

The Dangers of Values: Brenton Tarrant, Fraser Anning and the Christchurch Shootings

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The argument that the Christchurch shooter, suspect Brenton Tarrant, or the views of Australia's Senator Fraser Anning, seemingly holding a lone torch, are somehow not representative of the broader whole, be it Australia or New Zealand, is a self-deflecting exercise. They are the uncomfortable mirrors of ruin, actual and perceived. They are the voices of people who can either be marginalised and confined or addressed.

Tarrant's views sizzle with clenching anxiety, shot through the desire to recover what has been lost and what has been taken. It is deprivation, and it is not so much nostalgia as castration and insufficiency. How to overcome that? The response is spectacular violence, one that seeks to "show the invaders that our lands will never be their lands, our homelands are our own and that, as long as white man still lives, they will NEVER conquer our lands and they will never replace our people".

Australian Senator Fraser Anning, with the bodies still warm, decided to wade into the debate.

"Does anyone still dispute the link between Muslim immigration and violence?" he [posed](#) on Twitter.

Does anyone still dispute the link between Muslim immigration and violence?

— Senator Fraser Anning (@fraser_anning) [March 15, 2019](#)

He had no time for the "clichéd nonsense" that the Christchurch killings were the result of poor gun laws or those "holding nationalist views".

"The real cause of bloodshed on New Zealand streets today is the immigration program which allowed Muslim fanatics to migrate to New Zealand in the first place."

Marginalisation, coupled with severe muzzling, is the preferred formula to such individuals. A petition to remove Anning from parliament, for instance, has reached 750,000, a move that will do wonders to martyr him and make way for crude shrines.

"We call on the Australian government to expel this man who blames victims

for their own violent deaths, and uses references to genocide to further his hateful agenda.”

Repeatedly, remarks have been made across the politically smug spectrum that neither the shooter, nor the reactionary senator, represent the “values” of Australasia. Shadow Foreign Affairs Minister, Penny Wong, has [dismissed](#) Tarrant’s views as alien and incompatible.

“He is not who we are.” Ditto Anning, deemed a freak. “I say to the people of New Zealand, I say to all people, Mr Anning does not represent Australia, he does not represent our values, he does not represent who we are.”

This is self-denying, camouflaging guff; individuals like Tarrant and Anning are, in of themselves, representative of a particular strain of thinking of alienation, morbid fear of extinction, a terror of being subsumed. Call it bruised White ego, the governing classes left out in the cold. Call it a sense of drowning and asphyxiation and falling into social and political irrelevance. They are the ones whose views suggest a loss of control, and, fundamentally, a loss of power. Consider Anning’s [remarks](#) on March 12:

“I can see what happened in the UK where 429 Muslims are in political office now and hold massive influence over law making including introducing Sharia law.”

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Islam is NOT compatible with Australia and our politics.

— Senator Fraser Anning (@fraser_anning) [March 12, 2019](#)

Those of Wong’s persuasion would do well to consider that many Australians of a certain ilk and background are, however delusional, terrified about the incompatibilities of Islam and the Anglo-Australian legal system.

In August last year, Anning made [the claim](#) before his Senate colleagues in his maiden speech that Australia needed to finally redress the issue of immigration. He reflects on the era of Sir Robert Menzies, one where change was slow and wealth abundant; he then looks the country now, and sees welfare seekers everywhere. (A touch shabby on the actual success of Australia’s immigration program, is Anning.)

“In the days of Menzies, immigrants arriving here were not allowed to apply for welfare and that attracted the right sort of hard-working people this country needed.”

Such a program, one that had been taken out of the hands of the Australian people, needed a “final solution”. Whether Anning’s choice of words was intentionally vulgar, or simply ignorant and convenient, is impossible to know. But few listened or consulted the full text of that speech, which has a number of surprises. Anning mentions, for instance, the methods

of the Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci, the inspiration behind an “insidious revolution”. Understand Gramsci, and you will understand the dangers posed by cultural Marxism. Anning misses the boat by a good stretch on why individuals concur with their institutions (people can be seduced not to revolt), but his views nonetheless draw the customary lines in the sand in the culture debates.

His words got their [predictable reaction](#), fodder for his brand label. As a minor politician, publicity is pure oxygen. In the kingdom of clippings and short takes, his message was simplified and amplified. It is also worth noting that Katter’s Australia Party, to which he initially belonged, endorsed his claims about immigration only to have a dramatic change of heart.

Playing the values game is a dangerous one. What, exactly, are “Australian values”, inchoate and slippery as they are? We see those two words repeated with machine automated promptings. Australian values were not reflected in the killings; they were not reflected in the extremist sentiments of the suspect shooter or the senator with a loose tongue. But Australian values have just as easily been ones of expropriation, dispossession and racial fear, a product of British colonial mentality, frontier conflict against the Indigenous population, and the deputy sheriff essentials so keenly embraced by this extension of the US imperium. How pleasant it is to assume that something else is at play, that Anning and Tarrant are the exceptional monsters in the playground.

The poisoned well of anxiety and resentment is a deep and broad one, common to Islamic State and the right wing fundamentalism that supplies their counter. They are, as journalist Stan Grant noted on ABC News quoting from Mark Lilla, the [shipwrecked minds](#); they catastrophize the world, see it as calamitous. They nourish each other, supplying the nutrient of hate. To not understand the fundamental unity of these seemingly opposite positions, and seeking ways to remove that polarity, will be to mask the condition. Talk about values, to that end, is pernicious.

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