the figure of Menzies.²⁶ Historians and biographers have debated Menzies’ credentials as a liberal or conservative, but his capacities as a leader were evident in his longevity.²⁷ Despite his initial

¹⁹ Hancock, *National and Permanent?*, p. 63.

²⁰ Final Report of the Committee on Name and Objectives, 16 October 1944, in Graeme Starr (ed.), *The Liberal Party of Australia: A Documentary History* (Richmond: Heinemann Educational Australia, 1980), pp. 94–95.

²¹ Robert Menzies, Letter of Invitation to Canberra Conference, September 1944, in Starr (ed.), *The Liberal Party of Australia*, p. 69.

²² Liberal Party of Australia, Federal Platform, January 1946, in Starr (ed.), *The Liberal Party of Australia*, p. 100, p. 103, p. 104.

²³ Hancock, *National and Permanent?*, p. 128.

²⁴ Frank Bongiorno, “A Tale of Two Leaders: Malcolm Turnbull and Scott Morrison in Historical Perspective”, in Mark Evans, Michelle Grattan and Brendan McAffrie (eds.), *From Turnbull to Morrison: The Trust Divide* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2019), p. 321.

²⁵ Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 30.

²⁶ Kemp, “A Leader and a Philosophy”, p. 52.

²⁷ Stephen A. Chavura and Greg Melleuish consider Menzies’ liberalism to be tempered by cultural puritanism and British idealism, influenced greatly by his studies at the University of Melbourne. See *The Forgotten Menzies: The World Picture of Australia’s Longest-serving Prime Minister* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2021). By way of contrast, his biographer Allan Martin claimed that the seeming illiberalism of Menzies’ anti-communist stance in the 1950s demonstrated a preparedness to adapt his views and ideology to evolving contexts. See Allan Martin, “Mr Menzies’ Anti-Communism”, *Quadrant*, vol. 40, no. 5 (1996), pp. 47–56; Allan Martin, *Robert Gordon Menzies: A Life* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1999), pp. 80–82. Judith Brett locates Menzies’

shortcomings, Menzies as prime minister cultivated an authority predicated on bodily stature, oratorical skill, and a hint of belligerence that could, in Dame Enid Lyons' recall, make a "Cabinet Minister colour like a schoolboy".²⁸ Internal cohesion suffered in the late 1960s and early 1970s for his absence. Similarly, in the wake of Strong Leaders such as Fraser (1975–83) and Howard (1985–89 and 1995–2007), the party divided into bands of "wets" and "dries", "moderates" and "conservatives", though the boundaries were always porous.²⁹ During these periods of opposition, the search for a Strong Leader often amounted to what conservative commentator and Liberal adviser Gerard Henderson perceived as a "Messiah complex".³⁰ Those few leaders who achieved longevity, namely Menzies, Fraser and Howard, were Strong Leaders in that they subsumed (though never reconciled) the party's philosophical inconsistencies within their own person and offered authoritative performances to the public.

Although liberals had been responsible for most of Australia's political life writing before the 1980s, the Liberal memoir was an undemonstrative genre in ideological terms.³¹ Menzies, in particular, did little to explicate his understanding of liberalism in his two volumes. Zachary Gorman and Greg Melleuish have noted that, unlike the famous "Forgotten People" broadcasts in 1942, his post-parliamentary memoirs required no "appeals to ideology".³² Even as he wrote the books, Menzies conflated liberalism with conservatism. In a "Literary White Paper" written by Cassell to help Menzies draft his second volume, *The Measure of the Years* (1970), publisher David Asciooli described him as "Conservative in the widest sense", and encouraged "critical and controversial comment" on socialist politics in Australia and the United Kingdom.³³ The goal, clearly, was to help Menzies appeal to a British readership that could locate him comfortably in their own imaginings of conservatism. Not everyone perceived Menzies' conservative credentials in this way. In a draft chapter about "Apartheid and Sport", Menzies

liberal rhetoric in the longer context of vague liberal principles in Australian politics, as well as the rhetorical impulse toward binary opposites in Australian political discourse. See *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*, pp. 33–38. Troy Bramston notes in passing that Menzies' liberalism was both individualistic and conservative insofar as it accepted a place for state regulation. See *Robert Menzies: The Art of Politics* (Brunswick: Scribe, 2019), p. 115.

²⁸ Enid Lyons, *Among the Carrion Crows* (Adelaide: Rigby Limited, 1972), p. 90.

²⁹ Paul Kelly, *The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1992), p. 320.

³⁰ Gerard Henderson, *Menzies' Child: The Liberal Party of Australia 1944–1994* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1994), pp. 10–12.

³¹ Figure 2, Party Affiliation of Memoirists and Diarists, in Sean Scalmer, "The Rise of the Insider: Memoirs and Diaries in Recent Australian Political History", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 56, no. 1 (2010), p. 86.

³² Zachary Gorman and Gregory Melleuish, "Menzies and Howard on Themselves: Liberal Memoir, Memory and Myth Making", *History Australia*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2018), p. 12.

³³ David Asciooli, "A Literary White Paper", p. 9, Papers of Sir Robert Menzies, NLA, MS 4936, Series 10, Box 364, Folder 81. For the book see Robert Menzies, *The Measure of the Years* (London: Cassell, 1970).

described South African prime minister John Vorster as “the most ‘liberally minded’ South African Prime Minister I have known”.³⁴ “[T]he word ‘liberal’ in South Africa”, Vorster curtly warned Menzies, “has a meaning completely different from what it has to you. I consider myself to be a conservative”.³⁵

The published memoirs reproduced only vague sentiments about liberal thought. Liberalism, Menzies wrote, was about “the individual, his rights, and his enterprise”, and the state’s role was to avoid “large-scale unemployment”.³⁶ Australian liberals were not a “residual” or “third party” like the British liberals, nor were they occupied with “racial relations” as American liberals were: “we are free of this problem in Australia”, he naively wrote.³⁷ In a much-cited passage, he claimed that his Party rejected “reactionary” politics in favour of “progressive” reformism, but even here the sentiment was opaque.³⁸

However, the Strong Leader trope was clear in Menzies’ reminiscences. In their letters to him, Cassell representatives praised this “greatest statesman” as “the last of the great Churchillian figures”, and his “authentic voice” that of a “leader”.³⁹ With that encouragement, Menzies delivered the performance of the Strong Leader *par excellence* in *Afternoon Light* (1967). Explaining the party’s formation, he said that it was *his* guiding hand that brought “fourteen organisations” of different political hue “into one, under one banner, and with one body of ideas”.⁴⁰ Though recognising the contributions of others (particularly Dame Elizabeth Couchman of the Australian Women’s National League and William Anderson of the Services and Citizens’ Party), Menzies was, by his own account, the Party’s true founder:

If, in my retirement, I permit myself to cast myself for the role of the “founding father” [...] I hope that this will be attributed, not to a species of vanity, but to a just pride in a result which many “practical” people would have dismissed from their imaginations ...⁴¹

³⁴ Robert Menzies, Chapter Draft of “Apartheid and Sport”, Papers of Sir Robert Menzies, NLA, MS 4936, Series 10, Box 363, Folder 74.

³⁵ John Vorster, Letter to Robert Menzies, 19 February 1970, Papers of Sir Robert Menzies, NLA, MS 4936, Series 10, Box 364, Folder 79.

³⁶ Robert Menzies, *Afternoon Light: Some Memories of Men and Events* (Melbourne: Cassell, 1967), pp. 288—89.

³⁷ Menzies, *Afternoon Light*, p. 286.

³⁸ Menzies, *Afternoon Light*, p. 286.

³⁹ Desmond Flower MC, Letter to Robert Menzies, 19 January 1966, Papers of Sir Robert Menzies, NLA, MS 4936, Series 10, Box 362, Folder 64; Asciole, “A Literary White Paper”, p. 9.

⁴⁰ Menzies, *Afternoon Light*, p. 284.

⁴¹ Robert Menzies, Chapter Draft of “The Revival of Liberalism in Australia”, “D”, Papers of Sir Robert Menzies, NLA, MS 4936, Series 10, Box 361, File 59.

This self-aggrandising image was a late addition to the manuscript, and one that historians have since contested.⁴² Menzies' account of the formation of the Liberal Party demonstrated less interest in ideas than with personality and character (chiefly his own). Though avowedly distrustful of contemporary history, we see his hand sketching a deliberate place for himself in the historic record in the role of Strong Leader.⁴³

(Re-)Presenting Malcolm Fraser

In the decades after Menzies' memoirs, few liberal or conservative parliamentarians produced memoirs in Australia. Peter Howson's *Diaries* (1984) and Jim Killen's *Inside Australian Politics* (1985) both attracted public interest, former deputy Neil Brown's *On the Other Hand* (1993) far less.⁴⁴ The late Paul Hasluck's posthumous *The Chance of Politics* (1997) famously described the former prime minister William McMahon as a "contemptible creature", which made the book more memorable than might otherwise have been the case.⁴⁵ But the real revival of the Liberal memoir in Australia as a political and publishing event depended on four key factors. First, the party's flagging fortunes after 2007 invited a vigorous discussion about its direction. Patrick Weller noted that Liberal ministers adhered to conventions of non-disclosure and hence produced no memoirs in the Howard years.⁴⁶ However, the genre now had a degree of potency for a party that found itself out of office federally and in every state jurisdiction. Second, the party now suffered from sharp ideological and cultural disputes, precipitating in turn a rapid leadership turnover between 2007 and 2010. Malcolm Turnbull, deputy leader Julie Bishop and shadow treasurer Joe Hockey cultivated "moderate" supporters, while senator Nick Minchin and former ministers Kevin Andrews and Tony Abbott gathered the conservative forces. Amid debates about the apology to the stolen generations and the Rudd government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (hereafter CPRS), the party became increasingly balkanised, its leadership more unstable. In that political environment, there was great scope for former leaders to perform their leadership and expound their liberalism once again.

⁴² Robert Menzies, Chapter Draft of "The Revival of Liberalism in Australia", "D", Papers of Sir Robert Menzies, NLA, MS 4936, Series 10, Box 361, File 59. For accounts that are critical of Menzies' 'founding father' persona see Hancock, *National and Permanent?*, pp. 3–4; Bongiorno, *Dreamers and Schemers*, pp. 201–4. Bridget Griffen-Foley accounts for the role of corporate ad media partisans in the party's establishment in *Party Games: Australian Politicians and the Media from War to Dismissal* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2003), chapter 1.

⁴³ See Chris Wallace, "'Menzies Biography Mystery': Robert Menzies and Political Biography as Political Intervention", *Australian Journal of Biography and History*, no. 5 (2021), pp. 128–30.

⁴⁴ Peter Howson, *The Howson Diaries: The Life of Politics*, ed. Don Aitkin (Ringwood: Viking Press, 1984); Jim Killen, *Killen: Inside Australian Politics* (North Ryde: Methuen Hayes, 1985); Neil Brown, *On the Other Hand: Sketches and Reflections from Political Life* (Woden: Poplar Press, 1993).

⁴⁵ Paul Hasluck, *The Chance of Politics*, ed. Nicholas Hasluck (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1997), p. 185.

⁴⁶ Patrick Weller, *Cabinet Government in Australia, 1901–2006: Practice, Principles, Performance* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007), p. 178.

Third, by 2005 political memoirs (and life writing more broadly) had become a staple of the modern Australian publishing industry. The prime ministerial precedents from Whitlam to Hawke were indicative of the genre's capacity to generate publicity, while the plethora of Labor memoirs in the 1990s and 2000s spoke to a general shift in public tolerance for and interest in personal disclosure. And fourth, there was a new force in the Australian publishing industry willing to invest in Liberal projects. Fraser's memoir, along with books by Costello and Abbott, were products of Louise Adler's stewardship of MUP. Howard was certain to secure a good publishing contract by virtue of his status, and some publishers thought that a memoir from Costello as he sat on the backbench "would be interesting", but the more common refrain was that "books from the left sold well, but books from the right stayed on the shelves".⁴⁷ MUP had proven that the dismissal, at the very least, remained a matter of much public interest when it republished Gough Whitlam's 1979 memoir *The Truth of the Matter*, for which it acquired the publication rights from Penguin in 2005 on generous terms.⁴⁸ Adler would give Fraser the same opportunity for contemporary relevance, challenging too the notion that Liberals could not sell books.

Fraser's memoir owed its origins to those forces. Defeated in March 1983, he told journalists that he would not "do the three years' work" of trawling through his papers to write a book.⁴⁹ He remained an active campaigner against apartheid in South Africa, and worked with the humanitarian agency CARE Australia; in 2006 he remained "more interested in what's happening tomorrow than what happened [...] 20 years ago".⁵⁰ But as the Howard government's fourth term proceeded, he began to consider writing a book in defence of his views on liberalism and human rights.⁵¹ After (at least) one false start with a Melbourne journalist, Adler and commissioning editor Sybil Nolan approached freelance journalist and author Margaret Simons. "I gather Louise had been talking to Malcolm for quite a long while", she recalled in our interview. "So, she suggested to him collaborating, and she brought us together".⁵² The partnership was not natural for either of them, the independent journalist having owned "a dartboard with Malcolm Fraser's face on it" as an undergraduate student.⁵³ But in the 2000s, Fraser and Simons both numbered among a cohort of Australians who

⁴⁷ Tony Wright, "Publishers' Apathy Speaks Volumes for Political Memoirs", *Age*, 15 January 2008, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Gough Whitlam, *The Truth of the Matter*, 3rd ed. (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2005 [1979]).

⁴⁹ Malcolm Fraser quoted in Colin Brammall, "A Defeated PM Talks of the Past and His Plans for the Future", *Canberra Times*, 11 April 1983, p. 2.

⁵⁰ Malcolm Fraser quoted in Michael Gordon, "The Two of Us; The Dismissal", *Age*, 5 November 2006, p. 6.

⁵¹ Louise Adler, phone interview with the author, 25 January 2022.

⁵² Margaret Simons, zoom interview with the author, 24 March 2021.

⁵³ Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021.

opposed the “emotional and psychological mood Howard had brought to the government of the nation”.⁵⁴ This became a recurring motif in their conversations. There was also curiosity about Fraser on Simons’ part, and a sense that there was some “merit” in hearing his story.⁵⁵ In their first meeting, Fraser remarked that many of his fellow human rights activists once hated him. Simons suggested that he might have “killed their dreams” through the dismissal of the Whitlam government in 1975, to which he sagely replied, “They were dreams that had to die”. Simons wrote, “that was the moment in which I decided to take on the project”.⁵⁶

Fraser’s credentials as a Strong Leader were self-evident in the 1970s and 1980s, even if hindsight and the march of neoliberalism in his wake made him seem rather weak, or as one of his trenchant critics in the Liberal Party described him in 2008, a “frothing-at-the-mouth leftie”.⁵⁷ Brett has likened him to Stanley Melbourne Bruce, both “aloof, buttoned-up men of impeccable ruling-class credentials and experience”.⁵⁸ Little noted that Fraser’s was a “belligerent – or at least bantering – manner” with thin tolerance for “unnecessary questioning”.⁵⁹ His enormous height and sharp, clipped speech seemed sufficient to indicate his manly dominance in a political culture where “manhood” mattered immensely.⁶⁰ According to Howard, Fraser became leader in 1975 chiefly because he “sounded strong and looked like a winner”.⁶¹ And in his very large hands, philosophy was a useful if inelegant political weapon. His unpopularity notwithstanding, Fraser was recognised for his faith with an older tradition of “social liberalism” and, as Jon Piccini has noted, a “personal commitment to human rights”.⁶² By the same token, those high-minded ideals “were always on hand to rationalise his more ruthless moves on power”.⁶³

⁵⁴ Brett, “Graham Little’s Theory”, p. 109.

⁵⁵ Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021.

⁵⁶ Simons, “A Note from the Narrator”, in Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simons, *Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs* (Carlton: Miegunyah Press, 2010), p. 2.

⁵⁷ Sophie Mirabella quoted in Reid Sexton, “Liberal MP Attacks ‘Frothing’ Fraser”, *Age*, 6 January 2008, <https://www.theage.com.au/national/liberal-mp-attacks-frothing-fraser-20080106-ge6kup.html>, accessed 23 March 2023.

⁵⁸ Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, p. 162.

⁵⁹ Little, *Strong Leadership*, p. 39, p. 200, p. 209.

⁶⁰ See Bethany Phillips-Peddlesden, “‘A Race of Intelligent Super-Giants’: The Whitlams, Gendered Bodies and Political Authority in Modern Australia”, in Michelle Arrow and Angela Woollacott (eds.), *Everyday Revolutions: Remaking Gender, Sexuality and Culture in 1970s Australia* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2019), pp. 261—78.

⁶¹ John Howard, *Lazarus Rising: A Personal and Political Autobiography* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2013 [2010]), p. 91.

⁶² Jon Piccini, *Human Rights in Twentieth-Century Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 154.

⁶³ Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, p. 165.

As a performance, Fraser's memoir enjoyed cultural privileges that others lacked. The project was produced under MUP's Miegunyah Press, an imprint funded by bequests from philanthropists Sir Russell and Lady Mab Grimwade. Miegunyah was established to produce "important texts that might not have been commercially possible".⁶⁴ With the enthusiastic endorsement of the overseeing committee and Andrew Grimwade, Adler published Fraser's memoir alongside Jenny Hocking's two-volume biography of Whitlam, and Mark McKenna's acclaimed biography of historian Manning Clark.⁶⁵ Simons' involvement lent Fraser's book further credibility. She and her research assistant Caitlin Stone conducted extensive research at the NAA, an institution for which Fraser reserved much suspicion on account of its stonewalling whenever he sought to access official papers from them.⁶⁶ Subjected to an invasive security clearance process by the NAA, the pair then had to resist threats to resubmit open documents for access examination and to vet all historic Defence documents before Fraser himself could see them. Simons recalled that it was "only with the full force of Malcolm Fraser" that she overcame the NAA's obstructionism, an advantage that other users lacked.⁶⁷ Alongside her archival research, Simons conducted weekly interviews with Fraser and tested his recollections against documentary evidence. Finally, Simons also gave the project a detached and investigative voice that avoided repetitive first-person pronouns. "Malcolm said, 'I don't want to say 'I', 'I', 'I' all the time'", Simons recalled with laughter.⁶⁸ She gave the project its intellectual rigour, while Adler and Grimwade ensured that it would be printed on quality paper and packaged between magisterial covers.

Fraser approached the task of memoir making in the manner that a Strong Leader approaches any political performance. The bulk of the work was performed by Simons, but Fraser was largely in charge of its direction. "One of the things Malcolm liked was being argued with" Simons recalled, "which was not easy".⁶⁹ Despite their growing friendship, inconvenient questions from Simons could incite sharp anger. One combative interview ended especially badly: "I remember parking and ringing up Louise and saying, 'I think you're about to get a call from Malcolm saying I'm sacked!'"⁷⁰ On another occasion, she asked Fraser why he had

⁶⁴ Sir Andrew Grimwade, "Foreword", in John Poynter and Benjamin Thomas, *Miegunyah: The Bequests of Russell and Mab Grimwade* (Carlton: Miegunyah Press, 2015), p. xiv.

⁶⁵ Jenny Hocking, *Gough Whitlam: The Biography*, 2 vols. (Carlton: Melbourne University Press/Miegunyah Press, 2008/2012); Mark McKenna, *An Eye for Eternity: The Life of Manning Clark* (Carlton: Miegunyah Press, 2011).

⁶⁶ See Gideon Haigh, "The Rise and Rise of the Prime Minister", *Meanjin*, vol. 72, no. 1 (2013), pp. 55—57.

⁶⁷ Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021.

⁶⁸ Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021.

⁶⁹ Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021.

⁷⁰ Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021.

not pursued criminal allegations against the Whitlam government and its “reprehensible” loans affair through the courts. The attorney-general, Bob Ellicott, had wanted to lay charges, and Simons wondered whether Fraser had overruled him. Growing tense, Fraser began to argue, sharply accentuating each syllable, that she was “not understanding the harm done to a democratic institution if a new government tries to put its predecessor in jail”.⁷¹ Fraser complained that Simons’ questions were leading down “side-tracks” that were “not part of the theme of the book”, which was really about values and principles “which are important to government”.⁷² The combative exchange (relatively rare between them, it must be said) reveals Fraser’s preparedness to assert his authority over the narrative, and his willingness to call upon noble ideals in pursuit of linguistic control. Additionally, it illuminates a desire to avoid the appearance of weakness, hence his aggressive defence of democratic institutions. In short, Fraser exercised Strong Leadership over the content and the form of this collaborative memoir.

Not only would he direct the memoir like a Strong Leader; he would look like one in its pages. In Little’s view, conservative leaders who always did things “by the book” invited doubts that they were “strong enough” to truly lead.⁷³ This was particularly true of Fraser, whose ruthless attainment of power in 1975 was followed by a perceived unwillingness to dismantle the post-war policy order. But Fraser appealed instead to Strong Leadership’s other values, namely “stability and order” along with a leader’s capacity for unilateral action.⁷⁴ Cabinet government was important, he reaffirmed to Simons, but when personal conviction was at stake, “it’s not the numbers, it’s the *weight* that counts”.⁷⁵ Rejecting the view that the Fraser years were a lost opportunity, he set about claiming personal credit for policy initiatives. In particular, having watched former treasurer Howard assume much credit for the origins of financial deregulation and the Campbell Inquiry into the Australian financial system in the early 1980s, Fraser was “very interested” in staking a modest claim to certain reforms, such as the deregulation of Treasury bonds in 1982, for himself.⁷⁶ (He had always been less enthusiastic

⁷¹ Malcolm Fraser, Recording of Research Interview, 19 March 2008, University of Melbourne Archives (hereafter UMA), Margaret Simons Research Papers and Recordings for Malcolm Fraser Memoir, 2019.0109, File 00130.

⁷² Malcolm Fraser, Recording of Research Interview, 19 March 2008, UMA, Margaret Simons Research Papers and Recordings for Malcolm Fraser Memoir, 2019.0109, File 00130.

⁷³ Graham Little, *Political Ensembles: A Psychosocial Approach to Politics and Leadership* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 129.

⁷⁴ Little, *Strong Leadership*, p. 212.

⁷⁵ Malcolm Fraser, Recording of Research Interview, 24 September 2007, UMA, Margaret Simons Research Papers and Recordings for Malcolm Fraser Memoir, 2019.0109, File 00101.

⁷⁶ Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021.

about floating the Australian dollar.) Though he never expressed it in such terms, Fraser's memoir was an exiled leader's attempt to perform Strong Leadership once again.

Indeed, the Howard era presented Fraser with the ideological crisis against which to redefine his liberal philosophy and its record in government. Strong Leaders such as Fraser, Little thought, "dissolve politics into the simplicities of sheer resoluteness" in the hope of achieving "a rhetorical advantage".⁷⁷ In the book, Howard was the *conservative* Other against which Fraser defined himself as *liberal*. According to his critics, Fraser (like John Gorton before him) had "reinvented himself as a cuddly left-winger with a social conscience" in the 2000s.⁷⁸ As Simons saw it, liberalism's victory at the end of the Cold War simply meant that "other aspects of his character came forward".⁷⁹ For his part, Fraser pointed to his decision to ban sand mining on Fraser Island in Queensland as emblematic of his aspiration to be not a "conservative government" but rather a "liberal government, progressive and forward looking".⁸⁰ Against the backdrop of Howard's National Intervention in the Northern Territory in 2007, Fraser told Simons of the importance of state-sponsored Aboriginal self-management, creating "the circumstances for Aboriginals to take charge of their own lives the way so many other people take charge of their own lives".⁸¹ Fraser and Simons' sharpest criticisms of Howard concerned racism and asylum seeker policy, comparing his own rejection of offshore detention regimes with Howard's Pacific Solution, knowing that these stories "would have relevance" in contemporary debates.⁸² In each case, Fraser drew a sharp contrast between his liberalism and Howard's conservatism and insisted that *his* was the legacy of the Strong Leader animated by principles.

Given Fraser's earlier reputation as a fierce conservative, key issues needed to be carefully managed in the narrative. Michelle Arrow has argued that the Fraser government "undermined many of the victories in women's policy" that feminists achieved under Whitlam.⁸³ Fraser and Simons pointed instead to his government's "progressive" and

⁷⁷ Little, "Hawke in Trouble", *Meanjin*, vol. 44, no. 3 (1985), p. 291.

⁷⁸ "Memoirs of an ex-PM", *Canberra Times*, 2 July 2005, p. 4; Kerry-Anne Walsh, "'Control' is the Word, not 'Sorry'", *Sun-Herald*, 16 November 2008, p. 57.

⁷⁹ Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021.

⁸⁰ Malcolm Fraser, Recording of Research Interview, 19 March 2008, UMA, Margaret Simons Research Papers and Recordings for Malcolm Fraser Memoir, 2019.0109, File 00130.

⁸¹ Malcolm Fraser, Recording of Research Interview, 28 September 2007, UMA, Margaret Simons Research Papers and Recordings for Malcolm Fraser Memoir, 2019.0109, File 00118.

⁸² Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021.

⁸³ Michelle Arrow, *The Seventies: The Personal, the Political and the Making of Modern Australia* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2018), p. 196.

“generous” family allowance payments to Australian mothers.⁸⁴ They acknowledged that Fraser “was vocal in opposing abortion on demand” and maintained a conservative stance against decriminalising homosexuality in the 1970s, but these were matters on which the younger Fraser “thought a liberal *should* be conservative” [emphasis in original].⁸⁵ The Vietnam War, which Fraser passionately supported as a backbencher and as defence minister, was now recorded as “a mistake”.⁸⁶ When former United States defence secretary Robert McNamara revealed in 1995 that the American state had been involved in the assassination of South Vietnam’s president Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963, Fraser claimed to have had no knowledge of American underhandedness.⁸⁷ Critics dubbed him “a big liar”, and Simons questioned him further.⁸⁸ “We had a day of fierce rows over that chapter”, she recalled. “I do think that if I was writing it myself, I’d have given him a harder time”.⁸⁹ In the end, they largely framed the story in terms of Fraser’s principles and his fervent commitment to civic action in South Vietnam, the issue that brought his ministerial career under Gorton to a close in 1971.⁹⁰

The 1975 dismissal similarly required a careful liberal framing, though it no doubt served Fraser’s performance of Strong Leadership. Simons told Fraser that they needed to “cast it within the light of the enduring values” that informed the rest of the book: “If, when this book hits the deck”, he replied, “the headline is ‘New Revelations on ’75’, in my view, the book will have failed”.⁹¹ The story, then, became one of conflicting principles. “Sometimes, in politics”, Fraser explained, “you can believe in two principles, and you find that you cannot follow both absolutely”. His belief in liberal democracy, he claimed, had come up against his feeling that it was “unconscionable to allow the country to be governed in that state through Christmas [1975]”, hence his use of the Senate to block supply.⁹² Though problematic for his performance of liberalism, it did enhance his projection of Strong Leadership, particularly its “implacable determination and pragmatic flexibility”.⁹³ The tension on display here between liberal values and ruthless pragmatism remained somewhat unresolved in the final narrative.

⁸⁴ Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, p. 355.

⁸⁵ Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, p. 234, p. 271, p. 234.

⁸⁶ Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, p. 132.

⁸⁷ Greg Sheridan, “Playing Fast and Loose with History”, *Australian*, 8 June 2001, p. 13.

⁸⁸ Sheridan, “Playing Fast and Loose with History”, p. 13.

⁸⁹ Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021.

⁹⁰ For a full account of these events see Griffen-Foley, *Party Games*, pp. 162—72; Patrick Mullins, *Tiberius with a Telephone: The Life and Stories of William McMahon* (Brunswick: Scribe, 2018), pp. 372—99.

⁹¹ Margaret Simons and Malcolm Fraser, Recording of Research Interview, 15 August 2007, UMA, Margaret Simons Research Papers and Recordings for Malcolm Fraser Memoir, 2019.0109, File 00135.

⁹² Malcolm Fraser, Recording of Research Interview, 15 August 2007, UMA, Margaret Simons Research Papers and Recordings for Malcolm Fraser Memoir, 2019.0109, File 00135.

⁹³ Little, *Strong Leadership*, p. 197.

The Memphis trousers affair posed the biggest challenge to Fraser's literary performance. In late 1986, during an anti-apartheid speaking tour of the United States, the former prime minister awoke one morning in a notoriously "seedy" Memphis hotel without his wallet and his trousers, and seemingly under the influence of something more sinister than alcohol.⁹⁴ The story seemed purpose-fitted for the humour of the Australian vernacular, redolent of Joseph Furphy's novel *Such is Life* (1903), in which the hapless Tom Collins loses his trousers and



Figure 14: Ron Tandberg, Malcolm Fraser cartoon, *Age*, 4 February 1983, p. 1.

despairs that "a man [...] should depend so entirely" on them for his dignity.⁹⁵ The fallen trousers were a metaphor that Fraser had enjoyed deploying against political opponents in 1975, threatening to catch them with their pants down. For Simons, Memphis was a major distraction from the main themes of the book, but for Fraser it was the rawest nerve, a subject "harder than the dismissal" to discuss: "I think he was just so humiliated and offended and devastated by the whole thing".⁹⁶ In the end, Simons interviewed Fraser's wife, Tamie, who had been at home during those events, and drafted the story largely from Tamie's perspective. Tamie assured readers that Fraser had been "drugged" while searching for Memphis's "famous live blues' music", and Simons pointed out the "cruel irony" in the fact that Fraser's trip was successful in advocating sanctions against South Africa.⁹⁷ It remained a deeply embarrassing episode in his life, and publicly reliving it promised only to invite the possibility of what Little described as one of Fraser's larger fears, that of "feeling inferior".⁹⁸

In the end, how did the memoir recall Fraser's life? Liberalism, it seemed, could explain everything from his maternal lineage ("barely spoken of" before now) to his time at Oxford.⁹⁹ Attempting pre-selection for the western Victorian seat of Wannon in 1953, Fraser sought to join a "progressive" and "forward-looking" parliamentary Liberal Party.¹⁰⁰ As a minister in the

⁹⁴ Fraser with Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, p. 661.

⁹⁵ Joseph Furphy, *Such is Life: Being Certain Extracts from the Diary of Tom Collins* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2013 [1903]), p. 162.

⁹⁶ Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021.

⁹⁷ Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, pp. 661–63.

⁹⁸ Little, *Strong Leadership*, p. 201, p. 234.

⁹⁹ Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, p. 24.

¹⁰⁰ Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, p. 71, p. 61.

1960s and early 1970s, he justified military conscription for the Vietnam War as part of the “obligation” that individuals in a liberal democracy have “to ourselves”, and emphasised the “idealism” of his commitment to civic aid programs.¹⁰¹ His incendiary resignation from Gorton’s cabinet in 1971 was a defence of “good government” and “proper process”.¹⁰² The 1975 dismissal was a story of “conflicting principles”, chiefly the right of a government “to govern” and the duty of an opposition “to protect the country from fundamental damage”.¹⁰³ In government, faced with economic uncertainty and guided by Keynesian rather than Friedmanite principles, Fraser strove to juggle “the need for small government and individual freedom” with “social order and obligation”.¹⁰⁴ His approach to Aboriginal affairs, including the *Northern Territory Land Rights Act* 1976 and the establishment of the Human Rights Commission, spoke to the twin liberal ideals of individual “freedom” and “order”.¹⁰⁵ His defence of asylum seekers, his pro-environment policies, and his “activism” within the Commonwealth of Nations reflected his social liberalism.¹⁰⁶ Fraser claimed some credit as an “activist” for early financial deregulation, and the later chapters detailed his campaigns against apartheid and work with CARE Australia. In the intervening years, his book declared, the Liberal Party had become “conservative and not liberal”.¹⁰⁷

Adler wanted Fraser’s book to make a direct and incisive intervention in political debate, but also had commercial imperatives in mind. Simons recalled that Adler “set a cracking pace through the whole thing”, and that MUP’s goal was to publish the book in time for Christmas sales in 2009.¹⁰⁸ Recognising exhaustion on Simons’ part, Fraser intervened forcefully: “a battle between Louise Adler and Malcolm Fraser is not one you want to be very close to”, Simons laughed in our interview.¹⁰⁹ In the end, Adler agreed to Fraser’s demand for an eight week extension. The trio then debated the book’s provisional title, *Enduring Liberal*. The press had already begun to report on the forthcoming book using that title.¹¹⁰ Simons was keen to “have the word liberal in the title”, but Fraser, who had secretly resigned his life membership

¹⁰¹ Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, p. 139, p. 208.

¹⁰² Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, p. 182.

¹⁰³ Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, p. 264, p. 314.

¹⁰⁴ Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, p., 350, pp. 377—78.

¹⁰⁵ Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, p. 386.

¹⁰⁶ Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, p. 424, p. 449, pp. 556 – 57.

¹⁰⁷ Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, p. 62.

¹⁰⁸ Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021.

¹⁰⁹ Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021.

¹¹⁰ Carlene Ellwood, “Political Insights Abound”, *Sunday Tasmanian*, 10 January 2010, p. 23.

of the Party, wanted none of it.¹¹¹ Fraser won. In a firm signal that Fraser's liberalism was no derivative of the modern party, the book was billed instead as *Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs*.

Lazarus Writing

As a keen participant in the history wars of the 1990s and 2000s, it was unsurprising that Howard would actively craft his own history in retirement.¹¹² "I thought about it fleetingly while I was prime minister", Howard told me, "but it's something that became obvious as an endeavour once I'd stopped being prime minister".¹¹³ Even before it existed, the imagined memoir attracted opponents and supporters. Conservative commentator Gerard Henderson judged that it could be "valuable" and "rewarding", while ABC broadcaster Phillip Adams wryly predicted that he would not "see the publishers fighting" to sign the prime minister.¹¹⁴ Key figures in the publishing industry were unenthusiastic. "I don't think they are blockbuster material", literary agent Margaret Gee said of Howard's *Liberal Party in the Age*. "I mean, what would you call their books? Perhaps Peter Costello's could be *Bridesmaid Revisited*, John Howard's could be *The Feather Duster Diaries*".¹¹⁵ Thus, Howard's prospective memoir had acquired enthusiasts and antagonists even before its inception.

In his study of *Public Emotions*, Little described the emotional essence of Howard's prime ministership as "a long march towards the image of 'strong leadership'".¹¹⁶ At the end of that march in November 2007, Howard constructed his post-prime ministerial office with the objective of cementing that image for posterity. He advertised for a paid researcher to join the team. Troy Daniel, at that time a Masters student in International Politics at Flinders University with no political affiliation, remembers finding the advertisement in the *Australian* newspaper. "I didn't really know what the job exactly was", he laughed, "and I don't think they knew, to be honest, it was something that naturally evolved".¹¹⁷ As the successful applicant, Daniel joined Howard's staff as a research assistant on economic and foreign affairs, focussing

¹¹¹ Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021; Margaret Simons, "The Inside Story on Fraser's Resignation", *Crikey*, 26 May 2010, <https://www.crikey.com.au/2010/05/26/the-inside-story-on-frasers-resignation-abbott-appealed-to-him-to-stay/>, accessed 19 March 2021.

¹¹² See Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000), introduction.

¹¹³ John Howard, interview with the author, Sydney, 3 June 2021.

¹¹⁴ Gerard Henderson, "Too Early for a Christmas Wish-List", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 May 2006, p. 11; Alan Gold, "Yesterday's Men Should Keep Silent", *Australian*, 11 June 2007, p. 8; Phillip Adams, "Unloved PM Well Used to Rejection", *Australian*, 18 December 2007, p. 12.

¹¹⁵ Margaret Gee in Wright, "Publishers' Apathy".

¹¹⁶ Little, *The Public Emotions*, p. 15.

¹¹⁷ Troy Daniel, zoom interview with the author, 10 May 2021.

on the Howard government's legacy: "at that point in his career [...] the times that he would choose to jump in [the debate] was when it was correcting the record".¹¹⁸ Though Howard's memoir was not yet planned, Daniel "knew it was coming".¹¹⁹ When the ABC approached Howard in 2008 to participate in a series of interviews for *The Howard Years* documentary, he agreed on the condition that he would receive the transcripts for the benefit of his memoir.¹²⁰ Daniel saw the four-part series as "the documentary version of the book" featuring multiple voices, but political scientist Paul Strangio derided it as "an exercise in self-justification and record-defending" on the part of Howard's ministers.¹²¹ The legacy-building imperative shaped the Howard post-prime ministerial office and its early activities.

A major political and historiographical challenge emerged in the form of Costello's own memoir.¹²² For Howard, there were matters of personal and political legacy at stake. When Costello's deal with MUP was announced, the *Herald Sun* described it as a "small victory", and the *Age* declared it a "very uncomfortable day for John Howard".¹²³ In July 2008, the press reported that Costello would use his memoir to "distance himself from John Howard's 'conservative' agenda".¹²⁴ In pointed comparisons, journalists predicted that Costello's book would "at least double" the sales figures for Peter van Onselen and Wayne Errington's 2007 biography of Howard, the initial success of which had encouraged MUP to take their "larger gamble" with the former treasurer.¹²⁵ Costello's book was launched in September 2008 (see Chapter 7), and the newspaper excerpts spoke of "an assault on John Howard's legacy", a "leadership handover" never honoured, and a "Cult of Leadership" that had corroded the party's fortunes at the 2007 federal election.¹²⁶ Speaking with me, Howard was reticent about Costello's book, but others remembered just how greatly it had mattered at the time. Daniel recalled being sent to a Dymocks store in Sydney to collect a copy for Howard: "we didn't see

¹¹⁸ Daniel, zoom interview, 10 May 2021.

¹¹⁹ Daniel, zoom interview, 10 May 2021.

¹²⁰ Sarah Ferguson with Patricia Drum, *The Killing Season: Uncut* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2016), pp. 6–7.

¹²¹ Daniel, zoom interview, 10 May 2021; Paul Strangio, "I Did it My Way", *Inside Story*, 12 December 2008, <https://insidestory.org.au/i-did-it-my-way/>, accessed 5 July 2019.

¹²² Stuart Kells, *MUP: A Centenary History* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2023), pp. 343–48.

¹²³ Peter Jean and Claire Sutherland, "Former Treasurer Turns Over a Rich Leaf with Political Memoir", *Herald Sun*, 23 April 2008, p. 7; Shaun Carney, "Memoir Could Have a Happy Ending for the Liberals", *Sunday Age*, 23 April 2008, p. 2.

¹²⁴ Steve Lewis, "Costello's Way – New Agenda Sounds Like a Job Application", *Courier Mail*, 26 July 2008, p. 14.

¹²⁵ Michael Ruffles, "Costello Set to Outsell Howard", *Canberra Times*, 31 August 2008, p. 3; Kells, *MUP*, p. 344. For the book see Wayne Errington and Peter van Onselen, *John Winston Howard* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2007).

¹²⁶ Steve Lewis, "How Howard Failed Nation", *Daily Telegraph*, 10 September 2008, p. 2; "The Cult of Leadership", *Age*, 15 September 2008, p. 9.

him for a while after that, but we were all of course interested in what had been written”.¹²⁷ News stories about Howard’s own literary negotiations appeared on the same day.¹²⁸ For Howard and Costello, competition was not just a market principle, but also about reputations and legacies.

For Howard, a political memoir was a work of History, and his political inspirations Churchill and Menzies offered clear precedents (the former more so than the latter). Indeed, his HarperCollins editor, Anne Reilly, recalled the “very strong sense of this as an historic record, and that he was in the liberal tradition, that it fits into a lineage”.¹²⁹ Conservative commentator and author Les Carlyon advised Howard to “do what Menzies did and write a book of essays” with a light touch. Howard politely ignored the advice, and Carlyon later praised his more effusive approach as “a hell of a nice piece of writing”.¹³⁰ In ignoring Carlyon, Howard also diverged from the approach taken by his friend and fellow world leader, American president George W. Bush, who “took twelve issues and dealt with them” in a thematic memoir called *Decision Points*.¹³¹ Reilly recalled that Howard mentioned he had spoken with Bush about their respective memoirs, so he was keenly aware of alternate literary approaches.¹³² He decided on a comprehensive account in three parts, tracing “his early years in parliament [...] to the end of the Fraser Government”, the “tumultuous years” of Opposition, and “full coverage of the Howard Government”.¹³³ This scope gave him the capacity to contextualise and defend his often controversial policies: “I mean, one of the things that you do hope to do with something like this is to put in context what you’ve done”.¹³⁴ In this manner, Howard followed Churchill’s earlier attempts to be “in command of History”.¹³⁵

Howard led the project in the fashion of a Strong Leader, perhaps more successfully than Fraser. Ignoring one British politician’s advice to engage a literary agent, Howard decided that it was “a complete waste of time and money if I couldn’t negotiate a contract” alone.¹³⁶ HarperCollins won the bidding contest for the book because they “made a good offer”, and

¹²⁷ Daniel, zoom interview, 10 May 2021.

¹²⁸ Dennis Shanahan, “Howard Touts His Memoir to Publishers, But Tight-Lipped on Costello Book”, *Australian*, 16 September 2008, p. 2.

¹²⁹ Anne Reilly, zoom interview with the author, 13 May 2021.

¹³⁰ Les Carlyon quoted in Stephen Romei, “Lazarus Writing”, *Weekend Australian*, 13 August 2011, p. 12.

¹³¹ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

¹³² Reilly, zoom interview, 6 May 2021.

¹³³ Shanahan, “Howard Touts His Memoir”, p. 2.

¹³⁴ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

¹³⁵ David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (London: Penguin, 2005).

¹³⁶ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

Howard liked that they “were backed by [Rupert] Murdoch”.¹³⁷ He was also “attracted by the idea” of his story being “serialised through the News [Limited] papers”.¹³⁸ The quest for control also shaped Howard’s writing process, which quickly evolved from dictation to keyboard touch-typing. This presented other challenges. Daniel recalled: “He’d ring me a few times early in the morning and say, ‘Look, I was up late last night, I can’t find [the file], where is it? But he very quickly became more than self-sufficient in this space”.¹³⁹ Submitting his work to editors, Howard accepted advice on the form but not the content, and ceased collaborating with one editor who “sort of argued the toss over the substance of the things that I was saying”.¹⁴⁰ Finally, Howard was determined that the title of his book would be *Lazarus Rising*, a triumphant reference to his remarks on his removal as leader in 1989 that for him to return to the leadership would be like “Lazarus with a triple bypass”. Reilly recalled that Howard was “absolutely adamant” on this title, and that it reflected the turbulence of his career and also his “thinking about what constitutes an effective leader”.¹⁴¹ Conscious of the risks and rewards associated with telling a life narrative, Howard painstakingly ensured that the memoirs would suit him.

Control having been established, the former prime minister still needed significant labour from elsewhere. Daniel’s research and Reilly’s editing were necessary for actualising Howard’s vision. Editorially, Reilly shared his enthusiasm about writing for an imagined “ordinary reader with an above average interest in politics”.¹⁴² There was no stylistic ambition here, Howard said, only the ambition to write “something that was easy to read.”¹⁴³ Moreover, it had to be empirically sound because “your political critics survive your political career”.¹⁴⁴ Former advisers such as Grahame Morris and Arthur Sinodinos, and key public servants such as Michael L’Estrange, corroborated his recollections.¹⁴⁵ HarperCollins also engaged historian Ian Hancock to help. “Basically”, Hancock explained to me, “I was just given the book, and told, ‘Check it for facts’.”¹⁴⁶ He claimed that there were multiple and “surprising” errors, while Howard assured me that Hancock “didn’t have a lot to do”.¹⁴⁷ (It is probable that Hancock’s

¹³⁷ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

¹³⁸ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

¹³⁹ Daniel, zoom interview, 10 May 2021.

¹⁴⁰ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

¹⁴¹ Reilly, zoom interview, 6 May 2021.

¹⁴² Reilly, zoom interview, 6 May 2021.

¹⁴³ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

¹⁴⁴ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

¹⁴⁵ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

¹⁴⁶ Hancock, interview, 27 May 2021.

¹⁴⁷ Hancock, interview, 27 May 2021; Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

testimony was nearer the mark.) There would be in Howard's book, as in Fraser's, a reference list to pre-emptively assuage concerns about the veracity of some of its claims. Howard would share several personal and emotional stories in the book, but as he saw it, "you know what you want to say and what you don't want to say".¹⁴⁸ Certainly, there would be less pressure on him to make personal disclosures than on Julia Gillard as she wrote her memoir four years later. "Maybe gender issues were feeding into that", Reilly reflected, having worked on both projects.¹⁴⁹ Many people made important evidentiary and editorial contributions to the manuscript, but its intellectual and emotional contours were firmly under his control.

Howard had firm claims to the status of Strong Leader, but not without complications. There were four election victories. There had been his steadfast commitment to the War on Terror in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attack in the United States. But Howard did not exude masculine political authority. He was an uninspiring orator, and his initial refusal to employ a speechwriter reflected a "pride in his greatest weakness" in the minds of some commentators.¹⁵⁰ He was a formidable debater but lacked the physical stature so advantageous to Menzies and Fraser. "[H]e always reminded me of a little boy that was terribly excited", Hancock told me. "If he was kicking his legs under the table, I wouldn't be at all surprised, because [...] this is the little boy who grew up and did very well and is very pleased. There's nothing wrong with that quality".¹⁵¹ Hancock's remarks reflect the entrenched semiotic significance attached to men's bodies as sites of agency and authority in political and popular culture, though as Lech Blaine has shown, that same culture can sometimes occasion respect for "a little bloke like [Howard] for having a go".¹⁵² For those who cared to remember, he had seemed an unimpressive leader in the late 1980s prior to his removal in 1989, an event that was clearly traumatic at the time but which could be treated in a more sanguine manner after eleven years as prime minister. Still, in the aftermath of the 2007 election, Howard's legacy as a leader seemed dominated by his refusal to resign after a decade in the Lodge, the loss of his own seat, and a party facing its "darkest days" across the country.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

¹⁴⁹ Reilly, zoom interview, 6 May 2021.

¹⁵⁰ Michael Duffy, "Stumped By a Feeble Way with Words", *Weekend Australian*, 6 December 1997, p. 30. Duffy was not alone in that conclusion. See Gerard Henderson, "PM, Power and Print", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 December 1997, p. 19.

¹⁵¹ Hancock, interview, 27 May 2021.

¹⁵² Lech Blaine, "Top Blokes: The Larrikin Myth, Class and Power", *Quarterly Essay*, no. 83 (Carlton: Black Inc., 2021), p. 10. For more on this, see R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 45–66.

¹⁵³ Peter van Onselen and Philip Senior, *Howard's End: The Unravelling of a Government* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2008), p. 190.

Against that backdrop, Howard's memoir would locate his government's political and moral authority within his own experiences and personal capacities. He strove to perform as both the embodiment of mainstream liberal values and as a decisive policy actor. "I think to be an effective leader, first and foremost, you've got to have beliefs. [...] That's number one. The next most important thing is that you have to have a very good relationship with the people you immediately lead".¹⁵⁴ Reflecting on his prime ministerial predecessors, Howard praised Gorton's "Australian nationalism", but criticised his "ill-disciplined" exercise of power within the party and the government.¹⁵⁵ In Howard's telling, Fraser was a much better leader, but far from perfect. A "highly intelligent" man with "prodigious energy", Fraser nonetheless "held too many cabinet meetings" which often "went on for too long".¹⁵⁶ More grievously in Howard's view, Fraser "would not chance his arm" on the big policy calls that shifting economic fortunes demanded.¹⁵⁷ Howard's prime ministerial successor Kevin Rudd also figured as a benchmark: "He was popular, but he just couldn't run the show".¹⁵⁸ Daniel recalled that "Rudd was front and centre in our office in those days".¹⁵⁹ The inference here was that Howard represented good government process and decisive personal leadership in a fashion that had eluded both Gorton and Rudd. In short, Howard set out to use his memoir to perform a version of Liberal leadership that was authoritative, agent-centric, and capable of simplifying the complexities of liberal politics within his own person.

Liberal values, or at least Howard's interpretation of them, were necessarily central to this literary performance. Specifically, he was at pains to articulate what he thought were the party's main priorities and philosophical positions:

I was intending to defend and explain the views I had about the "broad church" and the fact that I was what I call an "economic liberal" and a "social conservative", which to me was a very happy accommodation. Some people didn't like that; others did. That was my position, and I wasn't going to retreat from it.¹⁶⁰

That statement positioned Howard as the direct opposite of Fraser in philosophical terms, though both shared a predisposition for simple answers, ordered binaries and a refusal to countenance retreat. And like Fraser, Howard recognised that to shirk ideological discourse as Menzies had done in his earlier memoirs was untenable:

¹⁵⁴ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

¹⁵⁵ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

¹⁵⁶ Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 132.

¹⁵⁷ Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 140.

¹⁵⁸ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

¹⁵⁹ Daniel, zoom interview, 10 May 2021.

¹⁶⁰ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

[...] the philosophical tensions inside the Liberal Party became more apparent through the 1970s because of the changed world economic circumstances and the challenge to the prevailing Keynesian orthodoxy, the rise of monetarism and what that represented, and how that imposed or produced challenges to the way the Liberal Party had dealt with a lot of those issues in the past.¹⁶¹

In Howard's view, the collapse of the Keynesian ascendancy required a new kind of debate within and between Australian political parties.¹⁶² Although overlooking the extent to which divergent ideologies had always figured in the Liberal Party, Howard's point is a compelling one. In a post-Keynesian environment, a moderate style of liberalism with communism as its foremost antagonist was no longer enough to sustain party cohesion. It was therefore natural for figures such as Howard to project more specific ideological visions in their memoirs.

I asked those involved with the book if they perceived it as an attempt to contribute to the ongoing intellectual debates within the Liberal Party. In Daniel's view, it hardly seemed the prime concern because "the memory of him [...] was pretty fresh".¹⁶³ Reilly, on the other hand, saw liberalism as a central component of the book.¹⁶⁴ For his part, Hancock saw the book as an expression of Howard's belief in "a party [...] that was open to drawing people in."¹⁶⁵ In the end, I asked Howard directly if he had hoped to influence the party's philosophical debates with this book. "I didn't see that as one of the major objectives of the book", he replied, "but I suppose I was conscious it might have some impact".¹⁶⁶ He said that he "wasn't trying to permanently influence the direction" of the Party, but this claim leaves open the possibility that he wanted it to exercise *some* degree of influence over its language and its values in the foreseeable future.¹⁶⁷ His is perhaps a more coy articulation of the point Gorman and Melleuish have made, namely that Howard hoped to reach "one very specific audience [...] the Liberal Party itself".¹⁶⁸

In the end, *Lazarus Rising* conveyed a life narrative that embodied Howard's own conception of liberalism. His parents were "conservative, patriotic Australians", small business-owners numbering among Menzies' "forgotten people".¹⁶⁹ Cricket, biography and history were formative influences on his worldview. The young solicitor-turned-MP's social

¹⁶¹ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

¹⁶² Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

¹⁶³ Daniel, zoom interview, 10 May 2021.

¹⁶⁴ Reilly, zoom interview, 13 May 2021.

¹⁶⁵ Hancock, interview, 27 May 2021.

¹⁶⁶ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

¹⁶⁷ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

¹⁶⁸ Gorman and Melleuish, "Menzies and Howard on Themselves", p. 17.

¹⁶⁹ Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, pp. 12—13. All references in this paragraph and the next are to the 2013 updated issue of the book.

conservatism pitted him against the Whitlam government's reforms, while his economic liberalism hardened against the "prevailing orthodoxy" on protection, wage arbitration and financial controls during the Fraser years.¹⁷⁰ As Liberal leader in the 1980s, Howard confessed to appearing as a "dull, dogged conservative" against Andrew Peacock the "progressive" and Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen the "rural populist".¹⁷¹ His own government constituted a happy marriage of economic liberalism and social conservatism within the "broad church" of the Liberal Party. "Burkean conservatism" shaped his approach to the republic referendum in 1999.¹⁷² He appealed to "international law" to explain his government's actions during the Tampa affair (the event that triggered a divisive debate about asylum seekers in 2001), but in the case of the Iraq War "shared history and values" with the United States justified deploying Australian soldiers into war.¹⁷³ Howard's social policies placed a premium on the "Liberal principle of choice", but coercive labour market schemes such as Work for the Dole concerned "fairness" for taxpayers rather than choice for the unemployed.¹⁷⁴ The controversial *WorkChoices* industrial relations legislation was designed to "wind back monopoly union power" and drive a "further reduction in unemployment".¹⁷⁵ From start to finish, individual effort and free choice were the liberal tenets arrayed against state control and collective power.

A broad and often fluid philosophy went hand-in-hand with political authority in Howard's performance of Strong Leadership in *Lazarus Rising*. Being prime minister, he wrote, meant that he had "full control of the affairs of Australia's government", though he exercised it "in a cooperative fashion".¹⁷⁶ He claimed personal responsibility for the National Firearms Agreement that followed the Port Arthur massacre in 1996, just as he claimed a distinct personal influence over the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (hereafter GST) in 2000. His government's actions during the Tampa affair were about ensuring the public that Australia was no "soft touch" for people smugglers, the inference being that he, Howard, was no soft touch either.¹⁷⁷ With its majority in the Senate from July 2005, the government refused to be "policy cowards" and doubled down on industrial relations reform in the guise of *WorkChoices*, despite muted business advocacy and "a most effective" campaign from the

¹⁷⁰ Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 108.

¹⁷¹ Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 165, p. 184.

¹⁷² Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 234.

¹⁷³ Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 539.

¹⁷⁴ Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 570, p. 572.

¹⁷⁵ Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 675.

¹⁷⁶ Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 314.

¹⁷⁷ Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 463.

union movement.¹⁷⁸ The book was also replete with highly charged emotional reflections about September 11 and the 2002 Bali Bombings, both of them lending moral authority to Howard's account of his legacy. Overwhelmingly, *Lazarus Rising* was a literary performance of Strong Leadership and in all of its linguistic, emotional and moralising aspects.

It is important to note that, despite their shared admiration for the "independent" and "tough" women in their governments, including Dame Margaret Guilfoyle, Amanda Vanstone and Jocelyn Newman, both Fraser and Howard performed a distinctly masculine style of authority in their stories. In line with older linguistic conventions of professional politics, both consistently referred to nation-states as "her" rather than using non-gendered pronouns such as "it" or "they", and tended to refer to the generic or archetypal politician as "he". Though likely unconscious, this linguistic feminising of the nation-state reminds us that "the concept of the nation-state is itself gendered", predicated on assumptions about the statesman as masculine actor and the nation as passive subject.¹⁷⁹ It is part of a historical semiotic system in which femininity and vulnerability characterises nationhood; as Kate Darian-Smith suggested, "the allegorical female form has, for centuries, served the political interests of patriarchal authority".¹⁸⁰ That these texts were published at a time when the incumbent governor-general, prime minister, and premiers of Queensland and NSW were all women makes this gendered linguistic paradigm all the more stark.

Enter, Stage Right

The performative power of these memoirs was not confined to the physical object of the book. As well as offering carefully crafted narratives, these memoirs functioned as platforms on which other kinds of performance, physical, oratorical and mediated, could be staged. Book launches, writers' festivals and television broadcasts gave Fraser and Howard ample opportunity to promote their respective liberal ideals, and to re-enact the qualities that had rendered them Strong Leaders. Howard's account drew criticisms in some quarters, but earned the favour of the Liberal Party establishment and the conservative press. Fraser largely failed to win hearts and minds within the party, but he endeared himself to Australia's merchants of

¹⁷⁸ Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 668, p. 683.

¹⁷⁹ Carol Delaney, "Father State, Motherland, and the Birth of Modern Turkey", in Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney, *Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 178. In Delaney's account, Mustafa Kemal ("Ataturk") is a prime example of the statesman as paternal, father figure.

¹⁸⁰ Kate Darian-Smith, "Images of Empire: Gender and Nationhood in Australia at the Time of Federation", in Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw and Stuart Macintyre (eds.), *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2007), p. 159.

culture, a core component of the moral middle class that he had profoundly alienated in the 1970s.¹⁸¹

The public presentation of Fraser's story hinged on the question of what it meant to be Liberal. Fraser knew that his story would "be published in an atmosphere in which the Liberal Party is very likely going through turmoil".¹⁸² He also anticipated that leading conservatives in party and the media would buy into the debate with force. The utility of the memoir was that it would allow Fraser to project his philosophy outside the confines of the party structure. "Big Mal", the *Australian* caustically reported, "won't be calling on any of the Liberal Party's present hierarchy to assist with launching duties".¹⁸³ MUP's pre-release publicity described Fraser as "an enduring liberal, constantly reinterpreting core values to meet the needs of changing times".¹⁸⁴ Newspaper extracts emphasised some of the personal conflicts of Fraser's political career with headlines such as "FRASER V HOWARD: THE INSIDE STRUGGLE" and "Vice-Regal Connection That Brought Down a Government", but even these extracts, in the *Australian* no less, included the "enduring liberal" theme.¹⁸⁵ Not all of the pre-release activity was to Fraser's liking, with one edited extract in the *Sunday Telegraph* gleefully proclaiming, "What Happened in Memphis, Stays in Memphis", though even here Simons' account of Fraser's actions against apartheid framed the story in a compelling way.¹⁸⁶ Fundamentally, the extracts encouraged a discourse about Fraser as man, and Fraser as a liberal old man.

Fraser's book launch on 4 March 2010 was a celebration of progressive liberalism, and an even clearer picture of Little's notion of Strong Leadership in action. MUP hosted the event at the University of Melbourne Law School, a spatial symbol of the rule of law with historic links to Menzies, a Melbourne graduate.¹⁸⁷ Simons fondly recalled that the moderate "old dudes" of the Fraser government were there (but not the conservatives), along with Fraser's activist daughter Phoebe, his peers in the field of human rights, and "members of the

¹⁸¹ Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, pp. 152—57.

¹⁸² Malcolm Fraser, Recording of Research Interview, 11 April 2008, UMA, Margaret Simons Research Papers and Recordings for Malcolm Fraser Memoir, 2019.0109, File 00123.

¹⁸³ James Jeffries, "Strewth", *Australian*, 12 May 2009, p. 11.

¹⁸⁴ "Media Release: MUP", *MediaNew Press Release Wire*, 4 March 2010.

¹⁸⁵ Malcolm Fraser, "Fraser v Howard: The Inside Struggle", *Weekend Australian*, 20 February 2010, p. 1; Malcolm Fraser, "Vice-Regal Connection That Brought Down a Government", *Weekend Australian*, 20 February 2010, p. 2.

¹⁸⁶ Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simons, "What Happened in Memphis, Stays in Memphis", *Sunday Telegraph*, 21 February 2010, p. 112.

¹⁸⁷ See Allan Martin, *Robert Menzies: A Life*, vol. 1 (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1996 [1993]), pp. 19—31.

Vietnamese community who were always very important to him”.¹⁸⁸ Fraser chose Michael Kirby, a former High Court judge renowned for his “conviction, compassion” and “firm moral stand”, to launch the volume.¹⁸⁹ Kirby arguably embodied the universalist and progressive human rights story that Fraser hoped his book would tell. Unlike other Liberals, Kirby said, Fraser “maintained what he sees as the ‘liberal tradition’”, though his values were not “completely immovable”.¹⁹⁰ Fraser was an “enigma”, averse to the “bonhomie and glad-handling” norms of politics: “How did such a reserved man”, Kirby asked, “reach the top elected office in Australia?”¹⁹¹ The answer was to be found in Fraser’s character, his “steady, highly focused, intensively hard-working” nature, stemming from “deep pools” and “undisclosed waters of strong emotion and firm commitments”.¹⁹² With humility, Fraser told the assembled audience that “there were more important things in the book” than himself.¹⁹³ That said, Kirby’s tribute tells us something about the role of Strong Leadership in reconciling or disguising the tensions of liberalism, even within the cultural terrain of the moral middle class. If the gap between Fraser’s former conservative image and contemporary progressive performance seemed stark, the man’s strong character and unyielding values tied the distinct threads together.

The conservative press repudiated Fraser’s literary performance as a Strong Leader and as enduring liberal. The assault began with figures such as Henderson and *Australian* columnist Greg Sheridan publicising minor editorial errors. Henderson ridiculed the statement that Fraser won four elections (he won three) and the notion that Fraser had retained Whitlam’s Medibank universal health insurance scheme.¹⁹⁴ Recognising the former as a “serious” editing error, Simons noted that it “didn’t go to the integrity of the book”.¹⁹⁵ Sheridan accused Fraser of weakening Australia’s opposition to Indonesian aggression in East Timor in 1975, “exactly the opposite of what Fraser claims in his book”.¹⁹⁶ Fraser and Simons publicly replied to these attacks, deriding Sheridan in particular for his “emotional allegations” and his incapacity to

¹⁸⁸ Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021.

¹⁸⁹ Tim Elliot, “Judging Michael Kirby”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 June 2010.

¹⁹⁰ Michael Kirby, Speech at the Launch of Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simons, *Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs*, University of Melbourne Law School, 4 March 2010, https://www.michaelkirby.com.au/images/stories/speeches/2000s/2010_Speeches/2439.LaunchOfMalcolmFraserPoliticalMemoirs4March2010.pdf, accessed and downloaded 30 July 2019.

¹⁹¹ Kirby, Speech at the Launch, 4 March 2010.

¹⁹² Kirby, Speech at the Launch, 4 March 2010.

¹⁹³ Malcolm Fraser quoted in Edwina Scott, “Fraser Launched His Political Memoirs”, Australian Associated Press, 4 March 2010.

¹⁹⁴ Gerard Henderson, “Angry Old Leaders – Libs Lots, Labor 1”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 June 2010, p. 11.

¹⁹⁵ Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021.

¹⁹⁶ Greg Sheridan, “Fraser’s Unreliable Memoirs Rewrite History Books”, *Australian*, 26 May 2011, p. 12.

“fairly assess our book”.¹⁹⁷ The argument grew increasingly emotional when, at the end of their book tour, Fraser revealed that he had renounced his life membership of the Liberal Party. Henderson accused Fraser of masquerading as both traditional “liberal” and “hero of the left”.¹⁹⁸ Sheridan dubbed him a “Liberal rat”.¹⁹⁹ Sydney’s *Daily Telegraph* dismissed “Malcolm’s memoir” as “All Mouth – But No Trousers”.²⁰⁰ The *Australian*, meanwhile, dismissed the account as a “dishonest and exaggerated contrast between the alleged goodness of Australians in the Fraser years and our alleged wickedness today”.²⁰¹ Indeed, Sheridan used this piece to advocate for the abolition of permanent resettlement of “boat people” in Australia.²⁰² Henderson accused Fraser of hypocrisy, arguing that his “refusal even to admit that he changes his positions” had brought about the conservative backlash.²⁰³

¹⁹⁷ Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simons, Letters to the Editor, *Australian*, 27 May 2011, p. 15.

¹⁹⁸ Henderson, “Angry Old Leaders”, p. 11.

¹⁹⁹ Sheridan, “Fraser’s Unreliable Memoirs”, p. 12.

²⁰⁰ Paul Toohey, “Malcolm’s Memoir is All Mouth – But No Trousers”, *Daily Telegraph*, 19 March 2010, p. 83.

²⁰¹ Greg Sheridan, “To Deter the Boats, Australia Must Rule Out Permanent Resettlement”, *Australian*, 5 January 2012, p. 12.

²⁰² Sheridan, “Rule Out Permanent Resettlement”, p. 12.

²⁰³ Gerard Henderson, “Fraser’s Unreliable Memoir Makes the Waters of His Contested Legacy Even Muddier”, *Weekend Australian*, 28 March 2015, p. 22; Gerard Henderson, “Concession That Led to an Immigration Debacle”, *Weekend Australian*, 23 May 2015, p. 16.



Figure 15: Malcolm Fraser signs a copy of *Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs* for Gough Whitlam in Sydney, 11 March 2010. AAP Photos, Bruce Postle.

These exchanges are significant because they reveal the unwillingness of conservative opinion makers to accept Fraser in the guise of Strong Leader. To describe him as a “rat”, and the book as “all mouth but no trousers”, was to attribute to Fraser a failure of dignity, honour and loyalty. In conservatives’ view, Fraser’s performance of moderate liberalism was too one-sided and therefore not to be trusted. Images of Fraser cheerfully signing a copy of his book for Whitlam likely intensified those attitudes (Figure 12). Fraser and Simons appealed to empirical integrity in defence of the project, but to little avail.²⁰⁴ In a letter to the editor, one Victorian pundit likened Fraser’s defence of the book’s accuracy to that of British comedy’s “Basil Fawlty defending the health inspector’s devastating roll call of unacceptable hotel hygiene: ‘Yes, but apart from that everything is all right, isn’t it?’”²⁰⁵ By way of contrast, a Canberra resident happily told the *Weekend Australian* that Sheridan’s attack was “riddled with historical errors of its own”.²⁰⁶ Ultimately, by 2012 Fraser’s book, and by extension his character, had lost all currency in the pages of the conservative press.

²⁰⁴ Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simons, Letters to the Editor, *Australian*, 27 May 2011, p. 15.

²⁰⁵ John Dorman, Letters to the Editor, *Weekend Australian*, 28 May 2011, p. 15.

²⁰⁶ Simon Thompson, Letter to the Editor, *Weekend Australian*, 28 May 2011, p. 15.

At the same time, Fraser's self-portrait of progressive liberalism won much praise among urban audiences. In a pre-release interview with journalist Kerry O'Brien for 7:30, Fraser criticised the party's "march to the right" under Howard: "a number of the race-related issues have been handled in ways which I really abhor".²⁰⁷ Pointedly, Fraser cited Menzies' description of the party in *Afternoon Light* as "progressive", not "reactionary".²⁰⁸ On their book tour, Fraser and Simons performed a "double-act" including a "line of jokes" that both enjoyed.²⁰⁹ Popular journalist George Megalogenis of *The Australian* newspaper (though certainly not of its conservative culture) joined them for an appearance at the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne.²¹⁰ Fraser also utilised speaking opportunities arising in the political cycle. Following the 2010 federal election, Fraser remarked on Q&A that Malcolm Turnbull was "a traditional Liberal", and had been removed from the leadership in December 2009 because conservatives would not allow such men to "rule and shape the future of the Liberal Party".²¹¹ Responding to Fraser's appearances, *YouTube* viewers described him as the "only Liberal Party PM I have any respect for", a "[heavyweight]", a leader who "holds himself with dignity", though there were of course other commenters with ungenerous sentiments.²¹² "I'm going to have to get a book on the Fraser era" one person wrote, "because I suspect the Liberal Party was a much better beast than it is now".²¹³

Malcolm Fraser sold nearly 9,000 copies (an impressive feat given how much time had passed since his premiership), and it won further credibility in the form of the 2011 NSW Premier's Literary Prize for non-fiction as well as Book of the Year, earning a total of \$50,000 in prize money.²¹⁴ The judges praised the memoir's "rich interplay of perspectives", deft negotiation of "the personal and the public", and explication of "an almost forgotten strand of liberalism in Australian political culture".²¹⁵ "I thought the judges had absolutely got what we

²⁰⁷ Malcolm Fraser, Transcript of interview with Kerry O'Brien, *7:30 Report*, Sydney, ABC, 23 February 2010, archived by ProQuest (Document ID 190359586), accessed 25 February 2021.

²⁰⁸ Fraser, Interview with Kerry O'Brien.

²⁰⁹ Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021.

²¹⁰ WheelerCentre, "Malcolm Fraser Part One", *YouTube*, [published online 25 January 2015], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17EFa_7pqiM&t=225s, accessed 25 July 2021.

²¹¹ Malcolm Fraser, Transcript of Q&A, 30 August 2010, archived by National Library of Australia (6 October 2010), <https://bit.ly/3xJRZ8Q>, accessed 27 July 2021.

²¹² Comments section, righttoremain, "Tony Abbott Character Slam by Malcolm Fraser", *YouTube*, 1 September 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1L66KhP0jYg>, accessed 27 July 2021.

²¹³ Comments section, righttoremain, "Tony Abbott Character Slam by Malcolm Fraser".

²¹⁴ Stephen Romei, "Life and Times of Former Prime Minister Sweeps Premier's Awards", *Australian*, 17 May 2011, p. 3. Sales figure cited in Troy Bramston, "Kevin Rudd Short on Tenure, Long on Words", *Weekend Australian*, 22 July 2017.

²¹⁵ "2011 NSW Premier's Literary Awards – Judges' Comments", *Create NSW website*, <https://www.create.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Judges-comments-for-web-FINAL.pdf>, accessed 23 March 2023.

were trying to do, which was to talk about how to govern”, Simons said of the awards ceremony. “I don’t remember anything else about the rest of the evening because Malcolm and I went and had a few drinks!”²¹⁶ Literary prizes are powerful acts of consecration in contemporary book culture, helping to strengthen the symbolic capital of the winners (the majority of them men).²¹⁷ The NSW Premier’s Prize augmented *Malcolm Fraser’s* impact, with Fraser and Simons appearing on ABC news that night and the following day to criticise both major parties’ hardline approaches to asylum seekers.²¹⁸ Henderson was duly enraged by the prize and its moral undertones.²¹⁹ Conservative antipathy notwithstanding, Fraser’s memoir attracted substantive public attention, and in doing so it contributed to ongoing debates about liberal values in modern Australia. Working with the literary establishment of the capital cities and the ABC, Fraser and Simons secured an audience who saw their story as one of cultural and progressive liberalism in a conservative age.

When it came to his own book tour, Howard’s reputation as a conservative Strong Leader preceded him in complex ways. Fraser and Costello had both called Howard’s legacy into question, including his credentials as a virtuous leader. Howard therefore approached the book tour as if it were a federal election. “I saw it as very much a political campaign”, he explained. “You had events at publishers, and you’d make a speech, talk about it, you’d be happy to sign any number of copies, and that’s how you sell books”.²²⁰ News Limited published edited extracts of the book, including one from his chapter on Iraq that contrasted Labor’s “thin and legalistic veneer” with Howard’s own willingness to “put everything on the line” for his democratic, pro-American beliefs.²²¹ In the language of the Strong Leader, the extract declared that there was “no alternative” to the Iraq War, a claim that seems untenable in the Australian context given the United Nations Security Council’s failure to pass the appropriate resolutions.²²² Other extracts focussed on the Howard–Costello relationship and his decision not to retire. “[I]f Peter Costello had been a better listener”, one extract declared, “he would

²¹⁶ Simons, zoom interview, 24 March 2021.

²¹⁷ Alexandra Dane, *Gender and Prestige in Literature: Contemporary Australian Book Culture* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 123–76.

²¹⁸ Malcolm Fraser quoted in ABC News, “Malcolm Fraser Joins Australia’s Literati”, *YouTube*, 17 May 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXyPK--NVNk>, accessed 26 July 2021. See also ABC News, “Fraser Takes Bipartisan Aim at Asylum Policies”, *YouTube*, 17 May 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ippo8PktMkc>, accessed 27 July 2021.

²¹⁹ Gerard Henderson, “Literary Festivals and Prizes Champion Politics Over Quality”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 August 2011, p. 11.

²²⁰ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

²²¹ John Howard, “Why We Took on Saddam’s Iraq”, *Weekend Australian*, 25 October 2010, p. 13.

²²² Howard, “Why We Took on Saddam’s Iraq”, p. 13.

have succeeded me”.²²³ The Fairfax newspapers published a strident rebuttal by Costello himself, who claimed that there was “not a skerrick of objective evidence” underwriting Howard’s account of the succession drama.²²⁴ Taking sides in this fashion, Fairfax and News Limited appeared to be helping Howard and Costello debate the virtue of Strong Leadership itself.

Howard’s book launch at the Intercontinental (described by journalist Mike Carlton as a “posh Sydney hotel”) on 26 October embodied his “broad church” conception of the Liberal Party.²²⁵ It was a well-attended launch.²²⁶ Howard invited conservative broadcaster Alan Jones to launch the book. “Alan was a very high-profile identity, particularly in Sydney” Howard explained, “He and I were good friends”.²²⁷ Straining to listen at the back of the room, Hancock felt that Jones “was laying it on with a trowel” in an obsequious speech, and recalled that he “left while they were still talking”.²²⁸ Strikingly, Ten News viewers saw footage that evening of former leader and rival Andrew Peacock warmly embracing the memoirist: “I’m just so pleased to be here, mate, and I look forward to [reading the book]”.²²⁹ Peacock was joined by former leader Alexander Downer, former deputy leader Peter Reith and longstanding frontbench senator Richard Alston among many others.²³⁰ Indeed, despite the presence of an avowedly conservative broadcaster on the stage, the launch was framed as a show of party unity, Costello excepted. “[T]here was a Liberal Party spirit”, Howard recalled fondly.²³¹ Howard made conciliatory remarks about Costello, and said that his account of their conflict was a core part of his “obligations as a writer of those times”.²³² The footage of Howard’s launch (replete with throngs of Liberal men of all factions in their black suits and blue ties and a beaming Janette Howard) invited the illusion of the Liberal Party as an ideological “broad church” as Howard had always claimed, even if its pews were populated mostly by men.

A plethora of other public performances accompanied *Lazarus Rising*. As we have seen, Howard appeared on Q&A, but was refused an interview on 7:30 because O’Brien allegedly

²²³ John Howard, “It Takes a Leader”, *Weekend Australian*, 23 October 2010, p. 1.

²²⁴ Peter Costello, “Howard: The Great Architect of Failure”, *Age*, 27 October 2010, p. 15.

²²⁵ Mike Carlton, “Rarely in the Field of Meddling Has So Much Rubbish Been Said”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 October 2010, p. 18.

²²⁶ Reilly, zoom interview, 6 May 2021.

²²⁷ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

²²⁸ Hancock, interview, 27 May 2021.

²²⁹ Andrew Peacock quoted in ABC News, “War Protester Aims Shoes at Howard”, *YouTube*, 26 October 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pA_Lt8OonsA, accessed 17 April 2021.

²³⁰ Myles Peterson, “Lazarus Rising, But Publisher Can’t Keep Up”, *Canberra Times*, 27 October 2010, p. 2.

²³¹ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

²³² John Howard quoted in sydlord, “Lazarus Rising \ Howard Deserved ‘A Lot Worse’ Says Shoe Thrower”, *YouTube*, 26 October 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdLGXPx1qww>, accessed 17 April 2021.

refused to play “second fiddle” to Jones.²³³ Gray’s controversial shoe-throwing performance, and Howard’s relaxed response, earned an extensive run in the media the following day. “I didn’t think that was a harm or difficulty at all”, Howard told me.²³⁴ (He also expressed sadness when Gray died shortly afterwards of a rapid cancer.) Most spectacularly, Q&A handpicked David Hicks, a former Al Qaeda affiliate and detainee at the United States military detention camp at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, to ask Howard a question via videoconference. Hicks had famously been imprisoned for several years without trial, one of two “hapless captives” Australia seemed to have abandoned in Guantanamo Bay military prison.²³⁵ “Do you believe”, Hicks asked Howard, “that I was treated humanely, and that the military commission was a fair system?”²³⁶ Provoked, Howard straightened up in his seat and squared his shoulders. “[I]t ought to make all of us very proud that we live in a country that allows [this] sort of exchange”, he declared.²³⁷ He defended his government’s handling of Iraq and the Australian detainees at Guantanamo Bay. In rhetoric and physical comportment, it was a quintessential performance of Strong Leadership, with all the “will and authority” and “order and restraint” that such a performance requires.²³⁸

In these retrospective debates about Iraq and Hicks, Howard performed as Strong Leader by internalising the loose threads of liberal thinking within his own display of authority. Charged by Hicks with perverting the law and the right to trial, Howard carefully reaffirmed his commitment to the rule of law: “we wanted the trial of Hicks to be accelerated, we thought he’d been held in detention for too long without trial”. But his real point was a moral one: “we should not create a situation where [Hicks] became a hero. He was not a hero”.²³⁹ The rhetoric of Strong Leadership allowed Howard to reduce the issue at hand to stark moral certainties, avoiding more complex questions about adherence to the law in American military detention centres and the whole nature of Australia’s relationship with the United States. The morning after his book launch, Howard spoke with Fran Kelly on ABC Radio National where he was repeatedly asked if he “regretted” any of his government’s controversial policies, chiefly the war in Iraq, *WorkChoices*, or the refusal to apologise to the stolen generations. Howard

²³³ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

²³⁴ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

²³⁵ Tony Kevin, “Foreign Policy”, in Robert Manne (ed.), *The Howard Years* (Melbourne: Black Inc. Agenda, 2004), p. 308.

²³⁶ David Hicks in abcqanda, “David Hicks asks John Howard a Question on Q&A”, *YouTube*, 26 October 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQO3pW0DLmI>, accessed 11 May 2021.

²³⁷ John Howard in abcqanda, “David Hicks asks John Howard a Question on Q&A”.

²³⁸ Little, *Strong Leadership*, pp. 8—9.

²³⁹ John Howard quoted in abcqanda, “David Hicks asks John Howard a Question on Q&A”.

dismissed this “semantic debate” and said that he had did not have “an enormous amount of time” for former leaders who cultivated the forgiveness and “applause of their erstwhile critics”, perhaps an implicit criticism of Fraser.²⁴⁰ Conservative commentators praised Howard’s willingness to “state his case”, particularly when compared with Hicks, who had launched a memoir of his own days earlier, but with few public speaking engagements: “This means that he can state his case without being questioned about his life or his story”, Henderson complained.²⁴¹ In this vein of thought, Howard won applause for facing criticism and doggedly pursuing his picture of liberalism in the fashion of the Strong Leader.

But literary performances of Strong Leadership invited critics to judge the author’s moral and masculine qualities. Those who live-tweeted their responses to Q&A said things such as “John Howard not thrown by David Hicks’ curveball but fire clearly in his eyes now”, and “It’s dueling [sic] memoirs!”.²⁴² There was latent admiration here for his manliness, or his capacity for political combat. But some responders saw hypocrisy where Howard promised truth, or illiberalism where he professed liberal values. Many letters to newspaper editors were written on the subject of Hicks’ detention, with *Sydney Morning Herald* readers accusing Howard of perverting “the separation of powers” and eschewing his “responsibility” to defend Hicks’ rights as an Australian citizen.²⁴³ Importantly, some responses implicitly questioned Howard’s claims to Strong Leadership, particularly given his failure to retire in 2006 or 2007. “It’s a poor leader who doesn’t know when to step down”, one pundit wrote to the *Australian*.²⁴⁴ Others described him as “pig-headed”, driven by “arrogance and ego”.²⁴⁵ These criticisms paled in comparison with public responses to Bush’s and Blair’s memoirs in the United States and United Kingdom respectively, published at the same time as *Lazarus Rising*. Five thousand British activists responded to Blair’s *A Journey* by organising subversive action to relocate copies of the memoir from the Biography shelves to the True Crime section of bookstores.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁰ John Howard quoted in ABC News, “(Pt 1) John Howard on his 30+ years in politics”, *YouTube*, 27 October 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrCvCl4Bv5Y>, accessed 20 July 2021.

²⁴¹ Gerard Henderson, “Hicks Has Little to Say About His Memoir”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 October 2010, p. 13.

²⁴² abcqanda, “David Hicks asks John Howard a Question on Q&A”.

²⁴³ Letters to the Editor, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 October 2010, p. 12.

²⁴⁴ John Wilson, Letter to the Editor, *Australian*, 25 October 2010, p. 15.

²⁴⁵ Cynthia Harris, Letter to the Editor, *Australian*, 25 October 2010, p. 15; Gary King, Letter to the Editor, *Herald Sun*, 26 October 2010, p. 22.

²⁴⁶ Alexandra Topping, “Looking for Tony Blair’s Memoir? Try the Crime Section”, *Guardian*, 6 September 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2010/sep/05/tony-blair-memoirs-facebook-group>, accessed 9 January 2023.

American activists promptly followed suit with Bush's *Decision Points*.²⁴⁷ No such concerted campaign appears to have befallen Howard, but his stories about Iraq and his self-justification for remaining in power invited criticism of similar moral potency.

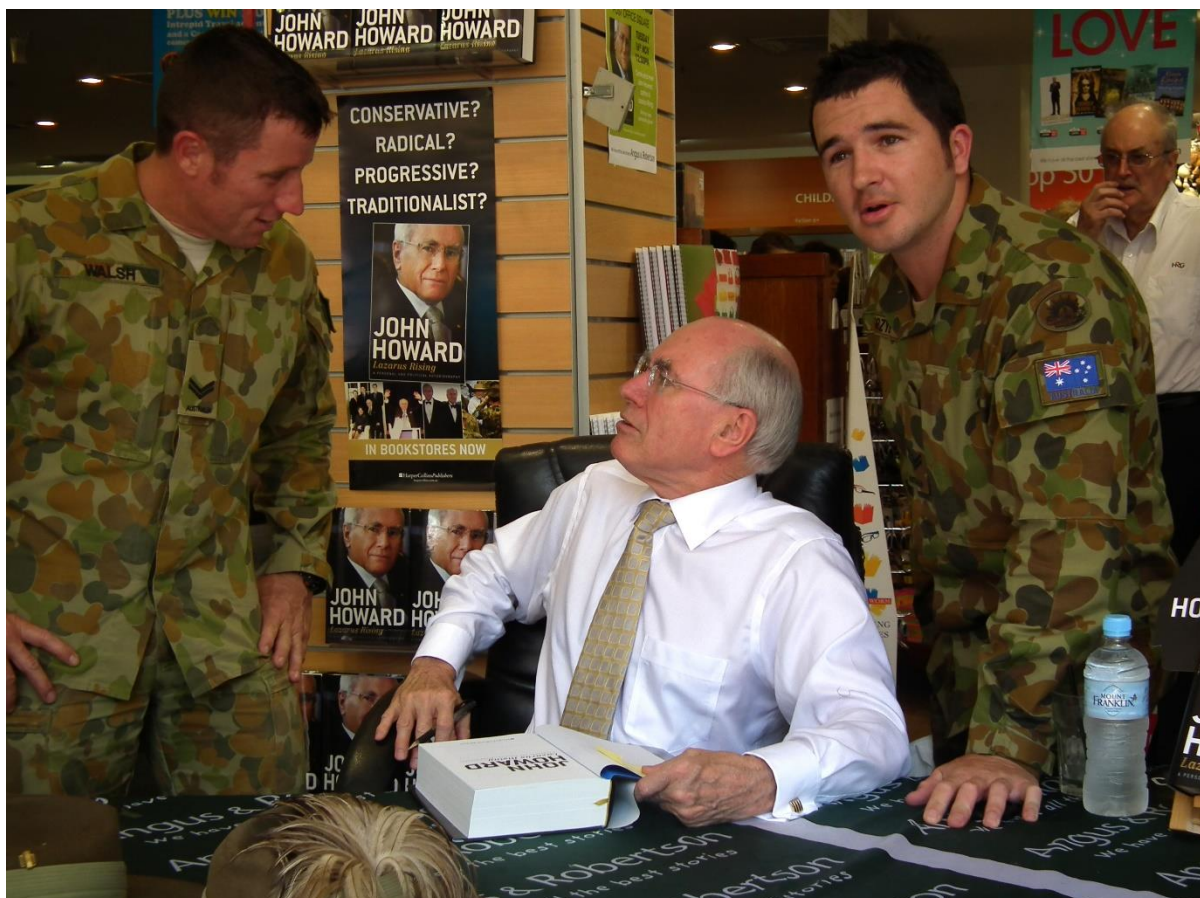


Figure 16: John Howard signing copies of *Lazarus Rising* at a bookstore in Brisbane, 16 November 2010. AAP Photos, Kym Agius.

Nonetheless, a substantial audience bought, and bought into, Howard's performance of Strong Leadership. For some, his immovability was admirable. "John Howard's memoir", one letter writer told the *Sunday Age*, "sits proudly on my bookshelf alongside Andrew Bolt's book, *Still Not Sorry*".²⁴⁸ For every critical comment against Howard, there were hundreds buying the book, taking pictures with him in bookstores, and seeking his signature at airports. By January 2011 Howard had sold 70,000 copies of the book, and he was by all accounts ecstatic when it eclipsed Hawke's *Memoirs* at 75,000.²⁴⁹ The book allegedly passed the 100,000 milestone in mid-2012.²⁵⁰ Updated reprints with new chapters were released in 2011 and 2013.

²⁴⁷ Benedicte Page, "George Bush's Memoir Turns to Crime", *Guardian*, 9 November 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/nov/09/george-bush-memoir-crime-section>, accessed 9 January 2023.

²⁴⁸ Richard Ryan, Letter to the Editor, *Sunday Age*, 1 November 2010, p. 12.

²⁴⁹ Romei, "Lazarus Writing", p. 12.

²⁵⁰ Jason Steger, "Read About It: Millennium Series Tops Bestseller List", *Canberra Times*, 11 January 2011, p. 3; "Former PM's Second Offer", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 June 2012, p. 18.

Those sales figures tell us more about the status of the figure and the status of the memoir genre, perhaps, than about the public's attitudes toward Howard's story. As Troy Bramston of the *Australian* newspaper put it, *Lazarus Rising* was the kind of book that seemed "good to have on the shelf if you're a businessman [...] or a politician".²⁵¹ Evidently, though, plenty of people liked the author, his politics and the gravitas of his cover photograph enough to buy the book.

Even as the shelf lives of *Malcolm Fraser* and *Lazarus Rising* waned, the book remained a powerful space for debates about the nature of modern liberalism. Howard produced a second book, this one about *The Menzies Era*.²⁵² He wrote this book because he felt that "insufficient credit had been given to Menzies for the condition of modern Australia".²⁵³ Relishing the opportunity to do something out of the ordinary, Howard argued that the contemporary ideological tags, *moderate* and *conservative*, would have been incomprehensible to Menzies himself. Fraser was sceptical, prophesying that the "progressive and forward-looking" Menzies he had known would be absent in Howard's pages.²⁵⁴ The overarching debate raged on inside the Liberal Party over the ensuing decade, with Abbott and Turnbull each fashioning the Menzies legacy in their own images.²⁵⁵ For his part, Fraser died in early 2015, but the debate about his memoir and its significance continued. "Enter stage right, Exit far left", Sheridan remarked, "after a characteristically capricious performance".²⁵⁶ Henderson editorialised that "Fraser's unreliable memoir makes the waters of his contested legacy even muddier".²⁵⁷ Adler published a commemorative issue of the book, and Simons told ABC interviewers that Fraser had "permanently changed the face of Australia" with important policies "like the establishment of SBS" and the "harmonious settling of many refugees, including many from Asia".²⁵⁸ Fraser, though, seems unlikely to secure a place among the Liberal Party's self-identified and small pantheon of Strong Leaders.

²⁵¹ Troy Bramston, interview with the author, News Corporation HQ, Sydney, 19 September 2018.

²⁵² John Howard, *The Menzies Era* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2014).

²⁵³ Howard, interview, 3 June 2021.

²⁵⁴ Malcolm Fraser quoted in Troy Bramston, "Menzies, The True Liberal", *Australian*, 30 September 2013, p. 10.

²⁵⁵ See for instance Steve Cannane, "Malcolm Turnbull Hits Back at Right-Wing Liberals", *ABC Premium News*, 10 July 2017; Paul Karp, "'Never Shirk a Fight': Tony Abbott Enlists Robert Menzies in Crusade for No Compromise", *Guardian*, 22 May 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/may/22/never-shirk-a-fight-tony-abbott-enlists-robert-menzies-in-crusade-for-no-compromise>, accessed 21 May 2021.

²⁵⁶ Greg Sheridan, "Enter Stage Right, Exit Far Left After a Characteristically Capricious Performance", *Weekend Australian*, 21 March 2015, p. 15; Greg Sheridan, "Fraser Was no Saint for Vietnamese Refugees", *Australian*, 26 March 2015, p. 12.

²⁵⁷ Henderson, "Waters of His Contested Legacy", p. 22.

²⁵⁸ Margaret Simons, Transcript of interview with David Mark, 20 March 2015, ABC, Sydney, archived by ProQuest (Document ID 1664690075), accessed 6 March 2021.

Conclusion

These performances marked a shift in the culture of the Liberal Party. John Hirst once noted that Liberals were partly to blame for the dearth of historical research on their own movement. Unlike Labor, he said, Liberal figures, “are not as interested in their history and write fewer memoirs”.²⁵⁹ By 2010, Liberal memoirs were proliferating in non-fiction publishing schedules, and playing an active role in public and media discourses about the party’s recent past and future directions. This chapter has discussed *Malcolm Fraser* and *Lazarus Rising*, and I will outline the role that books by Abbott and Costello played in this history in Chapter 7. The core point here is that conservative politicians and their media interlocutors saw much value in debating the party’s own history in government, under Fraser and especially under Howard, who in effect represented competing tendencies and warring factions within the Liberal Party. The memoirs attest to a degree of partisan introspection that often seemed lacking in the years before 2007.

As political memoirs, the books by Howard and Fraser were necessarily pre-occupied with personal legacy contests and the rehabilitation of reputations. However, both gave expression to their authors’ conceptions of liberal thinking and values in the twenty-first century. Written in and produced for a political environment in which liberalism’s electoral success was uncertain, these books were used to intervene with some force in the debate among Liberals. The texts themselves depended on formidable quantities of capital and labour, provided by MUP, HarperCollins, Simons, Daniel and others. But they also required additional channels of communication. Without the mainstream press, especially the Fairfax and News Limited newspapers, but also the ABC, the lively debates sparked by these volumes would have been left for the avid political junkie or critical scholar alone. Bridget Griffen-Foley has suggested that Australia’s media barons “liked to have ‘their’ men installed in Canberra”.²⁶⁰ As News Limited’s benevolent approach to *Lazarus Rising* shows, it also liked to invest in those same men in their political afterlives.

The chief utility of the liberal memoir was that it was a textual performance on which other, often more publicised and mediatised, forms of performance could be staged. These performances mattered because they reproduced and reaffirmed in the Australian civic culture (especially that of the Liberal Party) the primacy of a very masculine form of leadership. In

²⁵⁹ John Hirst, “Changing My Mind”, in Stuart Macintyre (ed.), *The Historian’s Conscience: Australian Historians on the Ethics of History* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2004), pp. 86—87.

²⁶⁰ Griffen-Foley, *Party Games*, p. 237.

their memoirs, Fraser and Howard pictured themselves as authoritative actors whose role in politics had led to so much change. There was much in these narratives for Liberal partisans to celebrate or repudiate, but the preference for a Strong Leader seemed to transcend the confines of the Liberal Party. Assertively masculine performances of political authority, as embodied by Fraser and Howard alike, were applauded by book buyers, some cultural agents, media proprietors and various public audiences. With the memoir as their stage, the Liberal prime ministers of yesteryear and the ideological approaches that they represented were made to matter again.

SNAPSHOT 6

Roads Not Travelled

Not everybody that I contacted in search of an interview ultimately sat for one. The pages of *Oral History Review* are filled with reflections on the nature and function of oral history methodologies, but little is said about interviews that ultimately did not transpire. What of the individuals who, I believed, were important to the history I was attempting to explain? What was the consequence of their silence? There is an epistemological dimension to this; the researcher necessarily needs to find ways to fill the evidentiary gap. But there was also acute curiosity involved. What narrative paths might have been available if a missing informant had agreed to speak?

At the beginning of this project, I had some cause for optimism that most of my prospective informants would indeed participate. I had conducted oral history interviews with several Labor figures for an Honours thesis the previous year, and with the permission of the ANU's Human Research Ethics Committee, I incorporated those into this doctoral project, partly to inform the chapter that follows, and partly to prove to prospective participants that I was practised at this kind of research.

When former prime minister Kevin Rudd spoke on campus at the ANU in mid-2019, I seized the opportunity to make my research pitch to him in person. During that Honours research, he had been the sole non-respondent. This time, waiting patiently with a colleague in a long line of book buyers seeking a signature, I rehearsed the lines that I might use to explain this project and persuade him that it was worth investing an hour in. In a very brief interaction (the line stretched on behind me), he politely directed me to his adviser for further discussion. I received a business card with an office phone number and an email address. But a succession of emails over the next two years went unanswered. In late 2020, I spoke to another staffer who appreciated the work I was attempting to do and promised to help ensure that Rudd found time to participate. After two or three follow-up phone calls, another adviser politely but firmly dismissed my hopes of securing an interview or correspondence with Rudd.

Perhaps Rudd was a small loss. There was other material in the public domain that I could use. But his non-participation made me even more eager to procure the involvement of his publishers at Pan Macmillan. As I have indicated earlier, it is the publishers' job to be invisible

so that their client can be as visible as possible. I wanted to find Rudd's publisher at Pan Macmillan, Ingrid Ohlsson, and make the inside story of Rudd's memoirs visible.

I wrote to Ohlsson in mid-2020, explaining the project and asking for her participation. I had a strong precedent to point to. Meredith Curnow, senior publisher at Penguin Random House Australia and publisher of Julia Gillard's *My Story*, was open and honest with me about the publishing process without even slightly wavering in her loyalty to her author. I wanted to compare that relationship to the one that Rudd and Ohlsson might have developed.

Initially, Ohlsson expressed in-principle willingness to speak on the record about her experience working on Rudd's memoirs, and I duly sent through a list of questions. Much time passed, and nothing happened. I politely persevered between September 2020 and April 2021, leaving messages where necessary, and taking brief opportunities to speak to her directly. Her responses and phone calls, always polite, grew increasingly cautious until in a last phone call she indicated that she would not participate. I advanced every compelling point that I could to persuade her to reconsider, but to no avail. Though slightly frustrated at the time lost in pursuit, I despaired more greatly of the testimony I would now never see.

It was usually easier to entice Labor memoirists, collaborators and publishers to participate in this project than their Liberal counterparts, who were usually harder to reach and more reticent about responding. Andrew Robb and John Howard were the clear exceptions. In August 2021, I emailed former prime minister Tony Abbott with a number of questions about his 2009 manifesto *Battlelines*. The following April he used a week of "covid-enforced idleness" to respond to unread emails including mine, but time seemed to get away from him thereafter, and my questions went unanswered.

Oral history requires us to think about the paths not taken, even as it forces us to contend with a wealth of recordings and transcripts from those that were travelled. To record these dashed hopes and research cul-de-sacs is not to complain or carp, but simply to acknowledge the very real limitations of the methodology.

CHAPTER 6

TOXIC TALES

The Rudd–Gillard Trauma and the Peak of the Political Memoir Boom

In October 2018 the term “miserable ghosts” entered the Australian political lexicon.¹ Malcolm Turnbull, removed from the prime ministership two months earlier by his Liberal colleagues in a “week of political butchery”, had promptly departed for New York where he described his predecessors Tony Abbott and Kevin Rudd as “miserable, miserable ghosts”.² A few short weeks later, Rudd seemed dangerously close to confirming Turnbull’s assessment. Launching *The PM Years* (the second and penultimate volume of his memoirs) at Parliament House on 23 October, Rudd promised the assembled former colleagues, public servants and journalists he had written the true story of his government and its dramatic interregnum from 2010 to 2013:

Some have asked why bring this matter up now. The truth is there is never a good time to do so. But after sitting largely in silence as a series of accounts have emerged over the years by the perpetrators of the coup seeking to justify their actions in the noblest of terms [...] the time has well and truly come to exercise a right of reply.³

In his own estimation, *The PM Years* would serve as an exercise in truth-telling and historiographical rebuttal. Promoting his book in television and radio interviews, Rudd talked extensively about the “Shakespearean” nature of the 2010 “coup” and the “ambition” of the plotters, but pointedly denied that he was “bitter” anymore.⁴

The main target of Rudd’s attacks, Julia Gillard, seemed unperturbed by these performances. The day before Rudd’s launch at Parliament House, Gillard enjoyed pride of

¹ This chapter develops and builds on existing work that I have produced, including the following: Joshua Black, “For What Purpose?: The Political Memoirs of the Rudd–Gillard Labor Cabinet”, Honours thesis, University of Wollongong, 2018; Joshua Black, “‘Our Side of the Story’: The Political Memoirs of the Rudd–Gillard Labor Cabinet”, *Labour History*, no. 120 (2021), pp. 69–94; Joshua Black, “‘For the Historic Record’: Memoirs, History, and Australian Political Culture”, *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, vol. 67, no. 2 (2021), pp. 312–30.

² David Crowe, *Venom: Vendettas, Betrayals and the Price of Power* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2019), p. 336; “Malcolm Turnbull says Rudd and Abbott ‘Like Miserable Ghosts’”, *Guardian*, 1 October 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/oct/01/malcolm-turnbull-kevin-rudd-tony-abbott-miserable-ghosts>, accessed 22 September 2022.

³ Kevin Rudd, Speech at the Launch of *The PM Years*, Parliament House, Canberra, 23 October 2018, <https://kevinrudd.com/2018/10/23/launch-of-the-pm-years-volume-2-of-the-autobiography-of-the-hon-kevin-rudd/>, accessed 7 September 2020.

⁴ Kevin Rudd quoted in ABC News (Australia), “Kevin Rudd Blames His Demise on Plotting, Ambitious Colleagues | 7.30”, *YouTube*, 22 October 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAliux-Wn0E>, accessed 15 October 2020; Mamamia, “Kevin Rudd Isn’t Bitter Anymore”, No Filter [Podcast Audio], 26 November 2018, <https://omny.fm/shows/no-filter/kevin-rudd-isn-t-bitter-anymore#description>, accessed 20 October 2020.

place at the official national apology to victims of child sex abuse in institutional settings, the outcome of a Royal Commission that she had initiated as prime minister in 2012. Gillard “received a standing ovation” at the event, and journalists wrote about her “star status” among this group of Australians.⁵ Two days later, and pointedly, the day after Rudd’s launch, Gillard returned to Parliament House to unveil her official prime ministerial portrait, painted by Archibald Prize-winning portraitist Vincent Fantauzzo. She asserted that her portrait, with its close-up focus on the face of the first woman prime minister, was distinct from that of “every prime minister who had come before”.⁶ Asked in an interview that morning about Rudd’s latest memoir, Gillard nonchalantly remarked that “people will read” his book, some had read her own earlier memoir, and that ultimately readers would “make up their own minds”.⁷ In that week of legacy-building, even the most conservative commentators were quick to stress that Gillard was no “miserable ghost”.⁸

The ghosts of the Rudd – Gillard Labor government haunted the pages of Australian political culture for several years after their comprehensive electoral defeat in 2013. Between 2012 and 2018, the Australian political memoir phenomenon reached its peak in quantitative terms. In that short period, partisans active and retired produced dozens of political books, most of which were memoirs, autobiographies, or diaries. Former Rudd–Gillard Labor ministers, MPs and their staff were responsible for the vast bulk of these publications. Leaders of the Australian Greens, and the two prominent Independents who had supported the Gillard minority government, added to this memoir boom. In six years, participants in the forty-second and forty-third parliaments of Australia produced more political books than their forbears had in the entire first half of the twentieth century.⁹ It may seem premature to call this the “peak” of the memoir boom, but again, contemporaries understood the literary outpouring around them in those precise terms. Scholars and commentators alike described a “deluge” or a “flood” of political memoirs, and journalists speculated that the tide of public demand was in fact

⁵ Tom McIlroy, “Parliament Pauses in National Apology for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse”, *Australian Financial Review*, 22 October 2018, <https://www.afr.com/politics/parliament-pauses-in-national-apology-for-institutional-child-sexual-abuse-20181022-h16xoe>, accessed 7 September 2020.

⁶ Julia Gillard quoted in Rosie Lewis, “Former PMs Embrace the Bigger Picture”, *Australian*, 25 October 2017, p. 7.

⁷ Julia Gillard quoted in Annabel Crabb, “Julia Gillard’s Portrait Unveiled in Parliament House”, *ABC News*, 24 October 2020, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-10-24/julia-gillard-portrait-unveiled-in-parliament-house/10424304>, accessed 7 September 2020.

⁸ Janet Albrechtsen, “Oh, For a Moment’s Silence from These Angry Ghosts”, *Australian*, 29 January 2020, p. 12.

⁹ Sean Scalmer, “The Rise of the Insider: Memoirs and Diaries in Recent Australian Political History”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 56, no. 1 (2010), p. 85.

turning.¹⁰ In November 2014, journalist James Button was asked to host a public panel session in Melbourne with diarist Gareth Evans (see Chapter 2), publisher Louise Adler, and political historian Judith Brett. The core goal for the evening, he suggested to them, should be to explain “why so many political memoirs are being written now”, and “whether these books are good”.¹¹

I emulate Button in asking why “so many political memoirs” were being written at that time. I argue that the high literary tide was a collective response on the part of the political class to the intensification of troubling trends in Australian political culture. The late 2000s and the 2010s constituted a period of particularly embittered and emotional political discourse in Australia and in comparable societies. Divisive policy debates about the economy, climate change and asylum seekers, complex personal, factional, and administrative conflict, gendered vitriol, and a particularly vicious media landscape all took their toll on the Labor government. While the ugliness of that environment was neither completely novel nor without precedent, existing political processes rather than sudden departures accelerated the emotional intensity of Australian politics. The end of the Howard government was met with a sense of “huge relief for progressives” in Australia, but that emotion was short-lived.¹² A series of shocks and crises ensured that, for the most part, the Labor governments would be faced with the renewed ascendancy of anti-progressive narratives in the public sphere (turmoil within the Liberal Party notwithstanding). This conflict-laden environment, and the emotional labour required of those who worked in it, prompted a groundswell of apologia and historiographical corrective on the part of aggrieved MPs, ministers and staff. In its aftermath, progressives took full advantage of a supportive commercial publishing environment to attempt a corrective historiography.

Publishers remained attracted not just to the celebrity status, however minor, that politicians brought to the table, but also to the emotional subjectivity that came with it. Adler said to me in response to the genre’s critics, “[d]on’t read memoirs or autobiographies if you want objectivity”.¹³ Books remained a powerful medium with which to challenge political narratives and make reparations for the exacting emotional labour of public life in the 2010s.

¹⁰ Jane Messer, “Australia is Awash with Political Memoir, but only some will survive the flood”, *The Conversation*, 9 September 2015, <https://bit.ly/2RtqYQB>, accessed 14 April 2018; Jason Steger, “Have Australian Readers Had Enough of Books About Politics?”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 January 2016, <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/have-australian-readers-had-enough-of-books-about-politics-20160108-gm1uqv.html>, accessed 3 July 2019.

¹¹ James Button, email to Sue Roberts, Gareth Evans, Judith Brett and Louise Adler, 3 November 2014, ANUA, Papers of Gareth Evans, ANUA 740, Box 34, File 457.

¹² Paddy Manning, *Inside the Greens: The Origins and Future of the Party, the People and the Politics* (Carlton: Black Inc., 2019), p. 259.

¹³ Louise Adler, phone interview with the author, 25 January 2022.

Cognisant of scrutiny, the memoirists endowed their writings with the aesthetic of something more authoritative, purporting to present a well-researched account of their life and work.¹⁴ Aware of the genre's fluidities, and alert to its potential impact on public discourse, modern politicians had clear incentives to put their most "authentic" foot forward in their memoirs, displaying the emotional labour of their work for all to see, along with the footnotes that might legitimate those subjectivities and delay the critics, even for a moment.

Old Challenges, New Emotions

The people I interviewed understood the 2010s as a distinct period in Australia's political history. Button, former speechwriter in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and the son of the late Hawke and Keating government minister John Button, described the unravelling of the Labor government as "a tragic event".¹⁵ For Bennelong MP Maxine McKew, the leadership change of 2010 was "an act of such destructive force" that its emotional aftershocks lingered long after the event.¹⁶ One former minister suggested to me that the divisions in their government were "as significant" as those that had split the Labor Party during the 1950s, not in organisational impact but for the "interpersonal relationship changes" and "cultural changes" wrought.¹⁷ The idea that the Rudd–Gillard conflict compared with the great splits in Labor's history is not immediately convincing, but the emotional parameters of politics now allowed for mass retrospection and revelation in a manner largely distinct from previous party conflicts. Moreover, the fact that some participants understood their own melodrama as commensurate with prior party splits tells us something of the emotional intensity and ferocity of the period through which they lived and worked.

The Rudd–Gillard conflict diverged from older patterns in Labor's history in a few respects. First, despite bleak media narratives, the economic picture under their administration was a generally positive one. Previous party schisms had often been driven by external crises and economic shocks. The deep-seated enmities between former prime minister James Scullin and former NSW Premier Jack Lang, for instance, were forged in the "tempestuous atmosphere" of the great depression.¹⁸ Similarly, the bitter split in the 1910s occurred in

¹⁴ See Black, "For the Historic Record", pp. 312–30.

¹⁵ James Button, zoom interview with the author, 3 November 2020.

¹⁶ Maxine McKew, zoom interview with the author, 13 October 2020.

¹⁷ Kim Carr, interview with the author, Parliament House, Canberra, 30 July 2021.

¹⁸ Liam Byrne, *Becoming John Curtin and James Scullin: The Making of the Modern Labor Party, 1876–1921* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2020), p. 161.

response to the profound challenges posed by World War I, chiefly conscription.¹⁹ Even the Hawke–Keating rivalry, initially a plain clash of ambition and egotism, was by mid-1991 infused with policy debates about the recession of the 1990s and policy responses to it.²⁰ By way of contrast, the Rudd government was forced to contend with “the worst global economic downturn since the great depression of the 1930s” and succeeded.²¹ In an attempt to save jobs and avoid the vagaries of the global recession, the Rudd government launched two Keynesian-style stimulus programs, involving approximately \$54 billion in government expenditure.²² The Coalition doggedly attacked these programs, as did Rupert Murdoch’s News Limited newspapers.²³ Internationally, Australia seemed an exemplar, but domestically the public discourse hinged “not on [Rudd’s] successes but on his mistakes”.²⁴ Unlike in 1931, Labor was defeated in 2013 not because it failed to govern the Australian economy, but rather because it failed to explain that it had succeeded so well.

There was something novel, too, about the particular policy fronts on which progressive politics faltered in the late 2000s and early 2010s. Helen Thompson has argued that “energy has largely gone unrecognized as an important cause of the geopolitical and economic fault lines” that disrupted the world in the 2010s.²⁵ In Australia, energy policy and climate change certainly were, in Margaret Simons’ view, “the most toxic issue in Australian politics”.²⁶ Elected on a bipartisan promise to introduce an emissions trading scheme to reduce the scale of carbon pollution over the long run, the Rudd government failed twice to get its CPRS (a market mechanism for carbon abatement) through the Senate. The Australian Greens, an environmental activist party that had become by 2007 “the third force in Australian politics”, rejected Rudd’s “brownd down” scheme.²⁷ Rudd ultimately deferred the emissions trading scheme entirely, contributing to a fall in popularity and arguably his removal in June 2010. The new prime

¹⁹ Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party, 1891—1991* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 92—121.

²⁰ For an effective discussion of this point, see Laura Tingle, *Chasing the Future: Recession, Recovery and the New Politics in Australia* (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1994), p. 144.

²¹ Lenore Taylor and David Uren, *Shitstorm: Inside Labor’s Darkest Days* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2010), p. 2.

²² For detailed accounts of Labor’s response to the Global Financial Crisis, see Taylor and Uren, *Shitstorm*; Paul Kelly, *Triumph and Demise: The Broken Promise of a Labor Generation*, 2nd ed. (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2014).

²³ David McKnight, *Rupert Murdoch: An Investigation of Political Power* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2012), p. 8.

²⁴ Taylor and Uren, *Shitstorm*, p. 241.

²⁵ Helen Thompson, *Disorder: Hard Times in the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 4.

²⁶ Margaret Simons, *Penny Wong: Passion and Principle* (Carlton: Black Inc., 2019), p. 194.

²⁷ Manning, *Inside the Greens*, p. 257, p. 270.

minister, Gillard, unable to win majority government in 2010, was forced to negotiate the Clean Energy Future (CEF) package (including a fixed price on carbon) with the Greens in 2011. The public and media backlash against the package was fierce. The issue of climate policy ultimately remained “unresolved” at the time of the government’s defeat.²⁸ The only other issue that rivalled climate change in its capacity to aggravate the “spatial and emotional politics” of Australia was the issue of asylum seekers and people smuggling.²⁹ The growing influx of asylum seekers by 2010 “stimulated rising panic in a party still haunted by its traumatic defeat in the *Tampa* election”.³⁰ By 2013 Labor found itself wedged between a Coalition determined to “project failure” on the government and the Greens who saw the government’s increasingly repressive policy as “cruel”.³¹

But in many ways, the 2010s saw the intensification of existing cultural trends rather than the onset of new ones. This was certainly true of the troubled relations between the government and the media. Sally Young and Bridget Griffen-Foley have shown that the concentration of media ownership in Australia has been such that, since the 1940s at least, “Australian politicians had more to fear than most” in terms of powerful media barons shaping public opinion.³² After its faltering start and the infamous dot.com bust, the internet disrupted existing business models with such force that, while the public broadcasters found ways of thriving, commercial powerhouses like Fairfax saw much of their value “sucked away” by new information providers.³³ To compete for audiences and advertising revenue, print media providers began to offer increasingly “breathless and shouty” reporting.³⁴ Button recalled that this structural challenge, coupled with a generational change within the Canberra Press Gallery, led to a “weakening of the analytic capacity of the media”.³⁵ Using its dominant market share of

²⁸ Philip Chubb, *Power Failure: The Inside Story of Climate Politics Under Rudd and Gillard* (Collingwood: Black Inc., 2014), p. 6.

²⁹ Roland Bleiker, David Campbell and Emma Hutchinson, “Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Emotions”, Jenny M. Lewis and Anne Tiernan (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Australian Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 222.

³⁰ Frank Bongiorno, *Dreamers and Schemers: A Political History of Australia* (Collingwood: La Trobe University Press, 2022), p. 363.

³¹ Mary Walsh, “The Gillard Government, the Coalition and Asylum Seekers”, in Chris Aulich (ed.), *The Gillard Governments: Australian Commonwealth Administration 2010-2013* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2014), p. 127; Manning, *Inside the Greens*, p. 294.

³² Sally Young, *Paper Emperors: The Rise of Australia’s Newspaper Empires* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2019), p. 3; Bridget Griffen-Foley, *Party Games: Australian Politicians and the Media from War to Dismissal* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2003).

³³ Matthew Ricketson and Patrick Mullins, *Who Needs the ABC?* (Brunswick: Scribe, 2022), p. 14.

³⁴ Matthew Ricketson, Katharine Murphy and Patrick Mullins, “The Media”, in Mark Evans, Michelle Grattan and Brendan McCaffrie (eds.), *From Turnbull to Morrison, The Trust Divide: Australian Commonwealth Administration 2016 – 2019* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2019), p. 120.

³⁵ Button, zoom interview, 3 November 2020.

metropolitan newspapers, the Murdoch press fostered narratives that were especially hostile to progressives.³⁶ Journalists played a major role in perpetuating the leadership conflict between Rudd and Gillard, too. As former Press Gallery reporter Kerry-Anne Walsh put it, “[t]hey became players, not reporters”.³⁷ Troy Bramston, who worked for News Limited in this period, suggested in an interview for this research that these “critiques were exaggerated”.³⁸ However, I think the case can be convincingly made that the “narrative ecology” of Australian political culture was dominated from 2009 onward by decidedly anti-progressive storytelling.³⁹ This narrative ecology was particularly intense, if not unprecedented.

Labor MPs were often criticised as members of a privileged political class (or more commonly derided as “faceless men”) isolated from the lives and experiences of real voters. To the extent that this was true, it was also the product of a much longer process of political personalisation. The reforms of the 1980s and 1990s relied on the complicity of influential trade union organisers, but the long-term result was the widespread “hollowing out of the organised labour movement”.⁴⁰ Trade unions, which represented almost half of the Australian workforce in 1980, fell to just 17 per cent coverage of full-time workers by 2018.⁴¹ Political parties also saw their memberships declining dramatically, bequeathing an “ageing and less active” rank and file.⁴² In that context, the entrenched national factions ceased to reflect major ideological difference within the party, and instead became mechanisms for the “regulation of conflict”, especially the “competition for jobs” among officials and parliamentarians.⁴³ Locked out of office during the Howard years and reckoning with the “demise of the grassroots Labor organisation”, factions and groupings “became empty volcanoes” for the prosecution of “personal power contests”.⁴⁴ In December 2006 Rudd and Gillard sought to bridge some of those rifts in their “deeply divided Caucus” with what was described in hindsight as a “marriage

³⁶ Manning, *Inside the Greens*, p. 285.

³⁷ Kerry-Anne Walsh, *The Stalking of Julia Gillard* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2013), p. xii.

³⁸ Troy Bramston, interview with the author, News Corporation HQ, Sydney, 19 September 2018.

³⁹ See Yiannis Gabriel, “Narrative Ecologies in Post-Truth Times: Nostalgia and Conspiracy Theories in Narrative Jungles?”, in R. A. W. Rhodes and Susan Hodggett (eds.), *What Political Science Can Learn from the Humanities: Blurring Genres* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), pp. 33—55.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Humphrys, *How Labour Built Neoliberalism: Australia’s Accord, the Labour Movement and the Neoliberal Project* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), p. 203.

⁴¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics data cited in Dana McCauley, “Employers Say Unions are Irrelevant After Latest Membership Decline”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 November 2018, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/employers-say-unions-are-irrelevant-after-latest-membership-decline-20181129-p50j5h.html>, accessed 28 November 2020.

⁴² William Cross and Anika Gauja, “Evolving Membership Strategies in Australian Political Parties”, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 49, no. 4 (2014), p. 612.

⁴³ Rodney Cavalier, *Power Crisis: The Self-Destruction of a State Labor Party* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 38, p. 49.

⁴⁴ Chubb, *Power Failure*, p. 257; Kelly, *Triumph and Demise*, pp. 54—55.

of convenience”.⁴⁵ The failure of their partnership in 2010 gave rise to a remarkable display of personal and factional conflict within the party, an animosity devoid of any significant ideological difference.⁴⁶ Political advisers, continuously growing in number and influence, greatly contributed to this environment of conflict, particularly in their efforts to defend or protect the (prime) ministers for whom they worked.⁴⁷

Underlying this already turgid environment was the issue of gender and Australian political culture. As Chapter 4 demonstrated, women made significant gains in the 1990s and 2000s in terms of parliamentary representation, especially in the Labor Party. However, the ascension of Australia’s first prime minister via what many perceived to be “an illegitimate coup” catalysed a new gendered intensity in political discourse.⁴⁸ Over time, Gillard was subjected to “relentless sexist-based attacks” from partisan opponents, internal enemies, media critics, and most seriously, members of the public.⁴⁹ A respectable body of scholarship has been generated by the collective attempt to understand why the Australian polity, media and public treated Gillard in such a sexist fashion.⁵⁰ As prime minister, Gillard faced in Abbott an opposition leader who was prepared to embody and perform a version of “hypermasculinity” with considerable effect.⁵¹ Against that backdrop, to borrow Carol Johnson’s words, Gillard struggled to prove to some voters “that she was anything other than the untrustworthy,

⁴⁵ Sarah Ferguson with Patricia Drum, *The Killing Season: Uncut* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2016), pp. 14–15.

⁴⁶ Simons, *Penny Wong*, p. 251. Scholars have argued that, despite some divergences, Rudd and Gillard were both leaders comfortably within the Labor tradition. See Carol Johnson, “Gillard, Rudd and Labor Tradition”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 57, no. 4 (2011), pp. 562–79; Lindy Edwards, “Ideology and Effective Government: Lessons from Rudd–Gillard Labor”, *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 77, no. 4 (2018), pp. 744–56.

⁴⁷ See R. A. W. Rhodes and Anne Tiernan, *Lessons in Governing: A Profile of Prime Ministers’ Chiefs of Staff* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2014), esp. chapter 8; Bongiorno, *Dreamers and Schemers*, p. 376.

⁴⁸ Blair Williams, “A Gendered Media Analysis of the Prime Ministerial Ascension of Gillard and Turnbull: He’s ‘Taken Back the Reins’ and She’s ‘A Backstabbing Murderer’”, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 52, no. 4 (2017), p. 554. See also Linda Trimble, “Melodrama and Gendered Mediation: Television Coverage of Women’s Leadership ‘Coups’ in New Zealand and Australia”, *Feminist Media Studies*, vol. 14, no. 4 (2014), pp. 663–78.

⁴⁹ Mary Walsh, “‘She Just Won’t Lie Down and Die’: Gillard, Misogyny and Australian Political Leadership”, in Zareh Ghazarian and Katrina Lee-Koo (eds.), *Gender Politics: Navigating Political Leadership in Australia* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2021), p. 48.

⁵⁰ For more see Jacqueline Kent, *The Making of Julia Gillard* (Camberwell: Penguin, 2010); Jacqueline Kent, *Take Your Best Shot: The Prime Ministership of Julia Gillard* (Melbourne: Penguin, 2013); Jennifer Curtin, “The Prime Ministership of Julia Gillard”, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 50, no. 1 (2015), pp. 190–204; Jack Holland and Katherine Wright, “The Double Delegitimisation of Julia Gillard: Gender, the Media and Australian Political Culture”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 63, no. 4 (2017), pp. 588–602; Linda Trimble, “Julia Gillard and the Gender Wars”, *Politics and Gender*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2016), pp. 296–316; Anna Worth, Martha Augoustinos and Brianne Hastie, “‘Playing the Gender Card’: Media Representations of Julia Gillard’s Sexism and Misogyny Speech”, *Feminism & Psychology*, vol. 26, no. 1 (2016), pp. 52–72.

⁵¹ Carol Johnson, “The Gendered Identities of Australian Political Leaders: From Hawkie to ScoMo”, in Zareh Ghazarian and Katrina Lee-Koo (eds.), *Gender Politics: Navigating Political Leadership in Australia* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2021), p. 16.

ambitious woman who had knifed Kevin Rudd and allegedly lied about introducing a carbon tax”.⁵² Nor, it should be noted, was Gillard alone in experiencing sexist treatment. Paddy Manning has shown that the first woman leader of the Greens, Christine Milne, was also subjected to a “fair degree of sexism” in the pages of the conservative press.⁵³ When women spoke out against this treatment, as Gillard famously did in her misogyny speech, it was they and not their antagonists who would be accused of “playing the gender card”.⁵⁴

These were the trends whose emotional force seemed to have been exacerbated after the global recession. Arlie Hochschild has suggested that some “events in economic history cannot be fully understood unless we pay attention to the filigreed patterns of feeling and their management” in the surrounding environment.⁵⁵ In the United States, the recession was “marked by an impoverished public discourse” and the revival of “established, enduring ideological precepts about class, race, consumerism, individualism, work and [...] gender”.⁵⁶ Despite its world-leading economic performance, Australia too suffered these cultural and political symptoms of economic disruption in the Rudd–Gillard years. Brett has argued that compulsory voting “lowers the emotional temperature of our politics and keeps open the sensible centre”.⁵⁷ That may be, but in the age of Rudd and Gillard it did not prevent emotional toxicity from pervading the political culture in powerful ways, compelling significant emotional labour (“management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display”) on the part of policymakers.⁵⁸ David Marr has argued that behind Rudd’s “public face”, anger was “the juice in the machine” of his character.⁵⁹ Gillard herself has described the “incredibly angry” feelings that she had to repress behind a “fixed posture” at moments of acute conflict.⁶⁰ The flood of memoirs that followed the Labor administration were generated by, and reinforced public impressions of, a politics dominated by personalities and deeply negative emotions. In

⁵² Johnson, “Gendered Identities of Australian Political Leaders”, p. 17.

⁵³ Manning, *Inside the Greens*, p. 299.

⁵⁴ For a particularly effective discussion see Carol Johnson, “Playing the Gender Card: The Uses and Abuses of Gender in Australian Politics”, *Politics & Gender*, no. 11 (2015), pp. 291–319.

⁵⁵ Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012 [1983]), p. 11.

⁵⁶ Diane Negra and Yvonne Tasker, “Introduction: Gender and Recessionary Culture”, in Diane Negra and Yvonne Tasker (eds.), *Gendering the Recession: Media and Culture in an Age of Austerity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 10.

⁵⁷ Judith Brett, *Doing Politics: Writing on Public Life* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2021), pp. 193–94.

⁵⁸ Hochschild, *Managed Heart*, p. 7.

⁵⁹ David Marr, “Power Trip: The Political Journey of Kevin Rudd”, *Quarterly Essay*, no. 38 (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2010), p. 86. Much is made of this particular quote in Mark McKenna, “‘The Character Business’: Biographical Political Writing in Australia”, in Stuart Macintyre, Lenore Layman and Jenny Gregory (eds.), *A Historian for All Seasons: Essays for Geoffrey Bolton* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2017), p. 67.

⁶⁰ Gillard quoted in Ferguson with Drum, *The Killing Season: Uncut*, p. 234.

the wake of Rudd and Gillard, political life writing was an obvious way in which to relieve the pressure of that emotional labour.

Capitalising on Conflict

In some ways, torturous politics and the frenzy of non-fiction publishing were structurally aligned in the 2010s. Mark McKenna suggested that Australian public culture was “saturated with political talk and political books”, even at the very moment when public apathy appeared greatest.⁶¹ Journalists generated much of the talk and many of the books. At every stage, the Rudd – Gillard government was shadowed by journalists attempting to explain how it had been elected with such a large majority in 2007, how it had responded to the global crisis, how its leadership crisis had emerged in 2010, and how Gillard’s minority government was delegitimised in the press, even as it embraced an ambitious legislative agenda.⁶² And then, with Labor consigned to opposition, journalists produced a second wave of histories, whose ambitions varied but whose conclusions were largely shared.⁶³ They often wrote in the tragic mode, and they tended to diagnose the Labor Party with the political equivalent of a terminal illness. The market for these books varied, and many are still found on the shelves of second-hand bookshops and charitable outlets such as Lifeline stores. But figures such as Paul Kelly and Sarah Ferguson achieved significant lifetime sales, and were influential in shaping attitudes toward Labor’s years in office. Kelly’s *Triumph and Demise* (2014) allegedly sold nearly 13,000 copies, while the debut episode of *The Killing Season* “out-ranked all its direct rivals” on air on 9 June 2015, including American navy crime show *NCIS* and celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay’s *Kitchen Nightmares*.⁶⁴ All the same, journalists’ books were not always the cash cow

⁶¹ McKenna, ““Character Business””, p. 59.

⁶² For the election, see Christine Jackman, *Inside Kevin07: the People, the Plan, the Prize* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2008) and Margot Saville, *The Battle for Bennelong: The Adventures of Maxine McKew, Aged 50 Something* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2007). For Labor’s response to the financial crisis see Taylor and Uren, *Shitstorm*. For the leadership change of 2010 and the subsequent election see Barrie Cassidy, *The Party Thieves: The Real Story of the 2010 Election* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2010); Aaron Patrick, *Downfall: How the Labor Party Ripped Itself Apart* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2013). For the minority government and the treatment of Gillard as prime minister see Kerry-Anne Walsh, *Stalking of Julia Gillard*; Kent, *Take Your Best Shot*.

⁶³ Chubb, *Power Failure*; Kelly, *Triumph and Demise*; Troy Bramston, *Rudd, Gillard, and Beyond* (Melbourne: Penguin, 2014).

⁶⁴ Troy Bramston, “Gillard’s Own Yarn Spins Nice Little Earner”, *Weekend Australian*, 24 January 2015, p. 5; Michael Lallo, “ABC’s *The Killing Season* Scores Strong Ratings, Showing Not ‘Everyone Hates Julia Gillard’”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 June 2015, <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/tv-and-radio/abcs-the-killing-season-scores-strong-ratings-showing-not-everyone-hates-julia-gillard-20150610-ghkzf3.html>, accessed 10 October 2022.

that some hoped they would be. For MUP, Kelly had been “hard to acquire” and his six-figure advance almost impossible to earn back.⁶⁵

Political publishing benefited from the anxieties of publishers at this critical moment. The rise of digital publishing and online shopping, combined with the effects of the global recession, precipitated the collapse of book retailers Angus & Robertson and Borders in 2011.⁶⁶ When Rupert Murdoch’s global media empire was restructured in July 2013, HarperCollins would be relegated to the “troubled” division of the company, while the “profitable entertainment assets” began trading as 21st Century Fox.⁶⁷ Cultural commentators pondered once again the decline of the book.⁶⁸ In any case, a decade of Nielsen BookScan market data had conditioned several of the mainstream publishers to pursue (prospective) authors who came with a guaranteed audience, if not always a large market. Risk-averse booksellers appeared to be ordering smaller units of new releases with a view to watching the market and ordering more if necessary, which was facilitated by the development of print on demand.⁶⁹ Non-fiction publishing, and auto/biography specifically, were somewhat isolated from the acute market anxieties surrounding fiction in the age of just-in-time capitalism.⁷⁰ As Meredith Curnow, publisher at Random House Australia, reflected in an interview with me: “we invest so much more time in analytics now than previously”.⁷¹ The upshot is that “having a name attached really helps with recognition and support from retailers”.⁷² Political names were as good as any. The commercial success of *The Latham Diaries* (2005), *The Costello Memoirs* (2008) and *Lazarus Rising* (2010) gave publishers further confidence that political memoirs would indeed sell.⁷³ In particular, *The Latham Diaries* proved that there was some market for and public interest in stories of Labor intrigue and bitterness. In that market environment it was unsurprising that politicians were highly sought after as prospective authors.

⁶⁵ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022; Stuart Kells, *MUP: A Centenary History* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2023), p. 373.

⁶⁶ Carl Reinecke, *Books That Made Us: Writers and Novels That Have Shaped Australia* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2021), p. 288.

⁶⁷ Dominic Rushe, “Rupert Murdoch Splits Empire but Keeps Faith in Tomorrow’s Newspapers”, *Guardian*, 19 June 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2013/jun/18/rupert-murdoch-split-empire-news-corp>, accessed 25 February 2023.

⁶⁸ Susan Wyndham, “Between the Lines”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 January 2017, p. 22.

⁶⁹ Brigid Magner, “Behind the BookScan Bestseller Lists: Technology and Cultural Anxieties in Early Twenty-First Century Australia”, *Script & Print*, vol. 36, no. 4 (2012), p. 250.

⁷⁰ Mark Davis, “The Decline of the Literary Paradigm in Australian Publishing”, *Heat*, no. 12 (2006), pp. 91—108.

⁷¹ Meredith Curnow, phone interview with the author, 2 April 2020.

⁷² Curnow, phone interview, 2 April 2020.

⁷³ Linda Morris, “Political Leaders in Rush to Print”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 August 2014, <https://bit.ly/2QwpP9C>, accessed 30 November 2017.

They might have been in high demand, but politicians also needed time and focus if they were to write and sell a book. Trade minister Craig Emerson's 2018 memoir *The Boy from Baradine* was in germination from at least 2009, but little progress occurred during his years as a cabinet minister.⁷⁴ In 2013, leadership spills and then the federal election were mass resignation events that offered former Labor politicians the time and the freedom to write. Gillard recalled that she "spent three weeks developing a structure" followed by a "chapter by chapter plan" for the book that became *My Story*.⁷⁵ At her book launch, she claimed that between 1 December 2013 and 14 February 2014 she produced 175,000 words.⁷⁶ Former treasurer Wayne Swan said that, notwithstanding his duties as an MP, he worked on his manuscript for "seven days a week for about nine months".⁷⁷ Rudd and foreign minister Bob Carr were outliers here, the former because he was distracted from the autobiographical pursuit by his unsuccessful campaign for nomination for the post of Secretary General of the United Nations, and the latter because he wrote his diarised reflections "every weekend" while contemporaneously serving as foreign minister.⁷⁸ Overall, time and freedom from the political fray were essential preconditions for authors during the peak of the boom.

The political memoir phenomenon would not have peaked at this particular time, however, without the efforts of Adler and MUP. Curnow rightly suggested that the political memoir boom was "very much driven by" this force in the industry.⁷⁹ Philippa McGuinness, then publisher at Sydney's NewSouth, an imprint of the University of New South Wales Press, hypothesised that MUP's publishing list "probably skews the picture" of this niche market at that time.⁸⁰ Adler proved highly adept at co-opting authors when circumstances seemed propitious. McKew, a long-standing friend of Adler's, recalled that the publisher rang her when she was defeated in the electorate of Bennelong in August 2010, and "made her case" until McKew eventually decided to commit to a book.⁸¹ MUP also published books by former advisers such as Bruce Hawker and Allan Behm, men who were rarely visible to the majority of the public and would not have attracted a substantial market, but who could claim to tell

⁷⁴ Craig Emerson, interview with the author, Barangaroo, Sydney, 15 May 2018.

⁷⁵ Julia Gillard, email correspondence with the author, 23 July 2020.

⁷⁶ Julia Gillard, Speech at the Launch of *My Story*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 26 September 2014, *AustralianPolitics.com – Farnsworth Online Archive*, <https://bit.ly/2riSGas>, accessed and downloaded 28 June 2019.

⁷⁷ Wayne Swan, phone interview with the author, 10 September 2018.

⁷⁸ Kevin Rudd, "Acknowledgements" in *The PM Years* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2018), 602–3; Bob Carr, interview with the author, Sydney, 7 May 2018.

⁷⁹ Curnow, phone interview, 2 April 2020.

⁸⁰ Philippa McGuinness, email correspondence with the author, 19 September 2018.

⁸¹ McKew, zoom interview, 13 October 2020.

stories from within “the eye of a political storm”.⁸² Adler proved equally adept at capitalising on nostalgia, publishing former Hawke–Keating minister Gareth Evans’ diary and memoir in this period (see Chapter 2).

To a great extent, though, other publishing houses were responsible for the most significant commercial productions. Gillard, for instance, published her memoir with Penguin Random House, developing a close partnership with the institution and its team in the process. Curnow worked with Gillard on the latter’s memoir *My Story* (2014), her tract on *Women and Leadership* (co-authored with Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and published in 2020), and her edited collection of reflections on the tenth anniversary of the misogyny speech named *Not Now, Not Ever* (2022).⁸³ She recalled that “there were only a few publishers who had the opportunity to meet with Julia and her team” to make a formal offer for the initial memoir contract in 2013.⁸⁴ Gillard and her team produced the manuscript, but Curnow emphasised how hard she and editor Anne Reilly worked in the editing process.⁸⁵ In her editorial conversations with Gillard, Curnow strove for “clearer understandings of things” and was not afraid to identify “material that didn’t need to be in the book”.⁸⁶ Swan and former cabinet minister Peter Garrett produced their memoirs with Allen & Unwin, and Bob Carr, who had once been a student at the University of New South Wales, published his diaries with McGuinness and NewSouth. Pan Macmillan published Rudd’s two-volume autobiography, the largest production among this cohort. If MUP was responsible for the sheer volume of memoirs at the peak of the memoir boom, other publishing houses were responsible for the books that generated larger political and personal debate.

This literary boom also demanded a labour force of political staffers who could assist in the manufacturing of political tales and provide testimonies of their own. The peak of the memoir boom in the 2010s was in part a reflection of their entrenched status among the broader political class, and their role as agents in the shaping of Australian political culture. Some advisers were content to work on, wait for and then read their employers’ memoirs, but others were not. In their role as collaborators, advisers provided their former employers with intense

⁸² Bruce Hawker, *The Rudd Rebellion: The Campaign to Save Labor* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2013), p. xvii; Allan Behm, *No, Minister: So You Want to be a Chief of Staff?* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2015).

⁸³ Julia Gillard, *My Story* (North Sydney: Random House Australia, 2014); Julia Gillard and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, *Women and Leadership: Real Lives, Real Lessons* (North Sydney: Vintage, 2020); Julia Gillard (ed.), *Not Now, Not Ever: Ten Years on from the Misogyny Speech* (North Sydney: Vintage, 2022).

⁸⁴ Curnow, phone interview, 2 April 2020.

⁸⁵ Curnow, phone interview, 2 April 2020.

⁸⁶ Curnow, phone interview, 2 April 2020.

loyalty and intense labour. Former ACTU secretary and climate minister Greg Combet, for example, co-produced a memoir with his former adviser and journalist Mark Davis: “Mark was out of a job, I didn’t have any work and I decided to do the book and I asked Mark if he would work with me on it.”⁸⁷ He added that Davis is “a nice writer and I’d be a lousy writer”.⁸⁸ The pair engaged in a series of detailed and comprehensive interviews, which Davis then drafted into chapters and Combet edited.⁸⁹ Davis also acted as Combet’s researcher and fact checker: “he’s gone back and fact-checked my recollections and then sourced how he’s done it”.⁹⁰ Swan also said that “former staff” were responsible for much of the “checking and rechecking, assistance, suggestions and so on” involved in *The Good Fight*.⁹¹ These literary relationships with former advisers were infused with loyalty and protectiveness, a desire to spare one’s political friend from questions about the credibility of their narrative.

A sense of collective defensiveness underwrote the kind of work that advisers and researchers performed, particularly in regard to the prime ministerial memoirs. Gillard asked author and former adviser Tom Bentley to prepare “a timeline and summary” for the policy-specific chapters of *My Story*. “That meant I could spend my time on the drafting”, she explained to me, “rather than stopping to check what day a policy launch happened, or when a relevant [...] meeting happened”.⁹² Similarly, Marielle Smith, formerly a policy adviser and now a senator for South Australia, provided fact-checking assistance as well as “a second pair of eyes on the manuscript as it developed”.⁹³ Supporting labour was even more critical for Rudd’s two-volume project. In the acknowledgements of his first volume, published in October 2017, he paid tribute to 11 researchers by name.⁹⁴ In the second volume, he thanked a “small army of researchers”, naming 32 individuals in total.⁹⁵ Some of these were paid researchers, and others were co-opted members of Rudd’s post-prime ministerial staff. For Rudd and Gillard, advisers were responsible for facts and information, allowing them to impose their experiential interpretation of events thereafter. That so much labour was required to ensure some degree of empirical veracity reflected the fact that these authors were writing in the

⁸⁷ Greg Combet, phone interview with the author, 11 July 2018.

⁸⁸ Combet, phone interview, 11 July 2018.

⁸⁹ Combet, phone interview, 11 July 2018.

⁹⁰ Combet, phone interview, 11 July 2018.

⁹¹ Swan, phone interview, 10 September 2018.

⁹² Gillard, email correspondence with the author, 23 July 2020.

⁹³ Gillard, email correspondence with the author, 23 July 2020.

⁹⁴ Kevin Rudd, *Not For the Faint-hearted: A Personal Reflection on Life, Politics and Purpose* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2017), p. 571.

⁹⁵ Rudd, *The PM Years* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2018), pp. 605—6.

context of continuing emotional turbulence and expected forensic interrogation at the hands of hostile critics.

Reframing Media Narratives

Labor memoirists used the genre to blame the media for much that was traumatic about their tenure. But the dance between politicians and the media was also a contest for authority between storytellers. McKenna has pointed to the “ever-intensifying struggle between politicians and journalists to claim authorship of political history” as a key driver of the “character business” that pervades contemporary political culture.⁹⁶ For former ministers and MPs, the memoir became an opportunity to challenge their media critics and justify the policy agendas with which they were personally associated. For the advisers who produced their own accounts, it was an opportunity to set the work with which they had been involved in its historical context, separated from the daily rounds of political reporting and fortnightly public opinion polling. Jim Chalmers, former chief of staff to the treasurer, premised his account of the global financial crisis on his “perspective on political life” independent of the commercial media; Behm promised to reveal the “largely unseen and unaccountable people” who worked in ministerial offices “in volatile and often unpleasant circumstances”.⁹⁷ For all involved, political life writing was an opportunity to disrupt a narrative ecology in which critics, conservatives and incomplete information seemed to have prevailed.⁹⁸

Fundamental to that ecology was Murdoch’s News Limited. Rudd described the Murdoch press as “the unofficial third member of the [Howard] coalition” before 2007.⁹⁹ At the launch of *The PM Years*, he described Murdoch as “a far-right ideologue who has written and re-written Australian, British and American politics”.¹⁰⁰ Swan, for his part, saw the “Utegate” scandal (“one of the more bizarre scandals to mark the nation’s politics”, in Frank Bongiorno’s telling) as evidence of the collusive and corrupt practices of News Limited.¹⁰¹ In mid-2009, information from Treasury official Godwin Grech managed to convince Turnbull as opposition leader that he might be justified in demanding the resignations of Rudd and Swan, on the grounds that they had used emergency stimulus money to deliver “special deals” to a

⁹⁶ McKenna, ““Character Business””, p. 62.

⁹⁷ Jim Chalmers, *Glory Daze: How a World-Beating Nation Got so Down on Itself* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2013), p. ix; Behm, *No, Minister*, p. xv.

⁹⁸ Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, “Framing Theory”, *Annual Review of Political Science*, no. 1 (2007), p. 109.

⁹⁹ Rudd, *Not For the Faint-hearted*, p. 370, p. 450, p. 509.

¹⁰⁰ Rudd, Launch of *The PM Years*.

¹⁰¹ Bongiorno, *Dreamers and Schemers*, p. 362.

“car dealer mate” and had then misled parliament. Turnbull’s parliamentary attack, which hinged on a forged email, “backfired forcefully”.¹⁰² In *The Good Fight* (2014), Swan claimed that this affair was propelled by a campaign “by News Ltd and other right-wing media zealots” (particularly Steve Lewis of *The Australian* newspaper) to defeat a “progressive centre-left government”.¹⁰³ Asked about this chapter, he said, “[Utegate] was a perfect example of an alternative universe constructed by the Liberals and their media backers, which almost had tragic consequences for the government”.¹⁰⁴ Murdoch-related bitterness was not limited to Labor’s bevy of former ministers. Former Greens leaders Bob Brown and Christine Milne both railed against the malignant influence of News Limited newspapers on Australian political discourse. Asked about this, Milne was particularly effusive: “the concentration of media ownership in Australia, the disproportionate influence of the Murdoch media, [...] the increasing loss of independence of the *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* [...], and the rise of social media meant that you got increasing silos, and fragmentation”.¹⁰⁵

The emotional significance of political rebuttal for these authors was overt in their writings, and certainly in interviews for this research. Swan, who felt that his ministerial tenure and budget management had been “continuously misrepresented in most of the popular press”, saw *The Good Fight* an opportunity to be truly heard in ways that had been denied him in office.¹⁰⁶ Rudd, for his part, clearly continued to feel a grievous sense of injustice in the way that certain stories had been handled by other media outlets, including the ABC. In *The PM Years*, he accused the public broadcaster of transforming the asylum seeker debate from a minor policy issue into a major political storm in one simple television report:

...the asylum seekers said, ‘Kevin Rudd – he’s changed everything about refugee. If I go to Australia now, different, different...Maybe accepted but when John Howard, president, Australia, he said come back to Indonesia.’ This quote, more than any other development in early 2009, significantly changed the tone of the national political debate.¹⁰⁷

Rudd claimed that the ABC aired testimonies (such as this one) that were unrepresentative of the broader asylum-seeking cohort of the time, and that the decision to do so turned the issue

¹⁰² Taylor and Uren, *Shitstorm*, 171.

¹⁰³ Wayne Swan, *The Good Fight: Six Years, Two Prime Ministers and Staring Down the Global Recession* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2014), p. 146.

¹⁰⁴ Swan, phone interview, 10 September 2018.

¹⁰⁵ Christine Milne, zoom interview with the author, 3 December 2020.

¹⁰⁶ Swan, phone interview, 10 September 2018.

¹⁰⁷ Rudd, *PM Years*, p. 198.

into something that the Coalition could exploit.¹⁰⁸ As with the assault on Murdoch, Rudd's rebuke of the ABC went to core questions of integrity and ethics in journalism, and he mounted the case that the media as a whole misrepresented the government's position on this most controversial of political issues. Rudd's perspective was limited, but it reflected deep resentment.

For a number of exhausted former ministers, personal reputation hinged on the capacity to rebut the stark and misleading portraits that they felt journalists had painted of them. In *Big Blue Sky* (2015), former environment minister Peter Garrett directly challenged the efficacy of the media's environmental policy coverage. In correspondence for this research, Garrett explained that he found the writing process "liberating" because it allowed him to share a "deeper sense" of his life and worldview than that which had been produced by journalists and partisans, "often rendered in clichéd terms".¹⁰⁹ In the memoir, Garrett used a vignette about a significant funding boost to the national reserve system to illustrate the inefficacy of contemporary political reporting: "At 9:30

am...I was raring to go at a national park close to Canberra. Very few journos showed up for the presser ('Too early in the morning,' one office wit remarked) and the coverage was risible."¹¹⁰ That kind of criticism served to legitimise Garrett's version of events concerning the failed home insulation program and journalists' criticisms of his role in it. Defending his record as the minister responsible for that project and the four deaths associated with it, he accused journalists of reproducing Liberal narratives "breathlessly as fact", and dismissed the Canberra Press Gallery as "hacks".¹¹¹ "Being in parliament for Labor took a big impact on



Figure 17: Front cover of the paperback issue (2017) of Peter Garrett's memoir, *Big Blue Sky*, published with Allen & Unwin in 2015.

¹⁰⁸ Rudd, *PM Years*, p. 198.

¹⁰⁹ Peter Garrett, email correspondence with the author, 14 December 2020.

¹¹⁰ Peter Garrett, *Big Blue Sky: A Memoir* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2017 [2015]), p. 321.

¹¹¹ Garrett, *Big Blue Sky*, 362—63.

[Garrett's] reputation and his credibility in environmental circles", Combet mused. "So it's important to get your record down".¹¹²

For her part, Gillard intended for her book to offer a counter-narrative to the gendered skew that characterised political reporting during her prime ministership. In *My Story*, she described the modern media as "a bastion for males" and reflected that "no daily newspaper in Australia" was, at the time she was writing, edited by a woman. She reminded readers that political correspondence in Australia was "overwhelmingly brought to [them] by men", and noted that federal politics, too, had traditionally been "the pursuit of men".¹¹³ In a chapter called "The Curious Question of Gender", Gillard used particular examples such as the Queensland Floods of 2011 "to distil what she sees as a vexed and gendered aspect of her prime ministership—the [...] misreporting of her as uncaring".¹¹⁴ In that chapter, the former prime minister quoted an article published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that criticised her for being "perfectly coiffed in a dark blue suit" and suggested that she "[didn't] appear to care" about flood victims.¹¹⁵ What nobody had written about, Gillard argued, was her tour of flood-stricken Brisbane, where she offered and received "plenty of hugs, plenty of kisses" from flood-affected citizens.¹¹⁶ "On 11 January, the media could have shown footage of me being mobbed by friendly crowds in evacuation centres", she fumed. "It was not shown. The damage was done. My clothes on one day sparked a thread of commentary that ran for six weeks".¹¹⁷ Later in the chapter, having described the anger and indignation that propelled her misogyny speech in October 2012, she noted that the Australian media had "entirely missed" its significance and resonance with women.¹¹⁸ In her media appearances to promote the book, Gillard made no secret of her antipathy toward political journalists. "Of the things I don't miss about the prime ministership", she chortled in an exclusive television interview with Ray Martin for the Nine network, "I don't miss the Canberra Press Gallery".¹¹⁹ Hers was clearly a personal right of reply, and one that took gender as a core point of contention.

¹¹² Combet, phone interview, 11 July 2018.

¹¹³ Gillard, *My Story*, p. 100, p. 101.

¹¹⁴ Rosemary Williams, "Natural Disaster and Writing the (Political) Self: The Memoirs of Julia Gillard and Anna Bligh", *New Writing*, vol. 15, no. 4 (2018), pp. 444—45.

¹¹⁵ Gillard, *My Story*, p. 104.

¹¹⁶ Gillard, *My Story*, p. 104.

¹¹⁷ Gillard, *My Story*, p. 104.

¹¹⁸ Gillard, *My Story*, p. 113.

¹¹⁹ Julia Gillard quoted in Darnell Jackson, "Julia Gillard Full Interview 2014 The Whole Truth and My Story with Ray Martin", *YouTube*, 24 September 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=On3S7BZj1yM>, accessed 18 October 2022.

However, Gillard's exclusive interview with Martin reaffirmed that, while there would be a market for her story, the media would continue to play a role in broadcasting it. Gillard not only sat for the interview with Martin, but also had to tolerate a bevy of journalists attending her book launch at the MCA in Sydney, and according to Curnow, the former prime minister "didn't get to choose which media were there".¹²⁰ Media-savvy publishers were critical in ensuring that their authors' books became news stories in their own right. McKew praised Adler for keeping *Tales from the Political Trenches* "steadily in the news [...]" for about two weeks" in late 2012.¹²¹ Bob Carr appeared twice on the Ten network's daytime program *Studio 10* in order to promote and talk about his *Diary*.¹²² Though the detailed policy disputes illustrated in the diary had a very select intellectual audience in mind, his more colourful entries marked by self-deprecation or feigned outrage (particularly his complaints about the want of steel-cut oats, English subtitles for German operas, or airline pyjamas on long-haul flights) ensured that his diary "would be filtered and re-broadcast by the media".¹²³ Through their appearances in television interviews, Writers' Festivals and Melbourne's Wheeler Centre (an influential cultural forum for the discussion and promotion of contemporary literature), authors not only boosted sales, but also exposed a larger non-reading audience to their version of history.¹²⁴ Rudd spent plenty of time promoting *The PM Years*. Nonetheless, the media were implicated in the business of projecting, considering and debating these retrospective narratives. At its peak in the 2010s, the political memoir boom revealed and reinforced the complex relationship between politicians and journalists in Australian political culture. Neither of these groups within

¹²⁰ Curnow, phone interview, 2 April 2020.

¹²¹ McKew, zoom interview, 13 October 2020.

¹²² Studio 10, "Bob Carr Interview", *YouTube*, 11 April 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nv4nU0OnzCQ&t=46s>, accessed 26 January 2023; Studio 10, "Bob Carr: Response to Gillard Calling His Work 'Lazy'", *YouTube*, 24 September 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Dtms-E-HO8&t=10s>, accessed 26 January 2023.

¹²³ Adam Masters and John Uhr, *Leadership Performance and Rhetoric* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 72.

¹²⁴ See for example WheelerCentre, "Bob Brown On Optimism", *YouTube*, 21 October 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NyQbU_i9nuA, accessed 26 January 2023; WheelerCentre, "The Fifth Estate: Greg Combet: Unions, Labor and Leadership", *YouTube*, 4 February 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jcq-6Hu5zuA>, accessed 26 January 2023; The Monthly, "My Story: Julia Gillard in Conversation (Adelaide Writers' Week 2015)", *YouTube*, 5 May 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Kf_oFYUUMw, accessed 26 January 2023; WheelerCentre, "Peter Garrett", *YouTube*, 28 October 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qet2xbrebY&t=1480s>, accessed 3 June 2019; Sydney Writers' Festival, "Bob Brown: On Optimism | Sydney Writers' Festival", *YouTube*, 1 July 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ooVqC6p24Y>, accessed 26 January 2023; WheelerCentre, "Kevin Rudd and Kerry O'Brien", *YouTube*, 6 November 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zQHviGVVhY&t=4s>, accessed 26 January 2023; Kevin Rudd, "Kevin Rudd in Conversation at the Byron Bay Writers Festival", *YouTube*, 9 September 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WoOwOeRE3k&t=1s>, accessed 26 January 2023; Kevin Rudd, "Kevin Rudd in Conversation with David Fagan at the Brisbane Writers Festival", *YouTube*, 25 September 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8vy6RjxCr0>, accessed 26 January 2023.

the political class mattered without the other, and in the context of increasingly rapid media cycles and uncertain profit margins, their intimacy was accompanied by acute conflict.

Emissions and Admissions

In order to have any real purchase on the public's attention, political memoirists needed not just to reinterpret and explain but also to bare emotions and reveal perspectives. In some instances, memoirists adopted a didactic mode of speaking, attempting to patiently coax a reader or reviewer to perceive the political process as the politicians had experienced it. This was a mode of political communication with a rich history. In the English Civil Wars, as Jason Peacey has shown, politicians produced pamphlets that deployed a "rhetoric of education" in the hope of convincing readers that "the people had been deceived".¹²⁵ The same rhetorical function was critical in the logic of climate storytelling in the wake of the Labor government. Revelation went hand-in-hand with both education and accusation, for stories about carbon pricing would persuade nobody if the author appeared to be merely repeating political spin or talking points. Given that carbon pricing was ultimately repealed by the Abbott government, there was much interest on the part of policymakers in claiming a legacy and validating the emotional investment that they had made in the policy. It was not that other traumas were insignificant to these authors: Rudd declared at a Writers' Festival in Byron Bay in coastal NSW, that the Coalition's downgrading of Labor's National Broadband Network made him want to "tear my left carotid artery out".¹²⁶ But by and large, it was climate policy that activated the deepest sense of grievance and injustice on the part of these authors, and which prompted the most pointed efforts at persuasion and re-education.

On announcing her proposed book in late 2013, Gillard promised readers that it would be unlike her political performances in office, which had been necessarily "mediated through others".¹²⁷ Her inference was that, after all of the debates about her trustworthiness (debates that were perhaps exacerbated by her unconvincing attempt during the 2010 election campaign to reintroduce herself to voters as the "real Julia"), this would be her truth, and nobody else's. Famously, Gillard had declared during the aforementioned campaign that there would be "no carbon tax under the government I lead", in the hope that it would neutralise Abbott's fear

¹²⁵ Jason Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda During the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (London: Routledge, 2016 [2004]), p. 40.

¹²⁶ Rudd, "Byron Bay Writers' Festival", 22:00.

¹²⁷ Gillard, email correspondence, 23 April 2018; Gillard quoted in "Julia Gillard Opens Up About Memoir," *Mercury*, 25 September 2013, <https://www.themercury.com.au/news/national/julia-gillard-opens-up-about-memoir/video/f39ce6e4d69a5955ce94c814bfed71c5>, accessed 21 October 2020.

campaign.¹²⁸ When she introduced a three-year fixed price on carbon, set at \$23 per tonne, the opposition characterised the policy as a “carbon tax”, making her seem a liar in the eyes of the public and the press. In *My Story*, Gillard sought to dismantle that accusation of dishonesty by explaining to readers the economic differences between a cap-and-trade scheme and a carbon tax: “a carbon tax is not a market-based mechanism. The government, not the market, fixes the amount paid per tonne [...] There is no way to set an economy-wide cap” under a carbon tax.¹²⁹ She reminded readers that what she legislated was not a carbon tax, but rather an emissions trading scheme with a fixed-price period of three years. What she admitted – and this was perhaps the core revelation in her chapter on this policy – was a serious failure to contest the media framing of her scheme as a “tax”. Though cognisant of her communicative errors, she reiterated: “I did not lie. I had never intended a carbon tax and did not introduce one”.¹³⁰ The educative impulse in *My Story* was critical for its author, whose personal reputation had been so badly damaged by communicative errors surrounding that policy problem.

Testimonies about the politics of carbon pricing, however partisan or whitewashed, were nevertheless shaped by the emotional trauma associated with them. When Margaret Simons interviewed Penny Wong for her biography years later, she found that the former minister’s “distress was obvious” when discussing the demise of carbon pricing.¹³¹ Combet, who as a former minister for climate change wrote extensively about carbon pricing in his memoir, explained that these stories were products of emotional investment and exhaustion: “I carried an immense burden with that carbon pricing policy. It was [...] really the most diabolically difficult piece of public policy that I could imagine”.¹³² Emerson, who had tried to help promote the reform, wrote about the “hysterical heights” their opponents reached in campaign against carbon pricing.¹³³ The memoir was an opportunity to speak directly to at least some audiences about the hard-won reform and its utility to Australians. For Combet, a climate minister representing an electorate with many dependent on coal for their living, the memoir was a place to validate the initiative that, as he put it, “dominated my life” in that term of parliament.¹³⁴ In some ways, the Independent MPs Rob Oakeshott and Tony Windsor (both of whom supported

¹²⁸ Julia Gillard quoted in Andrew Macintosh and Richard Denniss, “Climate Change”, in Chris Aulich (ed.), *The Gillard Governments: Australian Commonwealth Administration 2010 – 2013* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2014), 196.

¹²⁹ Gillard, *My Story*, 384.

¹³⁰ Gillard, *My Story*, 385.

¹³¹ Simons, *Penny Wong*, p. 195.

¹³² Combet, phone interview, 11 July 2018.

¹³³ Craig Emerson, *The Boy from Baradine* (Brunswick: Scribe, 2018), p. 306.

¹³⁴ Greg Combet with Mark Davis, *The Fights of My Life* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2014), p. 239.

Gillard and were involved in the design of the carbon pricing scheme) carried similar burdens; both represented rural and regional communities that did not share their MPs' commitment to ameliorating climate change. The former bemoaned that the dominance of conservative thinking made "national progress extremely difficult", while the latter set out to rebut the idea that "Windsor is a traitor".¹³⁵ In each instance, the memoirs were therefore attempts at explaining for the public and reaffirming for one's self the value of such a difficult piece of public policy.

Greens memoirists such as Brown and Milne felt compelled to write about carbon pricing in part to advocate for better reform, and in part to ensure that their own contributions were not erased from popular conceptions of political history. In a public talk at the ANU, Milne decried the fact that Gillard, in her post-prime ministerial speeches about carbon pricing, "never acknowledged that she was in a minority parliament with the Greens holding the balance of power".¹³⁶ In *An Activist Life* (2017), Milne therefore framed her CEF story in explicit terms: "Without the Greens in balance of power, [carbon pricing] would never have happened."¹³⁷ Central to Milne's writing was the assertion that, despite their neglect of the Greens' history, Labor figures felt no meaningful ownership of carbon pricing: "The point of writing those chapters was to [...] go through the sequence of events, point out why Labor has never owned that Clean Energy package, and why they've never felt at all the level of ownership and commitment to it that the Greens have".¹³⁸ Brown himself credited Milne with leading the charge on this policy front.¹³⁹ Those who had held the balance of power felt they deserved to own the legacy of carbon pricing.

Anxieties about ownership and legacy were accompanied by accusations of culpability and blame with respect to the CPRS. Manning has suggested that "Labor's hostility towards the Greens was relentless" on this question.¹⁴⁰ Labor authors heaped particular scorn on the minor party for its decision to vote alongside the Coalition against the package in December 2009. Swan equated the Greens' "self-indulgent sabotage" with the Coalition's "spineless

¹³⁵ Rob Oakeshott, *The Independent Member for Lyne: A Memoir* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2014), p. 364; Tony Windsor, *Windsor's Way* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2016), p. 101.

¹³⁶ Christine Milne, "Reflections on 'An Activist Life'", Biography Workshop at the ANU [audio file], 30 August 2018, <https://history.cass.anu.edu.au/files/audio/biography-workshop-christine-milne-reflecting-activist-life-30-august-2018-national>, accessed 12 October 2020.

¹³⁷ Christine Milne, *An Activist Life* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2017), p. 183.

¹³⁸ Milne, zoom interview, 3 December 2020.

¹³⁹ Bob Brown, *Optimism: Reflections on a Life of Action* (Richmond: Hardie Grant, 2014), p. 157.

¹⁴⁰ Manning, *Inside the Greens*, p. 270.

retreat” on emissions trading.¹⁴¹ Combet, whose memoir has been read and cited by a number of biographers and historians, put it starkly: “How different would Australian climate-change policy have been if the Greens had acted responsibly in 2009?”¹⁴² It is difficult to know whether or not any audience had its views on climate change or the history of carbon pricing swayed by these performances, but the initial effort on the part of the Australian Greens to compromise with the new Albanese Labor government on climate policy suggests that those narratives caused lingering anxiety on the part of the minor party.

The political memoir became a place for policymakers to claim a moral superiority on climate change. Rudd was by 2018 particularly keen to show that the fateful decision to abandon his emissions trading scheme in 2010 had been the fault of his most senior cabinet colleagues, Gillard and Swan. This was a narrative he had first advanced even while serving as a senior minister in Gillard’s government. In April 2011, with public hostility to Gillard’s carbon pricing package mounting, Rudd appeared on the ABC program Q&A to reveal the true story of the CPRS:

Kevin Rudd: I don’t think it’s a secret to all assembled here that there were a diversity of views within the Labor Party at the time.

Tony Jones: And within the cabinet?

Kevin Rudd: That wouldn’t be stretching the truth too far. You had some folk who wanted to get rid of it altogether. That is, kill the ETS as a future proposition for the country.¹⁴³

This performance, alluring for the public but incendiary for Gillard, was one that Rudd would sharpen and deliver later in *The Killing Season* documentary, and then again in his memoir. “I was reluctant to ride roughshod”, he wrote, “over the two most senior ministers in my government”.¹⁴⁴ Gillard and Swan had “wanted to kill it altogether”.¹⁴⁵ He accused Gillard’s

¹⁴¹ Swan, *The Good Fight*, p. 201.

¹⁴² Combet with Davis, *Fights of My Life*, p. 257. This excerpt also quoted in Simons, *Penny Wong*, p. 218.

¹⁴³ Kevin Rudd and Tony Jones quoted in ABC TV & iView, “Q&A | Kevin Rudd – I was wrong to shelve the ETS | Monday, 4 April, ABC1”, *YouTube*, 5 April 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzHwo7D6yqo>, accessed 20 October 2022.

¹⁴⁴ Rudd, *PM Years*, p. 260.

¹⁴⁵ Kevin Rudd quoted in La Trobe University, “Kevin Rudd on The PM Years – at La Trobe University”, *YouTube*, 27 October 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IY46NJcejYQ&t=912s>, accessed 20 October 2022.

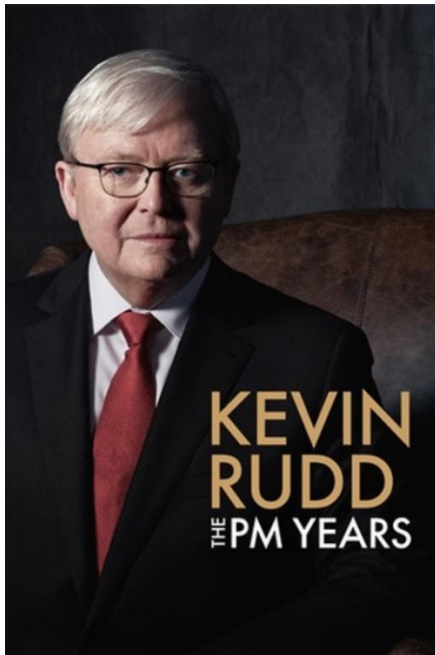


Figure 18: Front cover of Kevin Rudd's second volume of memoirs, *The PM Years*, published with Pan Macmillan, October 2018.

office of pre-emptively leaking the confidential decision to postpone the CPRS, an accusation she has always denied. This was a powerful, though not new, accusation in Rudd's memoir, and its function was to establish moral culpability on Gillard's part especially.

Emotionally charged revelations and accusations about carbon pricing dominated the peak of the memoir boom, but there were still some limits on full disclosure. Former MPs were increasingly willing to reveal much about themselves, their childhoods and their values. Emerson's memoir told a deeply moving story about his mother, her violent and suicidal tendencies, and the ways in which those experiences had shaped his character and Labor values. His message, in a nutshell, was that "behind all these titles and positions and images are just ordinary people."¹⁴⁶ But publishers wanted to balance revelation with legal caution. Milne found that her publishers at UQP had no appetite for defamation risk. "[T]hey were basically saying, 'we're not Louise Adler at Melbourne University Press, where they've got a ton of money to fight this stuff'", she recalled.¹⁴⁷ Institutional memory mattered here, no doubt; in 1983, UQP had been forced to withdraw the second volume of historian Ross Fitzgerald's history of Queensland from circulation following a libel suit levelled by Chief Justice Sir Walter Campbell who felt his "judicial independence" had been impugned by the book.¹⁴⁸ Bob Carr's *Diary of a Foreign Minister*, too, risked legal action for many reasons, particularly his reproduction of personal text messages between himself as foreign minister and Gillard as prime minister. The messages revealed their fierce dispute over Australia's policy toward Palestinian diplomacy at the United Nations. His publisher, Phillipa McGuinness, recalled that Carr and NewSouth were conscious of the legal risks and sought "specialist external advice" before publication.¹⁴⁹ More traditional documents were subject to careful regulation too. Swan recalled that a "really bad ruling from Treasury" meant that he could not access the full suite of his ministerial papers to assist with the book,

¹⁴⁶ Emerson, interview, 15 May 2018.

¹⁴⁷ Milne, zoom interview, 3 December 2020.

¹⁴⁸ Craig Munro, "Pulped! Why Book Publishing Can Be a Risky Business", *Inside Story*, 13 December 2021, <https://insidestory.org.au/pulped/>, accessed 7 January 2022.

¹⁴⁹ McGuinness, email correspondence, 19 September 2018.

unless he was willing to “sit in some bloody room at midnight” reading them under strict conditions.¹⁵⁰ Rudd, as a former prime minister, was “privileged to have had access to the cabinet record”.¹⁵¹ So even at the peak of the memoir boom, when the politics of emotion mattered enormously, there remained legal and political limits on what could be revealed, and on who could reveal it.

The Emotions of Leadership

The political memoir boom partly owed its origins to the rise of the modern leadership challenge as a political spectacle. The demise of John Gorton’s prime ministership in March 1971, and the publication of Alan Reid’s “unmerciful and unrelenting” account of it (sponsored by Australian Consolidated Press proprietor Sir Frank Packer) months later, precipitated a series of controversial newspaper articles from the ousted prime minister called “I Did It My Way” published in the *Sunday Australian*.¹⁵² According to Griffen-Foley, this memory war constituted a “new political crisis” in its own right, one that would earn Gorton a handsome fee.¹⁵³ His successor, William McMahon, would attempt to do the same after his 1972 election defeat, though unsuccessfully as Patrick Mullins has shown.¹⁵⁴ This thesis has traced the ways in which leadership tensions contributed to memoirs in the wake of the Hawke and Howard governments. The proliferation of post-prime ministerial storytelling in Australia was evidently connected with the increasing significance of party leaders and the growing “immediacy” of the contemporary “leadership spill” as a mediated event of high political drama.¹⁵⁵ The explosion of Labor memoirs in the 2010s reflected the emotional labour performed by senior figures in the party during its protracted leadership struggle.

Memoirists painted highly unflattering portraits of Rudd. Those aligned with Gillard accused Rudd of “micromanagement” (Swan, Garrett), slow or regularly-deferred decision-making, and of presiding over “shambolic” cabinet processes (Emerson).¹⁵⁶ He was simultaneously “obsessed with order and a peddler of chaos” (Button), and his office desperately competed for “ownership of the front page” each day (McKew).¹⁵⁷ Several writers

¹⁵⁰ Swan, phone interview, 10 September 2018.

¹⁵¹ Rudd, *The PM Years*, p. 602.

¹⁵² Bridget Griffen-Foley, “A Life at the Centre”, *Griffith Review*, no. 3 (2004), p. 64. See also Patrick Mullins, *Tiberius with a Telephone: The Life and Stories of William McMahon* (Brunswick: Scribe, 2018), pp. 442–48.

¹⁵³ Griffen-Foley, *Party Games*, p. 172.

¹⁵⁴ Mullins, *Tiberius*.

¹⁵⁵ Mark Bennister and Tim Heppell, “Comparing the Dynamics of Party Leadership Survival in Britain and Australia: Brown, Rudd and Gillard”, *Government and Opposition*, vol. 51, no. 1 (2016), p. 155.

¹⁵⁶ Swan, *Good Fight*, 230; Garrett, *Big Blue Sky*, 347–48; Gillard, *My Story*, 369; Combat with Davis, *Fights of My Life*, 230; Emerson, *Boy from Baradine*, 321.

¹⁵⁷ Button, *Speechless*, p. 65; McKew, *Tales*, p. 109.

criticised Rudd's "concerted campaign" (Combet) to destabilise Gillard as the "real killer" (Garrett) of his integrity, a "new kind of rot" (Swan).¹⁵⁸

Conversely, senior ministers wrote favourably about Gillard. Cabinet ministers from various states and factions described hers as a mostly collegiate style of executive leadership, and a highly effective form of government. They described "proper Cabinet structures" (Swan) overseen by a "very effective Cabinet leader" (Combet).¹⁵⁹ In their reflections on Gillard's interpersonal skills, comments varied. Where some perceived her as "collegiate" (Swan) and "true to her word" (Emerson), others described her as occasionally "icy and robotic" (Bob Carr).¹⁶⁰ To some, she led "bravely on the big policy issues", her policy commitment "rock solid" (Garrett).¹⁶¹ For others, even supporters such as Combet, her misreading of the party and electorate "let her down at times" on issues relating to gambling reform, support for Palestine, and same sex marriage.¹⁶² But the personality judgements largely favoured Gillard as leader. Bob Carr was unusual insofar as he "didn't want to put a pro-Rudd or pro-Gillard stamp on what had happened."¹⁶³

Gillard loyalism notwithstanding, the sheer trauma of the 2010 leadership change, and the electoral outcomes that followed, made for powerful storytelling. During Gillard's prime ministership, a narrative quickly emerged in which Rudd's removal had been engineered by an "ambitious deputy" joining forces with the "faceless men" of the factions. The first MP to advance this narrative in the form of a political memoir was McKew, a Rudd loyalist elected in 2007. Interviewed for this research, she said that while she "didn't see [herself] as his chronicler", she felt it important to challenge what she perceived to be the "incomplete" account of June 2010 given by the architects of the challenge itself.¹⁶⁴ Importantly, McKew wrote and published the book in 2012 at a moment when "things were not going well" for the Gillard government.¹⁶⁵ Gillard politely but firmly warned McKew at the time that "'none of this is helpful to my government or the Labor Party'".¹⁶⁶ Narratives such as McKew's accentuated an

¹⁵⁸ Combet with Davis, *Fights of My Life*, 278; Peter Garrett, "Peter Garrett", *YouTube*, 28 October 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qet2xbrebY&t=1480s>, accessed 3 June 2019; Swan, *The Good Fight*, 281.

¹⁵⁹ Swan, *Good Fight*, p. 306; Combet with Davis, *Fights of My Life*, p. 3.

¹⁶⁰ Swan, *Good Fight*, p. 262; Emerson, *Boy from Baradine*, p. 302; Bob Carr, *Diary of a Foreign Minister* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014), p. 236.

¹⁶¹ Swan, *Good Fight*, p. 306, Garrett, *Big Blue Sky*, p. 403.

¹⁶² Combet with Davis, *Fights of My Life*, pp. 242–43.

¹⁶³ Bob Carr, interview, 7 May 2018.

¹⁶⁴ McKew, zoom interview, 13 October 2020.

¹⁶⁵ McKew, zoom interview, 13 October 2020.

¹⁶⁶ McKew, zoom interview, 13 October 2020.

emotional rhetoric of injustice surrounding Rudd's removal. A former journalist, she was formidable at marshalling evidence, but the emotions clearly mattered too.

What made this body of memoirs so distinct was their authors' tendencies to deploy emotional rather than political or electoral logic to explain leadership conflict. Swan claimed that Rudd was "prone to vengeful behaviour" and "intolerant of debate or dispute" inside his government.¹⁶⁷ Garrett called Rudd a "poll-driven control freak" who "really was a brute".¹⁶⁸ And of course, Gillard's account of the breakdown in her relationship with Rudd placed emotional politics at its core. Curnow recalled that "there was always the little concern" about the prospect of a defamation suit against Random House.¹⁶⁹ Conscious of this, and encouraging Gillard's own lawyerly instincts, Curnow advised the first-time author against saying that "Kevin was depressed": "certainly we had to rewrite some bits and pieces, and Julia was incredibly gracious and quick to re-look at things or cut little bits, just to be careful".¹⁷⁰ But even so, *My Story* explained the removal of Rudd with heavy reliance on emotional forces. Rudd was, in Gillard's account, a man clearly "not coping" after the failure of the Copenhagen Climate Conference in December 2009, and who "appeared to hate every minute of his day" by mid-2010.¹⁷¹ These narratives invited the assumption that Gillard had been loyal to Rudd and unselfish in her efforts to keep his government afloat. Journalist Kerry O'Brien later remarked that Gillard had rendered herself "a saint" in her book.¹⁷² But these narratives did enjoy public purchase, not only in *The Killing Season* documentary, but also in journalistic histories of the period. Australian journalist Troy Bramston felt that "the weight" of Labor's memoirs was "overwhelmingly on the Gillard side".¹⁷³ In all of these stories, and increasingly in popular consciousness, emotional shortcomings performed an extraordinary amount of explanatory work with respect to Rudd's downfall.

These narratives were, in turn, cause for extraordinary anguish in some quarters. In the first volume of his memoir, Rudd complained about the "minor phalanx of [...] political adversaries" conducting what he perceived to be "an almost orchestrated defenestration of my character".¹⁷⁴ In particular, he found Gillard's performance as "psychologist-in-chief" hard to

¹⁶⁷ Swan, *The Good Fight*, p. 228, p. 230.

¹⁶⁸ Garrett, *Big Blue Sky*, p. 348.

¹⁶⁹ Curnow, phone interview, 2 April 2020.

¹⁷⁰ Curnow, phone interview, 2 April 2020.

¹⁷¹ Gillard, *My Story*, pp. 16–17.

¹⁷² Kerry O'Brien, *A Memoir* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2018), p. 749.

¹⁷³ Bramston, interview, 19 September 2018.

¹⁷⁴ Rudd, *Not For the Faint-hearted*, p. 570.

bear.¹⁷⁵ He prosecuted his own version of history in interviews Kelly's *Triumph and Demise*, and more powerfully in interviews for *The Killing Season*. Ferguson later described Rudd's "relentless message about the faceless men and Julia Gillard's betrayal" in her interviews with him.¹⁷⁶ But Rudd's literary retribution came in waves. His first volume, *Not for the Faint-hearted* (2017), offered not only an account of his childhood, education and years in the public service, but also his years in opposition. Several chapters were absorbed with a systematic attack on the Howard government's legacy, but there was still ample room for severe character assessments of internal factional opponents such as Swan, Stephen Smith and Stephen Conroy (known as the "Roosters" who had repeatedly mobilised in support of Kim Beazley's leadership aspirations). But it was Rudd's second volume, *The PM Years*, which best reflected his emotions.

Rudd's memoir was less effective than it might otherwise have been because it relied heavily on historiographic posturing that scarcely concealed the bitterness beneath. He argued that Gillard had "worked actively and secretly with the faceless men during the first six months of 2010 to achieve her ambitions".¹⁷⁷ Gillard and Swan's absence from a prime ministerial Christmas party in 2009 was cited as a particularly ominous sign of things to come.¹⁷⁸ Responding to accusations that he had undermined Gillard after 2010, Rudd asserted that he was "just not interested" in reclaiming the leadership between 2010 and February 2012, and that Gillard's prime ministership was itself a phenomenon of "roiling chaos" for which he was unfairly held responsible.¹⁷⁹ In the process of writing his account of the 2010 leadership change, Rudd harvested all of the "public reporting" that supported his arguments against Gillard and Swan, making extensive use of Ferguson's documentary interviews as well as contemporaneous "public reporting".¹⁸⁰ Across five forensic chapters, Rudd put the testimonies of Gillard, Swan, powerbroker Mark Arbib, national secretary Karl Bitar and others on trial, promising to assess the "evidence on which their claims are based".¹⁸¹ But his arguments about the past surprised nobody. Instead, it was his personal feelings about the leadership change, eight years after the fact, that mattered. "Kevin Rudd", the *MamaMia* news website said a little ironically, "Isn't

¹⁷⁵ Rudd, *PM Years*, p. 332.

¹⁷⁶ Ferguson with Drum, *Killing Season: Uncut*, p. 299.

¹⁷⁷ Swan, *Good Fight*, 236; Rudd, *PM Years*, xv.

¹⁷⁸ Rudd, *PM Years*, p. 232.

¹⁷⁹ Rudd, *PM Years*, 490, 521.

¹⁸⁰ Rudd, *PM Years*, p. 602.

¹⁸¹ Rudd, *PM Years*, p. xvi.

Bitter Anymore”.¹⁸² Rudd told an interviewer for the *Sydney Morning Herald* that he refused to be “bitter and twisted” about it all, but on this score, the journalist felt that “it’s hard to know what to make of Kevin Rudd”.¹⁸³ Rudd repeated himself in half a dozen radio appearances around Australia, the frequency undermining the claim.

The debates about leadership in Labor’s memoirs did have at least one overt public consequence. On 26 June 2013, as the party removed Gillard from office, there were already signs that a period of national introspection on gender politics would follow. The Ten network’s late news bulletin opened with the announcement that “the nation’s first female prime minister was thrown out of office by a resurgent Kevin Rudd”.¹⁸⁴ Gillard herself famously declared in her final media conference that gender “doesn’t explain everything” and “doesn’t explain nothing” about her prime ministership.¹⁸⁵ In correspondence for this research, Gillard said that she “was troubled that young women were saying what happened to me was discouraging them from considering going into politics. I wanted my book to come out quickly and be the case in reply”.¹⁸⁶ There were certainly some positive conclusions about the future of women in politics in her chapter on that subject. And in their promotional efforts, Gillard and Random House explicitly appealed to that sentiment. Launching the book, Australia’s first woman governor-general, Dame Quentin Bryce, located Gillard’s premiership in the longer history of women’s political advancement, publicly assuring the former prime minister that her example would “make a difference” in the future.¹⁸⁷ The launch was followed by an “exceptional” book tour, in Gillard’s recollection, where “people lined up sometimes for well over an hour, to say hello and have their copy signed”.¹⁸⁸ Her exclusive interview with Ray Martin for the Nine Network afforded her an opportunity to project her gendered narrative into the living rooms of households across the country. When Penguin Random House released cheaper paperback issues and reprints in 2015 and 2019, Curnow and her marketing team hoped that “young

¹⁸² Mia Freedman, “Kevin Rudd Isn’t Bitter Anymore”, *MamaMia*, <https://www.mamamia.com.au/podcasts/no-filter/kevin-rudd-isn-t-bitter-anymore/>, accessed 10 February 2022.

¹⁸³ Karen Hardy, “Kevin Rudd: ‘There’s a Tension Between Forgiveness and Not Forgetting’”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 October 2018.

¹⁸⁴ Channel 10, “Rudd Wins Back Leadership”, *YouTube*, 27 June 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLPvDbVI_hA, accessed 20 October 2022.

¹⁸⁵ ABC News (Australia), “Gillard Proud of Her Legacy as Prime Minister”, *YouTube*, 26 June 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0uhHuEw8LY>, accessed 26 January 2023, 7:26.

¹⁸⁶ Gillard, email correspondence, 23 April 2018.

¹⁸⁷ Quentin Bryce, Speech at the Launch of Julia Gillard’s *My Story*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 26 September 2014, *AustralianPolitics.com – Farnsworth Online Archive*, 26 September 2014, <https://bit.ly/2riSGas>, accessed and downloaded 28 June 2019.

¹⁸⁸ Gillard, email correspondence, 23 April 2018.

people” and particularly “young women who are finishing school or university” might buy them.¹⁸⁹

In time, *My Story* became just one piece of Gillard’s much broader corpus of cultural messaging around women and power. She published two more books about women and leadership, launched a podcast called *A Podcast of One’s Own* (the title a nod to Virginia Wolf), and established the Global Institute for Women’s Leadership based in King’s College London, and affiliated as of 2019 with the ANU as well. She contributed to other cultural projects about



Figure 19: Former governor-general Dame Quentin Bryce and former prime minister Julia Gillard at the launch of the latter's memoir, *My Story*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 26 September 2014. AAP Photos, Dean Lewins.

women in power such as Annabel Crabb’s ABC documentary series *Ms Represented* (2021) and former minister Kate Ellis’s book *Sex, Lies and Question Time* (2021).¹⁹⁰ At each turn, her stories of sexist delegitimation as prime minister were amplified for and received by an ever-larger and increasingly attentive audience. In a matter of just six years, Gillard seemed transformed from treacherous and lying Lady Macbeth into a global ambassador for women’s leadership.

¹⁸⁹ Curnow, phone interview, 2 April 2020.

¹⁹⁰ Annabel Crabb, creator, *Ms Represented with Annabel Crabb*, eps. 1—4, TV documentary, ABC, 2021; Kate Ellis, *Sex, Lies and Question Time* (Richmond: Hardie Grant, 2021).

In the end, it seemed to be the question of gender on which the success of these performances turned. By 2020 *My Story* had reportedly sold more than 75,000 copies, and had been re-issued twice.¹⁹¹ By way of contrast, Rudd's titles combined had allegedly sold fewer than 13,900 units.¹⁹² Figures such as Swan and Combet sold approximately 5,000 copies (not an unsuccessful volume for the Australian book market), while those who waited longer to publish sold even less.¹⁹³ In Sydney, where Carr remained a largely esteemed public figure, the *Diary of a Foreign Minister* sold more than 11,000 copies and remained a subject of media conversation for several weeks.¹⁹⁴ The speed and coordination of Gillard's version of history in particular, and the gendered nature of her story, gave Rudd cause for concern. When *My Story* was first published, Rudd issued a media statement (ostensibly to announce his new role as co-chair of the Independent Commission on Multilateralism at the International Peace Institute) in which he railed against "Ms Gillard's latest contribution to Australian fiction".¹⁹⁵ Rudd continued to use subtly gendered stereotyping to discredit Gillard's account of the past, asserting in *The Killing Season* that Gillard had "a problem with sincerity. Julia is such a disciplined political player that she has almost in her mind a scripted answer to any question".¹⁹⁶ Some men, reviewing Gillard's memoir, were less subtle. Kelly claimed that Gillard's efforts to be seen as the victim of misogyny were "nonsense" and gave the book "a delusional theme".¹⁹⁷ But it was precisely that theme which gave the book its long-term purchase in the public sphere.

A bevy of other political books were produced in support of Gillard's arguments about gender and power. In July 2013 Kerry-Ann Walsh published her diary about Gillard's prime ministership, in which she argued that "[i]f ever the deck was stacked against someone, it was Gillard".¹⁹⁸ Launching that book, Oakeshott praised Walsh's attempt to "have a look at what went on" behind the scenes against Gillard.¹⁹⁹ Gillard's speechwriter Michael Cooney produced a book, *The Gillard Project* (2015), on the premise that her government's "policy project" was

¹⁹¹ Troy Bramston, "Turnbull's Tome a Political Bestseller", *Weekend Australian*, 25 April 2020, p. 3.

¹⁹² Bramston, "Turnbull's Tome a Political Bestseller", p. 3.

¹⁹³ Troy Bramston, "Kevin Rudd Short on Tenure, Long on Words", *Weekend Australian*, 22 July 2017.

¹⁹⁴ Bramston, "Short on Tenure, Long on Words".

¹⁹⁵ "Kevin Rudd Dismisses Julia Gillard's Memoir as a Work of 'Fiction'", *ABC News*, 24 September 2014, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-24/kevin-rudd-dismisses-julia-gillard27s-memoir-as-a-work-of-27f/5767096>, accessed 20 October 2022.

¹⁹⁶ Kevin Rudd quoted in Ferguson with Drum, *The Killing Season: Uncut*, p. 161.

¹⁹⁷ Kelly, "Introduction to the New Edition", *Triumph and Demise*, p. x, p. xiii.

¹⁹⁸ Walsh, *Stalking of Julia Gillard*, p. xiii.

¹⁹⁹ Rob Oakeshott quoted in "New Gillard Book Describes Media as Rudd Pawns", *ABC News*, 3 July 2013, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-07-02/new-gillard-book-describes-media-as-rudd-pawns/4793084>, accessed 19 October 2020.

ultimately “more interesting and more relevant [...] than the politics of the Labor caucus”.²⁰⁰ These descriptions, however, belie that book’s emotional imperatives. At his book launch, Cooney struck a hagiographic tone, saying of his experience in politics, “it was worth it, and it was worth it because of her”.²⁰¹ Mary Delahunty, a former Victorian Labor minister and journalist who was allowed to observe Gillard at close quarters during her final year, also produced an inside account of Gillard’s tenure.²⁰² Reviewers described her as a “Gillard admirer, though not a cheerleader”.²⁰³ “[W]hat unnerved me”, Delahunty wrote, “was the crude sexism, powered by the internet and fostered by political opponents, that seeped into public debate”.²⁰⁴ Echoing Gillard’s memoir, Delahunty discussed the personal implications of sexism in public life, the necessity of a deep wellspring of “resilience”, the capacity to “[get] out of bed every morning, put on her lipstick and political armour” and so forth.²⁰⁵ In this formulation, sexism in politics was not an abstract phenomenon in public life, but also a deeply personal experience. These publications modestly amplified the gendered narrative that Gillard offered in *My Story*, and helped to create an environment in which that narrative could take firm root in the public imagination.

Rudd’s ongoing efforts to discredit Gillard were ultimately unsuccessful. In *The PM Years* he suggested that Gillard had been critical of or neglectful toward her women colleagues as deputy prime minister, was “agnostic on the question of gender”, and had been “nonplussed” about Bryce’s appointment as the first woman governor-general.²⁰⁶ Rudd argued that there were “in fact two Gillards”, one of whom was easy-going, affable”, the other a “political chameleon” who was “devoid of fundamental philosophical beliefs”.²⁰⁷ Reviewers and interviewers paid relatively little notice of this rhetoric, a sign perhaps that Gillard’s feminist narratives were already ascendant in public consciousness. Rudd’s publishers pointedly made the 2010 leadership challenge (“the coup that killed Australian politics”) a central feature of their

²⁰⁰ Michael Cooney, “Q+A: Michael Cooney”, *ANU Reporter*, vol. 46, no. 3 (2015), <https://reporter.anu.edu.au/qa-michael-cooney>, accessed 16 October 2020. For the book see Michael Cooney, *The Gillard Project: My Thousand Days of Despair and Hope* (Melbourne: Penguin, 2015).

²⁰¹ Michael Cooney, Speech at the Launch of *The Gillard Project*, Sydney, 28 April 2015, <https://www.chifley.org.au/michael-cooneys-thanks-to-former-pm-gillard-at-the-launch-of-the-gillard-project/>, accessed 12 October 2020.

²⁰² Mary Delahunty, *Gravity: Inside the PM’s Office During Her Last Year and Final Days* (Melbourne: Hardie Grant, 2014).

²⁰³ Gay Alcorn, “Mary Delahunty and the View from Julia Gillard’s Inner Sanctum”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 July 2014, <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/mary-delahunty-and-the-view-from-julia-gillards-inner-sanctum-20140717-ztzde.html>, accessed 10 October 2022.

²⁰⁴ Delahunty, *Gravity*, p. xix.

²⁰⁵ Delahunty, *Gravity*, p. 48.

²⁰⁶ Rudd, *PM Years*, p. 54.

²⁰⁷ Rudd, *PM Years*, pp. 381–82.

marketing campaign, but with relatively little impact. As Robert Manne put it, “[f]our months after publication, [Rudd’s] silence has not really ended”.²⁰⁸

That silence was also symptomatic of a broader fatigue with the memoir boom. Mark Rubbo, proprietor of the independent Readings book retail chain in Melbourne, told the press in 2016 that “it seemed as if there had been an endless series of memoirs that had had little significance”.²⁰⁹ When media speculation erupted about a possible memoir from disgraced former deputy prime minister Barnaby Joyce in April 2018, publishers advised inquisitive reporters that it was “getting harder to sell these types of books”, and that sales were scarcely “setting the world on fire”.²¹⁰ In the wake of the Rudd—Gillard conflict and Labor’s literary flood, it seemed that there was little room left in the memoir market for political trauma, or for narratives positioning the modern politician as victim of a toxic working environment.

Conclusion

The turbulent politics of the Rudd—Gillard years culminated in the rapid proliferation of parliamentarians’ memoirs, autobiographies and diaries. The intensification of various causes of conflict made the 2010s a distinctly emotional period in which to make policy, especially policy that related to seemingly intractable issues such as climate change. A generation of well-educated progressives departed politics *en masse* after 2013, and many of them moved into the open arms of a publishing industry who felt that these stories were safe bets in an uncertain market environment. The politicians worried that they would occupy an unhappy place in the annals of Australian political history unless they took action to rewrite that history themselves. In doing so, these politicians performed a series of counter-framing manoeuvres. They portrayed the media as inadequate and biased, they defended their carbon pricing policy by revealing new truths and apportioning blame, and they tried to fashion the traumatic leadership contest between Rudd and Gillard into stories with which they could live.

The very genre of the political memoir appeared to transform under the emotional weight of this generation’s narratives. Labor ministers set a new precedent in “speedy post facto autobiography”, though critics suggested in Gillard’s case that “a better book might have come with distance”.²¹¹ The lists of citations and endnotes began to lengthen at the back of the books,

²⁰⁸ Robert Manne, “Rats, Heroes and Kevin Rudd’s ‘The PM Years’”, *Monthly*, March 2019, <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2019/march/1551445200/robert-manne/rats-heroes-and-kevin-rudd-s-pm-years#mtr>, accessed 8 January 2020.

²⁰⁹ Steger, “Have Australian Readers Had Enough”.

²¹⁰ Dana McCauley, “Unpopular Joyce Finally Finds a Publisher”, *Australian*, 23 April 2018, p. 24.

²¹¹ Black, “‘Our Side of the Story’”. P. 70; Ferguson with Drum, *The Killing Season: Uncut*, p. 70.

and authors pointed to these as evidence of the honesty and integrity of their accounts. Moreover, several of the authors shared draft chapters and manuscripts in the hope of protecting friendships and avoiding significant contradictions. References to helpful colleagues proliferated in the acknowledgements sections of these books, a sure sign that getting the narrative right really mattered to the political and personal relationships that the authors valued. And underlying all of this was an increasing tendency to offer sweeping personal and emotional judgements that purported to be “History” rather than mere recollection or opinion. Scalmer noted that long before 2010, politicians were treating memoirs as vehicles of history.²¹² In the 2010s, those assertions of historicity became increasingly forthright and occasionally aggressive in tone. The genre itself seemed increasingly transformed by the embittered emotional dynamics of Australian political culture in the 2010s.

To some extent, the peak of the memoir boom did shift the narrative ecology of mainstream politics. Gillard, for her part, was highly successful in cultivating a reputation as a champion of women’s leadership on a local and global scale. If there was any nostalgia in the decade after 2013, it was a nostalgia that lauded her coolness under pressure and dignity in the face of disgraceful sexism. Rudd’s memoirs were less accessible by virtue of their size and style, and less effectively promoted to public audiences. His memoirs and his book tour, however, did contribute in some way to a national conversation about Rupert Murdoch and his media empire, which in June 2013 had been rebranded News Corp Australia as part of a global reorganisation of the mogul’s assets.²¹³ Rudd’s calls for a Royal Commission on the subject fell on deaf ears, but he was successful in catalysing a parliamentary inquiry, and was joined in this by his former opponent and fellow “miserable ghost” Malcolm Turnbull. None of the memoirists, though, could solve the climate policy deadlock with their writings.

At its core, the peak of the memoir boom occurred in response to the emotionally taxing experience of progressive politics in a culture whose narrative ecology was fundamentally opposed. The bitterness and anguish that parliamentarians felt toward their colleagues and their antagonists in the media explained the significance of the political memoir genre to them personally. For Rudd, the emotional imperative was greater than most, and autobiography was for him an opportunity to “exercise a right of reply”.²¹⁴ Gillard, too, saw her political memoir as a project of immense personal meaning: “I knew it would stand as my version of history”.²¹⁵

²¹² Scalmer, “Rise of the Insider”, pp. 92—95.

²¹³ Rodney Tiffen, *Rupert Murdoch: A Reassessment* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2013), p. 15.

²¹⁴ Rudd, Launch of *The PM Years*.

²¹⁵ Gillard, email correspondence, 23 April 2018.

For ministers, MPs, staff and minor party figures, the intense emotional labour of politics under Rudd and Gillard meant that political autobiography and memoir writing were a natural recourse after departure. In this way, Labor figures perceived the culture of their party and movement to have changed over time. Interviewed for this research, former minister Kim Carr suggested that progressives had a distinct tradition of “left-wing argument or style” but had not documented “the indiscretions of their colleagues” or their “psychological disposition”.²¹⁶ In the 2010s, these emotional disputes were the lifeblood of the political memoir genre. As Simons put it, the personal was consistently “tangled with the political”.²¹⁷ And it was often very personal indeed.

²¹⁶ Kim Carr, interview, 30 July 2021.

²¹⁷ Simons, *Penny Wong*, p. 241.

SNAPSHOT 7

Saving the Last Dance?

Without being too meticulous about the sequential order of the interviews I conducted, I knew that the schedule did matter. Claire Wright and Simon Ville have noted that relationships between oral historians and their informants are “embedded in a specific social and cultural context”.¹ Where multiple interviews are being conducted by a sole researcher, the order of those interviews forms an important part of that social and cultural context, because the order influences the kinds of questions the researcher is armed with and therefore the knowledge that later conversations might generate.

My schedule largely followed the chapter structure of the thesis. I knew that ageing members of the Hawke—Keating years were more urgent than the rest, a point reaffirmed by Hawke’s passing in May 2019. Some of his former colleagues had suffered significant health problems, and their time was not a limitless commodity. The sudden passing of Susan Ryan less than a fortnight after speaking with me for this thesis, and the passing of John Kerin two days before submission, were distressing reminders that the sequence had not been immaterial to me.

At the outset, I knew who I wanted to interview last. Louise Adler, as has already been established, is a critical figure in this research. A proactive and media-savvy publisher over a long period, she virtually made this genre of publishing her own in Australia. In the chapter that follows, I will augment my explanation of how she did that, and with what political and material effects. But I knew that her testimony would likely inform every chapter of this thesis to some extent. It was worth waiting until I had a firm handle on all of the subject matter before interviewing her.

There was also the matter of the archives. In Adler’s case, the University of Melbourne Archives held interesting material including draft manuscripts that bore her marginalia and comments. But those sources were closed, and my efforts to build a relationship with the Archives and get access to them were repeatedly frustrated by COVID-19 and its impact on

¹ Claire Wright and Simon Ville, “The Evolution of an Intellectual Community Through the Words of Its Founders: Recollections of Australia’s Economic History Field”, *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 57, no. 3 (2017), p. 347.

Melbourne. The lockdowns passed, but the access restrictions did not, so my dependence on her testimony became that little bit greater.

I also wanted to wait until the controversy surrounding her tenure at MUP was less immediate. In the month that I commenced this doctorate at the ANU, Adler and her peers controversially resigned from the Board of MUP after a formal review of its activities and an acrimonious debate about its role as an academic publisher. Adler treated the University's revised vision for MUP, which included re-emphasising academic publishing, to be a want of confidence in her leadership.

My earliest conversations for this thesis with historians and politicians alike were dominated by that controversy. In a memorable phone call, one widely respected politician described the academy's treatment of Adler as "insidious". Academics, on the other hand, expressed a sense of relief that Adler's iteration of MUP had been terminated. As Stuart Kells put it, "bottled-up feelings burst forth" after the board's resignation, with Adler's critics (particularly in Melbourne) overwhelmingly pleased to see the back of what they perceived to be "airport trash" publishing.²

I wanted to capture Adler's recollections without being caught in the polarities of that debate. But there were still tensions that needed to be considered as we approached our interview in January 2022. Adler took me at my word that I was pursuing serious research and not an attack piece masquerading as scholarship, and I have striven to live up to that ideal in the chapter that follows. But at so many points the opposing portraits of Adler continued to be reflected back at me by other participants. Politicians still gushed effusively, and fellow historians still arched their eyebrows and made pointed, sometimes scathing, remarks.

I have attempted to examine analytically the work of MUP under Adler's leadership. I allowed her own distinctive performance as a publisher to take centre stage, and I sought to understand the cultural and commercial logic that she brought to her role, in the terms that she articulated it. I have attempted to be critical but not cruel, clear-eyed but not callous. Adler was uniquely generous with her time and unfailingly courteous in her responses to my questions. Prior to my submission, we discussed some of the conclusions that I had arrived at, and while she disagreed with a number of them, she respected my academic autonomy. My aspiration here is not to cast moral aspersions on Adler or MUP, nor on her critics, but rather to explain how and why an academic publisher found itself at the centre of media discourse as the

² Stuart Kells, *MUP: A Centenary History* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2023), p. 395.

foremost publisher of a distinct political genre. Intellectually it is a difficult dance, and it is not incidental that I have saved it for last.

CHAPTER 7

“MORE THAN JUST A BOOK TOUR”

Performing and Publishing Political Ambition in Australia, 2008—2018

“Sometimes a book tour is more than just a book tour”, American political consultant Chris Lehane said to reporters in October 2006.¹ He was referring to Illinois senator Barack Obama, whose new book *The Audacity of Hope* was creating waves in the Democratic Party and the American press. According to Obama, publishers approached him to produce *Audacity* after his keynote speech at the Democratic National Convention in 2004 had catapulted his earlier memoir, *Dreams from My Father* (1995), “to the top of the bestseller list”.² In May 2006, with the manuscript for *Audacity* still unfinished, promotional activity commenced with excerpt releases, stories in newspapers, and a public appearance at the highly politicised BookExpo America forum.³ The book itself was launched in early October, and the frenetic book tour – featuring headline interviews with Oprah Winfrey, Charlie Rose, Larry King and others – coincided with a mid-term Congressional election in which Obama took centre-stage.⁴ “Behind the scenes of the book tour”, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported, “Mr Obama is occasionally meeting in private with some of the movers and shakers in the Democratic Party to discuss the prospects of a presidential bid in 2008”.⁵ Undoubtedly, the book played a role in “shaping perceptions” of the young senator “as a man and potential president”.⁶ Obama secured the Democratic nomination and then the presidency, and more importantly for the Crown Publishing Group, sold 7 million copies of his books in North America along the way.⁷

¹ Chris Lehane quoted in Scott Shephard, “Obama’s Book Tour Ignites Speculation on His Plans for 2008”, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 26 October 2006.

² Barack Obama, *A Promised Land* (New York: Viking, 2020), p. 54.

³ “Enough Top Talent to Make a Wave?”, *The Hotline*, 31 March 2006; Hillel Italie, “Left and Right to Gather This Weekend at BookExpo America”, *Associated Press*, 17 May 2006; Dennis Conrad, “Excerpts from Obama’s Upcoming Book Released”, *Associated Press*, 19 May 2006.

⁴ Charlie Rose, “A Conversation With Senator Barack Obama”, *Charlie Rose Show*, 19 October 2006; Larry King, “Interview With Barack Obama”, *CNN: Larry King Live*, 19 October 2006; Shephard, “Obama’s Book Tour Ignites Speculation on His Plans for 2008”, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 26 October 2006; David Brooks, “Run, Barack, Run”, *New York Times*, 19 October 2006.

⁵ Shephard, “Obama’s Book Tour Ignites Speculation on His Plans for 2008”, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 26 October 2006.

⁶ Darren G. Lilleker, “Autobiography and Political Marketing: Narrative and the Obama Brand”, in Bronwen Thomas and Julia Round (eds.), *Real Lives, Celebrity Stories: Narratives of Ordinary and Extraordinary People Across Media* (New York: Bloomsbury: 2014), p. 135.

⁷ Stephanie Merry, “Not That It’s a Race, but Michelle Obama’s Book is Going to Sell More than Both of Barack’s”, *Washington Post*, 29 March 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/not-that-its->

It is not surprising that Australian MPs produced memoirs, autobiographies, histories and manifestos in significant numbers in the years after *Audacity*. Perhaps more surprising is that the MPs who rushed into print did so with a culturally esteemed university press, namely MUP led by its formidable CEO Louise Adler. These books were naturally less profitable (and some less readable) than Obama's books, but they nonetheless constituted an important component of the political memoir boom in Australia, particularly in the decade after 2008. In a decade of heightened public cynicism, these autobiographical manifestos and mid-career books functioned as "an extension of the politician's media arsenal".⁸

Politicians have been collectively subject to loathing and cynicism in Australian society virtually as long as they have existed, but the personalisation of political discourse by the 2000s meant that politicians' identities needed to be "carefully packaged [...] to ensure that their presentation of self matches the expectations of the media and the public".⁹ I refer again to the renegotiation of the "boundary between public and private" spheres in the 1970s.¹⁰ Autobiographical manifestos and mid-career memoirs are products of that cultural transformation, enabling politicians to "present blueprints for action and talking points, fables of origin and performances of credentials, testaments to character".¹¹ In a culture where citizens are "increasingly being asked to judge the actions and policies of our political leaders on the basis of their character alone", parliamentarians of all persuasions have been willing participants in the literary performance of political ambition, seizing the opportunity to construct new selfhoods, distract from reputational risks, and to stake a claim to significance in the contemporary political din.¹²

Very few of these publications eased their authors' paths to power, but they afforded MUP a unique and influential position among the political class. In this chapter, I argue that the autobiographical manifestos of the early twenty-first century were a variety of "political gimmick" (in Sean Scalmer's sense of that term) from which MUP benefited as much as or

[a-race-but-michelle-obamas-book-is-going-to-sell-more-than-both-of-baracks/2019/03/29/7dde87b8-519a-11e9-a3f7-78b7525a8d5f_story.html](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/03/29/a-race-but-michelle-obamas-book-is-going-to-sell-more-than-both-of-baracks/2019/03/29/7dde87b8-519a-11e9-a3f7-78b7525a8d5f_story.html), accessed 8 January 2023.

⁸ Mark McKenna, "'The Character Business': Biographical Political Writing in Australia", in Stuart Macintyre, Lenore Layman and Jenny Gregory (eds.), *A Historian for All Seasons: Essays for Geoffrey Bolton* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2017), p. 65.

⁹ Jackie Dickenson, *Trust Me: Australians and Their Politicians* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2013), pp. 252—53.

¹⁰ Michelle Arrow, *The Seventies: The Personal, the Political and the Making of Modern Australia* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2019), p. 4.

¹¹ Sidonie Smith, "Autobiographical Discourses in the Theatres of Politics", *Biography*, vol. 33, no. 1 (2010), p. x.

¹² McKenna, "Character Business", p. 69.

more than its authors.¹³ Adler was earnest in her efforts to facilitate new avenues of political debate, though MUP increasingly seemed similar to the public opinion samplers and advertising consultants of the twentieth century, treating the personality and reputation of the ambitious politician as a tradeable commodity. Some of these politicians made for pedestrian authors, but Adler herself delivered a remarkable performance as Australia's foremost political publisher in the early twenty-first century, developing along the way what seemed to others "an entirely new genre of Australian political writing [with] these more mid-career books".¹⁴ Her name and brand were indelibly tied to the new forays that MUP was making and the authors it was soliciting. In striving to publish books that would contribute to public and partisan debate (or at the very least stimulate political intrigue in Canberra), Adler walked a tightrope between extraordinary media visibility and, later, underwhelming market performance. By 2018, as the University of Melbourne re-evaluated the mission of its press and new academic leadership emerged, it seemed likely that Adler and her colleagues were destined for departure sooner rather than later. But in producing these books, MUP occupied a unique place in Australian political discourse for more than a decade.¹⁵

Certain qualifications matter in the analysis that follows. First, the packaging of the politician as "celebrity" was not novel in the 2000s. Antoine Lilti has shown that celebrity mattered even in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century polities.¹⁶ The genre of political biography or pen portraiture, in Australia and elsewhere, assumed that contemporary politics could be explained through the lives and characters of leaders.¹⁷ If we are dealing with something novel in this chapter, it is the medium rather than the mode of personality politics, and a difference in degree rather than a difference in kind. Attempting to seize an audience for more than the fleeting moment of a sound-bite, the parliamentarian's book functioned in the same way as the earlier radio "fireside chat" or the national television address, for it cultivated attention,

¹³ See Sean Scalmer, *Dissent Events: Protest, the Media and the Political Gimmick in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002).

¹⁴ Emily Hart, zoom interview with the author, 9 November 2021.

¹⁵ For elaboration of human and symbolic capital, see John B. Thompson, *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), pp. 5—10.

¹⁶ Antoine Lilti, *The Invention of Celebrity, 1750 – 1850*, trans. Lynn Jeffress (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), p. 163.

¹⁷ Chris Wallace, *Political Lives: Australian Prime Ministers and Their Biographers* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2023).

bolstered credentials, and strived for what Bridget Griffen-Foley has called the “illusion of intimacy” between politicians and the public.¹⁸

Second, performances of ambition were largely monopolised by the white men who continued to dominate federal parliament in this period. Aboriginal activists had long used novel forms of performance and expression to convey their aspirations in a settler colonial society that was not always ready to hear them.¹⁹ But when Australia’s first Aboriginal federal politician senator Neville Bonner sought ministerial promotion in the late 1970s, he was met with the crude attitude that “[h]is being the first Aborigine in Parliament is enough”.²⁰ White men were hardly more accommodating toward white women MPs, whose expressions of ambition were fraught with political risk. In 2006 the ambitious Labor shadow minister Julia Gillard was featured in an episode of *Australian Story*, in which she criticised then-leader Kim Beazley and described herself as “single-minded and focussed”.²¹ Her agenda was none too subtle, and her colleague Kevin Rudd subsequently suggested that the episode caused Gillard “some internal damage in the caucus”.²² As in the United States, Australians could be quick to dismiss an ambitious woman as “monstrous”.²³

MediatISING Political Ambition

Political practices and technologies are not bound by national borders. Activists and protestors from various social movements in the twentieth century proved effective at the “transfer of political campaigns and techniques” across political and cultural spaces.²⁴ By the same token, politicians and political professionals were capable of emulating new political techniques from abroad too. Australian stump oratory, public opinion polling and the “fireside chat” broadcast were all influenced by earlier American experimentation.²⁵ The Australian autobiographical

¹⁸ Bridget Griffen-Foley, “The ‘Fireside Chat’ on Australian Radio”, in Bridget Griffen-Foley and Sean Scalmer (eds.), *Public Opinion, Campaign Politics and Media Audiences: New Australian Perspectives* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2017), p. 146.

¹⁹ See Bain Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2003).

²⁰ Senator Reg Withers quoted in Angela Burger, *Neville Bonner: A Biography* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 163–64.

²¹ Ross Peake, “Gillard Floats Her Leadership Ambitions, Criticizes Beazley’s Style”, *Canberra Times*, 7 March 2006, p. 2.

²² Kevin Rudd, *Not For the Faint-hearted: A Personal Reflection on Life, Politics and Purpose* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2017), p. 434.

²³ Sidonie Smith, “‘America’s Exhibit A’: Hillary Rodham Clinton’s *Living History* and the Genres of Authenticity”, *American Literary History*, vol. 24, no. 2 (2012), p. 538.

²⁴ Stefan Berger and Sean Scalmer, “The Transnational Activist: An Introduction”, in Stefan Berger and Sean Scalmer (eds.), *The Transnational Activist: Transformations and Comparisons from the Anglo-World Since the Nineteenth Century* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 6.

²⁵ Australian stump orators, though, were never “direct imitations” of American precedents. See Sean Scalmer, *On the Stump: Campaign Oratory and Democracy in the United States, Britain and Australia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017), p. 150. For opinion polling, see Bridget Griffen-Foley, “Political Opinion Polling

manifesto was also influenced by precedents and models abroad, though never wholly derivative. Such works were produced around the world in the twentieth century (two diametrically opposed examples include Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Gandhi's *My Own Story*), but in this practice as in so many others, Australian political figures learnt their strategies from American precedents. Presidential candidates from John F. Kennedy to Hillary Clinton had used books as evidence of their intellectual and moral credentials for leadership, even if produced by "committee labour".²⁶ The practice was perhaps less widespread in Britain, where the "manifesto" was more readily equated with a partisan election program, but as David Reynolds has shown, Winston Churchill's *History of the Second World War* was the prime example of an active politician for whom authorship was "bound up with his zeal to keep on making history".²⁷

Australian Labor politicians seemed to adapt Kennedy's example in particular to local conditions. In 1961 Lloyd O'Neil, creator of Lansdowne Press, invited opposition leader Arthur Calwell to "write a book setting out Labor's philosophy".²⁸ Calwell, with the support of the Fairfax Press, had left the Menzies government with a "threadbare two seat majority" after the 1961 federal election, and although an internal Labor brawl over foreign policy (particularly concerning Indonesian aggression in West Guinea) saw some of that "prestige" quickly lost, it was clear that Calwell hoped to perform as "the prime minister-in-waiting".²⁹ His "philosophical treatise", called *Labor's Role in Modern Society* (1963), was written largely by speechwriter Graham Freudenberg (Calwell himself was capable only of "thundering rhetoric" in his early chapter drafts), and it generically argued for "economic expansion, social equality and national security".³⁰ The book brought Labor no closer to the desired outcome at the

and the Professionalisation of Public Relations: Keith Murdoch, Robert Menzies, and the Liberal Party of Australia", *Australian Journalism Review*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2002), pp. 41—59; Murray Goot, "'A Worse Importation Than Chewing Gum': American Influences on The Australian Press and Their Limits—The Australian Gallup Poll, 1941-1973", *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 30, no. 3 (2010), pp. 269—302. For the radio 'fireside chat', see Griffen-Foley, "'Fireside Chat'", pp. 142—73.

²⁶ Herbert S. Parmet, *Jack: The Struggles of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Dial Press, 1980), p. 333. For an especially effective discussion of the latter see Smith, "'America's Exhibit A'", pp. 523—42.

²⁷ David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), p. 7.

²⁸ Graham Freudenberg, oral history interview with John Farquharson, 8 and 9 March 2000, 13 and 14 July 2000, and 23 July 2001, Sydney, NLA, ORAL TRC 3994; Lloyd O'Neil, oral history interview with Alec Bolton, 29-31 July 1991, NLA, ORAL TRC 2730.

²⁹ "Interim 1954—1969" in Frank Bongiorno, Benjamin Jones and John Uhr (eds.), *Elections Matter: Ten Federal Elections that Shaped Australia* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2018), p. 114; Freudenberg, interview with John Farquharson, NLA, ORAL TRC 3994.

³⁰ Arthur A. Calwell, oral history interview with Hazel de Berg, 15 June 1967, Hazel de Berg Collection, NLA, ORAL TRC 1/259-260; O'Neil, interview with Alec Bolton, NLA, ORAL TRC 2730; Arthur Calwell, *Labor's Role in Modern Society* (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1963), p. 11.

elections in 1963, when the Menzies government increased its majority. Dr Jim Cairns, who also produced a succession of books with Lansdowne Press and others in the late 1960s and 1970s, had perhaps a little more personal luck. His books denounced Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War and foretold of a re-energised democratic socialist Australia engaged with its regional neighbours.³¹ (If these made for heady reading, the first drafts had been, in O'Neil's view, positively "impenetrable").³² These books "consolidated Cairns' status as the intellectual leader of the anti-war movement", but also exposed him to much pillorying in the conservative press.³³ Calwell and Cairns sold respectable numbers of copies, but were hardly a political or commercial commodity as such, and the fledgling Lansdowne Press was ultimately absorbed and its leadership marginalised.³⁴

For Labor MPs consigned to opposition, the memoir or manifesto was about collective ambition, an attempt to formulate the right discourse for regaining power. The "labour public" – described by Terry Irving and Sean Scalmer as a cultural space where intellectuals could "discuss", "comprehend" and "plan" the movement's future – seemed to have withered in the twentieth century, but even in the 1990s party members retained "a faith in the power of the printed word".³⁵ Labor frontbenchers Lindsay Tanner and Mark Latham both published books that advocated a future direction for the party. Sporting a foreword from his mentor Gough Whitlam, and drawing on Blairite "Third Way" thinking then prominent in Britain, Latham's *Civilising Global Capital* (1998, Allen & Unwin) warned of the demise of social capital in Australia unless Labor could generate new social democratic relationships among the people, rather than between people and the state.³⁶ Though dense, the book "undoubtedly strengthened

³¹ See in particular J. F. Cairns, *Living With Asia* (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1965); J. F. Cairns, *The Eagle and the Lotus: Western Intervention in Vietnam, 1847–1971* (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1971); J. F. Cairns, *The Quiet Revolution* (Melbourne: Gold Star Publication, 1972).

³² O'Neil, interview with Alec Bolton, NLA, ORAL TRC 2730.

³³ Paul Strangio, *Keeper of the Faith: A Biography of Jim Cairns* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2002), p. 199, p. 160.

³⁴ O'Neil, interview with Alec Bolton, NLA, ORAL TRC 2730; John Currey, "Case-Study: Lansdowne and Lloyd O'Neil", in Craig Munro and Robyn Sheahan-Bright (eds.), *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia 1946–2005* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2006), p. 40.

³⁵ Terry Irving and Sean Scalmer, "Labour Intellectuals in Australia: Modes, Traditions, Generations, Transformations", *International Review of Social History*, vol. 50, no. 1 (2005), p. 3; Frank Bongiorno, "'My Plans for the Nation': Labor Politicians' Designs on Australia's Future", *Australian Review of Public Affairs*, 12 June 2006, <http://www.australianreview.net/digest/2006/06/bongiorno.html>, accessed 9 January 2023.

³⁶ Mark Latham, *Civilizing Global Capital: New Thinking for Australian Labor* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998), p. xl, p. 310.

his leadership credentials” in the eyes of journalists, even if wary colleagues saw it as a “none-too-subtle” effort at merely “being in the news”.³⁷

And therein lay the upshot: these books were evidently products of personal ambition too. In 2005 and 2006 MPs Wayne Swan and Craig Emerson each produced books that diagnosed particular socioeconomic problems that the Labor Party ought to rectify in government.³⁸ Swan, who hoped to establish himself as an alternate treasurer, wrote in *Postcode: The Splintering of a Nation* (Pluto Press) that the Howard government was “putting in place policies which are creating” the very battlers that it claimed to represent.³⁹ Emerson wrote *Vital Signs, Vibrant Society* (University of New South Wales Press) while languishing on the backbench and striving to regain his post as chair of the caucus committee on living standards: “I thought, ‘gee Craig, you know, [...] if you don’t get that job back then you’ve definitely gone backwards’”.⁴⁰ These publications were intellectual and theoretical, and in Swan’s case slightly autobiographical. The political class was among their target audience.

These exercises were fraught with short-term risk. Remarking on Tanner’s and Latham’s books, John Warhurst concluded in the *Canberra Times* that “their wide-ranging and speculative discussion of policies is asking for trouble”.⁴¹ In the *Age*, Mungo MacCallum pointed out that “excessive literacy is seen as unappealing to the wider electorate”.⁴² Michelle Grattan, who by now had seen many politicians and their books come and go, noted that today’s “Labor books” were tomorrow’s “Liberal weapons”.⁴³ Treasurer Peter Costello’s remarks in parliament in 1999 reflect that line of attack: “This is not a shadow ministry, this front bench; this is a book club! They are writing books to each other”.⁴⁴ There was also the risk of unfavourable comparison, which could leave Australian MPs seeming lacklustre. Commenting on the new breed of American author-politician emerging in Australia, George Megalogenis wrote that there were none “who can write and think like, say, Barack Obama or Winston

³⁷ Mungo MacCallum, “Political Illiteracy”, *Age*, 12 November 2005, p. 28; Rudd, *Not For the Faint-hearted*, p. 232, p. 381.

³⁸ Wayne Swan, *Postcode: The Splintering of a Nation* (North Melbourne: Pluto Press, 2005); Craig Emerson, *Vital Signs, Vibrant Society: Securing Australia’s Economic and Social Wellbeing* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006).

³⁹ Wayne Swan quoted in Kim Landers, “Australia a Divided Nation: Wayne Swan”, Transcript of The World Today, ABC, 15 June 2005.

⁴⁰ Craig Emerson, interview with the author, Barangaroo, Sydney, 15 May 2018.

⁴¹ John Warhurst, “ALP’s Ideas Men Must Do It By the Book”, *Canberra Times*, 16 February 1999, p. 9.

⁴² MacCallum, “Political Illiteracy”, p. 28.

⁴³ Michelle Grattan, “Belaboured”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 September 1999, p. 43.

⁴⁴ Peter Costello, Cth. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives Hansard, 9 February 1999, p. 2180.

Churchill”.⁴⁵ In the mid-2000s, then, Australia was hardly home to a flourishing manifesto genre.

Once in a Lifetime

So how did Australia’s oldest university press find itself at the forefront of what had been, to that point, a distinctly unexciting kind of political publishing? Adler was not the sole catalyst here. She had long been interested in political life. Hers had been a “highly political” Jewish family in Melbourne, her household always a site of “conversations” about local and global affairs.⁴⁶ She and her husband, political satirist Max Gillies, were both “riveted” by “the performance and practice of politics”.⁴⁷ These preoccupations could not help but shape her publishing priorities. But wider structural forces were necessary for that kind of mission to take root at MUP. As Stuart Kells has noted, the “very concept of a university press is shot through with tension and ambiguity”.⁴⁸ Many of those tensions and ambiguities were manifest in MUP’s corporate performance in the 15 years before Adler’s arrival. Longstanding director Peter Ryan departed the press in 1989 having “deplored its *raison d’être*” for some time, and nursing “an obvious prejudice against academics as a group”.⁴⁹ Activist publisher and former Labor staffer John Iremonger helmed the press in the early 1990s in a period characterised by “reorganised operations”, “modern financial methods”, “increased turnover”, and according to his eulogists, a “low tolerance for claptrap”.⁵⁰ Adler’s immediate predecessor Brian Wilder reaffirmed MUP’s commitment to high-quality scholarly publishing, but also knew that “scholarly publishing was not sustainable” without supplementary lines of revenue.⁵¹

By 2002 the University of Melbourne was demanding more radical change of its publisher, and its council launched a review with that outcome in mind. The review, led by Melbourne publishing executive Robert McKay with input from esteemed publisher Hilary McPhee, advocated sweeping changes to MUP’s corporate structure. The organisation was rebranded as Melbourne University Publishing, and divested of the University bookstore that

⁴⁵ George Megalogenis, “Authors of Their Own Destiny”, *Australian*, 7 October 2009, p. 6.

⁴⁶ Louise Adler, phone interview with the author, 25 January 2022.

⁴⁷ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

⁴⁸ Stuart Kells, *MUP: A Centenary History* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2023), p. 1.

⁴⁹ Doug Munro, *History Wars: The Peter Ryan–Manning Clark Controversy* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2021), p. 123.

⁵⁰ Stuart Macintyre, “John Iremonger, 1944—2002”, *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 122 (2003), p. 388; John Faulkner, Cth. *Parliamentary Debates*, Senate Hansard, 29 August 2002, p. 4067.

⁵¹ John Poynter and Benjamin Thomas, *Miegunyah: The Bequests of Russell and Mab Grimwade* (Carlton: Miegunyah Press, 2015), p. 254.

had been at the heart of the organisation since 1922.⁵² New corporate positions were created and staff were advised to re-apply for jobs in a company that promised to complement academic publishing with competitive trade titles.⁵³ “Knowledge transfer” was the watchword of the new mission, and the executives selected Adler to lead the new editorial enterprise, which promised to help academics speak to the public with the help of university subsidies. “What I really wanted to do was take the best of academic work and render it public”, she recalled.⁵⁴

At the outset, this was the order of the day. Within months of Adler’s arrival, MUP acquired and published Stuart Macintyre’s *The History Wars* (co-written with Anna Clark), an important dissection of the history wars engulfing Australian culture.⁵⁵ “[T]o this day” Adler said to me, “I’m proud of that book”.⁵⁶ Clare Wright, an emerging historian at La Trobe University, also enjoyed the benefits of Adler’s re-energising. MUP published Wright’s PhD thesis on the history of women publicans as a book called *Beyond the Ladies Lounge* (2003), and with a more generous and optimistic contract than would otherwise have been the case.⁵⁷ But the publication of *The Latham Diaries* in 2005 set the tone for the decade to come, and by 2007 opinions were “sharply divided” among Australian academics and intellectuals about the direction that MUP was taking.⁵⁸ Academics continued to publish with MUP (though electronic outputs seemed to replace physical books over time), but political publishing became central to its brand.

Adler cultivated a distinct public performance to embody MUP’s new direction. She used her considerable charm and her persuasive personality to make her presence, and that of MUP, known to the wider industry. Kells has noted that “an entire Adler-centred lexicon” emerged to reflect her dynamism: “Addled, Addlered, Adlerised, Adlerites, Adleresque”.⁵⁹ She was highly loyal to and protective of her authors, and she earned their admiration in return. The team she assembled around her seemed in many ways to reflect that mission. Scholar and publisher Sybil Nolan supported Adler as commissioning editor for five years, and Sally Heath, formerly a journalist at the *Age*, played a crucial role overseeing MUP’s acquisitions and

⁵² “Uni Publisher Sheds Staff”, *Age*, 23 January 2003, <https://www.theage.com.au/national/uni-publisher-sheds-staff-20030123-gdv3yp.html>, accessed 20 December 2022.

⁵³ Jason Steger, “When Making Money is Not Entirely Academic”, *Age*, 26 April 2002, p. 11.

⁵⁴ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

⁵⁵ Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark, *The History Wars* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2003).

⁵⁶ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

⁵⁷ Ray Cassin, “Pressing on Regardless”, *Age*, 15 September 2007, <https://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/books/pressing-on-regardless-20070915-ge5tk5.html>, accessed 16 December 2020.

⁵⁸ Cassin, “Pressing on Regardless”.

⁵⁹ Kells, *MUP*, p. 320.

productions for much of the 2010s. Foong Ling Kong, appointed as literary editor, received much acclaim from MUP's authors for her labours. This was, in Adler's recollection, "a once-in-a-lifetime sort of thing", a mission characterised by a sense of "shared endeavour" and "shared values".⁶⁰ In that environment, political publishing came to the fore organically over time, and with greater force after the success of *The Latham Diaries*. In our interview, Adler stressed that their shared mission had been more idealistic than her critics allowed, and that her ambitions for MUP had much to do with changing perceptions of its public relevance:

I remember someone berating me at a café once, coming up to me and asking why I wasn't publishing x or y [...]. She put her hands on her hips and said, 'But MUP was always the publisher of last resort'. I took it as my mandate to change that view of MUP.⁶¹

Adler was tough and unyielding in the face of the charge that scholarly publishers with institutional subsidies "shouldn't be in the business of populist books".⁶² In reply, Adler would often appeal to market logic, and more often to the noble aspiration of creating space for the exchange of political ideas.

For observers, it seemed that the newsworthiness of MUP's publications was what mattered above all else. I argue that it is helpful to consider the autobiographical manifestos and mid-career memoirs as a "political gimmick". Scalmer has described the gimmick, deployed by activists and protestors, as "a claim to public attention".⁶³ Not every political gimmick is insubstantial (though a few of these books do fit that description). But as Scalmer put it, gimmicks were "theatrical" performances, "sometimes counterproductive", and often "disposable rather than enduring".⁶⁴ For the ambitious politician seeking to build a public profile that could be deployed in "entertainment formats" or the "talk show", the appeal of the mid-career book as a gimmick seemed obvious.⁶⁵ For some, the risks were equally apparent. Labor minister Greg Combet repeatedly declined Adler's invitations to write a memoir for MUP on the grounds that it would be seen "as a declaration of intent" for a future leadership bid; he stayed his hand until he left parliament.⁶⁶ But as her political catalogue grew, Adler was feted at Writers' Festivals as the "publisher who breathed new life into political writing" in

⁶⁰ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

⁶¹ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

⁶² Shane Green, "True Stories of a Book Yet to be Written", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 March 2013, <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/true-stories-of-a-book-yet-to-be-written-20130329-2gyzp.html>, accessed 10 June 2020.

⁶³ Scalmer, *Dissent Events*, p. 6.

⁶⁴ Scalmer, *Dissent Events*, pp. 6—7.

⁶⁵ Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity* (London: SAGE, 2014), pp. 150—51.

⁶⁶ Combet, phone interview, 11 July 2018.

Australia.⁶⁷ For 15 years, MUP revelled in its newsworthiness and was perceived to be a unique contributor to Australian political discourse. Adler was innovative and resourceful, publishing conservative manifestos, epistolary performances from senior Labor figures, and books that sometimes read like job applications. She did not exhaust her own energies, but she did exhaust her academic host, and potentially the genre that she had made her own.

Conservative Characters

MUP's early experiments in the production of political manifestos and active parliamentarian's memoirs were determinedly non-Labor. There was a rationale for this. Having already published *The Latham Diaries* to such public attention, Adler was determined that MUP would not seem a "Labor pamphleteer" in the eyes of book buyers, nor in the view of the political class.⁶⁸ "Even though we published books we didn't agree with" Adler explained to me, "we understood the point of doing so".⁶⁹ She also felt emboldened to challenge the proposition that Labor authors and journalists had a monopoly on the political book market. Adler recalled that when Liberal MP Tony Abbott first spoke with her about a book proposal, his "first words" to her were, "'I know that books by Liberals don't sell'".⁷⁰ With its institutional subsidies, MUP was well-placed to (con)test that assumption. But the flurry of Liberal books that MUP published in the late 2000s owed much to political circumstance, too. As I argued in Chapter 5, the federal election of November 2007 left the party in a state of deep pessimism and uncertainty. In that environment, there would be much talk about the ideas, policies and personnel required for the party's electoral fortunes to recover. Wherever those debates took the form of a book, a publisher was required, and Adler was game where others were not.

Indeed, former treasurer Peter Costello's memoirs seemed to epitomise the kind of commodity that Adler sought. She first broached the subject with him when they met by chance on a flight from Canberra to Melbourne during the 2007 election campaign, and Costello seemed mildly bewildered.⁷¹ After the government's defeat, they spoke again, and he agreed to write a memoir for MUP, conscripting to the project his father-in-law, the conservative

⁶⁷ Virginia Trioli quoted in abcqanda, "Public Life & Political Memoirs - Q&A | 24 August 2015", *YouTube*, 26 August 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2zZ3W5wA8E>, accessed 23 December 2021.

⁶⁸ Louise Adler quoted in Phillip Adams, *Late Night Live*, ABC Radio National, 22 August 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/latenightlive/22-august-2019/11438802>, accessed 21 August 2021.

⁶⁹ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

⁷⁰ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

⁷¹ Peter Costello, "Author's Note", in Peter Costello and Peter Coleman, *The Costello Memoirs: The Age of Prosperity* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2008), p. xiii; Louise Adler quoted in Claire Harvey, "The Last Word in Memoirs", *Sunday Telegraph*, 7 September 2008, p. 81.

intellectual Peter Coleman, who was reportedly “flabbergasted” at the idea.⁷² Costello “wanted to be successful” as an author, Adler recalled, but he remained a federal MP and therefore approached the task with the “natural caution of a lawyer”.⁷³ The memoir would necessarily engage in a historiographical contest, but its political and market prospects had more to do with its bearing on Costello’s future. Despite a very public ambition to lead his party, he had shocked colleagues by refusing to nominate for the Liberal leadership following John Howard’s defeat. The hardworking but unpopular Dr Brendan Nelson was chosen in his stead. But Costello remained a prime leadership contender in public perception, and this was highly desirable for MUP. “Costello is a political creature”, Tim Coronel from industry organ *Bookseller + Publisher* told the *Sunday Telegraph*, “and in a way so is Louise”.⁷⁴ Some commentators were critical of the “guessing game” Costello seemed to play, and others criticised the lucrative parliamentary salary he would continue to earn in addition to his (allegedly six-figure) book advance.⁷⁵ Others urged him to “keep his leadership options open”.⁷⁶ Adler recalled that the former treasurer “used to laugh and say, ‘Let’s just call [the memoir] *The Story so Far*’”.⁷⁷ Not unlike Churchill, Costello wanted to write a version of history that could also furnish a political and personal platform for the future.

Invoking Australian poet C. J. Dennis, Costello promised to “square the ledger in some thortful hour”, but in reality his dominant theme was that of unrequited ambition.⁷⁸ *The Costello Memoirs* traced the “strong moral and religious guidance” of the former treasurer’s upbringing, the liberal values he imbibed at university, and his role in securing “a truly new province for law and order” (a pointed reference to progressive Justice H. B. Higgins’ “new province for law and order” in early-twentieth-century Australia) through landmark legal battles against militant trade unions in the 1980s.⁷⁹ Costello’s book revealed very little about his ascension within the Liberal Party, but dealt at length with his triumphs as treasurer, chiefly

⁷² Harvey, “Last Word”, p. 81.

⁷³ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

⁷⁴ Tim Coronel quoted in Harvey, “Last Word”, p. 81.

⁷⁵ “Former Pollies: Sometimes Bitter, Sometimes Inspiring”, *Sunday Age*, 27 April 2008, p. 16; Malcolm Farr, “Memoirs of a Still Sitting MP – Costello’s \$200,000 Pay Day”, *Daily Telegraph*, 23 April 2008, p. 2; Kells, *MUP*, p. 371.

⁷⁶ Christopher Pearson, “Costello, Man of the Future”, *Weekend Australian*, 5 July 2008, p. 30.

⁷⁷ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

⁷⁸ Costello with Coleman, *The Costello Memoirs*, p. 9.

⁷⁹ Costello with Coleman, *The Costello Memoirs*, p. 10, p. 28, pp. 36—37. For Higgins’ “new province for law and order” see Mark Hearn, “Securing the Man: Narratives of Gender and Nation in the Verdicts of Henry Bournes Higgins”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 37, no. 127 (2006), pp. 4—7; Marilyn Lake, *Progressive New World: How Settler Colonialism and Transpacific Exchange Shaped American Reform* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), introduction. For the Dollar Sweets case in context see Frank Bongiorno, *The Eighties: The Decade that Transformed Australia* (Carlton: Black Inc., 2015), pp. 170—71.

the introduction of the charter of budget honesty, inflation targeting, his handling of the Asian financial crisis, and the introduction of the GST. An unforgiving portrait of Howard was threaded through these stories. There were vignettes depicting the former prime minister recklessly tinkering with the GST package at the eleventh hour, and consistently mismanaging the “symbolism” of Aboriginal policy.⁸⁰ The climax of the book came with Costello’s claim that he and Howard had a leadership succession “undertaking” in 1994 that ought to have been honoured in 2000, or thereabouts.⁸¹ Critical of Howard loyalists who thought “the Liberal Party was the Howard Party”, Costello pointedly remarked that “[l]eadership is not only about winning; it is also about departing”.⁸² The book concluded with an attempt to reconcile moderate and conservative versions of liberalism, and an agenda of “unfinished business” including reforming the federation, combating the ageing population problem, advancing an Australian republic, and a program to lift Aboriginal communities “into the mainstream of Australian life”.⁸³

In mid-2008, the Costello memoir greatly enhanced MUP’s media presence. In her inaugural KS Inglis lecture, Griffen-Foley explained that there are “serendipitous findings” to be gleaned from “manual searching” rather than keyword searching in media databases and archives.⁸⁴ Pictures of Peter Costello’s face were likely not the kind of “serendipitous findings” she had in mind, but her point is of critical value here. A manual search of the *Age* newspaper reveals that Costello’s face and words were prolific in the weeks before his book launch. Provocative headlines declared that “Costello may be among us some time yet” (See Figure 3).⁸⁵ Even when he flatly denied that he was seeking the leadership in television interviews, his co-author assured reporters that there was still a “crack in the door” for Costello’s leadership prospects.⁸⁶ In that context, the market fortunes of the memoir seemed likely to make the political fortunes of the man. Exaggerating the power of the memoir, conservative commentator Piers Ackerman declared that Costello should challenge Nelson “if the public reception [of the book] is favourable”.⁸⁷ Adler moved to “dampen expectations” of an

⁸⁰ Costello with Coleman, *The Costello Memoirs*, p. 132, p. 212.

⁸¹ Costello with Coleman, *The Costello Memoirs*, p. 226.

⁸² Costello with Coleman, *The Costello Memoirs*, p. 236, p. 256, p. 257.

⁸³ Costello with Coleman, *The Costello Memoirs*, p. 310.

⁸⁴ Bridget Griffen-Foley, “Inaugural KS Inglis Address: Making Australian Media History”, *Media International Australia*, vol. 170, no. 1 (2019), p. 12.

⁸⁵ Michelle Grattan, “Costello May be Among Us Some Time Yet”, *Age*, 13 September 2008, p. 7; Steve Lewis, “Costello May book Top Spot with Libs”, *Herald Sun*, 26 July 2008, p. 12; Shaun Carney, “Memoir Could Have a Happy Ending for the Liberals”, *Age*, 23 April 2008, p. 2.

⁸⁶ Peter Coleman quoted in Title No. 766201, “National Nine News. Perth. 2008.09.13”, 13 September 2008, STW 9, Perth, NFSA.

⁸⁷ Piers Ackerman, “Costello: MP or PM?” *Daily Telegraph*, 13 July 2008, p. 91.

unrestrained literary assault on Howard, but this did not equate to “talking down the book’s attractions” as Kells has recently suggested.⁸⁸ He is on surer footing when he suggests that



Figure 20: Full page spread of Peter Costello in the *Age*, Thursday 11 September 2008. NLA, *Age*.

MUP sought to “make the best use of the political speculation” about its author’s leadership prospects.⁸⁹ Scalmer has convincingly argued that this book (subtitled *The Age of Prosperity*) was an expression of “grander historical ambition” on Costello’s part, but in the mainstream media, its prospects were tied up with the future as much as the past.⁹⁰

The problem with this political gimmick was that public expectations and political anticipation were very difficult to manage. In the weeks prior to Costello’s book launch at the National Press Club on 16 September 2008, his supporters’ enthusiasm clearly waned. “[L]eadership”, opined Adelaide’s *Advertiser*, “comes only to those who fight for it”.⁹¹ Labor figures cheerfully amplified these doubts about Costello’s character in gendered terms. The trade minister, Simon Crean, quipped that Costello had “never consented” when wooed, and “never succeeded” when he had chased his prize.⁹² MUP promised that Costello would call for a “makeover of the Liberal Party”, but when the makeover came, the Party would not adopt Costello’s likeness.⁹³

On the day of the book launch, Liberal MPs replaced the flagging Nelson with the urbane and impatient Malcolm Turnbull. And overshadowing that event was the collapse two days

⁸⁸ Kells, *MUP*, p. 345.

⁸⁹ Kells, *MUP*, p. 346.

⁹⁰ Sean Scalmer, “The Rise of the Insider: Memoirs and Diaries in Recent Australian Political History”, vol. 56, no. 1 (2010), p. 95.

⁹¹ “Costello Should Spell Out His Plans”, *Advertiser*, 10 September 2008, p. 16.

⁹² Simon Crean quoted in Title No. 763874, “Seven News. Perth. 2008.08.03”, 3 August 2008, TVW 7, Perth, NSFA.

⁹³ Steve Lewis and Clinton Porteous, “Costello Calls for Liberal Facelift”, *Courier Mail*, 26 August 2008, p. 3.

earlier of Lehman Brothers investment bank in New York, a key moment in the unfolding global financial crisis. Hoping to retain some media interest in himself, the former treasurer joked that this was only “volume one” of his memoirs: “To come back to the football analogy, there’s always a season next year!”⁹⁴ It was no use. In the *Sydney Morning Herald* commentator Annabel Crabb claimed that she and colleagues sat through the launch “desperately wishing ourselves elsewhere”.⁹⁵ There was little sympathy for the memoirist. “Mr Indecisive” had “done himself serious damage” with his unwillingness to firmly declare himself a candidate or deny future ambitions, News Limited’s Steve Lewis editorialised.⁹⁶ Crabb declared that Costello’s “flash of leg isn’t as alluring as it was”.⁹⁷ Peter Hartcher suggested that Costello’s leadership dreams had simply been “bistro braggadocio” performed for the media’s benefit all along.⁹⁸ When Costello resigned from parliament nine months later, some wondered if he had in fact been “writing himself out of public life”, but such claims were tenable only in hindsight, for although it ultimately became a full account of the author’s career, its original unique selling point was that it seemed a first-hand account of a career potentially at the cusp of leadership.⁹⁹ In the circumstances of the launch, and given the emasculating way in which it was reported in the press, Costello’s memoir seemed to have failed as a spectacle.

MUP still stood to benefit, though it was not initially apparent that it had. *Brisbane Times* described the sales as “underwhelming despite the publicity whirlwind”, and the *Weekend Australian* noted that Costello had been “beaten at the bookstores by a children’s fantasy novel and a book of home recipes that uses four ingredients or less”.¹⁰⁰ In parliament, deputy prime minister Julia Gillard gleefully exhibited a “discounted” copy from the “remainders bin”.¹⁰¹ If not the blockbuster hoped for, *The Costello Memoirs* nonetheless sold steadily over time; reported sales figures range from 20,000 to 45,000.¹⁰² Only in hindsight could MUP boast that Costello’s memoirs had been three times as profitable as *The Latham Diaries*, and generated

⁹⁴ Peter Costello quoted in Annabel Crabb, “Costello Crowd Left with the Long End of the Schtick”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 September 2008, p. 12.

⁹⁵ Crabb, “Long End of the Schtick”, p. 12.

⁹⁶ Steve Lewis, “Audacious Talent, Now Learn to Lead”, *Herald Sun*, 17 September 2008, p. 25.

⁹⁷ Crabb, “Long End of the Schtick”, p. 12.

⁹⁸ Peter Hartcher, “A Long Conversation About No One”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 September 2008, p. 15.

⁹⁹ Megalogenis, “Authors of the Own Destiny”, *Australian*, 7 October 2009, p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ “Costello Memoir Sales Highly Forgettable”, *Brisbane Times*, 4 October 2008, <https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/costellos-memoirs-sales-highly-forgettable-20081004-geaf4f.html>, accessed 12 September 2021; Matthew Clayfield, “Costello Outsold by a Cookbook”, *Weekend Australian*, 27 September 2008, p. 9.

¹⁰¹ Julia Gillard, Cth. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives Hansard, 25 September 2008, pp. 64—65.

¹⁰² Troy Bramston, “Kevin Rudd Short on Tenure, Long on Words”, *Weekend Australian*, 22 July 2017.

\$3.4 million of publicity, though the reliability of such measurements is suspect.¹⁰³ The author's fortunes may have fared poorly, but Adler had undoubtedly proven that conservatives could sell.

Politically speaking, former health minister Tony Abbott's book *Battlelines* succeeded where Costello's *Memoirs* failed. Often dubbed "Howard's head-kicker", Abbott floundered badly during the 2007 election with a series of embarrassing gaffes.¹⁰⁴ To his critics, the conservative Member for Warringah seemed a "religious ratbag and people-offender" who embodied "everything that is wrong" with the Liberal Party.¹⁰⁵ Cognisant of those perceptions, Abbott determined to write a book that might repair his public relations and furnish the Liberal Party with some authentic conservative "thinking" to help spur its "political recovery".¹⁰⁶ Abbott made contact with Adler, who saw potential in his wish to establish himself as a thoughtful voice of contemporary conservatism. She recalled their unusual discussion about the contract: "I suggested a modest advance, and he said 'Half of that'. I have never had anyone else say that to me".¹⁰⁷ MUP and Abbott announced their agreement in July 2008 (along with a \$10,000 advance), and promised to "avoid 'pollie-waffle'" and be "controversial".¹⁰⁸ "I'm unlikely to be leader any time soon", Abbott admitted in a media interview: "I hope I can burnish my credentials".¹⁰⁹ Adler, when questioned about the book a decade later, asserted that there was merit in creating "space for a dialogue and discussion" with a politician such as Abbott who "had something to say".¹¹⁰ Figures such as Abbott, of course, enjoyed public space already.

Not unlike for Latham a decade earlier, the mere promise of a book conferred a new legitimacy on the author's reputation. Factional opponents such as Turnbull loyalist Christopher Pyne saw the book project restoring Abbott's "vim and vigour".¹¹¹ The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Harry Jenkins Jr., found that Abbott's parliamentary behaviour

¹⁰³ Kells, *MUP*, p. 348, p. 384.

¹⁰⁴ Peter van Onselen and Philip Senior, *Howard's End: The Unravelling of a Government* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2008), pp. 144–46.

¹⁰⁵ Letters to the Editor, *Daily Telegraph*, 20 April 2008, p. 82.

¹⁰⁶ Tony Abbott quoted in Peter Hartcher, "Abbott's Quest for Power", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 2008, p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

¹⁰⁸ Ray Chesterton, "Novel Ideas", *Daily Telegraph*, 12 July 2008, p. 75; Tony Abbott quoted in Jonathan Dart, "Hollowmen are Rudd's Men: Abbott", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 July 2008, p. 6; Matthew Franklin, "Abbott Takes Up Pen to Draft new Direction for Conservatives", *Australian*, 10 July 2008, p. 5.

¹⁰⁹ Tony Abbott quoted in Peter Hartcher, "Abbott's Quest for Power", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 2008, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ Adler quoted in Adams, *Late Night Live*; Franklin, "Direction for Conservatives", p. 5.

¹¹¹ Christopher Pyne, *The Insider: The Scoops, the Scandals and the Serious Business within the Canberra Bubble* (Sydney: Hachette, 2020), p. 53.

mellowed because writing on his laptop was “all he’d be interested in”.¹¹² And the tenor of media commentary began to register his potential status as an author too. “If Turnbull kills off Nelson but stumbles”, Queensland’s *Courier Mail* presciently mused, “Abbott could be the last man standing”.¹¹³ There were shallow and unlikely comparisons of Abbott’s forthcoming book with Obama’s *Dreams from My Father*.¹¹⁴ Though Abbott’s popularity remained lower than that of Costello, North Sydney MP Joe Hockey or indeed Turnbull, press gallery doyen Michelle Grattan described him as “underused”, his book a “satisfying diversion” from the daily flotsam of politics.¹¹⁵

Another MUP book reminded politicians of the risks that came with publishing in a febrile political environment. In late 2008, Abbott joined deputy leader Julie Bishop and shadow minister George Brandis in contributing chapters in a book called *Liberals and Power: The Road Ahead* edited by former Liberal staffer, journalist and political scientist Peter van Onselen.¹¹⁶ Abbott used his piece to minimise his reputation as “Howard’s headkicker”, arguing that the party needed to recommit itself to the “moral middle class” that Judith Brett had identified as the party’s historic constituency, and who had likely been alienated by Howard’s radical *WorkChoices* reforms.¹¹⁷ Abbott’s chapter was warmly received, Bishop’s far less so. Although she had written little of note, it was subsequently revealed that a large part of her piece, ghostwritten by chief of staff Murray Hansen, had been plagiarised from a New Zealand businessman’s speech of some nine years earlier.¹¹⁸ Bishop was publicly rebuked by journalists and more forthrightly by van Onselen, who said it was “disappointing” that Bishop “didn’t see fit” to do it herself.¹¹⁹ Commentators judged that the plagiarism affair had “weakened” Bishop’s authority among Liberals.¹²⁰ Adler and MUP appeared untroubled about the authenticity of Abbott’s writings; the shadow families minister acknowledged the assistance of South Australian conservative figure Christopher Pearson on his book project, but

¹¹² Harry Jenkins Jr., phone interview with the author, 6 July 2020.

¹¹³ “Abbott Waits in the Wings”, *Sunday Mail*, 14 September 2008, p. 53.

¹¹⁴ Sue Dunlevy, “Abbott on First Now Costello’s Struck Out”, *Daily Telegraph*, 19 June 2009, p. 34.

¹¹⁵ Michelle Grattan, “Abbott Takes a Warm Glow into Winter Quarters”, *Sun-Herald*, 28 June 2009, p. 14. For comparative polling figures, see Phil Coorey, “Turnbull Hammered by Voters in His Darkest Hour”, *Examiner*, 28 June 2009.

¹¹⁶ Peter van Onselen (ed.), *Liberals and Power: The Road Ahead* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2008).

¹¹⁷ “Lost for Words”, *Australian*, 29 October 2008, p. 17. For more on the “moral middle class”, see Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹¹⁸ Mark Metherell, “Editor Hits Out at Copycat Bishop”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 October 2008, p. 6.

¹¹⁹ Peter van Onselen quoted in “Bishop ‘In Second Plagiarism Row’”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 October 2008, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/bishop-in-second-plagiarism-row-20081027-595c.html>, accessed 27 December 2022.

¹²⁰ Michelle Grattan, “Julie Bishop Can’t Sit and Wait”, *Sun-Herald*, 15 February 2009, p. 46.

Adler felt that Abbott was the kind of man who “writes his own material”.¹²¹ Certainly, the title of Abbott’s book bore all the hallmarks of its author, forthright and unsubtle as it was. But had there been any hint of scandal about its authorship, *Battlelines* might have proven one gaffe too many for the ambitious Mr Abbott.

Authorship aside, there was inherent political risk in producing such a visually slick but conservative title. The dark cover of *Battlelines* sported an endorsement from esteemed Liberal operative Tony Staley, and a photograph of Abbott ruffling his thinning hair with an innocuous smile. Perhaps in the hope of attracting readers, Abbott began by revisiting the story of his ex-girlfriend and his long-lost son who, a paternity test had revealed in 2005, was in fact not his son at all.¹²² Recognising the importance of being “fair dinkum”, he discussed his Catholic values and his life before entering parliament in 1994.¹²³ There were long musings on the nature of modern conservatism, which he said was a “pragmatic, eclectic creed” built on “facts”, “intuition” and “instinct”.¹²⁴ He promised that a future Coalition government would

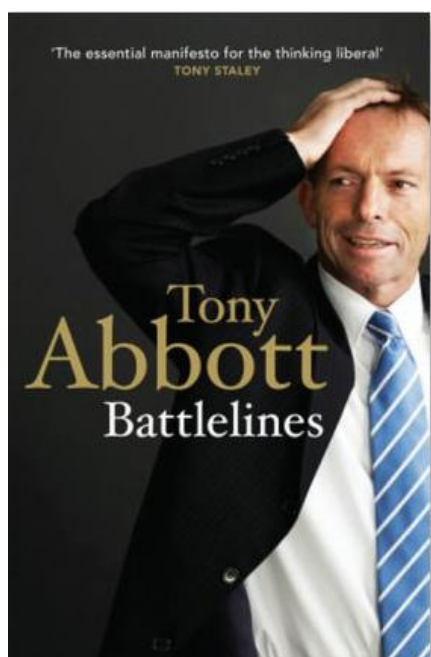


Figure 21: Front cover of Tony Abbott’s *Battlelines*, published with MUP, first edition, 2009.

“incorporate John Howard’s principles and values” but not “replay his policies”.¹²⁵ And in seeking “common ground” among conservatives and liberals in the party, he offered a bevy of policy ideas.¹²⁶ These included: “automatic income management” for some welfare-dependent families; a six-month maternity leave scheme funded by a levy on businesses; raising the pension age to 70; a referendum for greater Commonwealth power over the states; “direct measures” or perhaps “a carbon charge” to mitigate the prospect of climate change; and an optional “covenant” form of marriage (or “pre-Lionel Murphy Matrimonial Causes Act concept of marriage”, as he put it) to minimise divorce rates.¹²⁷ It was the latter point, above all else, that drew derision from commentators who saw it as a journey

“back to the future”.¹²⁸ Promoting the book, Abbott somewhat peculiarly described it as the

¹²¹ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

¹²² Tony Abbott, *Battlelines* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2009), pp. 1—3.

¹²³ Abbott, *Battlelines*, p. 6.

¹²⁴ Abbott, *Battlelines*, p. 21, p. 72.

¹²⁵ Abbott, *Battlelines*, p. x.

¹²⁶ Abbott, *Battlelines*, p. 57.

¹²⁷ Abbott, *Battlelines*, p. 91, p. 102, p. 108, p. 124, p. 172, p. 177.

¹²⁸ Farah Farouque, “No Fault of Abbott’s But Big Marriage Idea Gets Little Support”, *Age*, 13 July 2009, p. 4.

“coming out” of conservatism in Australia.¹²⁹ Labor ministers taunted Abbott in parliament with the absurdity of his proposals. One political scientist wondered if the shadow minister had “dashed his leadership hopes with the very device he hopes will materialise them”.¹³⁰

In hindsight, Abbott could legitimately claim that *Battlelines* had helped rather than hindered his path to power. First, the official book launch on 28 July 2009 was a carefully choreographed performance of ambition. Flanked by Adler and Sarah Murdoch, model and wife of Lachlan (who praised Abbott’s “strength of character”), Abbott described himself as a “potential finalist” if there were a program called “*Australia’s Next Top Politician*”.¹³¹ Second, Abbott enjoyed a round of promotional interviews and media appearances that evidently helped him revitalise his public relations and neutralised some internal doubt about his presentation skills.¹³² Third, when the debate on the government’s contested CPRS intensified, Abbott’s promotional activities brought him closer to the conservative membership of his party. Initially pragmatic about the emissions trading scheme because “that’s what the people voted for”, he found himself “howled down” over the CPRS in his own Sydney electorate when promoting *Battlelines*.¹³³ In September, a promotional Liberal dinner for *Battlelines* in rural Victoria turned into a grassroots assault on the CPRS.¹³⁴ The parliamentary party grappled with the issue for another two months, until he and other conservatives resigned from Turnbull’s frontbench. A leadership ballot saw Abbott prevail against Turnbull by one vote on 1 December 2009. No effort, and no expense, was spared in Abbott’s quest to sell himself and his manifesto (He was later to repay \$9,400 to the Commonwealth for misusing travel entitlements for his book tour.)¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Tony Abbott quoted in Josh Gordon, “Battlelines are Drawn with a Nod to Family Tradition”, *Sun-Herald*, 12 July 2009, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/battlelines-are-drawn-with-a-nod-to-family-tradition-20090711-dgp1.html>, accessed 21 March 2023.

¹³⁰ Paul Williams, “The Danger of Being Different”, *Courier Mail*, 14 July 2009, p. 26.

¹³¹ Tony Abbott quoted in Title No. 795479, “Ten News. Perth. 2009.07.28”, 28 July 2009, NEW 10, Perth, NFSA.

¹³² Tony Abbott quoted in Sky News Australia, “Sky News – Interview with Tony Abbott”, *YouTube*, 29 July 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5QXblcJA4>, accessed 11 October 2021; Tony Abbott quoted in ABC News (Australia), “Tony Abbott Launches Battlelines Book”, *YouTube*, 28 July 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OooHdU0wa-s>, accessed 11 October 2021; Tony Abbott, *Battlelines: Address to the National Press Club*, 30 July 2009, archived by National Library of Australia (13 September 2009), <https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20090912175850/http://www.tonyabbott.com.au/Pages/Article.aspx?ID=3764>, accessed 25 July 2021.

¹³³ Abbott, *Battlelines* [2013], p. 53, p. 183.

¹³⁴ Paul Kelly, *Triumph and Demise: The Broken Promise of a Labor Generation* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2014), p. 247.

¹³⁵ “Abbott Travel Probed”, *Daily Telegraph*, 20 December 2009, p. 19; Paul Osborne, “Police Handball MP Claims”, *Mercury*, 18 October 2013, p. 13.

For MUP too, *Battlelines* represented a successful product. It sold well for a production of this kind, allegedly passing 15,000 sales in six months.¹³⁶ Moreover, Abbott's rising political fortunes gave MUP further opportunity for commercial intervention. On his ascension to the leadership, Abbott and MUP re-launched the book at an impromptu event in a Manly newsagency, in his electorate, just in time for Christmas sales.¹³⁷ Further reprints accompanied the 2010 and 2013 federal elections, and some estimated its sales to have reached 20,000 by the time of his election as prime minister.¹³⁸ "I remember that in the lead-up to an election, people quoted that book's take again and again", Adler happily recalled.¹³⁹ Such quotations were not generally to the benefit of Abbott, whose policy offerings at the 2010 and 2013 elections scarcely resembled those espoused in *Battlelines*.¹⁴⁰ Most obviously, the "carbon tax" he proposed on his book tour quickly became the "great big new tax on everything" that he fought against for the next three years.¹⁴¹ The pre-election reprints were accompanied by a new introduction carefully distancing the Coalition from the book's original policy proposals.¹⁴² The Chaser, a group of satirists from Sydney, made light of that point. In a sketch broadcast prior to the 2010 federal election, one of their members, Craig Reucassel, playfully confronted Abbott about these policy retreats, physically tearing out the section called "WorkChoices Wasn't All Bad". (He also tore the front cover off, quipping that the photograph of Abbott wasn't "playing very well with the ladies".¹⁴³) Some wondered what the point of such a book ultimately was if its author could so easily disown its ideas, but MUP was in little doubt that the value could be measured in sales units and public debate.

Some of MUP's publications made the idealism of Adler's mission more apparent to sceptical observers. In September 2009, senior MP and former Liberal Party director Andrew Robb took leave from the opposition frontbench and sought treatment for diurnal variation, a lifelong condition that had caused him to "wake up deeply depressed", and which had worsened as he aged.¹⁴⁴ He eventually decided to take leave from parliament for treatment, and more bravely, to announce it publicly to senior journalist Laurie Oakes and radio host Neil

¹³⁶ Deborah Snow, "Abbott Book Now a Stocking Stuffer", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 December 2009, p. 7.

¹³⁷ Snow, "Stocking Stuffer", p. 7.

¹³⁸ Troy Bramston, "Prime Ministerial Memoirs Can Provide Valuable Insight", *Australian*, 8 September 2014.

¹³⁹ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

¹⁴⁰ Jane Messer, "Awash with Political Memoir".

¹⁴¹ "Australia Votes to Repeal Carbon Tax", *BBC News*, 17 July 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28339663>, accessed 26 January 2023.

¹⁴² Abbott, *Battlelines* [2013], pp. vii—xiii.

¹⁴³ The Chaser Archive, "Yes We Canberra! Episode 1", *YouTube*, 13 October 2011 [aired 2010], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SAbtbtzSzuQ>, accessed 22 March 2023.

¹⁴⁴ Andrew Robb, bluejueans interview with the author, 12 November 2021.

Mitchell.¹⁴⁵ If Robb hoped to set a positive example for others, he subsequently wondered if the “coverage” would quickly become “tomorrow’s fish and chips wrapper”.¹⁴⁶ But the story did not escape the attention of Adler, who called Robb in the later stages of his psychiatric treatment to urge him to write a book with MUP. “I thought his story and his honesty was very poignant”, she recalled.¹⁴⁷ Though initially non-committal toward the idea, Robb was heartened to be told by his psychiatrist that the “publicity around my problem” had encouraged other middle-aged professional men to present for treatment.¹⁴⁸ A book, it seemed, might allow him to transform his experiences “into something good” for a wider community.¹⁴⁹ When Robb returned to parliament and was installed as shadow finance minister in 2010, he signed a contract to write the book that became *Black Dog Daze: Public Life, Private Demons*. His draft chapters proved too “starchy” for Adler’s liking, but help was available in the form of Heath, who spent an intensive fortnight in MUP’s Carlton office with Robb as he dictated the manuscript.¹⁵⁰ When the book was completed, extracts appeared in the *Weekend Australian*, and book signing events gave Robb ample opportunity to further destigmatise mental health issues.¹⁵¹ Given that state politicians such as NSW’s John Brogden and Western Australia’s Geoff Gallup had publicly acknowledged their own mental health challenges, Robb’s self-expression was perhaps less fraught than it might have been in prior decades.¹⁵² In any case, Adler and MUP clearly had a firm sense of the social import of Robb’s story.

Even here, though, there was political ambition animating the author. Though not wanting to produce a “vindictive” book, Robb hoped to record the story of the party’s conflagration over climate policy in late 2009 from his own perspective, having been branded a traitor by Turnbull, who had expected Robb’s support for the CPRS: “I needed to deal with the Malcolm issue”, Robb recalled.¹⁵³ Moreover, much of the memoir hinged on the fact that Robb’s condition had prevented him from challenging for the leadership of the Liberal Party in 2009. The book began with a vignette of Robb being approached for leadership as Turnbull faltered, and ended with the declaration that he “would now have no hesitation” to stand, having

¹⁴⁵ Robb, bluejueans interview, 12 November 2021; Peter Munro, “Rise and Shine”, Extra, *Sunday Age*, 18 April 2010, p. 17.

¹⁴⁶ Robb, bluejueans interview, 12 November 2021.

¹⁴⁷ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

¹⁴⁸ Robb, bluejueans interview, 12 November 2021.

¹⁴⁹ Robb, bluejueans interview, 12 November 2021.

¹⁵⁰ Robb, bluejueans interview, 12 November 2021.

¹⁵¹ Michael Owen, “One in Five Politicians is on Medication for Depression, Claims Robb”, *Australian*, 8 September 2011, p. 4.

¹⁵² Frank Bongiorno, *Dreamers and Schemers: A Political History of Australia* (Collingwood: La Trobe University Press, 2022), p. 357, p. 377.

¹⁵³ Robb, bluejueans interview, 12 November 2021.

largely conquered his condition.¹⁵⁴ According to backgrounding in the press, Robb's colleagues saw him as a more natural "deputy" rather than "prime advocate".¹⁵⁵ So as he wrote the book, Robb told journalist Samantha Maiden that he would be enthusiastic to take on the role of shadow treasurer instead, replacing the incumbent Hockey if an opportunity arose.¹⁵⁶ Interviewed a decade later, Robb admitted that he had "still harboured those ambitions" for leadership while promoting his book.¹⁵⁷ But despite its healthy sales figures (allegedly 10,000 copies), the book was a blunt instrument for the advancement of political ambition. Robb became trade minister when the Coalition won government in 2013, but would resign from parliament in 2016 in favour of the private sector. *Black Dog Daze* had been a brave act of disclosure from a conservative man with much to lose, but bravery and ambition were not mutually exclusive. And wherever ambition was in the offing, MUP was often there too, building the platform and making the news.

Epistolary Conversations

MUP's mid-career memoirs and manifestos were more than a cynical attempt to take advantage of unrest in conservative political circles. In the 2010s, the Australian political landscape was increasingly replete with artificial performative conceits that emphasised personality, character and style over policy and morality. For some, the ABC program *Kitchen Cabinet*, in which journalist Annabel Crabb chatted with a senior politician over a meal, exemplified this trend.¹⁵⁸ In some ways, these conceits are the latest in a longer history of "artful, theatrical" performances designed to mitigate what Jackie Dickenson has described as "the perceived insincerity of politicians".¹⁵⁹ But celebrity itself was now an industry, and politicians occupied a unique place in the media landscape by virtue of their office and their minor celebrity status. As Graeme Turner put it, "take away celebrity and the industries which feed it, and some of the basic support systems for contemporary commercial media production go with them".¹⁶⁰ What MUP did in the 2010s was to position itself as a distinct and recognisable entity in that celebrity market. Its non-academic authors, many of whom were people with recognisable names and brands, came with an established claim to public attention. For the politicians among

¹⁵⁴ Andrew Robb, *Black Dog Daze: Public Life, Private Demons* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2011), p. 175.

¹⁵⁵ Peter Munro, "Rise and Shine", Extra, *Sunday Age*, 18 April 2010, p. 17.

¹⁵⁶ Samantha Maiden, "Black Dog and Me – Rejuvenated Robb Eyes Hockey's Job", *Herald Sun*, 13 February 2011, p. 24.

¹⁵⁷ Robb, bluejeans interview, 12 November 2021.

¹⁵⁸ For more see Sean Kelly, *The Game: A Portrait of Scott Morrison* (Carlton: Black Inc., 2021), pp. 1—5.

¹⁵⁹ Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, 4th ed. (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2016 [1999]), p. 97; Dickenson, *Trust Me*, p. 238.

¹⁶⁰ Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, p. 145.

these authors, the point was to perform a kind of personality or character that would reframe, distract from or positively spin existing public perceptions.

Spin, in several cases, took the form of an epistolary conceit, a letter. In the eighteenth century, letters figured as both a private and semi-public form of communication among literary elites, and the epistolary novel or “letter-in-novel” enjoyed popularity in this period; in the twentieth century it re-emerged as a significant genre of life writing and publishing.¹⁶¹ By the 2010s, with Australian political discourse apparently more monotonous in its vacuousness but bitter in its partisanship, the epistolary form seemed a way of representing to a public audience a parliamentarian’s inner thoughts and subjectivities. MUP’s role was to help construct and sell that artifice as a contribution to public discourse. These books functioned in a fashion similar to the op-eds the politicians often contributed to metropolitan newspapers, and prompted frustration from parliament’s presiding officers; the then-Speaker felt that MPs should “get a job with the bloody paper” if they were wholly uninterested in using “parliamentary avenues” for intellectual debates.¹⁶²

The performative letter became a particularly prominent tool for Labor politicians who sought to engage with and inspire an increasingly disillusioned left-wing constituency. In the Howard years, and again after 2010, a score of Labor personalities published their thoughts on the party’s fundamental problems and prospective reforms.¹⁶³ Foreign minister Bob Carr likened these books to “vampire fiction”, such was the voluminousness of the genre.¹⁶⁴ Labor luminaries could best help the cause, some of his colleagues decided, by writing books about what was *right* with the party, and how its structures could be improved.

Adler was characteristically quick to capitalise on the anxieties of Labor figures. In March 2013, immigration minister Chris Bowen and industry minister Kim Carr (both Rudd supporters but from the NSW Right and Victorian Left factions respectively), resigned from Gillard’s cabinet after a leadership ballot that Rudd had declined to contest. In the backseat of a Commonwealth car later that evening, Carr received a phone call from Adler who invited him to write a book about the Labor Party. “I was reluctant to do it, because I was in a distressed

¹⁶¹ Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: Interpreting Life Narratives*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010 [2001]), p. 273.

¹⁶² Jenkins, phone interview, 6 July 2020.

¹⁶³ See for instance John Button, “Beyond Belief: What Future for Labor?”, *Quarterly Essay*, no. 6 (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2002).

¹⁶⁴ Troy Bramston, “Like ‘Vampire Fiction’, Market Awash with the Musings of Politics Past”, *Weekend Australian*, 17 May 2014, p. 8.

state”, he recalled.¹⁶⁵ Similarly, Bowen received a text while walking through a shopping centre in his Western Sydney electorate the next day: “[Adler] said, ‘Do you think, now that you’re not in cabinet, there’s a book in you?’ I thought, ‘yeah, okay’”.¹⁶⁶ The hesitant MPs found Adler’s persuasions hard to ignore. Carr recalled that she was “very good at taking something and making it a reasonable and agreeable idea”.¹⁶⁷ In order to meet a seemingly impossible deadline of just a few weeks, Carr relied on a former staffer and “wordsmith” Jennifer Bowles to help him “turn a phrase”, and a small bevy of other advisers who “were still on their redundancy payments” following his resignation.¹⁶⁸ Bowen drafted most of his manuscript himself, but relied on others to help make its mark in the political domain. Keating agreed to write a foreword, which pleased the publisher because “anything with Paul’s name on it sells well”.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, Bowen invited CEO of News Limited, Kim Williams, to launch his book in due course because, “Kim was a Labor supporting Chief Executive of News Limited, so I thought that was interesting”.¹⁷⁰ Here was a clear sign of MUP’s determination to make its books newsworthy.

The epistolary manifesto mattered because it couched broad philosophical and rhetorical flourishes in distinctly personal terms. This was pleasing to Adler, who found “manifestos” in particular “very interesting”.¹⁷¹ Carr and Adler decided on framing his book as a letter to his children, and by extension the wider “generation next”, about the virtues of the Labor Party. When I asked Carr if the “letter” idea had been his or Adler’s, he laughed: “I mean, when you talk to Louise, you’re never quite certain where you started and where she started”.¹⁷² In *A Letter to Generation Next*, Carr wrote of Labor’s commitment to “social democracy” with its politics “of enhancing, of optimism and of resolve”.¹⁷³ The story was anchored in his own life narrative, commencing with his upbringing in the “notorious” Boles Street Caravan Park in Gladstone and the “rented homes in three states [...] where our feet literally went through the floorboards”.¹⁷⁴ Carr was unenthusiastic about this level of personal disclosure. “[I]t’s

¹⁶⁵ Kim Carr, interview with the author, Parliament House, Canberra, 30 July 2021.

¹⁶⁶ Chris Bowen, zoom interview with the author, 15 October 2021.

¹⁶⁷ Kim Carr, interview, 30 July 2021.

¹⁶⁸ Kim Carr, interview, 30 July 2021.

¹⁶⁹ Bowen, zoom interview, 15 October 2021.

¹⁷⁰ Bowen, zoom interview, 15 October 2021.

¹⁷¹ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

¹⁷² Kim Carr, interview, 30 July 2021.

¹⁷³ Kim Carr, *A Letter to Generation Next: Why Labor* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2013), p. 4.

¹⁷⁴ Carr, *Letter to Generation Next*, p. 19.

something Louise asked for”, he explained, “I think this is a fairly subdued version of events, and yeah it was difficult”.¹⁷⁵

Stylistically Bowen settled on a more conventional “blueprint” that aspired to the posture, if not the detail or scope, of Tony Crosland’s writings on British Labour. “[M]ost of it was already in my head”, he told me, “[b]ut it is always a challenge to structure it, and get down on paper exactly what’s floating around”.¹⁷⁶ True enough, the central thesis of his book *Hearts & Minds* – that “Labor is the only party that believes in both growth and opportunity” – had been given prime expression in his resignation speech hours before Adler’s initial phone call in March.¹⁷⁷ The Greens, Bowen argued, could “never understand the importance of growth”, while the Liberals would “never replicate” Labor’s commitment to opportunity.¹⁷⁸ He positioned Labor as the true heir of the social liberal tradition in Australia and a firm bulwark against the “muscular liberalism of Friedrich Hayek [...] and Milton Friedman which inspired modern conservatives in Australia and elsewhere”.¹⁷⁹ But even in this polemical tract, there was room for autobiographical discourse. Bowen recalled his first branch meeting, which he attended at the age of 15 because of a “gut feeling” that Labor was “the only party that thought I should be given the chance to grow”.¹⁸⁰ The life narratives of others proved powerful here, too. In his efforts to describe Labor as “the party of small business”, Bowen referred to Paul Keating and his father Matt, whose “difficulties in obtaining finance for his small engineering firm” in the 1950s has convinced his son of the need for financial deregulation.¹⁸¹

Bowen and Carr imagined that their books constituted an epistolary conversation with the Labor faithful about organisational reform. On the backbench, they joined a cross-factional group of MPs who were then discussing the party’s challenges and the reforms that would ameliorate them. This was no “formal” group, Bowen explained to me, but rather a gathering of people who “happened to come from different factions talking about some of the things that needed to change” if the party were to be electable again in the future.¹⁸² Their prescriptions differed, with Carr arguing for the continued importance of trade union affiliations, and Bowen making the case for the abolition of union membership as a pre-requisite for party

¹⁷⁵ Kim Carr, interview, 30 July 2021.

¹⁷⁶ Bowen, zoom interview, 15 October 2021.

¹⁷⁷ Chris Bowen, *Hearts & Minds: A Blueprint for Modern Labor* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2013), p. 3.

¹⁷⁸ Bowen, *Hearts & Minds*, pp. 3–4.

¹⁷⁹ Bowen, *Hearts & Minds*, p. 17.

¹⁸⁰ Bowen, *Hearts & Minds*, p. 14.

¹⁸¹ Bowen, *Hearts & Minds*, p. 53.

¹⁸² Bowen, zoom interview, 15 October 2021.

membership.¹⁸³ The factional varieties were grist to the mill for MUP. Adler explained, “I wanted politicians of all hues to make the case!”¹⁸⁴ Competing visions of change were good for journalists too, because they came with implied “internal criticism” which made the book itself “a bit sexier” to report on, Bowen suggested.¹⁸⁵ Carr and Bowen agreed that new rules were required for the process of selecting the party’s leader, which would involve mass membership ballots in line with the British Labour precedent.¹⁸⁶ The pace of political change ultimately outstripped the pace of the publishing process, with a re-installed prime minister Rudd announcing his plan for new Labor leadership election rules on 8 July 2013.¹⁸⁷ At his book launch four days later, the new treasurer Bowen laughed that his was the “only book that has been implemented before it is even released”.¹⁸⁸

These letters to the Labor Party did little to ease the party’s final throes in office. *A Letter to Generation Next* was launched by Victorian Labor right stalwart Gareth Evans in a show of party unity that was immediately undermined in the press by a “factional tempest” about Victorian preselections for the impending federal election.¹⁸⁹ Carr enjoyed the opportunity that his book tour afforded to speak with university students about the vocation of politics, but it became something of a yardstick with which to beat him in press interviews. The social democrat was forced to defend the Rudd government’s Papua New Guinea solution to the asylum seeker policy problem, a policy that permanently denied resettlement for asylum seekers arriving in Australia by boat: “it’s hard to work out how you would support this policy”, *Lateline* interviewer Steve Cannane suggested.¹⁹⁰ Bowen’s *Hearts & Minds* also created vulnerabilities in a hostile media landscape. Journalists argued that, when the new treasurer reaffirmed John Curtin’s dictum that Labor should govern alone or not at all, he was making “an admission that the past three years of [Gillard’s] minority government” had been unsuccessful.¹⁹¹ Interviewers on Network Ten’s *Meet the Press* questioned the book’s function

¹⁸³ Carr, *Letter to Generation Next*, pp. 40—41; Bowen, *Hearts & Minds*, pp. 130—33.

¹⁸⁴ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

¹⁸⁵ Bowen, zoom interview, 15 October 2021.

¹⁸⁶ Carr, *Letter to Generation Next*, pp. 43 – 48; Bowen, *Hearts & Minds*, pp. 116—19.

¹⁸⁷ Michelle Grattan, “No More Coups Against Labor PMs Under New Rudd Rules”, *The Conversation*, 8 July 2013, <https://theconversation.com/no-more-coups-against-labor-pms-under-new-rudd-rules-15887>, accessed 19 October 2021.

¹⁸⁸ Chris Bowen, Speeches – *Hearts & Minds: A Blueprint for Modern Labor* launch, Sydney, 12 July 2013, archived by Pandora (15 December 2014), <https://bit.ly/3kePMir>, accessed 6 October 2020.

¹⁸⁹ Josh Gordon, “ALP’s Factional Fault Lines are Rumbling Again”, *Age*, 25 July 2013, p. 31.

¹⁹⁰ Steve Cannane, Transcript of interview with Kim Carr, *Lateline*, 22 July 2013, archived by ProQuest (Document ID 1406201218), accessed 6 October 2020.

¹⁹¹ Leigh Sales, Interview with Chris Bowen, 7.30, 11 July 2013, archived by Pandora (21 October 2015), <https://bit.ly/3kePMir>, accessed 6 October 2020.

as a marker of future leadership ambitions, drawing parallels with *Battlelines*.¹⁹² Several hundred people did buy these books in due course, but there was no political salvation to be gleaned from them. In September 2013, Labor was comprehensively defeated by Abbott's Coalition, and Bowen was fortunate to be re-elected in his own Western Sydney electorate of McMahon. Though these were hardly lucrative products in the book market, MUP benefited from having been active in the discourses that surrounded the troubled party.

The epistolary conceit was also adopted by those who recognised the need for a more individual form of reputational rehabilitation or distraction. Christopher Pyne, newly appointed minister for education under Abbott, had long considered writing a book, but the form, the time, and the purpose had all eluded him. Adler had considered signing him to write a book called *On Passion* for MUP in 2008, which would have been published in its *On* series of small releases, but Pyne felt that the projected publication date of 2010 was too electorally risky for him.¹⁹³ Uncharacteristically, Adler suggested that Pyne consider writing for Morry Schwartz's *Quarterly Essay* or *Monthly* publications, noting that the latter "didn't do Mr Rudd's career any harm".¹⁹⁴ The South Australian MP pursued the matter no further, but by the time he returned to government in 2013, his reputation had deteriorated somewhat. Probably the most aggressive male parliamentary combatant during Gillard's premiership, Pyne was regarded in Liberal factional politics as a "vicious" kingmaker, and press clippings in his personal papers suggest that he was wholly aware that these perceptions were publicly shared.¹⁹⁵ That reputation soured further when, as education minister, he advocated for the deregulation of tertiary education tuition fees, a proposal that ultimately failed to pass the Senate.¹⁹⁶ By mid-2014, then, Pyne had every reason to want to "show another side of himself".¹⁹⁷ For this father of four, reputational reset would take the form of a 70,000 word book called *A Letter to My Children*.

¹⁹² Adam Shand, Transcript of interview with Chris Bowen, Meet the Press, 14 July 2013, archived by Pandora (15 December 2014), <https://bit.ly/3XEaxSt>, accessed 6 October 2020.

¹⁹³ Louise Adler, Email to Christopher Pyne, 29 July 2008, UniSA Archives, Christopher Pyne Collection, Series CP16: Recordings Relating to Memoir "A Letter to My Children", Box 1.

¹⁹⁴ Louise Adler, Email to Christopher Pyne, 29 July 2008, UniSA Archives, Christopher Pyne Collection, Series CP16: Recordings Relating to Memoir "A Letter to My Children", Box 1.

¹⁹⁵ Sharri Markson, "Rise & Pyne", *Sunday Telegraph*, 19 April 2009; Greg Kilton, "The Kingmaker", *Advertiser*, 6 April 2010, p. 21, UniSA Archives, Christopher Pyne Collection, Series CP16: Recordings Relating to Memoir "A Letter to My Children", Box 1.

¹⁹⁶ Mike Secombe, "Christopher 'The Fixer' Pyne's Bid to Deregulate Uni Fees", *Saturday Paper*, 21–27 March 2015, no. 52, <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/politics/2015/03/21/christopher-the-fixer-pynes-bid-deregulate-uni-fees/14268564001648#hrd>, accessed 26 January 2023.

¹⁹⁷ James Massola, "Why I Do What I Do: Pyne Pens Note to Children", *Age*, 25 April 2015, p. 11.

Adler and Heath placed a high premium on the style of Pyne's epistolary conceit. The project took as its central premise the question that Pyne's daughter had once asked him: why had he produced four children if he really wanted to be kept away from them by political life? MUP received a test chapter marked by astonishingly dry tales of parliamentary intrigue from the mid-1990s, largely lacking the familial and lively anecdotes that would characterise the eventual book.¹⁹⁸ When Pyne received a contract (and an initial advance of \$3,000), it was with the caveat that he would enjoy significant literary help.¹⁹⁹ Emily Hart, a student of publishing and a Pyne family friend, was assigned as the researcher and co-author. Over lunch in one of Adelaide's first class restaurants, Hart and Pyne devised the structure of the book with Adler and Heath "on a napkin or on a paper tablecloth".²⁰⁰ Hart "shared royalties" with Pyne, but reserved the right not to put her name on the cover.²⁰¹ Her job would be to help him retrace the story of his father, the late eye surgeon Remington Pyne, whose life of "public service" became the project's core story and the noble answer to his daughter's initial question.²⁰² "He really wanted a book about his dad", Hart recalled, and the story of Christopher's own public life required more coaxing.²⁰³ To bring the elder Pyne's story to life, Hart harvested newspaper clippings about Remington and interviewed people who knew and worked with him.²⁰⁴ Moreover, she interviewed the minister at length, using the transcripts to build the narrative, and drawing some inspiration from Obama's *Dreams from My Father*.²⁰⁵ Remington's and Christopher's stories were the central threads, entwined by kinship but also by the noble theme of "[intergenerational] service" and the Jesuit dictum, "A man for others".²⁰⁶ Having flagged Jesuit faith as a guiding force in the Pyne family story, the book revealed little of the role that religion played in the lives of father or son. Both men were to be depicted as civic leaders in

¹⁹⁸ Test Chapter for Melbourne University Press Before Book Contract Signed, UniSA Archives, Christopher Pyne Collection, Series CP16: Recordings Relating to Memoir "A Letter to My Children", Box 1.

¹⁹⁹ Yilin Liu, Letter to Christopher Pyne, 13 October 2014, UniSA Archives, Christopher Pyne Collection, Series CP16: Recordings Relating to Memoir "A Letter to My Children", Box 1.

²⁰⁰ Hart, zoom interview, 9 November 2021.

²⁰¹ Hart, zoom interview, 9 November 2021.

²⁰² Christopher Pyne, Interview with Sabra Lane, 7.30, 27 July 2015, *PyneOnline*, <https://www.pyneonline.com.au/media-centre/transcripts/abc-730-27-07-2015>, accessed 22 January 2022.

²⁰³ Hart, zoom interview, 9 November 2021.

²⁰⁴ Draft with Research & Notes, UniSA Archives, Christopher Pyne Collection, Series CP16: Recordings Relating to Memoir "A Letter to My Children", Box 1.

²⁰⁵ Hart, zoom interview, 9 November 2021.

²⁰⁶ Notes for *A Letter to My Children*, UniSA Archives, Christopher Pyne Collection, Series CP16: Recordings Relating to Memoir "A Letter to My Children", Box 1.

largely secular terms, their stories refracted through the “idea of leadership”.²⁰⁷ Heath, it seems, played a key role in approving the content and the style of iterative drafts.

A Letter to My Children would not grease Pyne’s path to leadership, but it did help salvage his faltering public reputation. Adler saw it as “hilarious” in style but “honourable” in its message of public service.²⁰⁸ With cover endorsements from columnist Peter FitzSimons and morning television host Karl Stefanovic, the book itself told a simple enough story. Remington’s death at the age of fifty-nine was a traumatic event for the young Pyne, who became a politician in something of a hurry. Where Remington had shown self-belief in pioneering a new Australian Craniofacial Unit for the treatment of “cranial and facial deformities”, the younger Pyne used his own confidence to “remedy” the internal politics of the Adelaide University Liberal Club.²⁰⁹ Just as Remington had persevered in his quest to create the influential Specific Learning Difficulties Association of South Australia, a young Christopher persevered through a torturous preselection battle in 1992. More compellingly, Remington’s compassion toward treating trachoma in Aboriginal communities was mirrored in Pyne’s own efforts as parliamentary secretary for health to create headspace, a national service for young people facing mental health challenges, in 2007. Launching the book with Crabb and Adler at a café in Adelaide’s Burnside Village, Pyne reiterated the central premise of the book, that “public service is a good thing in itself”.²¹⁰ A slew of public talks and media interviews generated a shift in the tone of commentary about him. The *Australian*’s Troy Bramston wrote of the “new side to this veteran political warrior”, and Peter Hartcher in the *Sydney Morning Herald* dubbed it “the funniest of the new wave of political books”.²¹¹ Hart recalled that sales were likely less than 5,000, likely concentrated in Pyne’s own electorate.²¹²

Even as Pyne’s standing stabilised, opinions of political life writing seemed to fall further. Sometimes it was mild banter. Launching the book, Crabb joked with Pyne’s children, “I’ve read your father’s book, so you don’t have to”.²¹³ More seriously, the insincerity of the medium itself was remarked upon. When Pyne appeared on Network Ten’s satirical program

²⁰⁷ Notes for *A Letter to My Children*, UniSA Archives, Christopher Pyne Collection, Series CP16: Recordings Relating to Memoir “A Letter to My Children”, Box 1.

²⁰⁸ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

²⁰⁹ Christopher Pyne, *A Letter to My Children* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2015), p. 125, p. 145.

²¹⁰ Christopher Pyne, Speech Notes for Book Launch, July 2015, UniSA Archives, Christopher Pyne Collection, Series CP16: Recordings Relating to Memoir “A Letter to My Children”, Box 1.

²¹¹ Troy Bramston, “Pyne Tells His Kids What Drives Him”, *Weekend Australian*, 25 July 2015, p. 2; Peter Hartcher, “Jumping Off the Hamster Wheel”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 September 2015, p. 28.

²¹² Hart, zoom interview, 9 November 2021.

²¹³ Annabel Crabb, Launch of Christopher Pyne’s *A Letter to My Children*, *Speakola*, 2 August 2015, <https://speakola.com/arts/annabel-crabb-christopher-pyne-letter-to-my-children-2015>, accessed 20 June 2019.

Have You Been Paying Attention to promote the book, radio host and comedian Sam Pang asked him, “Do you expect to sell more than four books?”²¹⁴ Reviewers asked similar questions. “Come on, children”, Gerard Windsor wrote of Pyne’s politics in the *Canberra Times*: “He hasn’t told you the half of it”.²¹⁵ A scathing reviewer in the *Sunday Mail* wondered how much further time with his children Pyne had lost while writing the book: “Funny old Daddy”.²¹⁶ Nor did Pyne’s self-portrait of paternal benevolence wash with student protesters from the National Union of Students, who rallied against higher education deregulation at his Melbourne book launch in a struggle that ended with smashed windows and the arrest of a young woman.²¹⁷ And finally the book, published at a moment of heightened public anger at politicians’ liberal use of parliamentary entitlements and expenses, figured as another object of greed and self-interest. Adelaide’s *Advertiser* noted that a number of Pyne’s colleagues had purchased their copies of his book using taxpayers’ money.²¹⁸ If Pyne’s epistolary performance was a modestly successful example of reputational rehabilitation, it was also a reminder that the form of politicians’ autobiographical performances could mark out them and their medium for further cynicism.

The Right Men for the Right Jobs

By the mid-2010s, the logic on which Adler’s vision for MUP rested had become less tenable than it had been a decade earlier. The publisher was herself a national celebrity (she had long been one in Melbourne), with a passionate band of supporters in the political class and an increasingly large coterie of critics in the academy. In these final years of her tenure at MUP, the publishing house afforded opportunities to the most senior figures of the Labor Party, who once again languished in opposition, to establish their credentials to serve in the most important roles. For the political class, whose public standing appeared to be diminishing in surveys of public opinion, these books were an opportunity to establish themselves as upright men (and less often women) of principle and intellect, qualities that often seemed in short supply in Canberra. To have one’s name on the cover of a self-authored book would prove to sceptics a capacity to deal with important matters in something other than a superficial or cynical manner.

²¹⁴ Sam Pang quoted in Working Dog Productions, “Christopher Pyne joins #HYBPA”, *YouTube*, 13 August 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XeCrckuc0Uo>, accessed 19 October 2021.

²¹⁵ Gerard Windsor, “Questions a Politician’s Children Should Ask”, *Canberra Times*, 26 September 2015, p. 14.

²¹⁶ Peter Goers, “Oh, Christopher Pyne, Our Man of Self-Congratulatory Letters”, *Sunday Mail*, 9 August 2015, p. 58.

²¹⁷ Chloe Booker, “Protestors and Police Clash at Launch of Pyne’s Book”, *Canberra Times*, 1 August 2015, p. 3.

²¹⁸ Jackson Gothe-Snape and Peter Jean, “Extra Hospitality Bill for Biggs’ Ill-Fated HK Trip”, *Advertiser*, 2 September 2016, p. 4.

Again, the point here is not that these performances necessarily worked for the politicians, but rather that MUP invested in these activities in the name of public discourse.

Some politicians, including Bowen as shadow treasurer, used the opportunities that Adler created for them to establish in unambiguous terms their credentials for a specific ministerial role. Following Labor's defeat in 2013, Adler once again invited Bowen to write a political memoir, but the latter scoffed that he was "too young" and proposed instead a book-length study of the most important treasurers in Australia's history.²¹⁹ His historiographical ambition to plug a "big hole in Australian history" was more than matched by an enthusiasm to "be a better shadow treasurer and then treasurer" if he were returned to that position by voters: "it would sort of show a degree of seriousness about the task", he thought.²²⁰ The project was anything other than a "quickie", involving as it did interviews with the living former treasurers as well as extensive biographical reading on weekends and during long-haul flights, during which Bowen would read a "book on Ted Theodore and make notes".²²¹ He consulted Queensland political historian Ross Fitzgerald and journalist Paul Kelly. Above all, he asked distinguished ANU economic historian Selwyn Cornish to read each chapter and discuss the contents. "I would go [to Parliament House], usually late in the afternoon", Cornish told me, "and we'd have a cup of tea [...] and talk for an hour".²²² Bowen and Cornish shared similar views about economic policies and institutions, but personalities were a lively subject of discussion. Cornish saw the project as an earnest "learning exercise" on Bowen's part, though he recognised that it might have aligned with Bowen's "political strategies" for visibility and brand development.²²³ To be a good treasurer again, it seemed, he had to be identified with the right men.

Published in 2015, *The Money Men* told a series of significant stories about institutional, intellectual and policy reform from 1901 to 2013. Character and temperament were important causal factors in the stories that Bowen told about each treasurer's tenure. William Watt was a treasurer of "unfulfilled potential", hindered by the lack of "mutual respect" between him and prime minister Billy Hughes; Bill Hayden's period in the role in 1975 was also a story "of what could have been".²²⁴ Theodore, in the throes of the great depression, had been a man of

²¹⁹ Bowen, zoom interview, 15 October 2021.

²²⁰ Bowen, zoom interview, 15 October 2021.

²²¹ Bowen, zoom interview, 15 October 2021.

²²² Selwyn Cornish, phone interview with the author, 9 September 2021.

²²³ Cornish, phone interview, 9 September 2021.

²²⁴ Chris Bowen, *The Money Men: Australia's 12 Most Notable Treasurers* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2015), p. 52, p. 246.

“brilliance and dedication” deprived of “moral authority and popularity” by the crisis and by local corruption allegations.²²⁵ Scathing of Dr Cairns, Bowen described his tenure in 1974—75 as a “powerful reminder” that treasurers need both intelligence *and* judgement, with Cairns’ economic “ignominy” explained by his want of the latter.²²⁶ But Keating, with his “sheer force of will” and “peerless ability to communicate”, was the “textbook” example for any serious treasurer.²²⁷ Bowen did not elide the recession of the early 1990s for which Keating bore much responsibility, but he did argue that “it would have been less severe” if Keating’s monetary policy instincts had prevailed over the advice of the RBA and Treasury.²²⁸ The clear lessons of the past, Bowen concluded, were that a treasurer’s relationships with their prime minister and Treasury itself were crucial, as was a practical (rather than solely intellectual) understanding of the Australian economy, for any treasurer’s success. “I’ve learnt things writing this book”, he declared, “that will make me a better treasurer should I receive the honour of serving in the post again”.²²⁹ It was important, then, for Bowen not only to record the lessons, but also the fact of his having personally imbibed them.

The response to Bowen’s book was largely positive, if uneven and somewhat partisan. In particular, the press shared his favourable impression of Keating’s economic legacy. In a series of articles for the *Australian*, Bramston promoted *The Money Men* and declared that this “impressive book” would help the Labor Party craft a compelling economic message in future.²³⁰ Labor’s leader Bill Shorten launched the book at a well-attended event at Old Parliament House in Canberra.²³¹ Cornish remembered a highly successful event at the ANU, and a further event at the Sydney Institute painstakingly managed by conservative commentator Gerard Henderson.²³² In the *Age*, economist Peter Martin described the book as “something of a triumph”, even as he wondered if the time could have been spent “more usefully developing policies”.²³³ Fitzgerald contributed a glowing review to the *Australian*, blurring the lines between collaborator and critic.²³⁴ However, Bowen’s partial defence of Wayne Swan as “an effective treasurer in the most difficult of circumstances” came in for questioning.²³⁵ Kelly,

²²⁵ Bowen, *The Money Men*, p. 109.

²²⁶ Bowen, *The Money Men*, p. 226, p. 188.

²²⁷ Bowen, *The Money Men*, p. 343, p. 295.

²²⁸ Bowen, *The Money Men*, p. 324.

²²⁹ Bowen, *The Money Men*, p. x.

²³⁰ Troy Bramston, “Hockey Should Learn From Those Who Went Before”, *Australian*, 3 August 2015, p. 10.

²³¹ Bowen, zoom interview, 15 October 2021.

²³² Cornish, phone interview, 9 September 2021.

²³³ Peter Martin, “Heroes Who Held the Purse Strings”, *Age*, 19 September 2015, p. 30.

²³⁴ Cornish, phone interview, 9 September 2021; Ross Fitzgerald, “A Dozen Doyens with Money Skills to Treasure”, *Weekend Australian*, 22 August 2015, p. 18.

²³⁵ Bowen, *The Money Men*, p. 394.

while celebrating the book's portrait of Keating, described Bowen's assessment of Swan as evidence of Labor's misguided Keynesian "faith".²³⁶ The economist and op-ed columnist Henry Ergas derided the book as evidence that "Labor refuses to acknowledge the mess it left behind".²³⁷ News Corp commentator Rowan Dean, with customary hyperbole, argued that "if Mr Bowen is indeed to ever become 'better' than he was last time around [...] [h]e will have to swap political parties and secondly he will have to have a brain transplant".²³⁸ In general, though, the book was clearly regarded among most commentators as evidence of its author's seriousness about the office he briefly held and hoped to occupy again.

When MUP asked Bowen's leader to sign a book contract in the following autumn, it was inviting him to prove his character rather than his intellect. Bill Shorten first achieved national recognition for his valiant leadership of the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) during the Beaconsfield Mine disaster of 2006, and his election to federal parliament in 2007 was followed by a rapid ascension through the ministerial ranks. In Labor's first rank-and-file leadership ballot, Shorten was narrowly elected ahead of Anthony Albanese (who in fact won the membership vote), but the Victorian brought to the role a reputation that was much diminished. By 2013, the most "potent images" of Shorten were those illustrating him as a factional plotter during the removal of two Labor prime ministers, and his "standing suffered" further when the Abbott government pursued him with its Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption.²³⁹ The ascension of Malcolm Turnbull to the prime ministership in September 2015 cast a significant shadow over what David Marr called the "faint halo" that still lingered around Shorten from Beaconsfield.²⁴⁰ Before the Labor Party could prepare its efficient 2016 election campaign (replete with "100 positive policies" and a campaign to "Save Medicare" from alleged privatisation), it had to manage Shorten's political reputation.

Despite the risks of collaborating unambiguously with the leader of a major political party in the months before an election campaign, Adler felt that there was merit in inviting Shorten to present himself more fully to the public. She stressed that she was no co-conspirator in the leader's public relations, but simply a publisher who saw a gap in public political discourse. "I probably asked him to do it", Adler recalled, "[a]nd, we know that, at that level, many people are involved in making the decision about whether publishing a book is a good

²³⁶ Paul Kelly, "Keating and Swan Loom Large in Bowen's Thinking", *Australian*, 7 October 2015, p. 14.

²³⁷ Henry Ergas, "Partisan Bowen Goes Too Far in Praise of Swan", *Australian*, 26 October 2015, p. 10.

²³⁸ Rowan Dean, "Throw the Book at Bowen", *Courier Mail*, 27 July 2015, p. 20.

²³⁹ David Marr, *Faction Man: Bill Shorten's Pursuit of Power* (Carlton: Black Inc., 2016), p. 3, p. 31.

²⁴⁰ Marr, *Faction Man*, p. 3. See also David Crowe, *Venom: Vendettas, Betrayals and the Price of Power* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2019), pp. 36—37.

idea or not”.²⁴¹ The leader and his office decided that it was. “Fundamentally,” Shorten told me, “I wanted to explain my policy vision for the nation and the ways in which my background, values, and life-long commitment to the labour movement had informed my long-term thinking on Australia’s future”.²⁴² MUP announced the forthcoming book on 19 April 2016, with a release date scheduled to coincide with the beginning of budget week.²⁴³ Derived chiefly from existing speeches, the book was initially conceived as “an online essay only”, his staff told the press at the time, but a physical book ultimately took shape.²⁴⁴ Like Calwell before him, Shorten would rely on members of his staff, historian and commentator Nick Dyrenfurth foremost among them, for intellectual input, though Shorten pointed out that it was “not intended as a John Grisham-style bestseller”.²⁴⁵ Whether it sold well or not, the point was public disclosure of character and purpose. “I was running for Prime Minister for the first time”, he explained: “the Australian people deserved to know my story”.²⁴⁶ The underlying assumption was that Shorten’s character and life story were public property.

Released a few weeks before the onset of the 2016 election campaign, *For the Common Good* told a short history of Shorten’s upbringing, his character and his values. Like Pyne, the Jesuit-educated Shorten reprised that favourite dictum, “To be men for others”.²⁴⁷ The book was glowing about Shorten’s late mother, but cautious in its portrait of his father, a man who “like many men of his generation” leaned too heavily on alcohol.²⁴⁸ Promising to boost funding for domestic violence prevention programs, Shorten framed the initiative in terms of the “permanent undercurrent of tension” in his own childhood home (his parents later divorced).²⁴⁹ Shorten remained “proud” of his years with the AWU, dismissed the attacks against his record as “bizarre”, and declared, “As Labor leader, I still think like an organiser”.²⁵⁰ He passionately described his work on the creation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (proof that “great policy tops personality”), but said little of his involvement in the leadership dramas of 2010–13.²⁵¹ Critically, the book advocated for some of the policies that would prove central to

²⁴¹ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

²⁴² Bill Shorten, email correspondence with the author, 27 September 2021.

²⁴³ Ellen Whinnett, “Turnbull Takes it On Trust”, *Herald Sun*, 20 April 2016, p. 8.

²⁴⁴ Sid Maher, “Shorten Hits the Ground Running, Online and on the Shelves”, *Australian*, 20 April 2016, p. 4.

²⁴⁵ Shorten, email correspondence, 27 September 2021.

²⁴⁶ Bill Shorten, email correspondence with the author, 27 September 2021.

²⁴⁷ Bill Shorten, *For the Common Good: Reflections on Australia’s Future* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2016), p. 1.

²⁴⁸ Shorten, *For the Common Good*, p. 16.

²⁴⁹ Shorten, *For the Common Good*, p. 17; Jessica Marszalek, “\$65m Puts Domestic Violence to the Fore”, *Courier Mail*, 14 May 2016, p. 9.

²⁵⁰ Shorten, *For the Common Good*, p. 34, 33.

²⁵¹ Shorten, *For the Common Good*, p. 70.

his election pitch, chiefly the restriction of negative gearing to newly constructed homes, and a halving of the capital gains tax discount.²⁵² After its release, Shorten did little to promote the book, preoccupied by the quest to “win votes not sell books”.²⁵³ The tone of reviews ranged from measured to hostile. Writing for *Inside Story*, Frank Bongiorno was generous, but called it a somewhat “defensive document”.²⁵⁴ Shorten’s political opponents, of course, used the book’s reflections on his union past to renew their attacks on his character. “No one can complain they weren’t warned”, the Menzies Research Centre’s Nick Cater wrote.²⁵⁵ The *Australian*’s Richard Ferguson saw the book as “a promising development in our political culture”, but pointed out that this was no *Audacity of Hope*.²⁵⁶ Though befitting Labor’s pamphleteering tradition, *For the Common Good* was not a politically or commercially transformative product.

Unprecedentedly, MUP took steps to advance the wider public relations of Australia’s alternate prime ministerial family after the election. In 2017 Adler published a book called *Take Heart: A Story for Modern Stepfamilies* penned by Chloe Shorten, corporate figure, wife of the Labor leader and daughter of former governor-general Dame Quentin Bryce. Journalists perceived the book a “surprising and intimate portrayal” of the challenges and anxieties of step parenting, informed by an interest in parenting books and sociological research.²⁵⁷ Though “peppered with anecdotes”, the author insisted that hers was not the “autobiography” of the Shorten blended family.²⁵⁸ The encouraging response to *Take Heart* gave Adler some hope that a second book could be saleable. Given the first book’s emphasis on shared meal times in modern families and stepfamilies, Shorten and Adler decided that a cookbook might be a good idea. Published in 2018, exclusive signed copies of *The Secret Ingredient: The Power of the Family Table* were advertised on MUP’s website as an invitation to “bring the remarkable power of the family meal into your home”.²⁵⁹ Chloe Shorten figured in media interviews and

²⁵² Shorten, *For the Common Good*, pp. 153–54.

²⁵³ Shorten, email correspondence, 27 September 2021.

²⁵⁴ Frank Bongiorno, “Uncommonly Good?”, *Inside Story*, 23 May 2016, <https://insidestory.org.au/uncommonly-good/>, accessed 6 January 2023.

²⁵⁵ Nick Cater, “Cosy Deals Make the Unskilled Among Our Best Paid”, *Australian*, 31 May 2016, p. 12.

²⁵⁶ Richard Ferguson, “Shorten’s Snapshot”, *Weekend Australian*, 21 May 2016, p. 16.

²⁵⁷ Melissa Fyfe, “Shortening the Odds: the Woman Humanising Bill’s Bid for the Lodge”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 May 2019, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/shortening-the-odds-the-woman-humanising-bill-s-bid-for-the-lodge-20190507-p51kx3.html>, accessed 6 January 2023.

²⁵⁸ Chloe Shorten quoted in Karen Hardy, “Bill and Chloe Shorten Share Lessons From their Step-Family”, *Canberra Times*, 24 April 2018 [19 May 2017], <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6032929/bill-and-chloe-shorten-share-lessons-from-their-step-family/>, accessed 6 January 2023.

²⁵⁹ Melbourne University Press, “The Secret Ingredient (Signed By Chloe Shorten)”, archived by National Library of Australia (7 April 2018), <https://bit.ly/3YTGelJ>, accessed 6 January 2023.

magazine pieces as a humanising “consort” for a potential prime minister, a role that politicians’ wives have had to develop with little guidance over time as Diane Langmore has shown.²⁶⁰ The negative repercussions were for MUP to bear. Journalists now argued that the publication of a “political cookbook” was a sign that the market for political memoirs was now well and truly “tired”.²⁶¹ Adler, though adamant that it had been “a perfectly legitimate project”, recognised the reputational damage that MUP incurred as a “tragedy”.²⁶²

The Secret Ingredient, coupled with the lacklustre performance of NSW senator Sam Dastyari’s 2017 memoir *One Halal of a Story*, spelt the end of MUP’s political publishing journey under Adler. Elected in 2013, the senator and former NSW general secretary Dastyari earned a high media profile by campaigning against malpractice in the banking sector, confronting anti-Muslim sentiment in the community, and inviting the reactionary Pauline Hanson to share a Halal snack pack with him.²⁶³ His memoir told a serious story about his parents’ survival and escape from fundamentalist Iran in the early 1980s, and offered some glimpses into the practice of modern politics and its often “insidious” culture.²⁶⁴ But it was equally, and transparently, an act of self-publicity performed by a man whose political career had stalled in the face of scandal. Speaking with me, Adler said that she had been fascinated by the skilful way that people like Dastyari and Paul Howes, another MUP author and long-serving national secretary of the Australian Workers’ Union, operated within the Labor Party.²⁶⁵ But there seemed to be little adeptness on display when Dastyari’s “financial dealings” with Chinese government operatives were revealed; they appeared to have paid personal debts on his behalf.²⁶⁶ Adler had first sought to enlist Dastyari as an author years earlier, but it was not until his resignation from Labor’s frontbench over those allegations in 2016 that he agreed to write for her, perhaps imagining that he might “restore his reputation”.²⁶⁷ Interviewed for

²⁶⁰ Diane Langmore, *Prime Ministers’ Wives: The Public and Private Lives of Ten Australian Women* (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble, 1992).

²⁶¹ Dana McCauley, “Unpopular Joyce Finally Finds a Publisher”, *Australian*, 23 April 2018, p. 24.

²⁶² Adler quoted in Adams, Late Night Live.

²⁶³ Dana McCauley, “Pauline Hanson Loses it Over Halal Snack Packs”, *news.com.au*, 3 July 2016, <https://www.news.com.au/national/federal-election/pauline-hanson-loses-it-over-halal-snack-packs/news-story/a52ed6c717833bdc81c14839e5de9518>, accessed 6 January 2023.

²⁶⁴ Sam Dastyari, *One Halal of a Story* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2017), p. 235.

²⁶⁵ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022. See Paul Howes, *Confessions of a Faceless Man: Inside Campaign 2010* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2010).

²⁶⁶ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022; Louise Yaxley, “Sam Dastyari and the Murky Links with Chinese Businessmen that Ended His Political Career”, *ABC News*, 12 December 2017, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-12/sam-dastyari:-murky-links-with-chinese-businessmen-ended-career/9249216>, accessed 6 January 2023.

²⁶⁷ Sally Patten, “Melbourne University Publishing CEO Louise Adler on How to Influence Public Debate”, *Australian Financial Review*, 25 August 2017, <https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/careers/mups-louise-adler-on-how-to-influence-public-debate-20170822-gy1bpv>, accessed 11 March 2023.

this research, Adler reaffirmed her pride in this book: “I loved it, and I was very disappointed that people didn’t love it”.²⁶⁸ In the months after Dastyari’s book was released, new disclosures of foreign influence on his policy pronouncements prompted the end of his political career. Regarded warily by much of the public, the book did the senator no favours.

For Adler’s critics, Dastyari’s and Chloe Shorten’s books were emblematic of the inefficacy of MUP’s political publishing project. Writing for the *Monthly*, Bongiorno argued that the university gained nothing from publishing “the insubstantial memoirs of a thirty-something Labor senator fallen on hard times”.²⁶⁹ In early 2018, Adler was “mooted” to be in talks with former deputy prime minister Barnaby Joyce to publish memoir *Weatherboard and Iron*, a “memoir-cum-manifesto” penned hastily in the wake of his resignation as leader of the National Party over his extra-marital affair.²⁷⁰ Joyce ultimately signed with New Holland publishing instead, but Adler moved directly into another series of publishing controversies involving former foreign minister and MUP board member Bob Carr’s memoir *Run for Your Life* and Louise Milligan’s *Cardinal*, an investigative study of disgraced Cardinal George Pell replete with allegations of child sexual abuse.²⁷¹ Carr was banned from the Brisbane Writers’ Festival on account of comments in his memoir about the concentration of migrant population growth in Sydney, and when Adler came to his defence (hardly the only person to do so), the *Weekend Australian* accused her of “milking the situation for as much publicity as possible”.²⁷² Milligan and Adler earned the ire of University of Melbourne Chancellor Allan Myers QC, who was scathing of *Cardinal*, and even more so of Adler’s decision to publish it.²⁷³ The disagreement between the university council and the leadership of MUP prompted a new review of MUP’s strategic direction, which seemed to lead inexorably to Adler’s departure. For all of the personal animosity at play in these manoeuvres, it seemed that Adler’s political publishing mission had now run its course.

²⁶⁸ Adler, phone interview, 25 January 2022.

²⁶⁹ Frank Bongiorno, “On Louise Adler, Academic Publishing and Cultural Barbarism”, *Monthly*, 7 February 2019, <https://www.themonthly.com.au/blog/frank-bongiorno/2019/07/2019/1549495530/louise-adler-academic-publishing-and-cultural-barbarism>, accessed 16 March 2023.

²⁷⁰ Rick Morton, “Exit Hits Where it Hurts with Pay Sliced by \$200k”, *Weekend Australian*, 24 February 2018, p. 6. For the book, see Barnaby Joyce, *Weatherboard and Iron: Politics, the Bush and Me* (Chatswood: New Holland, 2018).

²⁷¹ Bob Carr, *Run for Your Life* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2018); Louise Milligan, *Cardinal: The Rise and Fall of George Pell* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2017).

²⁷² Caroline Overington, “Snobs Put Bias Before Books”, *Weekend Australian*, 4 August 2018, p. 19.

²⁷³ Chip le Grand and John Ferguson, “Page-Turning Tale of Publishing”, *Weekend Australian*, 7 July 2018, p. 6.

Conclusion

In 2006 Obama bemoaned the rise of a “celebrity culture” with all its tendency toward spin. He said this while seated on the famous Oprah Winfrey couch, promoting a book that cemented the brand so essential to his becoming president two years later.²⁷⁴ In Australia, politicians ignored his complaints and followed his precedent in their construction of several autobiographical manifestos and mid-career books. These books functioned as public relations exercises, resetting foundering reputations and distinguishing authors from their peers as serious figures with legitimate claims to advancement. The performances depended on an increasingly personalised political culture. Indeed, it is entirely unremarkable today that a politician might discuss their childhood, their families and their most intimate experiences in a feature interview or a public statement. But as this chapter has demonstrated, mid-career memoirs and manifestos have also been generated by a process of cultural commodification. Given expression in the form of a memoir, a manifesto or a “letter”, the ambitious politician was a saleable commodity that, for a time, earned one daring publisher a significant degree of public interest and media attention.

With the exception of Abbott, few politicians have found that their book has helped to achieve higher office. Some of MUP’s authors were serious about the task they had agreed to undertake, but relatively few were rewarded for it in the political arena. But for 15 years, the making and selling of politicians’ stories placed Adler and MUP in a distinct and sometimes influential position in Australian political and media culture. A few of their publications, such as *The Costello Memoirs*, were commercially successful over time. Others, such as *The Money Men*, were projects with a genuinely novel contribution to offer. All of them contributed to Adler’s standing as the most prolific political publisher in Australia, but this publishing activity depleted any residual goodwill toward her in the academic environment to which MUP was necessarily tied. The historians she had eagerly published in 2003 were mainly publishing elsewhere by 2018.

As a not-for-profit organisation with institutional support, MUP never needed to earn significant margins. However, cumulative losses could not be overlooked forever. In 2011, the publisher suffered a net operating shortfall of \$2.1 million, and a smaller one of nearly \$1.5 million in 2016.²⁷⁵ In 2019 the University claimed that it had subsidised MUP’s operations to

²⁷⁴ David J. Garrow, *Rising Star: The Making of Barack Obama* (London: William Collins, 2017), p. 1002.

²⁷⁵ Green, “Yet to be Written”; Melbourne University Publishing Limited, Annual Report 2017, p. 7, accessed via Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission website, <https://acncpubfilesprodstorage.blob.core.windows.net/public/17ce6311-2caf-e811-a962-000d3ad24a0d->

the tune of \$1.25 million per year for over a decade.²⁷⁶ The 2018 review, led by Sandy Grant (a former colleague of Adler's) was a mild thing, but council was nonetheless determined to redirect MUP's activities toward the publication of scholarly knowledge. Adler took her personal brand and departed, re-establishing herself some months later at Hachette Australia and developing her *In the National Interest* series with Monash University Publishing.

To sceptics, Adler's departure from MUP represented the inevitable denouement of a misguided experiment that breached the core mission of a university press. To Adler, the mere fact of her departure's newsworthiness was proof that her quest to secure MUP's public relevance had succeeded. The politicians she published overwhelmingly found that their efforts to leverage an illusion of intimacy through the medium of the mid-career memoir failed. In practice, these performances probably found their greatest audience among journalists with a professional responsibility to report on them, and who were partly responsible for determining whether the performer's reputation would be enhanced or censured. After her departure, the personalisation of politics proceeded as before, but the demise of Adler's vision for MUP reflected a weariness with political life writing among the political class itself and the public at large.

[ced0c7c7-65ec-4bcb-bf6b-cd5d0d798cd5-Financial%20Report-c49e88c2-39b0-e811-a962-000d3ad24a0d-MUP 2017 Statutory Accounts - Signed.pdf](#), 9 August 2020.

²⁷⁶ Robert Bolton, "Melbourne University Press was Losing \$1.25m a Year", *Australian Financial Review*, 31 January 2019, <https://www.afr.com/policy/health-and-education/melbourne-university-press-was-losing-125m-a-year-20190131-h1apak>, accessed 16 October 2020.

CONCLUSION

Hard to Take Seriously?

The political memoir sometimes figured as an object of transnational public ridicule in the 2010s.¹ In the critically acclaimed American comedy series *Veep* (2012—2019), fictive vice-president Selina Meyer (portrayed by comedian Julia Louis-Dreyfus) produces an autobiographical manifesto called *Some New Beginnings* which she evidently has not even read in draft form; it is followed, several seasons later, by a poorly written and dreadfully received presidential memoir. When her advisers open their advance copies of *A Woman First: First Woman*, they are distressed to find themselves scarcely mentioned. “I’m not in there until page 213”, the press secretary complains, “and I wrote the book”.²

In Britain, where the memoir had once been lampooned as an “occupational hazard” in *Yes, Prime Minister* (1987) – itself ironically based on Richard Crossman’s diaries – they were now more likely to be depicted in popular culture as a metonym for deceit and insincerity.³ English journalist Robert Harris’ novel *The Ghost* (2007), and controversial director Roman Polanski’s subsequent film adaption *The Ghost Writer* (2010), treated readers to a political thriller involving war crimes, the Central Intelligence Agency, a nameless ghostwriter, and a former prime minister who was instinctively an actor with no discernible political beliefs whatsoever. Reviewers of the book and the film understood the fictive Adam Lang to be Harris’s attempt to “mock” the real Tony Blair as a “lightweight” man subservient to American interests.⁴ Blair, who allegedly called Harris a “cheeky fuck”, seemed less than amused.⁵

In Australia, the repeated removal of prime ministers and the seemingly endless flood of political memoirs clearly also lent themselves to satire. Australian comedian Shaun Micallef made light of the genre’s growing ignominy in a six-part television satire called *The Ex-PM* in 2015. His character was a former prime minister, Andrew Dugdale, a singularly insubstantial man isolated at home with his unfaithful wife, disdainful daughter and a crooked accomplice,

¹ Paul Farhi, “Who Wrote that Political Memoir? No, Who Actually Wrote It?”, *Washington Post*, 9 June 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/who-wrote-that-political-memoir-no-who-actually-wrote-it/2014/06/09/8e89ccae-f00a-11e3-9ebc-2ee6f81ed217_story.html, accessed 9 August 2022.

² Brad Hall, dir., *Veep*, season 6, ep. 9, “A Woman First”, HBO, 2017.

³ BBC Studios, “Former PM’s Memoirs – Yes, Prime Minister – BBC Comedy”, *YouTube*, 9 June 2007 [originally aired in December 1987], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9NifqJyDMI>, accessed 10 January 2023.

⁴ Nicholas Watt, “Tony Blair Hopes to Silence ‘Cheeky’ Author who Mocked Him in *The Ghost*”, *Guardian*, 1 September 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/wintour-and-watt/2010/sep/01/tonyblair-pierce-brosnan>, accessed 10 January 2023.

⁵ Watt, “Blair Hopes to Silence ‘Cheeky’ Author”.

who hires a young ghostwriter named Ellen to produce his memoirs. The heart of the joke, Micallef has explained, is that Ellen examines Dugdale's political life and finds that "there's nothing to look at".⁶ The ABC agreed to a second series of the program, but reviewers were relatively unimpressed with both. In the same breath as declaring Micallef a "comedy genius", critics said that this was "the draft of a great idea" lurking in the "very long shadow" of *Veep*, desperately pandering to a "media-savvy, metropolitan crowd".⁷ But it was not just that the program seemed unfinished or derivative; try as he might, not even a revered performer like Micallef could convince his viewers that he was as insubstantial and vacuous as the cohort of miserable ghosts he seemed to be embodying.

Perhaps the problem for Micallef was that Australian politicians appeared to be perfectly capable of satirising themselves. In 2016 mining magnate and populist one-term MP Clive Palmer spent \$200,000 self-publishing a two-volume hardback book about his political achievements. *The Last Sentry at the Gate* was largely derived from media releases and parliamentary statements, such as they were. Palmer furnished politicians and journalists with unsolicited copies, some of which were quickly found abandoned in Parliament House's bathrooms. But Palmer was at his most ridiculous when he attempted to tender the book as legal evidence ahead of a hearing in the Queensland Supreme Court, where former employees were pursuing him for unresolved entitlements. *ABC News* reported that Justice John Bond found it all rather "hard to take seriously".⁸

For the historian, the temptation might be to treat all political memoirs like those pictured in *Veep* or *The Ex-PM*. (Palmer, to be sure, is in a class of his own.) Rarely does one find astonishing originality of thought in the pages of such books, nor are they usually displays of literary skill. Their candour often comes in for questioning, and the spectacle of the polygraph test has more than once been deployed to dramatise personal dishonesty. By 2018 it seemed that there were just too many politicians of increasingly low rank publishing books that looked rather artificial. But if we think about political memoirs as the cultural residue of a particular class of people who have lived and worked under a distinct series of pressures and

⁶ Shaun Micallef quoted in Colin Vickery, "First Person with Shaun Micallef", *Advertiser*, 11 October 2015, p. 5.

⁷ Andrew P Street, "Shaun Micallef Has a Sitcom In Him; The Ex-PM Isn't It", *Junkee*, 28 October 2015, <https://junkee.com/review-shaun-micallef-has-a-great-sitcom-in-him-the-ex-pm-isnt-it/68224>, accessed 18 January 2023; Luke Buckmaster, "Shaun Micallef's The Ex-PM Review: A Deadpan and Desperate Return", *Guardian*, 26 October 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2017/oct/26/shaun-micallefs-the-ex-pm-review-a-deadpan-and-desperate-return>, accessed 18 January 2023.

⁸ Jennifer Huxley, "Clive Palmer Fails in Court Bid to Use Self-Published Book as Evidence", *ABC News*, 29 September 2017.

opportunities, then we begin to see something more significant at play. These books have been products of important transformations in Australia's public culture and political life. They have also worked to reinscribe these transformations and entrench a new kind of public culture that values memory, testimony and self-disclosure above objectivity, coolness and observation. From the 1990s a wider global boom in life writing, among which the work of politicians was a very specific subset, testified to the heightened cultural interest in and premium on revelatory storytelling. Prince Harry's best-selling autobiography *Spare* – a “great autobiography” full of “damning details” about life in the royal family, according to three esteemed Australian historians – clearly reaffirmed the purchase that emotion and revelation have in public cultures, including that of Australia.⁹ In historicising such a culture, Joy Damousi has suggested, the role of the historian is “to identify the forces which produced the conditions for these testimonies”.¹⁰ Taking up that challenge, this thesis has discerned the political conflicts, cultural patterns and market forces that have created the space for politicians to put their names to these literary performances.

What were the political forces compelling the Australian political class to produce memoirs? There was, first and foremost, the fundamental assault that social activists had launched on the idea of a public-private dichotomy itself. Michelle Arrow has shown that, by making the personal political, women's and gay liberationists made new claims on the state and rewrote expectations of government. These activists were also changing the very terms in which political discourse could take place. When politicians wrote memoirs from their unique and privileged perspective, they now made greater reference to the self, they explicated their own feelings more often, and they told political stories on the basis that their intimacy with those stories gave them a distinct authority. It was on these premises that someone like Cheryl Kernot could promise to reveal how it felt to be a woman MP living and working in the intensity of the media gaze. The same logics that allowed Julia Gillard to tell a story in which her predecessor's moods and emotions explained the shifting fortunes of their government. And often, it was the emotional efficacy or purchase of the author that was on trial in the review columns and television bulletins, much more than the veracity of their historical claims.

⁹ Ann Curthoys, John Docker and Lyndall Ryan, “Harry, Meghan and the Republic”, *Inside Story*, 7 February 2023, <https://insidestory.org.au/harry-meghan-and-the-republic/>, accessed 1 March 2023. For the book see Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, *Spare* (London: Bantam, 2023).

¹⁰ Joy Damousi, “The Emotions of History”, in Stuart Macintyre (ed.), *The Historian's Conscience: Australian Historians on the Ethics of History* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2004), p. 30.

Ideological transformation, and the trauma it caused some parliamentarians, mattered enormously to the story I have outlined here, too. The replacement of the Keynesian consensus with a neoliberal ascendancy has figured in the pages of political histories as an intellectual process involving the political class, the bureaucracy and the professions. But the process of replacing the Keynesian consensus with something else was a troubled one, often deeply embittering for those whose Laborist traditions were sacrificed in the name of economic rationalism. The “log cabin” origin stories of so many politicians seemed the same, but these were now offered as homilies of upward mobility rather than class solidarity. But even among Liberals, whose rhetorical traditions seemed more receptive to economic rationalism and its prescriptions, the decline of Keynesian thinking would generate significant debate about liberalism and its application to the modern world. And when it came to complex social issues such as the contemporary legacies of European colonisation or anthropogenic climate change, the triumph of conservative thinking within the Liberal Party prompted deep satisfaction or outrage, depending on whose memoir one read. For the Australian Greens, disgust at the shallowness of social commitment in both major parties proved to be a powerfully animating force. In their memoirs, former politicians were explicit about the ideological truths they perceived to be at stake in modern public administration, especially when applied to intractable problems such as asylum seeker or climate change policy. They were explicit, too, in their grief for principles and values that had been sacrificed on the altar of electoral opportunism. These stories attracted interest among partisans, journalists, and a community of political readers. And wherever they became news stories, they mattered even more.

Life for the political class was shaped in this period too by the formation of entrenched and disciplined factions. These were sources of acute conflict, initially ideological in nature but increasingly personal and professional. These were structures that left individuals emotionally bruised and whole power blocs isolated in the halls of power. Some, such as Graham Richardson, rejoiced in the public performance of this type of power. His book has perhaps etched itself into Australian political consciousness more distinctly than any other politician’s memoir. For others, factionalism was something to be revealed and reviled in the pages of political life writing. The “faceless men” of the Labor Party and the “terrorists” who supposedly populated the reactionary wing of the Liberal Party came to symbolise the corrosive effects of factions in the Australian polity. If the victims of those factions (usually vanquished leaders) were seeking personal retribution, they were also often seeking to engage the public in a conversation that was larger than the individual ego.

New groups of political partisans made for a new category of storytelling. The rise of the political “staffer” contributed directly to the political memoir boom. Unlike reticent and duty-bound public servants, advisers and speechwriters were highly educated and often highly literate individuals who enjoyed the freedom to write and publish their recollections if they felt so inclined. There was a picture of power that had the (prime) ministerial office at its core. And when these writers had as their subject a dynamic or intriguing character such as Paul Keating, they could even produce, as Don Watson did, singularly great literature. As political operatives bound only by personal loyalty, staffers could assist their former employers in the making of their memoirs too. Indeed, all the prime ministerial memoirs I have explored in this thesis depended to some extent on the supporting labour that staffers and ex-advisers provided.

Structural changes in the gendered composition of parliament also generated some of the conflicts that instigated the political memoir boom. Indeed, the political memoir figured as a powerful stage on which to perform, but also to criticise and censure, gendered subjectivities. The “dinky-di” Bob Hawke, in making a memoir, rendered himself a self-pitying and unrespectable man. So too with Mark Latham, whose diaries were publicly renowned for their hyper-masculine aggression rather than their powerful intellect, despite ample evidence of both. Thanks to the scorn of the media and former colleagues, Kernot’s tale of sexism and media invasiveness was politically doomed before it was put between paperback covers. But Gillard’s *My Story* helped the first woman prime minister to refashion herself as a global symbol of women’s leadership, some scepticism from journalists and former colleagues notwithstanding. In Australian historiography, political authority is now recognised as fundamentally gendered, manifest in bodily, oratorical and sartorial markers. But the political memoir has itself functioned as a marker of authority, repute and respectability for men and women alike, or has more often been treated as evidence of the absence of such qualities.

Memoirs mattered because they articulated those conflicts in highly personal ways, and because they seemed to be salient gimmicks. They have been commodities in what scholars of celebrity have called the “attention economy”.¹¹ This was why publishers, with their eyes fixed on market data and analytic reports, favoured books with celebrity names on the cover. They came with an imagined market, and if they were newsworthy, all the better as far as the sales and marketing teams were concerned. Indeed, the prime quality of most of these books was that they were spectacles capable of claiming time and space in an increasingly fractious media

¹¹ Philip Drake, “Celebrity, Reputational Capital and the Media Industries”, in Anthony Elliott (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Celebrity Studies* (London: Routledge, 2018), p. 274.

landscape. Plenty of readers did buy these books, but it was journalists who decided which memoirs would be newsworthy, which stories would be amplified, and which of the self-portraitists might find egg on their faces. Journalists decided who to condone and condemn. This was what made the autobiographical manifesto or mid-career memoir such a distinct commodity in the early twenty-first century, although those performances rarely led to political success for the author. The key point here is that the political memoir thrived in an environment where market logics were constraining the choices that book publishers and news providers alike could make.

I have suggested that the peak of the memoir boom has passed, but it retains a prominent place in Australia's political culture and its publishing and media landscape. To paraphrase the historian Mark Baker, it is often the emotions that *matter* in public culture, and it is to that sensibility that political memoirs continue to appeal.¹² And when publishers and collaborators invested their capital and labour in these books, they were really investing in the emotional purchase of politics in the public sphere. These realities were illustrated again with the publication of Malcolm Turnbull's memoir in April 2020. The project was redolent of *The Hawke Memoirs* in several ways. Both authors purported to tell an intimate story of a long public life (even if Turnbull's relived a much shorter prime ministership), and much like Hawke, Turnbull was "writing about recent, unhappy events that he'd probably barely had time to process".¹³ The dictaphone and the foolscap folder had been superseded by Google docs and WhatsApp groups, but the emotional torment and the quest to claim a legacy were strikingly similar. In fact, Australian political culture now seemed so emotionally charged that Chubb Insurance refused to renew Hardie Grant publishing's defamation insurance over fears that their client, Turnbull, would be too libellous.¹⁴ Readers might not have entirely believed the noble self-portrait that the former prime minister offered, but they did at least buy the book, much to the relief of retailers who needed the custom in the wake of the first COVID-19 national lockdown. It also helped that the book was fundamentally newsworthy. After all, the author had called into question the integrity and character of the prime minister on whom Australians now depended for good policy in the face of a global public health disaster.

¹² Mark Baker, Interview on ABC Radio National, 28 March 1997. NAA: C100, 1647542.

¹³ Emily Hart, zoom interview with the author, 9 November 2021.

¹⁴ Samantha Hutchinson and Rachel Eddie, "Defamation Fears Leave Turnbull's Publisher in Insurance Lurch", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 June 2019, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/defamation-fears-leave-turnbull-s-publisher-in-insurance-lurch-20190619-p51z70.html>, accessed 11 January 2023.

The political memoir has in the past three years demonstrated its capacity to perform more important work in the public sphere. For instance, a genre historically marked by masculine self-portraits of greatness now seemed to be a vehicle with which women MPs could challenge the insidious ways that their male colleagues and journalists treated them. In 2021 Hardie Grant produced two forceful memoirs that took sexism in politics as their main theme, packaged between bright colours that commanded consumers' attention. Kate Ellis, a minister in the Rudd—Gillard government, published the sensationally titled *Sex, Lies and Question Time*, which described the media stereotyping, whispering smear campaigns and online abuse that have often characterised women politicians' experiences.¹⁵ Ellis told the stories of women from across the political spectrum alongside her own, and “didn’t want to centre herself” in the manner of traditional autobiographical writing.¹⁶ Ellis’s book was followed by Julia Banks’ *Power Play*, a memoir in which the Liberal-turned-Independent MP detailed sexist behaviour ranging from offensive remarks by male preselectors to sexual harassment at the hands of a male cabinet minister.¹⁷ These books were published in a highly fortuitous landscape, for media reporting on the alleged rape of Liberal staffer Brittany Higgins was then mobilising significant interest in a national conversation about the structural sexism and abuse that women in politics have experienced. These books were extracted in the metropolitan newspapers and showcased on various ABC television programs (although Banks remained a “Liberal rat” in the pages of the *Australian*).¹⁸ As Ellis’ and Banks’ publisher Emily Hart put it, the two women wanted their stories “to be much bigger than themselves”, an ambition that seemed redolent of the earlier women’s liberation movement and its belief that “sharing personal stories gave them power”.¹⁹ These acts of political storytelling from former MPs undoubtedly amplified the anti-sexist backlash brewing in metropolitan Australia, which was given full expression at the May 2022 federal election.

There is a telling coda to this story, too. When speculation began about what a memoir from the defeated Scott Morrison might look like, publishers told the media that the former prime minister ought not to bother because he would be wholly uncompetitive against the memoir of his avowed critic, the former Australian of the Year, Grace Tame, whose *Ninth Life*

¹⁵ Kate Ellis, *Sex, Lies and Question Time* (Richmond: Hardie Grant, 2021).

¹⁶ Hart, zoom interview, 9 November 2021.

¹⁷ Julia Banks, *Power Play: Breaking Through Bias, Barriers and Boy’s Clubs* (Richmond: Hardie Grant, 2021).

¹⁸ Joshua Black, “Julia Banks’ New Book is Part of a 50-Year Tradition of Female MPs Using Memoirs to Fight for Equality”, *The Conversation*, 8 July 2021, <https://theconversation.com/julia-banks-new-book-is-part-of-a-50-year-tradition-of-female-mps-using-memoirs-to-fight-for-equality-163888>, accessed 13 March 2022.

¹⁹ Hart, zoom interview, 9 November 2021; Michelle Arrow, *The Seventies: The Personal, the Political and the Making of Modern Australia* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2019), p. 47.

of a *Diamond Miner* was predicted to be one of the biggest publishing events in Australian history.²⁰ If the “fierce bidding war” that preceded Tame’s book was any indication, this was no mere hyperbole on the part of the publishing insider.²¹

This is not to suggest that the political memoir genre has suddenly become a beacon of political and cultural equality. Its authorship remains relatively homogenous and unrepresentative of the broader Australian community. Labor’s Sam Dastyari and Anne Aly remain unique in having published memoirs meaningfully informed by Muslim faith and Middle Eastern identity. Australia’s large Asian diaspora remains underrepresented in parliament and nearly invisible in the pages of political autobiography. The election of a more pluralistic parliament in May 2022, in partisan, gender and especially ethnic terms, may transform the political memoir genre into a more representative political product over time, though much will depend on the publishing companies and their assessments of the market.

And even now, just as in 1788, the genre is implicated in the political and cultural process of colonisation. White authors continue to write stories that seem antithetical to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander political aspirations. In *A Bigger Picture*, Turnbull repeated his well-rehearsed criticisms of the Voice to parliament that Aboriginal activists had asked for in the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart (it would be, he reiterated for the avoidance of any doubt, a “third chamber”).²² And by the time he had recanted his criticisms and embraced the Voice, his predecessor John Howard had once more leapt in to print to attack “identity politics”, the Aboriginal “guilt” industry, and modern “cancel culture” in a book un-ironically called *A Sense of Balance* (2022).²³ He was, apparently, still not sorry for his views on Australia’s colonial past and present. Especially since Sally Morgan published her bestseller *My Place* in 1987, Indigenous Australians have used the medium of memoir and autobiography to reassert their cultural authority in the modern nation.²⁴ But it remains true of this “flourishing genre” that “few of [the] authors are or have been political figures”.²⁵ In the absence of memoirs from figures such as Neville Bonner, Aiden Ridgeway, Ken Wyatt and Linda Burney, senior

²⁰ Charlie Lewis, “Scott Morrison Isn’t Planning a Memoir. Which is Just as Well Because it Probably Wouldn’t Sell”, *Crikey*, 13 September 2022, <https://www.crikey.com.au/2022/09/13/scott-morrison-would-anyone-buy-his-book/>, accessed 13 September 2022.

²¹ Jacqueline Maley, “‘Rage Saved my life in the End’: Grace Tame on Not Backing Down”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 September 2022, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/rage-saved-my-life-in-the-end-grace-tame-on-not-backing-down-20220719-p5b2s7.html>, accessed 25 February 2023.

²² Malcolm Turnbull, *A Bigger Picture* (Richmond: Hardie Grant, 2020), p. 571.

²³ John Howard, *A Sense of Balance* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2022), p. 32, pp. 2—3.

²⁴ Sally Morgan, *My Place* (New York: Seaver Books, 1988 [1987]).

²⁵ Murray Goot and Tim Rowse, “Warren Mundine in Black and White”, *Australian Journal of Biography and History*, no. 5 (2021), p. 205.

Aboriginal leaders working in unelected roles such as Charles Perkins, Noel Pearson and Warren Mundine have been the chief producers of indigenous political life writing, and in the latter's case, not without controversy.²⁶ Even as the covers of political memoirs grow more colourful and decorative, they continue to project an image of politics that is largely whitewashed.

For better or for worse, the recent publications discussed above reaffirm the core contention of this thesis, which is that the political memoir boom has been about more than the individual ego of the genre's authors and the market imperatives of the publishing houses that have sponsored them, even if those things have mattered a great deal. The contemporary history of the political memoir in Australia is necessarily a contemporary history of Australian politics and the transformations it has undergone since the 1970s. Factional warriors, political staffers and antagonistic journalists have been dramatised for public audiences in print and, particularly in more recent years, gender has been recognised as a deep source of both identity and conflict in political lives. The ruptures of post-Keynesian Australia and the protracted policy challenges of the twenty-first century have been illustrated in distinctly personal terms.

The political memoir boom has been, to no small extent, the cultural residue of these political disruptions. The memoirs themselves have often proven culturally influential, shaping public perceptions of the political process and rendering visible for a wide readership the issues that have been at stake for partisans in contemporary politics. In producing a modern history of the political memoir, this thesis has helped to explain how those wider political phenomena were made to matter in personal, emotional and newsworthy ways. The Australian public have been encouraged to think about their politics in terms of egotistic leaders, warring factions, ideological battles, gendered debates, and influential advisers. A significant cultural artefact in the wider theatre of power, the memoir genre has been a product and purveyor of these dramatic and competing conceptions of political power. Above all, their emotional gave these books their purchase and notoriety in the public sphere, and long after the authors have departed public life, the stories continue bleeding off the page.

²⁶ Charles Perkins, *A Bastard Like Me* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1975); Noel Pearson, *Mission: Essays, Speeches and Ideas* (Carlton: Black Inc., 2021); Warren Mundine, *Warren Mundine in Black + White: Race, Politics and Changing Australia* (Neutral Bay: Pantera Press, 2017). For more on Mundine's book and its controversial approach, see Goot and Rowse, "Warren Mundine in Black and White", pp. 205—26.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Archival Collections

Australian National University Archives

ANUA 740 Papers of Gareth Evans, 1944 –

AustralianPolitics.com: Farnsworth Online Archive

Materials from the Audio Items collection, accessed and downloaded 28 June 2019.

Garry Sturgess (private collection)

Personal diary.

Hansard, Commonwealth Parliament

Cth. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives Hansard, 23 March 1998.

Cth. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives Hansard, 9 February 1999.

Cth. *Parliamentary Debates*, Senate Hansard, 29 August 2002.

Cth. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives Hansard, 25 September 2008.

Jimmy Carter Presidential Library

Series 142099 Office of the Chief of Staff Files, Hamilton Jordon's Confidential Files.

National Archives of Australia, Canberra

A432, E1978/1411 PART 1 Senate Question No 105 - Senator Walsh - Legislation Restricting a publication of memoirs by Commonwealth Government (S, Section 70 and 79 Crimes Act).

A1209, 1998/1219 Proposed Publication By Dr Blewett Disclosing Keating Cabinet Deliberations.

A13966. Photograph and Photograph Negatives taken by AUSPIC, official photographers for the Government.

C100 [ABC] Radio Archives Library Recordings, Radio Audio Production Material, Annual Multiple Number Series with an Alphabetical Suffix.

C475 [ABC] Television Audio-Visual Program Material, Annual Single Number Series with ARCH (Archives) Prefix.

M3983 Audio and Video Tapes of Interviews, Press Conferences and Speeches of Prime Minister Paul John Keating, Single Number Series [Including ephemera on Bob Hawke].

National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra

254213 “Bob Hawke Launches his Controversial Memoirs”, 16 August 1994 (Ten News Hobart).

267145 “Bob Hawke Offers to Take Lie Detector Test Over Claims that Keating Once Labelled Australia the Arse End of the Earth”, 20 July 1994 (Network 10 News).

267237 “Call for Bob Hawke to be Expelled from the Labor Party for his Damaging Row with Paul Keating”, 20 June 1994 (Network 10 News).

555086 “Kim Beazley Says Cheryl Kernot’s Defection Would Have Been Rejected if He’d Known About Her Affair with Gareth Evans”, 10 July 2002 (Sky News Australia).

555806 “Cheryl Kernot Has Spoken Publicly for the First Time About Her Affair with Gareth Evans”, 21 July 2002 (ABC News).

675679 “Controversial ABC Interview with Former Leader of the Australian Labor Party, Mark Latham, Goes to Air Despite News Limited Trying to Prevent the Broadcast”, 15 September 2005 (Sky News Australia).

678692 “Labor Leader Kim Beazley Says Labor Will Move On United After Attacks Contained in The Latham Diaries”, 19 September 2005 (ABC News).

735136 “A Current Affair. 2007.03.26”, 26 March 2007 (Nine Network Adelaide).

735142 “A Current Affair. 2007.03.27”, 27 March 2007 (Nine Network Adelaide).

735632 “Pauline Hanson Interrupted by a Heckler at a Book Signing in Melbourne Today”, 2 April 2007 (7 News Melbourne).

763874 “Seven News. Perth. 2008.08.03”, 3 August 2008 (7 News Melbourne).

766201 “National Nine News. Perth. 2008.09.13”, 13 September 2008 (Nine Network Perth).

795479 “Ten News. Perth. 2009.07.28”, 28 July 2009 (Network 10 News).

1088835 “Hawke/Book/Keating”, August 1994 (Network Ten Parliament House Bureau Master).

1090856 “Hawke PM”, June 1994 (Network Ten Parliament House Bureau Master).

1091563 “Hawke Book”, June 1994 (Network Ten Parliament House Bureau Master).

National Library of Australia, Canberra

- Class MS Acc07.071 Papers of Sir Jim Killen, 1933—2006.
- DeB 259—260 Hazel de Berg Collection, oral history interview with Arthur A. Calwell, 15 June 1967.
- MS 1538 Papers of William Morris Hughes, c. 1865—1958
- MS 4852 Papers of Dame Enid Lyons, 1931—1974.
- MS 4936 Papers of Sir Robert Menzies, 1905—1978.
- MS 6055 Papers of Tom Uren, 1941—1994
- MS 10063 Records of Curtis Brown Australia, 1962—2002.
- NLA WebArchive Malcolm Fraser. Transcript of Q&A, 30 August 2010. Archived by NLA (6 October 2010), <https://bit.ly/3xJRZ8Q>, accessed 27 July 2021.
- Melbourne University Press, “The Secret Ingredient (Signed By Chloe Shorten)”, archived by National Library of Australia (7 April 2018), <https://bit.ly/3YTGeIJ>, accessed 6 January 2023.
- Tony Abbott. Battlelines: Address to the National Press Club, 30 July 2009. Archived by NLA (13 September 2009), <https://bit.ly/3XXcKs1>, accessed 25 July 2021.
- ORAL TRC 121/8 Forde, Frank. Interview with Mel Pratt, Mel Pratt Collection, 5 March 1971.
- ORAL TRC 1759 Uren, Tom. Interview with Clare Martin, 17 April and 1 May 1985.
- ORAL TRC 1885 National Press Club luncheon address series recordings, launch of *The Whitlam Government* on 11 November 1985.
- ORAL TRC 2730 O’Neil, Lloyd. Interview with Alec Bolton, 29—31 July 1991.
- ORAL TRC 3994 Freudenberg, Graham. Interview with John Farquharson, 8 and 9 March 2000, 13 and 14 July 2000, and 23 July 2001.
- ORAL TRC 4379 National Press Club luncheon address series recordings, launch of *The Hawke Years* on 31 May 1993.
- ORAL TRC 4484 National Press Club luncheon address series recordings, launch of *Confessions of a Failed Finance Minister* on 3 April 1995.
- ORAL TRC 4900/2 Cope, James Francis. Interview with Andrew Moore, Parliament Bicentenary Oral History Project, 10 November 1983.
- ORAL TRC 6100/28 Walsh, Peter. Interview with Daniel Connell, Old Parliament House Oral History Project, 18 and 19 August 2010.
- ORAL TRC 6100/92 Reynolds, Margaret. Interview with Martin Thomas, Old Parliament House Oral History Project, 26 and 27 November 2014.

PIC/8765/233 Pryor, Geoff. "Nice Hand-writing! – Graham Richardson and Bob Hawke Writing Their Memoirs", [cartoon image], 1992, Pryor Collection of Cartoons and Drawings, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-156912578>, accessed 10 February 2020.

Pandora: Australia's Web Archive [National Library of Australia resource]

Bowen, Chris. Speeches – *Hearts & Minds: A Blueprint for Modern Labor* launch, Sydney, 12 July 2013. Archived by *Pandora* (15 December 2014), <https://bit.ly/3Z1iZMD>, accessed 6 October 2020.

Sales, Leigh. Interview with Chris Bowen, 7.30, 11 July 2013. Archived by *Pandora* (21 October 2015), <https://bit.ly/3kePMir>, accessed 6 October 2020.

Shand, Adam. Transcript of Interview with Chris Bowen, *Meet the Press*, 14 July 2013. Archived by *Pandora* (15 December 2014), <https://bit.ly/3XEaxSt>, accessed 6 October 2020.

ProQuest News and Newspaper Online Archive

Cannane, Steve. Transcript of interview with Kim Carr, *Lateline*, 22 July 2013. Archived by *ProQuest* (Document ID 1406201218), accessed 6 October 2020.

Fraser, Malcolm. Transcript of interview with Kerry O'Brien, *7:30 Report*, 23 February 2010. Archived by *ProQuest* (Document ID 190359586), accessed 25 February 2021.

Simons, Margaret. Transcript of interview with David Mark, *ABC*, 20 March 2015. Archived by *ProQuest* (Document ID 1664690075), accessed 6 March 2021.

State Library of Victoria

MS 13728 Papers of John Button, 1933—2008.

University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne

RN 2019.0109 Margaret Simons Research Papers and Recordings for Malcolm Fraser Memoir.

University of South Australia, Adelaide

Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Library, Bob Hawke Collection, RH45: Records relating to 'The Hawke Memoirs' - R. J. L. Hawke.

Christopher Pyne Collection, Series CP16: Records Relating to "A Letter to My Children".

YouTube Sources

- ABC News. "Tony Abbott Launches Battlelines Book". *YouTube*, 28 July 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OooHdU0wa-s>, accessed 11 October 2021.
- ". "War Protester Aims Shoes at Howard". *YouTube*, 26 October 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pA_Lt8OonsA, accessed 17 April 2021.
- ". "(Pt 1) John Howard on his 30+ years in politics". *YouTube*, 27 October 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrCvCl4Bv5Y>, accessed 20 July 2021.
- ". "Malcolm Fraser Joins Australia's Literati". *YouTube*, 17 May 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXyPK--NVNk>, accessed 26 July 2021.
- ". "Fraser Takes Bipartisan Aim at Asylum Policies". *YouTube*, 17 May 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ippo8PktMkc>, accessed 27 July 2021.
- ". "Gillard Proud of Her Legacy as Prime Minister". *YouTube*, 26 June 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0uhHuEw8LY>, accessed 26 January 2023.
- ". "In Full: Noel Pearson Remembers Gough Whitlam". *YouTube*, 5 November 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JsXmYHiuJ8s>, accessed 9 January 2023.
- ". "Kevin Rudd Blames His Demise on Plotting, Ambitious Colleagues | 7.30". *YouTube*, 22 October 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BALiux-Wn0E>, accessed 15 October 2020.
- abcqanda. "David Hicks asks John Howard a Question on Q&A". *YouTube*, 26 October 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQO3pW0DLmI>, accessed 11 May 2021.
- ". "Public Life & Political Memoirs - Q&A | 24 August 2015". *YouTube*, 26 August 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2zZ3W5wA8E>, accessed 23 December 2021.
- ABC TV & iview. "Q&A | Man throws shoe at former Prime Minister, John Howard | ABC1". *YouTube*, 26 October 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RplZI0r35Y>, accessed 23 April 2021.
- ". "Q&A | Kevin Rudd – I was wrong to shelve the ETS | Monday, 4 April, ABC1". *YouTube*, 5 April 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzHwo7D6yqo>, accessed 20 October 2022.
- BBC Studios. "Former PM's Memoirs – Yes, Prime Minister – BBC Comedy". *YouTube*, 9 June 2007 [originally aired in December 1987], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9NifqJyDMI>, accessed 10 January 2023.
- Carden, Matthew. "ACA – Jana Wendt and Premier Joh Bjelke Peterson" [sic]. *YouTube*, [published online 31 March 2014], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuAVO0jSW5U>, accessed 11 February 2022.
- Channel 10. "Rudd Wins Back Leadership". *YouTube*, 27 June 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLPvDbVI_hA, accessed 20 October 2022.
- Guardian News. "Anthony Albanese Announces His Leadership Bid". *YouTube*, 20 May 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19w4WEc-aFM>, accessed 28 July 2021.

- Jackson, Darnell. "Julia Gillard Full Interview 2014 The Whole Truth and My Story with Ray Martin". *YouTube*, 24 September 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=On3S7BZj1yM>, accessed 18 October 2022.
- La Trobe University. "Kevin Rudd on The PM Years – at La Trobe University". *YouTube*, 27 October 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IY46NJcejYQ&t=912s>, accessed 20 October 2022.
- Monthly, The. "My Story: Julia Gillard in Conversation (Adelaide Writers' Week 2015)". *YouTube*, 5 May 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Kf_oFYUUMw, accessed 26 January 2023.
- righttoremain. "Tony Abbott Character Slam by Malcolm Fraser". *YouTube*, 1 September 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1L66KhP0jYg>, accessed 27 July 2021.
- Rudd, Kevin. "Kevin Rudd in Conversation at the Byron Bay Writers Festival". *YouTube*, 9 September 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WoOwOeRE3k&t=1s>, accessed 26 January 2023.
- ". "Kevin Rudd in Conversation with David Fagan at the Brisbane Writers Festival". *YouTube*, 25 September 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8vy6RjxCRO>, accessed 26 January 2023.
- Sky News Australia. "Sky News – Interview with Tony Abbott". *YouTube*, 29 July 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5QXblcJAr4>, accessed 11 October 2021.
- SOH Talks and Ideas. "Paul Keating in Conversation with Kerry O'Brien". *YouTube*, 20 October 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6Y_p9dXZGE, accessed 8 August 2019.
- Stenhouse, George. "1993 Australian Federal Election Night Part 1". *YouTube*, [published online 11 November 2011], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQrNpZju894>, accessed 29 December 2020.
- Studio 10. "Bob Carr Interview". *YouTube*, 11 April 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nv4nU0OnzCQ&t=46s>, accessed 26 January 2023.
- ". "Bob Carr: Response to Gillard Calling His Work 'Lazy'". *YouTube*, 24 September 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Dtms-E-HO8&t=10s>, accessed 26 January 2023.
- sydlord. "Lazarus Rising \ Howard Deserved 'A Lot Worse' Says Shoe Thrower". *YouTube*, 26 October 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdLGXPx1qww>, accessed 17 April 2021.
- Sydney Writers' Festival. "Bob Brown: On Optimism | Sydney Writers' Festival". *YouTube*, 1 July 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ooVqC6p24Y>, accessed 26 January 2023.
- The Chaser Archive. "Yes We Canberra! Episode 1". *YouTube*, 13 October 2011 [aired 2010], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SAbtbzSzuQ>, accessed 22 March 2023.
- WheelerCentre. "Bob Brown On Optimism". *YouTube*, 21 October 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NyQbU_i9nuA, accessed 26 January 2023.

- . "Malcolm Fraser Part One". *YouTube*, [published online 25 January 2015], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17EFa_7pqIM&t=225s, accessed 25 July 2021.
- . "Don Watson". *YouTube*, [published online 23 January 2015], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3HyHeQQ0Ro&t=502s>, accessed 15 January 2021.
- . "The Fifth Estate: Greg Combet: Unions, Labor and Leadership", *YouTube*, 4 February 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jcq-6Hu5zuA>, accessed 26 January 2023.
- . "Peter Garrett", *YouTube*, 28 October 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qet2xbrebY&t=1480s>, accessed 3 June 2019.
- . "Kevin Rudd and Kerry O'Brien". *YouTube*, 6 November 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zQHyiGVVhY&t=4s>, accessed 26 January 2023.
- Working Dog Productions. "Christopher Pyne joins #HYBPA". *YouTube*, 13 August 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XeCrkcuc0Uo>, accessed 19 October 2021.

Government Papers

Australian National Audit Office. *Report on Administration of Staff Employed Under the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2003.

Commonwealth of Australia. *Budget Statements 1984—85*, Budget Paper No. 1. Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service, 1984.

Legislation

Cth. *Crimes Act* 1914.

Cth. *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act* 1984.

Cth. *Public Service Act* 1922.

Newspapers, Magazines, and News Wires

Includes print, online and digital publications, as well as materials accessed through *Trove*, microfilm, and NewsBank database.

ABC News

Advertiser (Adelaide)

Age/Sunday Age (Melbourne)

Atlantic (Washington, D.C.)

Associated Press

Australian/Weekend Australian (Canberra)

Australian Associated Press

Australian Book Review (Melbourne)

Australian Financial Review (Sydney)

BBC News

Brisbane Courier

Brisbane Times

Canberra Times

Courier Mail/Sunday Mail

Crikey (Melbourne)

Daily Standard (Brisbane)

Daily Telegraph (Sydney)

Economist (London)

Examiner (Launceston)

Guardian (Australia)

Guardian (UK)

Herald/Herald Sun (Melbourne)

Hotline (Washington, D. C.)

Illawarra Mercury (Wollongong)

Independent (London)

Junkee

MamaMia

Meanjin (Melbourne)

Mercury (Hobart)

Monthly

New Daily (Melbourne)

New York Review of Books

New York Times

News.com.au (Australia)

Newspoll

Northern Star (Lismore)

NZ Herald (Auckland)

Papua New Guinea Post-Courier

Perth Now

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Prahran Telegraph

Reuters

Register (Adelaide)

Saturday Paper

Sun (Sydney)

Sunday Mail Magazine (Brisbane)

Sunday Tasmanian (Hobart)

Sydney Morning Herald/Sun Herald

Times (Victor Harbor)

Townsville Bulletin

Washington Post

Oral History Interviews and Correspondence Conducted by the Author

Adler, Louise. Phone interview with the author, 25 January 2022.

Blewett, Neal. Phone interview with the author, 26 March 2020.

Bollen, Michael. Phone interview with the author, 29 June 2020.

Bowen, Chris. Zoom interview with the author, 15 October 2021.

Bramston, Troy. Interview with the author, News Corporation HQ, Sydney, 19 September 2018.

Button, James. Zoom interview with the author, 3 November 2020.

Carr, Bob. Interview with the author, Sydney, 7 May 2018.

Carr, Kim. Interview with the author, Parliament House, Canberra, 30 July 2021.

Combet, Greg. Phone interview with the author, 11 July 2018.

Cornish, Selwyn. Phone interview with the author, 9 September 2021.

Cunnane, Mary. Phone interview with the author, 16 December 2021.

Curnow, Meredith. Phone interview with the author, 2 April 2020.

Curr, Judith. Email correspondence with the author, 4 November 2020.

D'Alpuget, Blanche. Interview with the author, Sydney, 21 February 2020.

Daniel, Troy. Zoom interview with the author, 10 May 2021.

Dwyer, Michael. Interview with the author, Sydney, 20 February 2020.

Edwards, John. Phone interview with the author, 22 March 2021.

Emerson, Craig. Interview with the author, Barangaroo, Sydney, 15 May 2018.

Evans, Gareth. Zoom interview with the author, 17 June 2020.

Garrett, Peter. Email correspondence with the author, 14 December 2020.

Gerritsen, Rolf. Phone interview with the author, 16 June 2020.

Gillard, Julia. Email correspondence with the author, 23 April 2018, 23 July 2020.

Hancock, Ian. Interview with the author, Australian National University, Canberra, 27 May 2021.

Hart, Emily. Zoom interview with the author, 9 November 2021.

Howard, John. Interview with the author, Sydney, 3 June 2021.

Jenkins Jr., Harry. Phone interview with the author, 6 July 2020.

Jones, Barry. Zoom interview with the author, 26 August 2020.

Kelly, Roslyn. Interview with the author, Mittagong, 10 September 2020.

Kerin, John. Phone interview with the author, 2 September 2020.

Kernot, Cheryl. Zoom interview with the author, 18 February 2022.

Loukakis, Angelo. Email correspondence with the author, 7 October 2020.

McGuinness, Philippa. Email correspondence with the author, 19 September 2018.

McKew, Maxine. Zoom interview with the author, 13 October 2020.

Milne, Christine. Zoom interview with the author, 3 December 2020.

Reilly, Anne. Zoom interview with the author, 6 and 13 May 2021.

Richardson, Graham. Interview with the author, Sydney, 14 February 2020.

Robb, Andrew. Bluejeans interview with the author, 12 November 2021.

Ryan, Susan. Zoom interview with the author, 14 September 2020.

Sessions, Robert. Email correspondence with the author, 15 February 2021.

Shorten, Bill. Email correspondence with the author, 27 September 2021.

Simons, Margaret. Zoom interview with the author, 24 March 2021.

Sturgess, Garry. Interview with the author, Manuka, Canberra, 7 February 2020.

Swan, Wayne. Phone interview with the author, 10 September 2018.

Tickner, Robert. Zoom interview with the author, 29 June 2020.

Watson, Don. Interview with the author, Melbourne, 16 April 2021.

White, Hugh. Interview with the author, Australian National University, Canberra, 14 November 2019.

Published Sources

Politicians' and Staffers' Memoirs, Autobiographies, Diaries and Manifestos

Abbott, Tony. *Battlelines*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2009.

Attlee, Clement. *As it Happened: An Autobiography*. London: Heinemann, 1954.

Andren, Peter. *The Andren Report: An Independent Way in Australian Politics*. Melbourne: Scribe, 2003.

Banks, Julia. *Power Play: Breaking Through Bias, Barriers and Boy's Clubs*. Richmond: Hardie Grant, 2021.

Behm, Allan. *No, Minister: So You Want to be a Chief of Staff?* Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2015.

Blazey, Peter. *Screw Loose: Uncalled-For Memoirs*. Sydney: Picador, 1997.

Blewett, Neal. *A Cabinet Diary: A Personal Record of the First Keating Government*. Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 1999.

Bligh, Anna. *Through the Wall*. Sydney: HarperCollins, 2015.

Bowen, Chris. *Hearts & Minds: A Blueprint for Modern Labor*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2013.

-----, *The Money Men: Australia's 12 Most Notable Treasurers*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2015.

Brown, Bob. *Optimism: Reflections on a Life of Action*. Richmond: Hardie Grant, 2014.

Brown, Gordon. *My Life, Our Times*. London: The Bodley Head, 2017.

Brown, Neil. *On the Other Hand: Sketches and Reflections from Political Life*. Woden: Poplar Press, 1993.

Bunting, Sir John. *R. G. Menzies: A Portrait*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988.

Button, John. *Flying the Kite: Travels of an Australian Politician*. Milsons Point: Random House, 1994.

-----, *On the Loose*. Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1996.

-----, *As it Happened*. Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1998.

-----, "Beyond Belief: What Future for Labor?" *Quarterly Essay*, no. 6. Melbourne: Black Inc., 2002.

Cairns, J. F. *Living with Asia*. Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1965.

-----, *The Eagle and the Lotus: Western Intervention in Vietnam, 1847—1971*. Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1971.

-----, *The Quiet Revolution*. Melbourne: Gold Star Publication, 1972.

-----, *Oil in Troubled Waters*. Camberwell: Widescope International, 1976.

Calwell, Arthur. *Labor's Role in Modern Society*. Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1963.

-----, *Be Just and Fear Not*. Hawthorn: Lloyd O'Neil in association with Rigby, 1972.

- Cameron, Clyde. *The Cameron Diaries*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990.
- and Daniel Connell. *The Confessions of Clyde Cameron 1913—1990*. Crows Nest: ABC Enterprises, 1990.
- Carr, Bob. *Thoughtlines: Reflections of a Public Man*. Camberwell: Penguin, 2002.
- , *What Australia means to Me*. Camberwell: Penguin, 2003.
- , *My Reading Life: Adventures in the World of Books*. Camberwell: Penguin, 2008.
- , *Diary of a Foreign Minister*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2014.
- , *Run For Your Life*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2018.
- Carr, Kim. *A Letter to Generation Next: Why Labor*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2013.
- Casey, Richard. *Australian Foreign Minister: The Diaries of R. G. Casey, 1951—60*, ed. T. B. Millar. London: Collins, 1972.
- Chalmers, Jim. *Glory Daze: How a World-Beating Nation Got so Down on Itself*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2013.
- Churchill, Winston. *History of the Second World War*, 6 vols. London: Cassell, 1948–1954.
- Cleary, Phil. *Cleary Independent*. Pymble: HarperCollins, 1998.
- Combet, Greg with Mark Davis. *The Fights of My Life*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2014.
- Coombs, H. C. *Trial Balance: Issues of My Working Life*. South Melbourne: Sun Books, 1981.
- Cooney, Michael. *The Gillard Project: My Thousand Days of Despair and Hope*. Melbourne: Penguin, 2015.
- Costello, Peter and Peter Coleman. *The Costello Memoirs: The Age of Prosperity*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2008.
- Crossman, Richard. *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, 3 vols. London: Hamilton and Cape, 1975–1977.
- Daly, Fred. *From Curtin to Kerr*. South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1977.
- , *The Politician Who Laughed*, illustrated by Vane Lindesay. Melbourne: Hutchinson, 1982.
- Dastyari, Sam. *One Halal of a Story*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2017.
- Deakin, Alfred. *The Federal Story: The Inner History of the Federal Cause*, ed. Herbert Brooks. Melbourne: Robertson & Mullens, 1944.
- , *The Crisis in Victorian Politics, 1879—1881*, eds. J. A. La Nauze and R. M. Crawford. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1957.
- Deane, Joel. *Catch and Kill: The Politics of Power*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2015.
- Dedman, J. J. “The Labor Government in the Second World War: A Memoir”. Parts 1—3. *Labour History* 21—23 (1971—72): 62—71, 42—56, 48—61.

- Ellis, Bob. *Goodbye Jerusalem: Night Thoughts of a Labor Outsider*. Milsons Point; Vintage, 1997.
- Ellis, Kate. *Sex, Lies and Question Time*. Richmond: Hardie Grant, 2021.
- Emerson, Craig. *Vital Signs, Vibrant Society: Securing Australia's Economic and Social Wellbeing*. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006.
- , *The Boy from Baradine*. Brunswick: Scribe, 2018.
- Evans, Gareth. *Inside the Hawke–Keating Government: A Cabinet Diary*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2014.
- , *Incorrigible Optimist*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2017.
- Fallows, James. “The Passionless Presidency: The Trouble with Jimmy Carter’s Administration”. *Atlantic*, May 1979, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1979/05/the-passionless-presidency/308516/>, accessed 6 January 2021.
- Fraser, Malcolm with Margaret Simons. *Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs*. Carlton: Miegunyah Press, 2010.
- Freudenberg, Graham. *A Certain Grandeur*. Melbourne: Sun Books, 1978 [1977].
- , *Cause for Power: The Official History of the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Labor Party*. Leichardt: Pluto Press, 1991.
- Garrett, Peter. *Big Blue Sky: A Memoir*, reprint. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2017 [2015].
- Gillard, Julia. *My Story*. North Sydney: Random House Australia, 2014.
- and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, *Women and Leadership: Real Lives, Real Lessons*. North Sydney: Vintage, 2020.
- , (ed.). *Not Now, Not Ever: Ten Years on from the Misogyny Speech*. North Sydney: Vintage, 2022.
- Grassby, Al. *The Morning After*. Canberra: Judicator Publications, 1979.
- Hasluck, Paul. *The Chance of Politics*, ed. Nicholas Hasluck. Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1997.
- Hawke, Bob. *The Hawke Memoirs*. Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1994.
- Hawke, Hazel. *My Own Life: An Autobiography*. Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1992.
- Hawker, Bruce. *The Rudd Rebellion: The Campaign to Save Labor*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2013.
- Hayden, Bill. *Hayden: An Autobiography*. Sydney: HarperCollins, 1996.
- Henderson, Gerard. *Menzies’ Child: The Liberal Party of Australia, 1944 – 1994*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1994.
- Holt, Zara. *My Life and Harry: An Autobiography*. Melbourne: The Herald, 1968.
- Howard, John. *Lazarus Rising: A Personal and Political Autobiography*, updated issue. Sydney: HarperCollins, 2013 [2010].

- , *The Menzies Era*. Sydney: HarperCollins, 2014.
- , *A Sense of Balance*. Sydney: HarperCollins, 2022.
- Howes, Paul. *Confessions of a Faceless Man: Inside Campaign 2010*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2010.
- Howson, Peter. *The Howson Diaries: The Life of Politics*, ed. Don Aitkin. Ringwood: Viking Press, 1984.
- Jones, Barry. *A Thinking Reed*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2006.
- , *What is to be Done: Political Engagement and Saving the Planet*. Brunswick: Scribe, 2020.
- Joyce, Barnaby. *Weatherboard and Iron: Politics, the Bush and Me*. Chatswood: New Holland, 2018.
- Keating, Paul. *Engagement: Australia Faces the Asia–Pacific*. Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2000.
- , *After Words: The Post-Prime Ministerial Speeches*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2011.
- Kelly, Roslyn. *Ros Kelly: A Passionate Life*. Richmond: Hardie Grant, 2017.
- Kerin, John. *The Way I Saw It; The Way It Was: The Making of National Agricultural and Natural Resource Management Policy*. Melbourne: Analysis and Policy Observatory, 2017.
- Kernot, Cheryl. *Speaking for Myself Again*. Sydney: HarperCollins, 2002.
- Killen, Jim. *Killen: Inside Australian Politics*. North Ryde: Methuen Hayes, 1985.
- Lang, J. T. *The Turbulent Years*. Sydney: Alpha Books, 1970.
- Latham, Mark. *Civilizing Global Capital: New Thinking for Australian Labor*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998.
- , *The Latham Diaries*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2005.
- Lawrence, Carmen. “Foreword”. In Don Watson, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart: A Portrait of Paul Keating PM*, 10th anniversary edition, xi—xvi. North Sydney: Vintage, 2011.
- Lloyd George, David. *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, 6 vols. London: Nicholson & Watson, 1933–1936.
- Lyons, Enid. *So We Take Comfort*. London: Heinemann, 1965.
- , *Among the Carrion Crows*. Adelaide: Rigby, 1972.
- Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom*. London: Little, Brown & Company, 1994.
- McClelland, Jim. *Stirring the Possum: A Political Autobiography*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1989.
- McEwen, John. *John McEwen: His Story*, ed. R. V. Jackson. Self-published, 1983.
- Menzies, Robert. *Afternoon Light: Some Memories of Men and Events*. Melbourne: Cassells, 1967.
- , *The Measure of the Years*. London: Cassell, 1970.
- Milne, Christine. *An Activist Life*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2017.

- Morosi, Junie. *Sex, Prejudice and Politics*. Camberwell: Widescope, 1975.
- Mundine, Warren. *Warren Mundine in Black + White: Race, Politics and Changing Australia*. Neutral Bay: Pantera Press, 2017.
- Oakeshott, Rob. *The Independent Member for Lyne: A Memoir*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2014.
- Obama, Barack. *A Promised Land*. New York: Viking, 2020.
- Page, Earle. *Truant Surgeon: The Inside Story of Forty Years of Australian Political Life*, ed. Ann Mozley [Moyal]. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1963.
- Parkes, Henry. *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1892.
- Peris, Nova. *Finding My Voice*. Melbourne: Wilkinson Publishing, 2018.
- Perkins, Charles. *A Bastard Like Me*. Sydney: Ure Smith, 1975.
- Pyne, Christopher. *A Letter to My Children*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2015.
- , *The Insider: The Scoops, the Scandals and the Serious Business within the Canberra Bubble*. Sydney: Hachette, 2020.
- Reynolds, Margaret. *The Last Bastion: Labor Women Working Towards Equality in the Parliaments of Australia*. Chatswood: Business and Professional Publishing, 1995.
- , *Living Politics*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2007.
- Richardson, Graham. *Whatever it Takes*. Sydney: Bantam, 1994.
- Robb, Andrew. *Black Dog Daze: Public Life, Private Demons*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2011.
- Rudd, Kevin. *Not For the Faint-hearted: A Personal Reflection on Life, Politics and Purpose*. Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2017.
- , *The PM Years*. Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2018.
- Ryan, Susan. *Catching the Waves: Life in and Out of Politics*. Pymble: HarperCollins, 1999.
- Shorten, Bill. *For the Common Good: Reflections on Australia's Future*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2016.
- Spence, W. G. *Australia's Awakening: Thirty Years in the Life of an Australian Agitator*. Sydney: The Worker Trustees, 1909.
- Sponder, Percy. *Politics and a Man*. Sydney: Collins, 1972.
- Summers, Anne. *Unfettered and Alive: A Memoir*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2018.
- Swan, Wayne. *Postcode: The Splintering of a Nation*. North Melbourne: Pluto Press, 2005.
- , *The Good Fight: Six Years, Two Prime Ministers and Staring Down the Global Recession*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2014.
- Thatcher, Margaret. *The Downing Street Years*. London: HarperCollins, 1993.

- Tickner, Robert. *Taking a Stand: Land Rights to Reconciliation*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001.
- , *Ten Doors Down*. Brunswick: Scribe, 2020.
- Turnbull, Malcolm. *A Bigger Picture*. Richmond: Hardie Grant, 2020.
- Uren, Tom. *Straight Left*. Milsons Point: Random House, 1994.
- Walsh, Peter. *Confessions of a Failed Finance Minister*. Milsons Point: Random House, 1995.
- Watson, Don. *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart: A Portrait of Paul Keating PM*, 10th anniversary ed. North Sydney: Vintage, 2011.
- Whitlam, Gough. *The Truth of the Matter*, 2nd ed. Ringwood: Penguin, 1983 [1979].
- , *The Whitlam Government 1972–75*. Ringwood: Viking, 1985.
- , *The Truth of the Matter*, 3rd ed. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2005 [1979].
- Whitlam, Margaret. *My Other World*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2001.
- Windsor, Tony. *Windsor's Way*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2016.

Other Books, Chapters, and Journal Articles

- Adler, Louise. "Political Memoirs". *Meanjin* 74, no. 3 (2015): 237—39.
- Allen, Peter. *The Political Class: Why it Matters Who Our Politicians Are*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Almond, Gabriel A. "The Intellectual History of the Civic Culture Concept". In *The Civic Culture: Revisited*, eds. Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, 1—36. Newbury Park: Sage, 1989.
- Anderson, Kathryn and Dana C. Jack. "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses". In *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 2nd edition, 129—49. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Arklay, Tracey. "Political Science". In *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction*, vol. 1, ed. Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf, 122—29. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019.
- Arrow, Michelle. "16 September 1956, 'It's Here, at Last!': The Introduction of Television in Australia". In *Turning Points in Australian History*, eds. Martin Crotty and David Andrew Roberts, 143—56. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009.
- , *The Seventies: The Personal, the Political and the Making of Modern Australia*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2019.
- Attwood, Bain. *Rights for Aborigines*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2003.
- , *Telling the Truth About Aboriginal History*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005.
- Baird, Julia. *Media Tarts: How the Australian Press Frames Female Politicians*. Carlton North: Scribe, 2004.
- Baldick, Chris. *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

- Barry, Paul. *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer*. Sydney: Bantam, 1993.
- Beard, Mary. *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome*. London: Profile, 2016.
- Beaumont, Joan. *Australia's Great Depression*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2022.
- Bell, Stephen. *Ungoverning the Economy: The Political Economy of Australian Economic Policy*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Bellanta, Melissa. "A Man of Civic Sentiment: The Case of William Guthrie Spence". *Journal of Australian Studies* 32, no. 1 (March 2008): 63—76.
- , *Larrikins: A History*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2012.
- Bennister, Mark and Tim Heppell. "Comparing the Dynamics of Party Leadership Survival in Britain and Australia: Brown, Rudd and Gillard". *Government and Opposition* 51, no. 1 (2016): 134—59.
- Berger, Stefan and Sean Scalmer. "The Transnational Activist: An Introduction". In *The Transnational Activist: Transformations and Comparisons from the Anglo-World Since the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Stefan Berger and Sean Scalmer, 1—30. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.
- Besemeres, Mary and Maureen Perkins. "Editorial". *Life Writing* 1, no. 1 (2004): vii—xii.
- Black, Joshua. "A Life Triumphant Well Written: Producing the Hawke Legacy, 1979—2019". *ANU Historical Journal II* 2 (2020): 81—106.
- , "'Our Side of the Story': The Political Memoirs of the Rudd—Gillard Labor Cabinet". *Labour History* 120 (2021): 69—94.
- , "'For the Historic Record': Memoirs, History, and Australian Political Culture". *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 67, no. 2 (2021): 312—30.
- , "'A Historian's Diary': Autobiography, Life Writing and Neal Blewett's *A Cabinet Diary* Revisited". *Australian Journal of Biography and History* 5 (2021): 49—68.
- , "'Lessons in Statecraft?': Political Memoirs, Tax Reform, and the National Taxation Summit 1985". *Australian Journal of Political Science* 57, no. 2 (2022): 164—79.
- Blaine, Lech. "Top Blokes: The Larrikin Myth, Class and Power". *Quarterly Essay*, no. 83. Carlton: Black Inc., 2021.
- Bleiker, Roland, David Campbell and Emma Hutchinson. "Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Emotions". In *The Oxford Handbook of Australian Politics*, eds. Jenny M. Lewis and Anne Tiernan, 222—40. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Blewett, Neal. "No Secret Selves?". *Meanjin* 61, no. 1 (2002): 4—19.
- , "The Personal Writings of Politicians". In *Australian Political Lives: Chronicling Political Careers and Administrative Histories*, eds. Tracey Arklay, John Nethercote and John Wanna, 91—96. Canberra: ANU Press, 2006.
- Bode, Katherine and Roger Osborne. "Book History from the Archival Records". In *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. Leslie Howsham, 219—236. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

- Bolton, Geoffrey. *Edmund Barton: The One Man for the Job*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000.
- , "The Art of Australian Political Biography". In *Australian Political Lives: Chronicling Political Careers and Administrative Histories*, eds. Tracey Arklay, John Nethercote and John Wanna, 1—12. Canberra: ANU Press, 2006.
- Bongiorno, Frank. *The People's Party: Victorian Labor and the Radical Tradition, 1875–1914*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1996.
- , "The Origins of Caucus". In *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party*, eds. John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre, 3—16. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001.
- , "Whatever Happened to Free Trade Liberalism?" in *Confusion: The Making of the Australian Two-Party System*, eds. Paul Strangio and Nick Dyrenfurth, 249—74. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2009.
- and Nick Dyrenfurth. *A Little History of the Australian Labor Party*. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2011.
- , *The Eighties: The Decade that Transformed Australia*. Carlton: Black Inc., 2015.
- , Benjamin Jones and John Uhr (eds.), *Elections Matter: Ten Federal Elections that Shaped Australia*. Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2018.
- , "The Latham Factor". In *Trials and Transformations, 2001—2004: The Howard Government*, ed. Tom Frame, vol. 3, 174—86. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2019.
- , "A Tale of Two Leaders: Malcolm Turnbull and Scott Morrison in Historical Perspective". In *From Turnbull to Morrison: The Trust Divide*, eds. Mark Evans, Michelle Grattan and Brendan McAffrie, 317—31. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2019.
- , "Good Blokes? Gender and Political Leadership in the Australian Labor Party". In *Gender Politics: Navigating Political Leadership in Australia*, eds. Zareh Ghazarian and Katrina Lee-Koo, 24—35. Sydney: NewSouth, 2021.
- , "Balls, Bubbles and Bosses: Australian Politics and Sex Scandal". *Journal of Australian Studies* 46, no. 3 (2022): 292—306.
- , *Dreamers and Schemers: A Political History of Australia*. Collingwood: La Trobe University Press, 2022.
- Bramble, Tom and Rick Kuhn. *Labor's Conflict: Big Business, Workers and the Politics of Class*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Bramston, Troy. *Rudd, Gillard, and Beyond*. Melbourne: Penguin, 2014.
- , *Paul Keating: The Big-Picture Leader*. Brunswick: Scribe, 2016.
- , *Robert Menzies: The Art of Politics*. Brunswick: Scribe, 2019.
- , *Bob Hawke: Demons and Destiny*. Sydney: Viking, 2022.
- Brenton, Scott. "Ministers and Scandals". In *Ministerial Careers and Accountability in the Australian Commonwealth Government*, eds. Keith Dowding and Chris Lews, 135—52. Canberra: ANU Press, 2012.

- Brett, Judith. *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*. Chippendale: Macmillan, 1992.
- (ed.). *Political Lives*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997.
- , *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- , "‘The Fortunes of My Own Little Band’: The Dilemma of Deakin and the Liberal Protectionists". In *Confusion: The Making of the Australian Two-Party System*, eds. Paul Strangio and Nick Dyrenfurth, 23—44. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2009.
- , "Graham Little's Theory of Political Leadership". *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies* 6, no. 2 (2009): 103—10.
- , "Alfred Deakin's Political Oratory". In *Public Opinion, Campaign Politics and Media Audiences: New Australian Perspectives*, eds. Bridget Griffen-Foley and Sean Scalmer, 97—111. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2017.
- , *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*. Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2017.
- , *Doing Politics: Writing on Public Life*. Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2021.
- Brewster, Anne. *Reading Aboriginal Women's Autobiography*. Sydney: Sydney University Press with Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Broinowski, Alison. *Please Explain: The Rise, Fall and Rise Again of Pauline Hanson*. Sydney: Viking, 2017.
- Brown, Nicholas. "Public Lives, Private Lives: The Fundamental Dilemma in Political Biography". In *Australian Political Lives: Chronicling Political Careers and Administrative Histories*, eds. Tracey Arklay, John Nethercote and John Wanna, 35—42. Canberra: ANU E Press, 2006.
- , *A History of Canberra*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Buchanan, Ian. *Oxford Dictionary of Critical Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Buchbinder, David. *Studying Men and Masculinities*. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Buckridge, Patrick. "Readers and Reading". In *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia, 1946–2005*, eds. Craig Munro and Robyn Sheahan-Bright, 344—48. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2006.
- Bullock, Alan. *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives*. London: HarperCollins, 1991.
- Burger, Angela. *Neville Bonner: A Biography*. South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1979.
- Burgmann, Verity. "Premature Labour: The Maritime Strike and the Parliamentary Strategy". In *The Maritime Strike: A Centennial Retrospective*, eds. Jim Hagan and Andrew Wells, 83—96. Wollongong: University of Wollongong and Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1992.
- Burke, Peter. *What is Cultural History?* 3rd edition. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019.
- Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory". In *Performance: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Philip Auslander, vol. 4, 97—110. London: Routledge, 2003.

- , *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, reprint. London: Routledge, 2014 [1993].
- , *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.
- Butler, Kelly Jean. *Witnessing Australian Stories: History, Testimony and Memory in Contemporary Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Button, John. "Writing Political Autobiographies". In *Australian Political Lives: Chronicling Political Careers and Administrative Histories*, eds. Tracey Arklay, John Nethercote and John Wanna, 97—99. Canberra: ANU Press, 2006.
- Byrne, Liam. *Becoming John Curtin and James Scullin: The Making of the Modern Labor Party, 1876—1921*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2020.
- Cannadine, David. "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition', c. 1820 – 1977". In *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, 101—64. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Cardell, Kylie and Kate Douglas. "Life Writing and Conflict: Love Wins". In *The Routledge Companion to Australian Literature*, ed. Jessica Gildersleeve, 344—52. New York: Routledge, 2021.
- Carew, Edna. *Keating: A Biography*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988.
- , *Paul Keating, Prime Minister*. North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992.
- Carlyon, Les. *A Life in Words: Collected Writings from Gallipoli to the Melbourne Cup*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2021.
- Carter, David. "Publishing, Patronage and Cultural Politics: Institutional Changes in the Field of Australian Literature from 1950". In *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, eds. Peter Pierce, 360—90. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Cassidy, Barrie. *The Party Thieves: The Real Story of the 2010 Election*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2010.
- Castles, Francis G. "The Wage Earners' Welfare State Revisited: Refurbishing the Established Model of Australian Social Protection, 1983 – 93". *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 29, no. 2 (1994): 120 – 45
- Catterall, Peter. "What (if Anything) is Distinctive About Contemporary History?". *Journal of Contemporary History* 32, no. 4 (1997): 441—52.
- Cavalier, Rodney. *Power Crisis: The Self-Destruction of a State Labor Party*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Chalmers, Rob. *Inside the Canberra Press Gallery: Life in the Wedding Cake of Old Parliament House*, eds. Sam Vincent and John Wanna. Canberra: ANU Press, 2011.
- Chavura, Stephen A. and Greg Melleuish. *The Forgotten Menzies: The World Picture of Australia's Longest-serving Prime Minister*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2021.
- Chong, Dennis and James N. Druckman. "Framing Theory". *Annual Review of Political Science* 1 (2007): 103—26.

- Chubb, Philip. *Power Failure: The Inside Story of Climate Politics Under Rudd and Gillard*. Collingwood: Black Inc., 2014.
- Cica, Natasha. “You Can’t Say That”. *Australian Author* (August 2005): 23–26.
- Clark, Anna. “Teaching the Nation’s Story: Comparing Public Debates and Classroom Perspectives on History Education in Australia and Canada”. *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 41, no. 6 (2009): 745—62.
- , *Making Australian History*. North Sydney: Vintage, 2022.
- Clark, Anna K. *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Clark, Manning. *A Short History of Australia*. 4th revised edition. Camberwell: Penguin, 2006.
- Coatney, Caryn. *John Curtin: How He Won Over the Media*. North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2016.
- Colley, Linda. “For Better or for Worse: Fifty Years Since the Removal of the Marriage Bar in the Australian Public Service”. *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 64, no. 2 (2018): 227–40.
- Colmer, John. *Australian Autobiography: The Personal Quest*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Connell, R. W. *Masculinities*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Couser, G. Thomas. *Memoir: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Cowman, Krista. “The Political Autobiographies of Early Women MPs, c. 1918—1964”. In *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender, and Politics in Britain, 1918—1945*, eds. Julie V. Gottlieb and Richard Toye, 203—22. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Caiden, Gerald E. *Career Service: An Introduction to the History of Personnel Administration in the Commonwealth Public Service of Australia 1901–1961*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1965.
- Crabb, Annabel. *Losing It: The Inside Story of the Labor Party in Opposition*. Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2005.
- Craig, David M. “‘High Politics’ and the ‘New Political History’”. *Historical Journal* 53, no. 2 (2010): 453—75.
- Crawford, Robert and Matthew Bailey. “Cousins Once Removed? Revisiting the Relationship Between Oral History and Business History”. *Enterprise & Society* 20, no. 1 (2019): 4—18.
- Cross, William and Anika Gauja. “Evolving Membership Strategies in Australian Political Parties”. *Australian Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 4 (2014): 611—25.
- Crowe, David. *Venom: Vendettas, Betrayals and the Price of Power*. Sydney: HarperCollins, 2019.
- Crozier-De Rosa, Sharon. *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash: Britain, Ireland and Australia, 1890–1920*. New York: Routledge, 2018.

- , "Emotions of Protest". In *Sources for the History of Emotions: A Guide*, eds. Katie Barclay, Sharon Crozier-De Rosa and Peter N. Stearns, 198—211. London: Routledge, 2021.
- Curran, James. *The Power of Speech: Australian Prime Ministers Defining the National Image*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2004.
- and Stuart Ward. *The Unknown Nation: Australia After Empire*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2010.
- Currey, John. "Case-Study: Lansdowne and Lloyd O'Neil". In *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia 1946—2005*, eds. Craig Munro and Robyn Sheahan-Bright, 38—41. St Lucia; University of Queensland Press, 2006.
- Curthoys, Ann. "Introduction: Histories of Journalism". In *Journalism: Print, Politics and Popular Culture*, eds. Ann Curthoys and Julianne Schultz, 1—9. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999.
- Curtin, Jennifer. "The Prime Ministership of Julia Gillard". *Australian Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 1 (2015): 190—204.
- D'Alpuget, Blanche. *Robert J. Hawke: A Biography*. East Melbourne: Schwartz, 1982.
- , *Hawke: The Prime Minister*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2010.
- Damousi, Joy. "The Emotions of History". In *The Historian's Conscience: Australian Historians on the Ethics of History*, ed. Stuart Macintyre, 28—39. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2004.
- , "Why Do We Get So Emotional About Anzac?" In *What's Wrong with Anzac?: The Militarisation of Australian History*, eds. Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds (with Mark McKenna and Joy Damousi), 94—109. Sydney: NewSouth, 2010.
- , "A Biographer's Journey of Revelation: Stuart Macintyre on Ernest Scott". In *The Work of History: Writing for Stuart Macintyre*, eds. Peter Beilharz and Sian Supski, 133—48. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2022.
- Dane, Alexandra. *Gender and Prestige in Literature: Contemporary Australian Book Culture*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.
- Darian-Smith, Kate. "Images of Empire: Gender and Nationhood in Australia at the Time of Federation". In *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures*, eds. Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw and Stuart Macintyre, 153—68. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2007.
- Darnton, Robert. "What is the History of Books?" *Daedalus* 111, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 65—83.
- , *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990.
- Davis, Glyn. "Keating's Speechwriter as Black Box or Hand-held Camera". *Australian Book Review*, no. 336, 2011, <https://www.australianbookreview.com.au/about/61-november-2011/618-don-watson-recollections-of-a-bleeding-heart-second-edition> accessed 18 March 2021.

- Davis, Mark. "The Decline of the Literary Paradigm in Australian Publishing". *Heat* 12 (2006): 99—108.
- , "Culture Wars and Corporatism: The Cultural Mission in Australian Non-Fiction Book Publishing, 1958—2018". *Australian Literary Studies* 35, no. 1 (2020): <https://www.australianliterarystudies.com.au/articles/culture-wars-and-corporatism-the-cultural-mission-in-australian-non-fiction-book-publishing-19582018>, accessed 26 November 2020.
- Davison, Graeme. "The Colonial Strut: Australian Leaders on the World Stage". *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 51, no. 1 (2005): 6—16.
- , *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000.
- , *City Dreamers: The Urban Imagination in Australia*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2016.
- Day, David. *Paul Keating: The Biography*. Sydney: Fourth Estate, 2015.
- Day, Ingrid. "Romancing the Reader". In *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia 1946–2005*, eds. Craig Munro and Robyn Sheahan-Bright, 368—73. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2006.
- Deacon, Desley. "The Employment of Women in the Commonwealth Public Service: The Creation and Reproduction of a Dual Labour Market". *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 41, no. 3 (1982): 232—50.
- Delahunty, Mary. *Gravity: Inside the PM's Office During Her Last Year and Final Days*. Melbourne: Hardie Grant, 2014.
- Delaney, Carol. "Father State, Motherland, and the Birth of Modern Turkey". In *Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis*, eds. Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney, 177—99. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Dening, Greg. *Performances*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1996.
- Depkat, Volker. "History". In *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction*, vol. 1, ed. Martina Wagner Egelhaaf, 73—81. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019.
- , "Autobiography as Political Legacy in Transition Periods: Benjamin Franklin and Konrad Adenauer Compared". *European Journal of Life Writing* 9 (2020): 51—74.
- Devenish, Annie. "Performing the Political Self: A Study of Identity Making and Self Representation in the Autobiographies of India's First Generation of Parliamentary Women". *Women's History Review* 22, no. 2 (2013): 280—94.
- Dickenson, Jacqueline. *Renegades and Rats: Betrayal and the Remaking of Radical Organisations in Britain and Australia*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2006.
- Dickenson, Jackie. "Journalists Writing Australian Political History". *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 56, no. 1 (2010): 105—19.
- , *Trust Me: Australians and Their Politicians*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2013.
- Dixon, Thomas. *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Drake, Philip. "Celebrity, Reputational Capital and the Media Industries". In *Routledge Handbook of Celebrity Studies*, ed. Anthony Elliott, 271—84. London: Routledge, 2018.

- Dreifus, Claudia. “‘Studies in Power’: An Interview with Robert Caro”, *New York Review of Books*, 16 January 2018, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/01/16/studies-in-power-an-interview-with-robert-caro/>, accessed 8 October 2020.
- Dutt, Rajani Palme. *Problems of Contemporary History*. London: Lawrence and Wishart: 1963.
- Dyrenfurth, Nick. “‘A Political ... as well as a Propagandist Movement’: Cultural Politics and the Rise of Fisher Labor”. *Labour History* 102 (2012): 11—36.
- Eakin, Paul John. *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.
- . *Touching the World: Reference in Autobiography*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- (ed.). *The Ethics of Life Writing*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Edwards, John. *John Curtin’s War*, 2 vols. Melbourne: Viking, 2017—2018.
- Edwards, Lindy. “Ideology and Effective Government: Lessons from Rudd–Gillard Labor”. *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 77, no. 4 (2018): 744–56.
- Egan, Susanna. *Mirror Talk: Genres of Crisis in Contemporary Autobiography*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.
- . *Burdens of Proof: Faith, Doubt and Identity in Autobiography*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011.
- Egerton, George. “The Lloyd George ‘War Memoirs’: A Study in the Politics of Memory”. *Journal of Modern History* 60, no. 1 (1988): 55–94.
- . “Politics and Autobiography: Political Memoir as Polygenre”. *Biography* 15, no. 3 (1992): 221—42.
- . “Introduction”. In *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory*, ed. George Egerton, xi—xix. London: Frank Cass & Co., 1994.
- . “The Politics of Memory: Form and Function in the History of Political Memoir from Antiquity to Modernity”. In *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory*, ed. George Egerton, 1—27. London: Frank Cass & Co., 1994.
- Eichbaum, Chris and Richard Shaw eds., *Partisan Appointees and Public Servants: An International Analysis of the Role of the Political Adviser*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2010.
- . “Prime Ministers and Their Advisers in Parliamentary Democracies”. In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Leadership*, eds. R. A. W. Rhodes and Paul ‘t Hart, 517—31. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Errington, Wayne and Peter van Onselen. *John Winston Howard*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2007.
- Fehrman, Craig. “Reagan and the Rise of the Blockbuster Political Memoir”. *American Literary History* 24, no. 3 (2012): 468—90.
- Fenna, Alan. “Putting the ‘Australian Settlement’ in Perspective”. *Labour History* 102 (2012): 99—118.

- Ferguson, Sarah with Patricia Drum. *The Killing Season: Uncut*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2016.
- Fielding, Steven. "Looking for the 'New Political History'". *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 3 (2007): 515—24.
- Fisher, Catherine. *Sound Citizens: Australian Women Broadcasters Claim Their Voice, 1923–1956*. Canberra: ANU Press, 2021.
- Fitzgerald, Ross, Lyndon Megarrity and David Symonds. *Made in Queensland: A New History*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2009.
- Forsyth, Hannah. *A History of the Modern Australian University*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2014.
- and Sophie Loy-Wilson. "Seeking a New Materialism in Australian History". *Australian Historical Studies* 48, no. 2 (2017): 169—88.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. London: Routledge, 2002 [1969].
- Fox, Karen. *Honouring a Nation: A History of Australia's Honours System*. Canberra: ANU Press, 2022.
- Frame, Tom. "Perspectives and Polemics". In *The Ascent to Power, 1996: The Howard Government*, vol. 1, ed. Tom Frame, 1—16. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2017.
- Frances, Raelene. *The Politics of Work: Gender and Labour in Victoria 1880 – 1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Francis, Mark. *Governors and Settlers: Images of Authority in the British Colonies, 1820–60*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1992.
- Francis, Martin. "Tears, Tantrums, and Bared Teeth: The Emotional Economy of Three Conservative Prime Ministers, 1951–1963". *Journal of British Studies* 41 (July 2002): 354—87.
- Frow, John and Meaghan Morris. *Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1989.
- Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992.
- Furphy, Joseph. *Such is Life: Being Certain Extracts from the Diary of Tom Collins*. Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2013 [1903].
- Gabriel, Yiannis. "Narrative Ecologies in Post-Truth Times: Nostalgia and Conspiracy Theories in Narrative Jungles?" In *What Political Science Can Learn From the Humanities: Blurring Genres*, eds. R. A. W. Rhodes and Susan Hodggett, 33—56. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.
- Gallagher, Catherine and Stephen Greenblatt. *Practicing New Historicism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Gamble, Andrew. "Political Memoirs". *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 4, no. 1 (April 2002): 141–51.
- Garrow, David J. *Rising Star: The Making of Barack Obama*. London: William Collins, 2017.

- Ghazarian, Zareh. "Minor Parties: Dealing with the Greens, Democrats and One Nation". In *Back From the Brink, 1997 – 2001: The Howard Government*, vol. 2, ed. Tom Frame, 56–69. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2018.
- Gilmore, Leigh. *Tainted Witness: Why We Doubt What Women Say About Their Lives*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.
- Gooch, George Peabody. *Studies in Diplomacy and Statecraft*. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1942.
- Goot, Murray and Ian Watson. "One Nation's Electoral Support: Where Does It Come From, What Makes It Different and How Does It Fit?" *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 47, no. 2 (2001): 159–95.
- Goot, Murray. "Party Convergence Reconsidered". *Australian Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 1 (2004): 49–73.
- , "'A Worse Importation Than Chewing Gum': American Influences on The Australian Press and Their Limits—The Australian Gallup Poll, 1941-1973". *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 30, no. 3 (2010): 269–302.
- and Tim Rowse. "Warren Mundine in Black and White". *Australian Journal of Biography and History* 5 (2021): 205–26.
- Gordon, Michael. *A Question of Leadership: Paul Keating, Political Fighter*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1993.
- Gorman, Zachary and Gregory Melleuish. "Menzies and Howard on Themselves: Liberal Memoir, Memory and Myth Making". *History Australia* 15, no. 1 (2018): 7–22.
- Grattan, Michelle. "Caucus and the Factions". In *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party*, eds. John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre, 250–64. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001.
- , "Foreword". In Anne Tiernan. *Power Without Responsibility: Ministerial Staffers in Australian Governments from Whitlam to Howard*, vi–viii. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007.
- Griffen-Foley, Bridget. *The House of Packer: The Making of a Media Empire*, reprint. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000 [1999].
- , "Political Opinion Polling and the Professionalisation of Public Relations: Keith Murdoch, Robert Menzies, and the Liberal Party of Australia". *Australian Journalism Review* 24, no. 1 (2002): 41–59.
- , *Party Games: Australian Politicians and the Media from War to Dismissal*. Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2003.
- , "From Tit-Bits to Big Brother: A Century of Audience Participation in the Media". *Media, Culture and Society* 26, no. 4 (2004): 533–48.
- , "A Life at the Centre". *Griffith Review* 3 (2004): 59–66.
- , *Changing Stations: The Story of Australian Commercial Radio*. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009.

- , "The 'Fireside Chat' on Australian Radio". In *Public Opinion, Campaign Politics and Media Audiences: New Australian Perspectives*, eds. Bridget Griffen-Foley and Sean Scalmer, 142—73. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2017.
- , "Inaugural KS Inglis Address: Making Australian Media History". *Media International Australia* 170, no. 1 (2019): 3—21.
- Griffiths, Michael R. "Indigenous Life Writing: Rethinking Poetics and Practice". In *A Companion to Australian Aboriginal Literature*, ed. Belinda Wheeler, 15—33. New York: Camden House, 2013.
- Grimshaw, Patricia, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marian Quartly. *Creating a Nation*. Ringwood: McPhee Gribble, 1994.
- Grimwade, Sir Andrew. "Foreword". In *Miegunyah: The Bequests of Russell and Mab Grimwade*, eds. John Poynter and Benjamin Thomas, v—xvi. Carlton: Miegunyah Press, 2015.
- Groenewegen, Peter and John Lodewijks. "Dave Clark (1946 – 2008): Economist, Larrikin, 'Critical Drinker' and Friend". *Agenda* 15, no. 3 (2008): 101—04.
- Habermas, Jurgen. "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere". In *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, eds. Craig Calhoun, 421—62. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996 [1992].
- Haigh, Gideon. "The Rise and Rise of the Prime Minister". *Meanjin* 72, no. 1 (2013): 40—61.
- , *The Brilliant Boy: Doc Evatt and the Great Australian Dissent*. Sydney: Scribner, 2021.
- Hamilton, Keith. "Addressing the Past: The Foreign Office and the Vetting of Diplomatic and Ministerial Memoirs During the Years Between the World Wars". In *Britain in Global Politics, vol. 1: From Gladstone to Churchill*, eds. Christopher Baxter, Michael L. Dockrill and Keith Hamilton, 99—131. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Hampton, Mark. "Rethinking the 'New Journalism', 1850s—1930s". *Journal of British History* 43, no. 2 (April 2004): 278—90.
- Hancock, Ian. *National and Permanent?: The Federal Organisation of the Liberal Party of Australia, 1944 – 1965*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2000.
- , *Ainsley Gotto*. Redland Bay: Connor Court, 2020.
- Hart, Bradley W. "The 'Journal of Contemporary History': Fifty Years of Continuity and Change". *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 4 (2015): 738—49.
- Hartog, Francois. *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time*, trans. Saskia Brown. New York: Columbia University, 2017.
- Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Harvey, Melinda and Julieanne Lamond. "Literary Prizes and Book Reviews in Australia Since 2014". In *Book Publishing in Australia: A Living Legacy*, eds. Millicent Weber and Aaron Mannion, 231—64. Clayton: Monash University Press, 2019.
- Harry, Duke of Sussex. *Spare*. London: Bantam, 2023.

- Haussegger, Virginia. "The Gender Agenda". In *From Turnbull to Morrison: The Trust Divide*, eds. Mark Evans, Michelle Grattan and Brendan McCaffrie, 187—98. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2019.
- Hearn, Mark. "Securing the Man: Narratives of Gender and Nation in the Verdicts of Henry Bournes Higgins". *Australian Historical Studies* 37, no. 127 (2006): 1—24.
- Henderson, Margaret. *Marking Feminist Times: Remembering the Longest Revolution in Australia*. Berlin: Peter Lang and European University Studies, 2006.
- Hirst, John. "Bureaucracy". In *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, eds. Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart Macintyre, 95—96. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- . *A Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- . "Changing My Mind". In *The Historian's Conscience: Australian Historians on the Ethics of History*, ed. Stuart Macintyre, 84—93. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2004.
- Hobbs, Mia Martin. *Return to Vietnam: An Oral History of American and Australian Veterans' Journeys*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914—1991*, 2nd ed. London: Abacus, 1995.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012 [1983].
- Hocking, Jenny. *Gough Whitlam: The Biography*, 2 vols. Carlton: Melbourne University Press/Miegunyah Press, 2008/2012.
- . *The Palace Letters*. Brunswick: Scribe, 2020.
- Holbrook, Carolyn. "The Role of Nationalism in Australian War Literature of the 1930s". *First World War Studies* 5, no. 2 (2014): 213—31.
- . *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2014.
- . "Making Sense of the Great War Centenary". In *The Great War: Aftermath and Commemoration*, eds. Carolyn Holbrook and Keir Reeves, 244—53. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2019.
- . "Federation and Australian Nationalism: Early Commemoration of the Commonwealth". *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 66, no. 4 (2020): 560—77.
- . "The Collaboration of Intellectuals and Politicians in the Postwar Reconstruction: A Reassessment". *Australian Historical Studies* 47, no. 2 (2016): 278—94.
- Holland, Jack and Katherine Wright. "The Double Delegitimisation of Julia Gillard: Gender, the Media and Australian Political Culture". *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 63, no. 4 (2017): 588—602.
- Hollier, Nathan. "From Hope to Disillusion? The Legacy of the Whitlam Government in Australian Policy and Culture". In *It's Time Again: Whitlam and Modern Labor*, eds. Jenny Hocking and Colleen Lewis, 414—43. Armadale: circa, 2003.

- Holmes, Katie. "Does It Matter If She Cried? Recording Emotion and the Australian Generations Oral History Project". *Oral History Review* 44, no. 1 (2017): 56—76.
- Horne, Donald. *The Lucky Country*, reprint. Camberwell: Penguin, 2005 [1964].
- , *A Time of Hope: Australia 1966–72*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1980.
- Hull, David. "In Defence of Presentism". *History and Theory* 18, no. 1 (1979): 1—15.
- Humphrys, Elizabeth and Damien Cahill. "How Labour Made Neoliberalism". *Critical Sociology* 43 (2017): 669–84.
- Humphrys, Elizabeth. *How Labour Built Neoliberalism: Australia's Accord, the Labour Movement and the Neoliberal Project*. Leiden: Brill, 2019.
- Inglis, K. S. *Whose ABC? The Australian Broadcasting Corporation 1983—2006*. Melbourne: Black Inc., 2006.
- Irving, Terry and Sean Scalmer. "Labour Intellectuals in Australia: Modes, Traditions, Generations, Transformations". *International Review of Social History* 50, no. 1 (2005): 1—26.
- Israel, Milton. "Indian Nationalist Voices: Autobiography and the Process of Return". In *Political Memoirs: Essays on the Politics of Memory*, ed. George Egerton, 76—105. London: Frank Cass & Co., 1994.
- Jackman, Christine. *Inside Kevin07: the People, the Plan, the Prize*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2008.
- Jaensch, Dean. *The Hawke–Keating Hijack: The ALP in Transition*. North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989.
- Johnson, Carol. *Governing Change: From Keating to Howard*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000.
- , "Gillard, Rudd and Labor Tradition". *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 57, no. 4 (2011): 562—79.
- , "From Obama to Abbott: Gender Identity and the Politics of Emotion". *Australian Feminist Studies* 28, no. 75 (2013): 14—29.
- , "Playing the Gender Card: The Uses and Abuses of Gender in Australian Politics". *Politics & Gender* 11 (2015): 291—319.
- , "The Gendered Identities of Australian Political Leaders: From Hawkie to ScoMo". In *Gender Politics: Navigating Political Leadership in Australia*, eds. Katrina Lee-Koo and Zareh Ghazarian, 11—23. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2021.
- Johnson, Louise C., Tanja Luckins and David Walker. *The Story of Australia: A New History of People and Place*. London: Routledge, 2021.
- Jones, Mike. "The Temple of History: Historians and the Sacralisation of Archival Work". *History Australia* 18, no. 4 (2021): 676—93.
- Kells, Stuart. *MUP: A Centenary History*. Carlton: Miegunyah Press, 2023.
- Kelly, Paul. *The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1992.

- , *The March of Patriots: The Struggle for Modern Australia*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2009.
- , *Triumph and Demise: The Broken Promise of a Labor Generation*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2014.
- Kelly, Sean. *The Game: A Portrait of Scott Morrison*. Carlton: Black Inc., 2021.
- Kemp, David. "A Leader and a Philosophy". *Politics* 8, no. 1 (1973): 48—59.
- Kent, Jacqueline. *A Certain Style: Beatrice Davis, A Literary Life*. Ringwood: Viking, 2001.
- , *The Making of Julia Gillard*. Camberwell: Penguin, 2010.
- , *Take Your Best Shot: The Prime Ministership of Julia Gillard*. Melbourne: Penguin, 2013.
- Kershaw, Ian. *Personality and Power: Builders and Destroyers of Modern Europe*. London: Allen Lane, 2022.
- Kingston, Beverley. *Basket, Bag and Trolley: A History of Shopping in Australia*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- , *A History of New South Wales*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Kyvig, David E. and Myron Marty. *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You*, 3rd ed. Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2010.
- Lagan, Bernard. *Loner: Inside a Labor Tragedy*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005.
- Lake, Marilyn. "Historical Reconsiderations IV: The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context". *Historical Studies* 22, no. 86 (1986): 116—31.
- , *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999.
- , "'The Brightness of Eyes and Quiet Assurance Which Seem to Say America': Alfred Deakin's Identification with Republican Manhood". *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 129 (2007): 32—51.
- , *Progressive New World: How Settler Colonialism and Transpacific Exchange Shaped American Reform*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019.
- Lamb, Karen. *Thea Astley: Inventing Her Own Weather*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2015.
- Langmore, Diane. *Prime Ministers' Wives: The Public and Private Lives of Ten Australian Women*. Ringwood: McPhee Gribble, 1992.
- Lanzoni, Susan. *Empathy: A History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018.
- Lavelle, Ashley. "'Conflicts of Loyalty': The Australian Labor Party and Uranium Policy, 1976—82". *Labour History* 102 (2012): 177—96.
- Lawrence, Jon. *Electing Our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Lee, David. *Stanley Melbourne Bruce: Australian Internationalist*. London: Continuum, 2010.

- Lejeune, Philippe. *On Autobiography*, trans. Katherine Leary. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- Lilleker, Darren G. "Autobiography and Political Marketing: Narrative and the Obama Brand". In *Real Lives, Celebrity Stories: Narratives of Ordinary and Extraordinary People Across Media*, eds. Bronwen Thomas and Julia Round, 129—50. New York: Bloomsbury: 2014.
- Lilti, Antoine. *The Invention of Celebrity, 1750 – 1850*, trans. Lynn Jeffress. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017.
- Little, Graham. *Political Ensembles: A Psychosocial Approach to Politics and Leadership*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- . *Strong Leadership: Thatcher, Reagan and an Eminent Person*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- . *The Public Emotions: From Mourning to Hope*. Sydney: ABC Books, 1999.
- Loveday, Peter and Allan Martin. "Colonial Politics Before 1890". In *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, eds. P. Loveday, A. W. Martin and R. S. Parker, 5—43. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1977.
- Lowenstein, Wendy. *Weevils in the Flour: An Oral Record of the 1930s Depression in Australia*. Melbourne: Hyland House, 1979 [1978].
- Lyons, Martyn. "Britain's Largest Export Market". In *A History of the Book in Australia, 1891–1945*, eds. Martyn Lyons and John Arnold, 19—26. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2001.
- Lytard, Jean-Francois. "The Postmodern Condition". In *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, eds. Julie Rivken and Michael Ryan, 2nd ed., 355—64. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.
- Macintosh, Andrew and Richard Denniss. "Climate Change". In *The Gillard Governments: Australian Commonwealth Administration 2010 – 2013*, ed. Chris Aulich, 195—219. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2014.
- Macintyre, Stuart. *A Colonial Liberalism: The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- . "Liberalism". In *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, eds. Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart Macintyre, 388—90. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- . "Nationalist Party". In *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, eds. Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart Macintyre, 460. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- . "The First Caucus". In *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party*, eds. John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre, 17—29. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001.
- . "Obituary: John Iremonger, 1944–2002". *Australian Historical Studies* 34, no. 122 (2003): 387—88.
- and Anna Clark. *The History Wars*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2003.

- , "The Rebirth of Political History". *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 56, no. 1 (2010): 1—5.
- , *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2015.
- , *A Concise History of Australia*, 4th ed. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2016 [1999].
- , Andre Brett and Gwilym Croucher. *No End of a Lesson: Australia's Unified National System of Higher Education*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2017.
- , *The Reds: The Communist Party of Australia from Origins to Illegality*, reprint. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2022 [1998].
- Maddox, Graham. *The Hawke Government and Labor Tradition*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1989.
- Magner, Brigid. "Anglo-Australian Relations in the Book Trade". In *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia 1946–2005*, eds. Craig Munro and Robyn Sheahan-Bright, 7—9. St Lucia; University of Queensland Press, 2006.
- , "Behind the BookScan Bestseller Lists: Technology and Cultural Anxieties in Early Twenty-First Century Australia". *Script & Print* 36, no. 4 (2012): 243–58.
- Maley, Maria. "Understanding the Divergent Development of the Ministerial Office in Australia and the UK". *Australian Journal of Political Science* 53, no. 3 (2018): 320—35.
- Mancini, Paolo. "Corruption Scandals and the Media System". In *The Routledge Companion to Media and Scandal*, eds. Howard Tumber and Silvio Waisbord, 156—64. London: Routledge, 2019.
- Mandler, Peter and Susan Pedersen. "Introduction: The British Intelligentsia After the Victorians". In *After the Victorians: Private Conscience and Public Duty in Modern Britain*, eds. Susan Pedersen and Peter Mandler, 1—30. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Mandler, Peter. *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.
- Manning, Paddy. *Inside the Greens: The Origins and Future of the Party, the People and the Politics*. Carlton: Black Inc., 2019.
- Marr, David. "Power Trip: The Political Journey of Kevin Rudd". *Quarterly Essay* 38. Melbourne: Black Inc., 2010.
- , *Faction Man: Bill Shorten's Pursuit of Power*. Carlton: Black Inc., 2016.
- Martin, A. W. *Henry Parkes: A Biography*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1980.
- , "Mr Menzies' Anti-Communism". *Quadrant* 40, no. 5 (1996): 47—56.
- , *Robert Gordon Menzies: A Life*, 2 vols. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1993, 1999.
- Mason, Robert. "'Pitbulls' and Populist Politicians: Sarah Palin, Pauline Hanson and the Use of Gendered Nostalgia in Electoral Campaigns". *Comparative American Studies: An International Journal* 8, no. 3 (2010): 185—99.

- Masters, Adam and John Uhr. *Leadership Performance and Rhetoric*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
- McAllister, Ian. "Women's Electoral Representation in Australia". In *Representing Women in Parliament: A Comparative Study*, eds. Marian Sawer, Manon Tremblay and Linda Trimble, 27—46. London: Routledge, 2006.
- McCalman, Janet. *Struggletown: Public and Private Life in Richmond 1900—1965*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1984.
- McCarthy, Helen. "Whose Democracy? Histories of British Political Culture Between the Wars". *Historical Journal* 55, no. 1 (2012): 221—38.
- McCooley, David. *Artful Histories: Modern Australian Autobiography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- , "Autobiography". In *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, ed. Peter Pierce, 323—43. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- McDowall, Duncan. "Spinning the Past: Prime Ministerial Memoirs, 2007". *Queen's Quarterly* 115, no. 1 (2008): 116—131.
- McKee, Alan. "YouTube Versus the National Film and Sound Archive: Which is the More Useful Resource for Historians of Australian Television?". *Television & New Media* 12, no. 2 (2011): 154—73.
- McKenna, Mark. *An Eye for Eternity: The Life of Manning Clark*. Carlton: Miegunyah Press, 2011.
- , "'The Character Business': Biographical Political Writing in Australia". In *A Historian for All Seasons: Essays for Geoffrey Bolton*, eds. Stuart Macintyre, Lenore Layman and Jenny Gregory, 48—70. Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2017.
- McKnight, David. *Beyond Left and Right: New Politics and the Culture Wars*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005.
- , *Rupert Murdoch: An Investigation of Political Power*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2012.
- McLean, Ian. *Why Australia Prospered: The Shifting Sources of Economic Growth*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- McMinn, W. G. *George Reid*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1989.
- McMullin, Ross. *Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party, 1891—1991*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- McPhee, Hilary. *Other People's Words*. Sydney: Picador, 2001.
- Meaney, Neville. "Britishness and Australian Identity: The Problem of Nationalism in Australian History and Historiography". *Australian Historical Studies* 32, no. 116 (2001): 76—90.
- Megalogenis, George. *The Longest Decade*. Carlton North: Scribe, 2006.
- Megarrity, Lyndon. *Robert Philp and the Politics of Development*. North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2022.

- Melleuish, Gregory. *Cultural Liberalism in Australia: A Study in Intellectual and Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- , "Personal Politics and Being British: Political Rhetoric, Democracy and Their Consequences in Colonial New South Wales". *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 59, no. 1 (2013): 1—14.
- Milligan, Louise. *Cardinal: The Rise and Fall of George Pell*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2017.
- Millmow, Alex. *A History of Australasian Economic Thought*. London: Routledge, 2017.
- , "1929: The Patrician and the Orator". In *Elections Matter: Ten Federal Elections that Shaped Australia*, eds. Benjamin T. Jones, Frank Bongiorno and John Uhr, 47—67. Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2018.
- Mills, Stephen. "The Making of a Prime Minister's Speeches". In *The House on Capital Hill: Parliament, Politics and Power in the National Capital*, eds. Julian Disney and J. R. Nethercote, 165—78. Annandale: The Federation Press, 1996.
- Misch, Georg. *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity*, vol. 1. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951 [1907].
- Moore, Charles. *Margaret Thatcher, The Authorized Biography*, vol. 3: *Herself Alone*. London: Allen Lane, 2019.
- Moran, Christopher. *Classified: Secrecy and the State in Modern Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Morgan, Sally. *My Place*. New York: Seaver Books, 1988 [1987].
- Mullins, Patrick. "Chasing the Future: Journalists Writing Political History". *Australian Journalism Review* 37, no. 2 (2015): 95—107.
- , "Profiling the Biography of the Contemporary Political Figure in Australia". In *Offshoot: Contemporary Life Writing Methodologies and Practices*, eds. Donna Lee Brien and Quinn Eades, 83—97. Crawley: UWA Publishing, 2018.
- , *Tiberius with a Telephone: The Life and Stories of William McMahon*. Brunswick: Scribe, 2018.
- , *The Trials of Portnoy: How Penguin Brought Down Australia's Censorship System*. Melbourne: Scribe, 2020.
- , "Warren Denning and the Making of *Caucus Crisis*". *History Australia* 18, no. 1 (2021): 94—111.
- , "'None of You Will Believe It': Control, Truth and Myth in the Life of Billy McMahon". *Australian Journal of Biography and History* 5 (2021): 147—66.
- Munro, Craig. "Case-Study: 2001 Publishing Report Card". In *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia, 1946–2005*, eds. Craig Munro and Robyn Sheahan-Bright, 85—88. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2007.
- Munro, Doug. *History Wars: The Peter Ryan–Manning Clark Controversy*. Canberra: ANU Press, 2021.

- Murphy, John. *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia*, Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000.
- Naylor, John F. "British Memoirs and Official Secrecy: From Crossman to Thatcher". In *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory*, ed. George Egerton, 330—40. London: Frank Cass & Co., 1994.
- Negra, Diane and Yvonne Tasker. "Introduction: Gender and Recessionary Culture". In *Gendering the Recession: Media and Culture in an Age of Austerity*, eds. Diane Negra and Yvonne Tasker, 1—30. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.
- Nolan, Melanie. "The White Blouse Revolution: Heroic and Anti-Heroic Interpretations of the Feminisation of Work". *Journal of Australian Studies* 21, no. 52 (1997): 54—66.
- , "The High Tide of a Labour Market System: The Australasian Male Breadwinner Model". *Labour & Industry* 13, no. 3 (2003): 73—92.
- , "Country and Lives: Australian Biography and Its History". *Cercles* 35 (2015): 96—117.
- , "Biography in Australia: Different Yet the Same? All Connected Flatland?" In *Different Lives: Global Perspectives on Biography in Public Cultures and Societies*, eds. Hans Renders and David Veltman, 111—27. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
- , "The Great Individual in History: Historicizing Historians' Biographical Practice". In *Fear of Theory: Towards a New Theoretical Justification of Biography*, eds. Hans Renders and David Veltman, 72—88. Leiden: Brill, 2022.
- North, Louise. "Australia: A Case of Systemic Inequity for Women Journalists". In *The Palgrave International Handbook of Women and Journalism*, ed. Carolyn M. Byerly, 333—45. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- O'Brien, Kerry. *Keating*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2015.
- , *A Memoir*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2018.
- O'Meagher, B. D. "Introduction: Labor Ideology and Socialism". In *The Socialist Objective: Labor & Socialism*, eds. Bruce O'Meagher, 1—31. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1983.
- Parmet, Herbert S. *Jack: The Struggles of John F. Kennedy*. New York: Dial Press, 1980.
- Parnell, Claire, Alexandra Dane and Millicent Weber. "Author Care and the Invisibility of Affective Labour: Publicists' Role in Book Publishing". *Publishing Research Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (2020): 648—59.
- Pascal, Roy. *Design and Truth in Autobiography*, reprint. London: Routledge, 2016 [1960].
- Patrick, Aaron. *Downfall: How the Labor Party Ripped Itself Apart*. Sydney: HarperCollins, 2013.
- Peacey, Jason. *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda During the English Civil Wars and Interregnum*, reprint. London: Routledge, 2016 [2004].
- Pearson, Noel. *Mission: Essays, Speeches and Ideas*. Carlton: Black Inc., 2021.
- Peel, Mark. *The Lowest Rung: Voices of Australian Poverty*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

- Pedersen, Susan. "What is Political History Now?" In *What is History Now?* ed. David Cannane, 33—56. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Persels, Jeff and Russell Ganim eds. *Fecal Matters in Early Modern Literature and Art: Studies in Sociology*, reprint. New York: Routledge, 2016 [2004].
- Phillips, Adam. "On 'Remembering, Repeating and Working Through,' Again". *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 52, no. 3 (2016): 375—82.
- Phillips-Peddlesden, Bethany. "'A Stronger Man and a More Virile Character': Australian Prime Ministers, Embodied Manhood and Political Authority in the Early Twentieth Century". *Australian Historical Studies* 48, no. 4 (2017): 502—18.
- , "'A Race of Intelligent Super-Giants': The Whitlams, Gendered Bodies and Political Authority in Modern Australia". In *Everyday Revolutions: Remaking Gender, Sexuality and Culture in 1970s Australia*, eds. Michelle Arrow and Angela Woollacott, 261—78. Canberra: ANU Press, 2019.
- , "'Entitled to a Better Standard Than This': *Strong Female Lead*, Julia Gillard and Sexism in Australian Politics". *History Australia* 19, no. 1 (2022): 395—96.
- Piccini, Jon. *Human Rights in Twentieth-Century Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Pinto, Sarah. "The History of Emotions in Australia". *Australian Historical Studies* 48, no.1 (2017): 103—14.
- Platter, Charles. *Aristophanes and the Carnival of Genres*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007.
- Popkin, Jeremy D. "Ego-histoire Down Under: Australian Historian-Autobiographers". *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 129 (2008): 106—23.
- Potts, David. *The Myth of the Great Depression*. Melbourne: Scribe, 2006.
- Powell, Graeme. "The First in the Field: Prime Ministers' Papers in the National Library of Australia". *Australian Academic & Research Libraries* 36, no. 1 (2005): 54—64.
- Poynter, John and Benjamin Thomas. *Miegunyah: The Bequests of Russell and Mab Grimwade*. Carlton: Miegunyah Press, 2015.
- Prasad, Monica. *The Politics of Free Markets: The Rise of Neoliberal Economic Policies in Britain, France, Germany and the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- Probyn, Fiona. "'That Woman': Pauline Hanson and Cultural Crisis". *Australian Feminist Studies* 14, no. 29 (1999): 161—71.
- Pusey, Michael. *Economic Rationalism in Canberra: A Nation-Building State Changes Its Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Rak, Julie. *Boom! Manufacturing Memoir for the Popular Market*. Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2013.
- Rasmussen, Carolyn. *The Blackburns: Public Lives, Private Ambition*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2019.
- Reid, Alan. *The Gorton Experiment*. Sydney: Shakespeare Head Press, 1971.

- Reilly, Derek with Bob Hawke. *Wednesdays with Bob*. Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2017.
- Reinecke, Carl. *Books That Made Us: Writers and Novels That Have Shaped Australia*. Sydney: ABC Books, 2021.
- Reynolds, David. *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War*. London: Penguin, 2005.
- Rhodes, R. A. W. "Everyday Life in a Ministry: Public Administration as Anthropology". *American Review of Public Administration* 35, no. 1 (2005): 3—25.
- , "Theory, Method and British Political Life History". *Political Studies Review* 10, no. 2 (2012): 161—76.
- and Anne Tiernan. *Lessons in Governing: A Profile of Prime Ministers' Chiefs of Staff*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2014.
- , *Interpretive Political Science: Selected Essays*, vol. 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- , "Autoethnography as Narrative in Political Studies". In *What Can Political Science Learn from the Humanities: Blurring Genres*, eds. R. A. W. Rhodes and Susan Hodgett, 107—28. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.
- Richards, David and Helen Mathers. "Political Memoirs and New Labour: Interpretations of Power and the 'Club Rules'". *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 12, no. 4 (2010): 498—522.
- Richardson, Michael. "Ghosting Politics: Speechwriters, Speechmakers and the (Re)crafting of Identity". *Cultural Studies Review* 23, no. 2 (2017): 3—17.
- Rickard, John. "Autobiography". In *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, eds. Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart Macintyre, 53—54. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Ricketson, Matthew, Katharine Murphy and Patrick Mullins. "The Media". In *From Turnbull to Morrison, The Trust Divide: Australian Commonwealth Administration 2016 – 2019*, eds. Mark Evans, Michelle Grattan and Brendan McCaffrie, 109—26. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2019.
- Ricketson, Matthew and Patrick Mullins. *Who Needs the ABC?* Brunswick: Scribe, 2022.
- Rowse, Tim. *Australian Liberalism and National Character*. Melbourne: Kibble Books, 1978.
- , "Political Culture: A Concept and Its Ideologues". In *Critical Essays in Australian Politics*, ed. Graeme Duncan, 5—27. Port Melbourne: Edward Arnold, 1978.
- Rubinstein, W. D. "Men of Wealth". *Australian Cultural History* no. 3 (1984): 24—37.
- Ryan, Susan and Troy Bramston. "Introduction". In *The Hawke Government: A Critical Retrospective*, eds. Susan Ryan and Troy Bramston, 1—3. North Melbourne: Pluto Press, 2003.
- Saville, Margot. *The Battle for Bennelong: The Adventures of Maxine McKew, Aged 50 Something*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2007.
- Sawer, Marian. "The Ethical State: Social Liberalism and the Critique of Contract". *Australian Historical Studies* 31, no. 114 (2000): 67—90

- , *An Ethical State? Social Liberalism in Australia*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2003.
- with Gail Radford. *Making Women Count: A History of the Women's Electoral Lobby*. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008.
- , Manon Tremblay and Linda Trimble eds., *Representing Women in Parliament: A Comparative Study*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Scalmer, Sean. *Dissent Events: Protest, the Media and the Political Gimmick in Australia*. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002.
- and Nathan Hollier. "I, Diarist: Examining Australian Politics from the 'Inside'". *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 55, no. 2 (2009): 170—89.
- and Jackie Dickenson. "The March of the Insider". *Overland* 199 (2010): 18—26.
- , "The Rise of the Insider: Memoirs and Diaries in Recent Australian Political History". *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 56, no. 1 (2010): 82—104.
- , "Containing Contention: A Reinterpretation of Democratic Change and Electoral Reform in the Australian Colonies". *Australian Historical Studies* 42, no. 3 (2011): 337—56.
- , *On the Stump: Campaign Oratory and Democracy in the United States, Britain and Australia*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017.
- , *Democratic Adventurer: Graham Berry and the Making of Australian Politics*. Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2020.
- Selth, Philip A. "Political Biographies and Administrative Memoirs: Some Concluding Comments". In *Australian Political Lives: Chronicling Political Careers and Administrative Histories*, eds. Tracey Arklay, John Nethercote and John Wanna, 101—14. Canberra: ANU Press, 2006.
- Sheftel, Anna and Stacey Zembrzycki. "Who's Afraid of Oral History? Fifty Years of Debates and Anxiety About Ethics". *Oral History Review* 43, no. 2 (2016): 338—66.
- Simms, Marian and Marian Sawyer. *A Woman's Place: Women and Politics in Australia*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993.
- Simon, William and John H. Gagnon. "Sexual Scripts". In *Culture, Society and Sexuality: A Reader*, eds. Richard Parker and Peter Aggleton, 29—38. London: Routledge, 2014 [1999].
- Simons, Margaret. *The Content Makers: Understanding the Media in Australia*. Camberwell: Penguin, 2007.
- , *Penny Wong: Passion and Principle*. Carlton: Black Inc., 2019.
- Slootjes, Danielle. "Augustus and His Presentation of the People in the *Res Gestae*". *Classical World* 113, no. 3 (2020): 279—98.
- Smith, Sidonie. "The Autobiographical Manifesto: Identities, Temporalities, Politics". *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism* 14, no. 2 (1991): 186—212.
- and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: Interpreting Life Narratives*, 2nd ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

- . "Autobiographical Discourses in the Theaters of Politics". *Biography* 33, no. 1 (2010): v—xxvi.
- . "'America's Exhibit A': Hillary Rodham Clinton's *Living History* and the Genres of Authenticity". *American Literary History* 24, no. 2 (2012): 523—42.
- Starr, Graeme (ed.). *The Liberal Party of Australia: A Documentary History*. Richmond: Heinemann Educational Australia, 1980.
- Stearns, Peter N. *Shame: A Brief History*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017.
- Steketee, Mike. "Labor in Power, 1983 – 96". In *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party*, eds. John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre, 139—56. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001.
- Stelzig, Eugene. "Is There a Canon of Autobiography?", in *The Routledge Auto|Biography Studies Reader* eds. Ricia Anne Chansky and Emily Hipchen, 59—65. London: Routledge, 2016.
- Stillwell, Frank. *The Accord and Beyond: The Political Economy of the Labor Government*. Sydney: Pluto Press, 1986.
- Stinson, Emmett. "Small Publishers, Symbolic Capital and Australian Literary Prizes". In *Book Publishing in Australia: A Living Legacy*, eds. Millicent Weber and Aaron Mannion, 209—30. Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2019.
- Strangio, Paul. *Keeper of the Faith: A Biography of Jim Cairns*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2002.
- Summers, Anne. *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonisation of Women in Australia*, revised edition. Sydney: NewSouth, 2016 [1975].
- Taflaga, Marija. "2001: Boats, Terror and Legacy". In *Elections Matter: Ten Federal Elections that Shaped Australia*, eds. Benjamin T. Jones, Frank Bongiorno and John Uhr, 188—221. Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2018.
- and Matthew Kerby. "Who Does What Work in a Ministerial Office: Politically Appointed Staff and the Descriptive Representation of Women in Australian Political Offices, 1979–2010". *Political Studies* 68, no. 2 (2020): 463—85.
- Taylor, Lenore and David Uren. *Shitstorm: Inside Labor's Darkest Days*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2010.
- Terkel, Studs with Tony Parker. "Interviewing an Interviewer". In *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 2nd edition, 123—27. London: Routledge, 2006 [1998].
- Theakston, Kevin. "Richard Crossman: *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*". *Public Policy and Administration* 18, no. 4 (2003): 20—40.
- Thompson, Helen. *Disorder: Hard Times in the Twenty-First Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022.
- Thompson, John B. *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010.

- Thompson, Paul. *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3rd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Thomson, Alistair. "Unreliable Memories? The Use and Abuse of Oral History". In *Historical Controversies and Historians*, eds. William Lamont, 23—34. London: UCL Press, 1998.
- , "Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History". *Oral History Review* 34, no. 1 (2007): 49—70.
- Thucydides. *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner. London: Penguin, 1972.
- Tiernan, Anne. *Power without Responsibility: Ministerial Staffers in Australian Governments from Whitlam to Howard*. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007.
- Tiffen, Rodney. *Scandals: Media, Politics and Corruption in Contemporary Australia*. Sydney: UNSW Press, 1999.
- , *Rupert Murdoch: A Reassessment*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2014.
- Tingle, Laura. *Chasing the Future: Recession, Recovery, and the New Politics in Australia*. Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1994.
- Tosh, John. *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of History*, 6th edition. London: Routledge, 2015.
- Trimble, Linda. "Melodrama and Gendered Mediation: Television Coverage of Women's Leadership 'Coups' in New Zealand and Australia". *Feminist Media Studies* 14, no. 4 (2014): 663—78.
- , "Julia Gillard and the Gender Wars". *Politics and Gender* 12, no. 2 (2016): 296—316.
- Tripp, Charles. *A History of Iraq*, 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Turner, Graeme, Frances Bonner and P. David Marshall. *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Turner, Graeme. "A Current Affair". In *A Companion to the Australian Media*, ed. Bridget Griffen-Foley, 1. North Melbourne: Scholarly Publishing, 2014.
- , *Understanding Celebrity*. London: SAGE, 2014.
- Uhr, John and Shaun Crowe. *Novel Politics: Studies in Australian Political Fiction*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2020.
- van Onselen, Peter (ed.). *Liberals and Power: The Road Ahead*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2008.
- and Philip Senior. *Howard's End: The Unravelling of a Government*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2008.
- van Toorn, Penny. *Writing Never Arrives Naked: Early Aboriginal Cultures of Writing in Australia*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2006.
- Vickery, Amanda. "Introduction". In *Women, Privilege and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present*, ed. Amanda Vickery, 1—55. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- Wallace, Chris. *How to Win an Election*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2020.

- , “‘Menzies Biography Mystery’: Robert Menzies and Political Biography as Political Intervention”. *Australian Journal of Biography and History* 5 (2021): 121—45.
- , *Political Lives: Australian Prime Ministers and Their Biographers*. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2023.
- Walsh, Kerry-Anne. *The Stalking of Julia Gillard*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2013.
- Walsh, Mary. “The Gillard Government, the Coalition and Asylum Seekers”. In *The Gillard Governments: Australian Commonwealth Administration 2010-2013*, ed. Chris Aulich, 125—40. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2014.
- , “‘She Just Won’t Lie Down and Die’: Gillard, Misogyny and Australian Political Leadership”. In *Gender Politics: Navigating Political Leadership in Australia*, eds. Zareh Ghazarian and Katrina Lee-Koo, 47—55. Sydney: NewSouth, 2021.
- Walter, James. *Tunnel Vision: The Failure of Political Imagination*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996.
- , “Political Biography”, in *The Study of Australian Politics*, ed. R. A. W. Rhodes, 97—106. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- and Carolyn Holbrook. “Policy Narratives in Historical Transition: A Case Study in Contemporary History”. *Australian Historical Studies* 49, no. 2 (2018): 221—36.
- , “Historians: Bridging the Divide with Policymakers”. In *Lessons From History: Leading Historians Tackle Australia’s Greatest Challenges*, eds. Carolyn Holbrook, Lyndon Megarrity and David Lowe, 40—54. Sydney: NewSouth, 2022.
- Walton, Charles. “Preface and Acknowledgements”. In *Into Print: Limits and Legacies of the Enlightenment – Essays in Honour of Robert Darnton*, ed. Charles Walton, vii—xviii. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011.
- Ward, Russel. *The Australian Legend*, reprint. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005 [1958].
- Ward, Stuart. “The ‘New Nationalism’ in Australia, Canada and New Zealand: Civic Culture in the Wake of the British World”. In *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures*, eds. Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw and Stuart Macintyre, 231—63. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2007.
- Watson, Don. *Brian Fitzpatrick: A Radical Life*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1979.
- Weber, Millicent. *Literary Festivals and Contemporary Book Culture*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.
- Welch, Stephen. *The Concept of Political Culture*. London: Macmillan, 1993.
- Weller, Patrick. *Malcolm Fraser PM: A Study in Prime Ministerial Power in Australia*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1989.
- , “A Political Science Professor in Cabinet”. *Australian Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 1 (2000): 147—50.
- , *Cabinet Government in Australia, 1901 – 2006: Practice, Principles, Performance*. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007.
- White, Kate. “Australian Political Biography and Biographers: Revisiting Australian Political Biography”. *Australian Journal of Biography and History* 5 (2021): 1—20.

- Whitlock, Gillian. *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography*. London: Cassell, 2000.
- Wiebe, Robert H. *The Search for Order, 1877–1920*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1967.
- Wilding, Michael. *Political Fictions*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980.
- Wilkinson, Marian. *The Fixer: The Untold Story of Graham Richardson*. Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1996.
- Wilks, Stephen. “Now is the Psychological Moment”: Earle Page and the Imagining of Australia. Canberra: ANU Press, 2020.
- Williams, Blair. “A Gendered Media Analysis of the Prime Ministerial Ascension of Gillard and Turnbull: He’s ‘Taken Back the Reins’ and She’s ‘A Backstabbing Murderer’”. *Australian Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 4 (2017): 550—64.
- , “Where are the Great Women? A Feminist Analysis of Australian Political Biographies”. *Australian Journal of Biography and History* 5 (2021): 23—47.
- Williams, Rosemary. “Natural Disaster and Writing the (Political) Self: The Memoirs of Julia Gillard and Anna Bligh”. *New Writing* 15, no. 4 (2018): 442—51.
- Wolfe, Tom. *The New Journalism*. New York: Harper & Row, 1973.
- Woollacott, Angela. *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: Self-Government and Imperial Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- , *Don Dunstan: The Visionary Politician Who Changed Australia*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2019.
- Worth, Anna, Martha Augoustinos and Brianne Hastie. ““Playing the Gender Card’: Media Representations of Julia Gillard’s Sexism and Misogyny Speech”. *Feminism & Psychology* 26, no. 1 (2016): 52—72.
- Wright, Claire and Simon Ville. “The Evolution of an Intellectual Community Through the Words of Its Founders: Recollections of Australia’s Economic History Field”. *Australian Economic History Review* 57, no. 3 (2017): 345—67.
- Yagoda, Ben. *Memoir: A History*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2009.
- Yelin, Hannah. *Celebrity Memoir: From Ghostwriting to Gender Politics*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.
- Young, Jeremy C. *The Age of Charisma: Leaders, Followers, and Emotions in American Society, 1870 – 1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Young, Robert. “Partial Recall: Political Memoirs and Biography from the Third French Republic”. In *Political Memoirs: Essays on the Politics of Memory*, ed. George Egerton, 62—75. London: Frank Cass & Co., 1994.
- Young, Sally and Matthew Ricketson. “Gillard, Her Government and the Media”. In *The Gillard Governments: Australian Commonwealth Administration 2010–13*, ed. Chris Aulich, 283—302. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2014.
- Young, Sally. *Paper Emperors: The Rise of Australia’s Newspaper Empires*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2019.

Yow, Valerie. “Do I Like Them Too Much?": Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-Versa". *Oral History Review* 24, no. 1 (1997): 55—79.

Films, Television, and Documentaries

Belsham, Bruce and Tim Clark. Directors. *The Liberals: Fifty Years of the Federal Party*, five episodes. TV documentary, ABC, 1994.

Crabb, Annabel. Writer and Creator. *Ms Represented with Annabel Crabb*, four episodes. TV documentary, ABC, 2021.

Hall, Brad. Director. *Veep*, Season 6, Episode 9, “A Woman First”. TV series, HBO, 2017.

Permezel, Bruce. Director. *Hawke: The Larrikin and the Leader*, two episodes. TV documentary, Southern Pictures/ABC, 2018.

Spencer, Sue. Director. *Labor in Power*, five episodes. TV documentary, ABC, 1993.

Stevens, Justin. Producer. *Keating: The Interviews*, four episodes. TV documentary, ABC, 2013.

Online Articles and Media (Born Digital)

“2011 NSW Premier’s Literary Awards – Judges’ Comments”. *Create NSW website*, <https://www.create.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Judges-comments-for-web-FINAL.pdf>, accessed 23 March 2023.

ABC Radio National. “The Vanity Presses” [Podcast Audio]. Background Briefing, 13 September 2015, <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/the-vanity-presses/6759616>, accessed 14 April 2022.

Adams, Phillip. Late Night Live, ABC Radio National, 22 August 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/latenightlive/22-august-2019/11438802>, accessed 21 August 2021.

Black, Joshua. “Julia Banks’ New Book is Part of a 50-Year Tradition of Female MPs Using Memoirs to Fight for Equality”. *The Conversation*, 8 July 2021, <https://theconversation.com/julia-banks-new-book-is-part-of-a-50-year-tradition-of-female-mps-using-memoirs-to-fight-for-equality-163888>, accessed 13 March 2022.

Bongiorno, Frank. ““My Plans for the Nation’: Labor Politicians’ Designs on Australia’s Future”. *Australian Review of Public Affairs*, 12 June 2006, <http://www.australianreview.net/digest/2006/06/bongiorno.html>, accessed 9 January 2023.

-----, “Uncommonly Good?” *Inside Story*, 23 May 2016, <https://insidestory.org.au/uncommonly-good/>, accessed 6 January 2023.

-----, “On Louise Adler, Academic Publishing and Cultural Barbarism”. *Monthly*, 7 February 2019, <https://www.themonthly.com.au/blog/frank-bongiorno/2019/07/2019/1549495530/louise-adler-academic-publishing-and-cultural-barbarism>, accessed 16 March 2023.

- Cooney, Michael. "Q+A: Michael Cooney". *ANU Reporter*, vol. 46, no. 3 (2015), <https://reporter.anu.edu.au/qa-michael-cooney>, accessed 16 October 2020.
- , Speech at the Launch of *The Gillard Project*, Sydney, 28 April 2015, <https://www.chifley.org.au/michael-cooneys-thanks-to-former-pm-gillard-at-the-launch-of-the-gillard-project/>, accessed 12 October 2020.
- Crabb, Annabel. Launch of Christopher Pyne's *A Letter to My Children*. *Speakola*, 2 August 2015, <https://speakola.com/arts/annabel-crabb-christopher-pyne-letter-to-my-children-2015>, accessed 20 June 2019.
- Curthoys, Ann, John Docker and Lyndall Ryan. "Harry, Meghan and the Republic". *Inside Story*, 7 February 2023, <https://insidestory.org.au/harry-meghan-and-the-republic/>, accessed 1 March 2023.
- Freedman, Mia. "Kevin Rudd Isn't Bitter Anymore". *MamaMia*, <https://www.mamamia.com.au/podcasts/no-filter/kevin-rudd-isn-t-bitter-anymore/>, accessed 10 February 2022.
- Grattan, Michelle. "No More Coups Against Labor PMs Under New Rudd Rules". *The Conversation*, 8 July 2013, <https://theconversation.com/no-more-coups-against-labor-pms-under-new-rudd-rules-15887>, accessed 19 October 2021.
- Kirby, Michael. Speech at the Launch of Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simons. *Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs*, University of Melbourne Law School, 4 March 2010, https://www.michaelkirby.com.au/images/stories/speeches/2000s/2010_Speeches/2439_LaunchOfMalcolmFraserPoliticalMemoirs4March2010.pdf, accessed and downloaded 30 July 2019.
- Macintyre, Stuart. "'A Parcel o' Rogues in a Nation': Australian Attitudes to Politics and Politicians". The 2002 Reid Oration, University of Western Australia, 16 October 2002, <https://bit.ly/3KjLOzG>, accessed 6 June 2022.
- Mamamia. "Kevin Rudd Isn't Bitter Anymore". No Filter [Podcast Audio], 26 November 2018, <https://omny.fm/shows/no-filter/kevin-rudd-isn-t-bitter-anymore#description>, accessed 20 October 2020.
- Manne, Robert. "Rats, Heroes and Kevin Rudd's 'The PM Years'". *Monthly*, March 2019, <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2019/march/1551445200/robert-manne/rats-heroes-and-kevin-rudd-s-pm-years#mtr>, accessed 8 January 2020.
- Mast, Natalie. "The Latham Diaries, Ten Years On". *The Conversation*, 9 April 2015, <https://theconversation.com/book-review-the-latham-diaries-ten-years-on-38086>, accessed 3 March 2022.
- Melbourne University Publishing Limited, *Annual Report 2017* accessed via Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission website, 9 August 2020, <https://bit.ly/3xHz1Q3>.
- Messer, Jane. "Australia is Awash with Political Memoir, but only Some will Survive the Flood". *The Conversation*, 9 September 2015, <https://bit.ly/2RtqYQB>, accessed 14 April 2018.
- Milne, Christine. Reflections on 'An Activist Life'. Biography Workshop at the ANU [audio file], 30 August 2018, <https://history.cass.anu.edu.au/files/audio/biography-workshop->

- [christine-milne-reflecting-activist-life-30-august-2018-national](#), accessed 12 October 2020.
- Mitchell, Neil. Transcript of Radio Interview with Scott Morrison, 3AW, 17 April 2020, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/interview-neil-mitchell-3aw-170420>, accessed 9 May 2021.
- Morrison, Scott. Transcript of Press Conference – Australian Parliament House, ACT, 16 April 2020, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/press-conference-australian-parliament-house-act-15>, accessed 9 May 2021.
- Munro, Craig. “Pulped! Why Book Publishing Can Be a Risky Business”. *Inside Story*, 13 December 2021, <https://insidestory.org.au/pulped/>, accessed 7 January 2022.
- Pyne, Christopher. Interview with Sabra Lane. 7.30, 27 July 2015, *PyneOnline*, <https://www.pyneonline.com.au/media-centre/transcripts/abc-730-27-07-2015>, accessed 22 January 2022.
- Rundle, Guy. “Ming Vast: The Great Menzies Myth Machine Rolls On”. *Crikey*, 10 March 2023, <https://www.crikey.com.au/2023/03/10/review-the-young-menzies-zachary-gorman/>, accessed 10 March 2023.
- Rudd, Kevin. Speech at the Launch of *The PM Years*. Parliament House, Canberra, 23 October 2018, <https://kevinrudd.com/2018/10/23/launch-of-the-pm-years-volume-2-of-the-autobiography-of-the-hon-kevin-rudd/>, accessed 7 September 2020.
- Simons, Margaret. “The Inside Story on Fraser’s Resignation”. *Crikey*, 26 May 2010, <https://www.crikey.com.au/2010/05/26/the-inside-story-on-frasers-resignation-abbott-appealed-to-him-to-stay/>, accessed 19 March 2021.
- Stefanovic, Peter. Interview with John Frydenberg, Sky News, 16 April 2020, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/interview-neil-mitchell-3aw-170420>, accessed 9 May 2021.
- Strangio, Paul. “I Did It My Way”. *Inside Story*, 12 December 2008, <https://insidestory.org.au/i-did-it-my-way/>, accessed 5 July 2019.
- Wilcox, Craig. “Richardson, Graham Frederick (1949 -)”, *Biographical Dictionary of the Senate: Online Edition*, 2017, http://biography.senate.gov.au/richardson-graham-frederick/#_edn01, accessed 4 September 2020.

Unpublished Theses and Manuscripts

- Black, Joshua. “For What Purpose?: The Political Memoirs of the Rudd—Gillard Labor Cabinet”. Honours dissertation, University of Wollongong, 2018.
- Downing, Karen. “Weeping Politicians: The Power and Contingency of Men’s Tears”, Australian Historical Association Conference, 5 July 2018.
- Encel, John Daniel. “National Factions in the Australian Labor Party”. PhD dissertation, Australian National University, 2002.
- Lakkas, Zoi. “Soviet Political Memoirs: A Study in Politics and Literature”. MA dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1992.

- Maley, Maria. "Partisans at the Centre of Government: The Role of Ministerial Advisers in the Keating Government 1991 – 96". PhD dissertation, Australian National University, 2002.
- Marchant, Sylvia. "Things Fall Apart: The End of the United Australia Party, 1939 to 1943". Master of Letters dissertation, Australian National University, 1998.
- Phillips-Peddlesden, Bethany. "Prime Ministers: Gender and Power in Australian Political History, 1902—1975". PhD dissertation, University of Melbourne, 2019.
- Reaume, Amanda. "Embodying History: The Memoirs of Canadian Female Political Trailblazers". MA dissertation, University of British Columbia, 2009.
- Wallace, Chris. "The Silken Cord: Contemporaneous 20th Century Prime Ministerial Biography in Australia and Its Meaning". PhD dissertation, Australian National University, 2015.