

From Centenary to the Olympics, Gang Rape in Sydney

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On 15 August 2002 a 20 year old Sydney man named Bilal Skaf was sentenced to 55 years in gaol for his part in three separate gang rapes. The sentence is the longest in Australian history for rape and Skaf will not be eligible for parole until 2040 when he is 61 years old (*Bulletin* 27 August 2002).¹ Bilal Skaf, his brothers and his mates who took part in the rapes are Lebanese Australian Muslims. Skaf's crimes were reported in both Australian and international mass media as crimes of racial hatred. For example, in response to Skaf's trial Janet Albrechtsen warned of 'racially motivated gang rape' in her *Australian* article, 'Blind Spot Allows Criminal Barbarism to Flourish — The Cultural Divide' (2002:11).² Further afield, the *Chicago Sun Times* warned in response to Skaf: 'Beware Multicultural Madness; Accepting Immigrants Shouldn't Mean Giving Free Rein to Savage Customs' (Steyn 2002:34). Skaf's trials were conducted in the middle of a media and political frenzy over Islam, asylum seekers and terrorism, and at the tail end of another gang rape trial in Sydney involving young Lebanese men. At the centre of the media's charge of ethnic hatred was a threat by Skaf's brother to one of his victims, that he was 'going to fuck her leb style' as he was assaulting her (Payten 2002:5).³

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- 1 At the time of writing Bilal Skaf and his brother Mohammed have appealed their convictions based on an alleged perverse jury finding. The court has reserved its judgement (ABC News Online 2004).
- 2 Albrechtsen was criticised on ABC TV's *Media Watch* program for misrepresenting the work of Danish criminologist Fleming Balvig in her insistence that gang rape was an Islamic rite of passage for some young men. Balvig assured the ABC that Albrechtsen's citation of his work was 'completely wrong. What I have said is that the main explanation of gang rape is social, and not cultural or religious' (*Media Watch* 9 September 2002 c). *Media Watch*'s scrutiny of Albrechtsen was described by *Australian* editor Michael Stutchbury, with no apparent sense of irony, as a 'media pack rape'. Stutchbury included the ALP's Mark Latham and his reference in Parliament to Albrechtsen as 'a skanky-ho who will die in the ditch to defend the Liberal Party', as part of his evidence of an orchestrated 'pack rape' (2003:6).
- 3 The reference to one of the defendants in Skaf's trial threatening his victim with, 'I'm going to fuck you leb style', was repeated in many press reports, including as recently as March 2004 (Albrechtsen 2004:15). Justice Michael Finnane noted that Mohammed Skaf had asked one of his victims 'if she liked it leb style' and also said: 'in the course of the Crown case she has given evidence of the people preceding him saying things which are pretty unpleasant things. One of them, I think the first one suggests after pushing her up against a wall, he was going to have sex with her Leb style' (cited in *Regina v Tayyab Sheikh* at p. 131).

The media and political attention paid to ethnicity in Skaf's crimes obscures the reality that gang rape is common across cultures. For example, manager of the NSW Rape Crisis Centre, Karen Willis explains that 'women are being gang raped most weekends in Australia' (in Baird 2004), and 'this is not a problem confined to individual cultures' (in Duff 2002). The media fixation on ethnicity and multiculturalism also obscures the fact that gang rape has been a part of the Sydney landscape since white conquest. It is neither a new nor a Lebanese phenomenon. Jill Bavin-Mizzi notes in her study of 190 rape trials in the Australian colonies of the late 19th century, that 70 of the trials concerned multiple offenders (1995:148). The Mount Rennie trial of 1887 exemplifies the long history of gang rape in Sydney. The Mt Rennie gang rape was referred to quaintly in the late Victorian press as the Mt Rennie 'Outrage', in reference to the name of the desolate sandy knoll in Moore Park, where the assaults took place. The 20 young men involved in the Mt Rennie rape were Australian born, most of Irish Catholic descent. The Mt Rennie 'Larrikins' were the white 'natives' of Australia (Walker 1986:32).

In this article I examine the Mt Rennie outrage and the rapes involving Bilal Skaf in 2000. I note the ways in which the law responded to each case, the ways in which the media interpreted the importance of the rapes, and the significance that was accorded to each case. I do not suggest that the two cases are in any anachronistic sense 'the same'. Rather, I examine the ways in which 'society', Parliament and the Courts have dealt with shocking crimes of collective sexual violence in different periods in history. In both cases I perceive a political response in which the general tendency has been to look outside mainstream 'society' to locate the 'faces of evil' responsible for the barbaric attacks (Wockner 2002a:1). While Mt Rennie and Bilal Skaf pose different problems, the former being perceived as a danger from within (the white natives) and the latter as a threat from beyond (the Lebanese menace), in both cases the problem of gang rape was identified as a problem of the rapists' 'communities', rather than of the greater society in which they resided. In both, the threat of the rapists has been depicted and understood as the threat of 'them' to 'our' culture. As such, the opportunity to understand and address a general sexual hatred was forsaken in favour of demonising a subculture of young men as abhorrent, barbaric and of a deviant minority community.

Examining these two cases, I conclude that responses to gang rape have been remarkably uniform and are wholly inadequate still. In both, Parliament and the law responded with extreme punishment that perpetuates the notion of externally located barbarism, beyond the pale of normal human relationships. In both instances rape has been understood in terms of barbarism rather than gender or sex. In the case of Mt Rennie the barbarism was understood as coming from below (the uncivilised working class); in the case of Skaf the barbarians were the literal invaders (the Lebanese gangs). Interestingly, the notion of civilisation against whom the barbarians are measured has changed and developed in Australian history. In 1886 the fear was of the barbarous white native Australians who had failed to be fully civilised by the British (Walker 1986:32). In 2000 the white native has come of age, is civilised and is under threat of cultural invasion from ethnic minorities who 'invade our shores, take over our neighbourhood and rape our women' (Hage in Scott Poynting, Greg Noble, Paul Tabar & Jock Collins, 2004:x). For example, for Mark Steyn, in response to Bilal Skaf, the question is simple: 'Australians need to ask themselves "why do they rape us?"' (2002:34).

Steyn's analysis suggests that the problem of gang rape concerns the problem of communities which situate themselves outside the discourse, values and aspirations of the 'mainstream society' (as if such a homogeneous population exists). However, as Scott Poynting et al note, there is a problem with such an understanding and use of the concept

of 'community': it has always been a 'useful but flawed concept. It evokes nodes of collectivity and connection — determined by geography, class, ethnicity, history, and so on — but such aggregations are always riven by other divisions or other nodes of collectivity' (Poynting et al 2004:260). In relation to gang rape in Sydney, a problem with the use of the concept of 'community' is that the collectivity evidenced in the 'gang' (and masculine) nature of the crime has been interpreted to indicate a fundamental, and perhaps essential, fissure within greater society caused by deviant and impenetrable 'communities' such as the working class Larrikins of 1886 and the Lebanese youths of 2000. This situating of the 'problem' outside of the mainstream society allows for an abdication of political responsibility for the crimes; quite literally, 'it's not our problem'. Gang rape is particularly susceptible to being understood in terms of 'them' and 'their' bad behaviour due to its collective structure. Its collectivity has been interpreted as demarcating its participants as external to and outside of the mainstream, not simply in terms of their crimes, but also in terms of their fundamental identities and natures.

In this sense 'community' takes on 'an important ideological and political function that works by excluding others' (Poynting et al 2004:260–61). While it might be argued by Mark Steyn and others that 'they' by their crimes have excluded 'us', in their assaults on so-called mainstream society, the examples of Mt Rennie and Bilal Skaf provide insight into a converse relationship of this process of exclusion. Although perceived as different threats, from within and from afar, the political and media reaction to each case illustrates the process of exclusion that is *ascribed* to each 'community'. The youth of Mt Rennie and Bilal Skaf's peer group are ascribed qualities of deviance and difference and therefore are abandoned by political and media representatives because they are not the responsibility of the 'general community'. For Poynting et al this ideology of community is connected to a more general 'blaming of foreigners (or other "faces") for economic woes, loss of national pride and identity, crime, immorality' (2004:261). In the case of Mt Rennie, it was not a 'foreignness' that posed a threat, or could be blamed. Rather, collectivity and masculinity of the working class youths was perceived as subversive and unaligned with burgeoning middle class values: working class youth were depicted as barbaric and unattuned to 'civilised' values.

In tandem with the identification and labelling of 'their' exclusory communities a discourse of Australian nationalism simultaneously provides the backdrop for demarcation of otherness and deviance. In the cases of Skaf and Mt Rennie, the 'otherness' of the Lebanese and the Larrikins may be understood with reference to what Ghassan Hage calls 'fundamental' Australian values, which offer a 'normative conception of society as a coherent projection of complementary values' (Hage 2001:29). These values include 'decency, tolerance, fairness, harmony' and particularly for John Howard, Australian 'mateship' (Hage 2001:29). The media and political tale of gang rape in Australia posits the 'gang' in direct opposition to these values, and importantly, as *not* a product of the society which upholds such values. Thus, in both Mt Rennie and the case of Skaf a process of demonising the 'other' works to support and strengthen nationalist myths of fundamental homogeneous 'community values' by default. By demonising the 'other' as intrinsically, culturally disposed to gang rape, mainstream society is able to remain unexamined and is absolved of responsibility for the crimes. In this article I highlight how political leaders have not assumed responsibility for gang rape: its collective nature enables a dismissal of responsibility by the mainstream society for it is perceived as the problem of 'them'.

The case of Mt Rennie is illuminating because it illustrates how the quality of *collectivity* is highlighted in gang rape and seems to be privileged in political analyses to the detriment of the other factors of the crime, such as assault and indeed, the very sexual or gendered nature of the crime. Remarkably, in the furore over gang rape in Sydney, very little public

debate has been given to questions of, 'why do men rape women?'. Despite popular media portrayals, rapists can't all be barbarian invaders. Once we ask the question of why men rape women, then we may begin to determine what is wrong with the society in which rape is common. In the examples both of Mt Rennie and Bilal Skaf the opportunity to ask questions about rape and ritualised sexual hatred was overlooked and forsaken. By choosing to understand Bilal Skaf's acts as crimes of ethnic hatred, Australia once again has failed the victims of violent sexual hatred.

The Lebanese menace

First it is important to briefly explain the political climate and the mass media's representations of 'ethnic' crime in the lead up to Skaf's trials. Skaf's crimes were presented in the mass media as a part of a wave of imported Lebanese organised crime that supposedly was terrorising southwest Sydney. The first major example of this involved a drive-by shooting at Lakemba police station in November 1998, apparently in response to a murder investigation (Collins et al 2000:1). NSW Police Commissioner Peter Ryan's poetic slander was to blame the shootings on 'the sons of the people who reduced Beirut to rubble' (Ramsey 2002). NSW Premier Bob Carr warned sternly, 'the people trying to destroy *the Australian way of life* will simply not succeed' (*Daily Telegraph* 3 November 1998:5, emphasis added). The link between heinous, outrageous crime and alien men of 'Middle Eastern extraction' had begun to be formed in the Australian media.⁴

Fast forward to September 2000 and the lead up to the Sydney Olympics. Three young Lebanese Australian men were arrested for their involvement in a gang rape. The Sydney media recovered from Olympic fever and took up the story enthusiastically, appearing to overcompensate for earlier lax vigilance (*Media Watch* 9 September 2002a). In 2001 there was a theory promoted in the tabloid press and talkback radio that a spate of racially motivated rapes had terrorised Sydney and that the NSW police had 'attempted to cover up these crimes' (Anti Discrimination Board of NSW [hereafter 'ADB'] 2003:56). In fact the police had issued a press release concerning multiple gang rapes in September 2000 that was ignored largely by journalists as the Olympics was 'dominating news coverage at that time' (ADB 2003:57). By July 2001 the story was hot and in August 2001 Miranda Devine speculated dramatically and erroneously, in 'Rape, Hatred and Racism', that as many as 70 gang rapes had been perpetrated in a 'home-grown form of systematic ethnic cleansing by a group of men said to be of "Middle Eastern Extraction"' (2001:15).

The figure of 70 'gang rapes' indeed is alarming. But it seems to relate to a police statistic concerning 70 sexual offences in Bankstown that was later clarified by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. In August 2001 the Bureau released a media brief that clarified the startling figure of 70 sexual offences investigated in Bankstown for the month of June 1999. The media brief stated that 70 instances of sexual offences were reported to the Bankstown police in June 1999 and that 'these offences were not committed by a gang ... they were mainly committed by a single individual (Lesley Ketteringham) who has since been charged, convicted and imprisoned for committing a number of wilful and *obscene exposure* offences' (Weatherburn 2001:1, emphasis added). However the

4 Melbourne's alleged underworld family, the Morans, have been described in the press as 'gangland' and 'dangerously public', in response to their alleged 'gang wars' (Stewart & Murphy 2004:13). But their 'communities' have not been called to bear responsibility for their attacks on the *Australian way of life* despite the various murders with which they have been connected in the press. The Morans' alleged gang violence has not been interpreted by the press or the Parliament as ethnic gang warfare. The Morans are not Lebanese.

clarification was not emphasised in the popular press.⁵ As the Anti Discrimination Board (ADB) of NSW noted, the ‘racial element’ of sexual assaults was a big seller for the Sydney press in the climate of 2001, when Australia was ‘in the midst of a growing moral panic about Arabic or Middle Eastern and Muslim asylum seekers’ (2003:60). 2001 was also the year of September 11 and of what David Marr and Marion Wilkinson refer to as the federal government’s ‘Dark Victory’ election win, in the wake of the Tampa refugee case and the ‘children overboard’ scandal (both of which concerned Middle Eastern asylum seekers) (2003). According to the ADB, sexual assaults became ‘major news when they were angled as a story about Lebanese, Arabic or Muslim gangs targeting white Australian women, quoting comments allegedly made by the perpetrators’ (2003:56).

Three Lebanese Australian men were convicted in August 2001 for their roles in the rape of two young women in 2000. As two of the young men were underage, they were known by their initials, as ‘AEM and Co’. In the media coverage of their trial, the focus was on the allegation that one of the young accused had taunted his victim by telling her she ‘deserved it because she was Australian’ (Toy & Knowles 2001:1). Little was made of the accompanying, standard rape abuse of ‘slut’, ‘bitch’ and ‘you’re enjoying this aren’t you?’ (*Daily Telegraph* 22 August 2001:4). The Police Commissioner Peter Ryan announced, ‘I’ve never come across something quite like this before, where a particular, clearly defined cultural group of attackers attack a very clearly defined cultural group of victims’ (Chulov 2001:1). The myth persisted that the young women who were raped in the various attacks in Sydney were white Australians. They were not. The father of one of AEM and Co.’s victims told Sydney talkback radio station 2UE the men ‘realised they weren’t just with white Caucasian girls — both girls had ethnic backgrounds — and they were wanting to know at that time what those races were and they were delighting in it’ (Gee 2001:1). The father described his daughter as from ‘an Australian-Croatian marriage’ (Gee 2001:1). David Fickling in the *Guardian* (Manchester) noted that the victims of Bilal Skaf’s gang rapes included ‘two girls from an Italian background, one from a Greek family and another with Aboriginal parentage’ (2003). However these details did not deter the ‘racial background of the perpetrators becoming the predominant angle for media reporting’ (ADB 2003:62). Nor did they deter talkback radio announcer Alan Jones from claiming, ‘these are racist attacks against *ordinary* girls carried out by out-of-control Lebanese Muslim gangs’, or the *Sun Herald*’s July 2001 headline claim that ‘Caucasian women’ were ‘the targets’ (*Media Watch* 9 September 2002a, emphasis added). As Scott Poynting et al note, ‘two converse interesting ideological manoeuvres being affected here are the “othering” of the perpetrators and the “whitening” of the victims’ (2004:124).

The 2001 trial of AEM and Co. was reported in the press with detailed and salacious, front-page coverage. And when the three young men involved in the rapes were sentenced by Justice Megan Latham for a maximum of six years each, a political furore arose (*Regina v AEM (jnr). & AEM (snr) & KEM* 2001 Unreported, NSW District Court, [23 August 2001], 01/11/0096). The oldest brother (AEM senior) was convicted of two counts of aggravated sexual assault and sentenced to six years with a non-parole period of four years. The younger brother (KEM) was convicted of two counts of aggravated sexual assault and sentenced to five years and seven months, with a non-parole period of three years and six

5 Paul Sheehan defended the use of the figure, citing *Sun Herald* journalist John Kidman’s claim that a police databases held ‘another 50 similar matters on record’, in reference to gang rape (2003:99). Scott Poynting notes that the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research clarified further that ‘the recorded rate of sexual assault in Bankstown has remained stable since 1995, mostly remaining under 10 offences per month ... The rate of sexual assault was nearly twice as high [as Bankstown] in the state’s Northern, and over twice as high [as Bankstown] in its North Western Statistical division. Very few Arab-background or Muslim people live in these areas’ (2002:51).

months. Their friend (AEM junior) was convicted of one count of detain with intent to hold for advantage and sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment, with a non-parole period of twelve months. Justice Latham followed precedent in sentencing, specifically the case of *Rushby* ([1999] NSWCCA 104 [24 May 1999]). But as this case had concerned the kidnap and rape of a 13 year old girl by two young, *white* Australians in 1999, apparently no journalist or politician knew anything about it. Justice Latham was criticised because of her routine use of precedent in sentencing. (Jacobsen et al 2001:2). The ‘Lebanese’ rapes were popularly understood as *far from routine*, exceptional and racially motivated crimes of ethnic hatred. This was despite the fact that, aware of the media angle, Justice Latham had stated purposefully in sentencing that ‘there is nothing said or done at any stage by any of the offenders which provides the slightest basis for imputing to them some discrimination in terms of the nationality of the victims’ (*Regina v AEM (jnr)*, & *AEM (snr)* & *KEM* 2001:6).

The NSW Judicial Commission observed that the sentences were among the most harsh for rape in recent years (Videnieks & Leech 2001:4). Nonetheless, the NSW Premier Bob Carr wrote personally to the Director of Public Prosecutions requesting appeal of what he decried as the ‘ridiculously lenient sentencing’ (Chesterton 2001:4). The Premier got his wishes. On 13 March 2002 two of the young men were re-sentenced. AEM senior’s maximum sentence was increased to eleven years with a non-parole period of seven years. KEM’s sentence was increased to 14 years with a non-parole period of ten years (*Regina v AEM Snr; Regina v KEM; Regina v MM* 2002 *MM* [2002] I NSWCCA 58 [13 March 2002]). AEM junior’s sentence was not appealed. Then in order to ensure that judges like Justice Latham did not ‘disregard community sentiment’ in future, the NSW government rushed through legislation entailing that aggravated gang rape would be tried like murder with a maximum sentence of life imprisonment (*Crimes Amendment (Aggravated Sexual Assault in Company) Act* 2001) (Carmody 2001). To quote Attorney General Bob Debus: ‘no shortcuts, nothing short of the term of their natural life’ (*Canberra Times* 2001:1). Enter Bilal Skaf.

Bilal Skaf

Skaf and some of his alleged 13 accomplices were the first to be tried under the new legislation for the rapes of four young women in three separate attacks in 2000. Again the offenders were Lebanese and again the supposed racial element of their assaults was emphasised in the extensive media coverage. Justice Michael Finnane expressed his horror when sentencing Skaf as the leader of a ‘brutal gang of rapists’, and at the ‘considerable degree of planning and co-ordination involved in each set of attacks’ through the use of mobile phones, in the period leading up to the Olympics in Sydney (Finnane 2002:1). Bilal Skaf and his mates proved easily hateable. Skaf was unrepentant and verbally abusive in court. His younger brother had made references to sex ‘leb style’ with one of his victims (*Regina v Tayyab Sheikh* 2004:131). Another of Skaf’s accomplices demanded of his victim, ‘suck on this, Aussie pig’ (Payten 2002:5). Bilal Skaf’s sentence of 55 years and his younger brother’s sentence of 32 years were greeted with satisfaction and jubilation in the press and the Parliament. The *Daily Telegraph* declared ‘True Justice’, and stated with apparent pride that the ‘NSW Government has bowed to public pressure by increasing the maximum sentence for gang rape to life’ (ADB 2003:62). Prime Minister John Howard praised the extraordinary sentences claiming they ‘certainly would have reflected deep community feeling’ (Haslem & Gerard 2002:3). Apparently the ‘community’ wanted retribution. Heightened attacks and abuse were directed at local Sydney Islamic communities as Bob Carr put forward his tougher sentencing package.⁶ As the ADB noted, ‘community opinion, as shaped and measured by the media, then legitimise[d] and fuel[ed]

the NSW Government's law and order agenda' (2003:62). Rape seemed never to have received so much attention in Sydney, except perhaps in 1887.

Mt Rennie and the Larrikin menace

The Mt Rennie outrage involved the assault and rape of 16 year old orphan Mary Jane Hicks by a group of up to twenty young men identified as Larrikins, constituting the *Larrikin Menace* (Clune 1957:1). The brutal savaging of female youth and innocence captured the colony's imagination and was considered by the Governor of NSW, Lord Carrington, to be one of the 'greatest tragedies in the history of New South Wales' (in Walker 1986:28). Mary Jane Hicks had recently moved to Sydney. On the afternoon of 9 September 1886 she accepted a lift in a cab in the city from Charles Sweetman, a 'gentleman', who detoured the cab to the 'isolated wasteland' that was Moore Park at that time (Peers 1998:1). Sweetman stopped the cab and attempted to rape Mary Jane (Carrington's Papers undated:1). He was interrupted by a mob of young men, one of whom opened the cab door and persuaded Mary Jane to go with him. Sweetman drove back to the city and 'left Mary Jane Hicks to her fate' (Carrington's Papers undated:4). Mary Jane was assaulted by the mob of twenty and believed she had been raped by at least eight of the young men, though she fell in and out of consciousness during the assault. The men took turns holding her down and raping her. Some were armed with knives and bricks (*SMH* 6 October 1886:6). At one stage during the ordeal Mary Jane attempted to drown herself in the creek in Moore Park (Carrington's Papers undated:1). Police located her 'almost unconscious and in an extreme state of terror and exhaustion' (Carrington's Papers undated:5). Fifteen young men, most under the age of 20 were arrested for the assault, as was Sweetman the cab driver. Eleven of the young men were tried for rape: nine were found guilty and two were acquitted.

Juliet Peers claims that Mary Jane Hicks 'undoubtedly captured public imagination. She was sixteen years old, an orphan educated at a convent school and a relative newcomer. Her anonymity made her a figure around whom romantic speculation could be unfolded' (Peers 1998:4-5). However, while most of the press had romanticised her innocence and vulnerability, the *Bulletin* used the case to develop an existing debate against capital punishment in the colonies. It sided with the accused working-class youths throughout their trial. It insinuated that Hicks in fact was a prostitute or 'professional wanton' and argued that 'it is on fallen women only that outrages of the Mount Rennie type have been committed' (*Bulletin* 19 February 1887:5). The *Bulletin* criticised the Sydney daily newspapers for their erroneous focus on the 'epidemic of outrage' as peculiar to the New South Wales' working-class youth (*Bulletin* 19 February 1887:5). In the *Bulletin*, Mt Rennie was understood explicitly along class lines, with Sweetman the cab driver identified as the real villain. Hicks was described as an unfortunate (a common 19th century term for a prostitute): 'simply the product of a wayward and wilful disposition developed into vice under the gentlemanly tuition of a plausibly spoken and well dressed scoundrel, who takes advantage of his position and his influence over his victim to seduce her' (*Bulletin* 19 February 1887:5). For Juliet Peers, the *Bulletin*'s lack of interest in engaging with the

6 Greens Senator Kerry Nettle described attacks on Sydney Muslim women in her speech to the Australian Senate, 'Adjournment: National Headscarf Day' (2002). See also Scott Poynting (2002). The Carr Government introduced the *Crimes Amendment (Aggravated Sexual Assault in Company) Act* 2001. Then in the lead up to the state election in March 2003 the government introduced the *Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Amendment (Standard Minimum Sentencing) Act* 2002. The Act introduced standard minimum sentencing for a range of offences including sexual offences. The new provisions 'impose minimum sentences of 5 years to 15 years for sexual assaults depending on the charges laid' (Stubbs 2003:7).

culpability of the working-class offenders and its slanderous representation of Mary Jane Hicks is indicative of a grander nationalist narrative of the late 19th century that could not 'accommodate the feminine' (1993:127). David Walker is more blunt when he notes that 'by the late 1880s the *Bulletin* was already a self consciously male journal, expressing a bohemian contempt for women who were critical of male standards of behaviour' (1986:38).

The case caused a 'tremendous sensation' (Carrington's Papers 5 January 1887:4). According to Lord Carrington, 'the papers daily' had articles and 'people seem to talk of nothing else' (Carrington's Papers 5 January 1887:4). The *Bulletin* was in the minority in its focus on the capital punishment debates, with most of the Sydney press emphasising the brutal nature of the youths who had perpetrated the rapes. The *Sydney Morning Herald* warned ominously, 'that there is a class amongst us mastered by brutal passion and reckless in its want of ordinary self-control, has also been proved' (8 January 1887:6). The law responded harshly to the 'outrage': nine of the young men were sentenced to hang, but five of the sentences were commuted to life imprisonment with the first three years in irons. Sweetman received a sentence of 14 years hard labour with two floggings for attempted rape (Walker 1986:28). Four young men were hanged in January 1887 (Peers 1998:1). According to David Walker more than two thousand people crowded to witness the hangings, in which three of the young men 'slowly strangled to death and one of them struggled for six minutes, biting his tongue in half in the process' (1986:29). The 'community' wanted vengeance and this was provided by multiple death sentences, the most severe sentences for rape in the history of the colony (Walker 1986:1). Mt Rennie was viewed as crucial turning point, one crime in a series of terrors besieging the city that included a sequence of gang rapes and murders of women in 1883 (Bavin-Mizzi 1995:147).⁷

Identification of the 'barbarians'

In both the Mt Rennie and the Skaf cases, themes of barbarism and civilisation consistently and with little variation have been used to narrate, explain and come to terms with persistent tales of gang rape in Sydney. The Mt Rennie rape was represented in the daily press as confirmation that a 'crime wave of gathering momentum had struck Sydney' (Bavin-Mizzi 1995:147), and that law and order was at the mercy of gangs of young men with no fear of authority. In 1882 the *Bulletin* warned of the dangers of reckless youth. It reported that 'the law is powerless, authority set at naught, and the country is being daily more completely surrendered to larrikins' (in Bavin-Mizzi 1995:147). According to Frank Clune, larrikins typically were unemployed Waterloo teenagers identified by their 'own rules of behaviour, their own slang and a distinctive style of clothes....They prowled in gangs known as "pushes". They fought with rival pushes and among themselves' (1957:1). Writing in 1957 (with his main aim apparently to defame Mary-Jane Hicks), Clune could have been referring to Peter Ryan's 'sons of Beirut bombers', in his description of the Larrikins of the 1880s.⁸

7 The *Sydney Morning Herald* had written 'the public mind has naturally been shocked by the occurrence, with so short an interval between, of two such atrocious outrages as those committed at Woolloomooloo and at Mount Carmel. In each case a woman of more than the middle age was brutally 'done to death' by a band of youthful ruffians ... That two outrages of a peculiarly brutal and revolting character have been committed to the lasting disgrace of the place and the people is not a matter for inquiry, but a notorious and lamentable fact' (8 January 1887:6).

While the Lebanese gangs of Sydney 2000 have been understood as foreign, alien and immigrant, the problem identified in 1887 was that of the white 'native'. Amid colonial anxieties lay grave fears for the moral character of the white 'native' Australian. The fear was of the very *Australian* nature of the crime. The *Sydney Morning Herald* conceded that in Sydney 'these abominable offences are committed, not only with frequency, but with system' (8 January 1887:6). The *Echo* newspaper in 1886 feared that 'crimes of this nature do not happen in other parts of the world', and that 'this new criminal development has replaced bushranging as the *authentic Australian crime*' (Walker 1986:31, emphasis added). According to David Walker, Sydney born youths were understood as different from their British born counterparts, mainly due to their supposed 'freedom from parental influence, cohesiveness, a conscious contempt for authority and a criminality shaped by malign intelligence' (1986:32). It was feared that the 'criminal instincts of native born youth were highly developed and a menace to the social order' (Walker 1986:40). Indeed Walker argues that the assaults at Mt Rennie were 'what commentators expected of native born youths' (1986:40). The *Sydney Morning Herald* distinguished between the slums of London, where crime more understandably was 'begotten of poverty and hopeless want' and prosperous Sydney, where poverty was identified as 'at least not the excuse' (8 January 1887:6). The *Herald* concluded that a 'want of parental training, a want of restraint of any kind, facilities for earning money and an utter absence of self respect and self control have more to do with this development of brutality and recklessness in youth that out-shames even the seasoned vices of manhood' (in Walker 1986:40). The white 'natives' embodied potentially all the fears for barbarism that the colony was attempting to transcend.

For the *Daily Telegraph* in 1886, the Mt Rennie outrage was a crime 'to which no parallel can be found in the crimes of civilised life or in the savageries of barbarism' (in Walker 1986:30). In sentencing the Mt Rennie defendants, Justice Windeyer invoked both patriotism and notions of burgeoning civility and respectability in Australia, declaring the 'outrage' a 'most atrocious crime, a crime so horrible that every lover of his country must feel that it is a disgrace to our civilisation' (*SMH* 29 November 1886:5). For Justice Windeyer, the defendants were 'a class worse than savages lower in their instincts than the brutes below us', whose crime involved their victim like 'some wild animal hunted down by a set of savages' (*SMH* 29 November 1886:5).

As with Mt Rennie, the barbarians in the Skaf case were located outside the general community, identified as animalistic and beyond the pale of mainstream civilisation. In a tirade on Sydney radio station 2UE in 2001, Alan Jones described the Lebanese rapists in terms of an *external* threat, deriding 'out-of-control Lebanese Muslim gangs who hold us

8 Juliet Peers notes that most 'popular historians' who have addressed the Mount Rennie Outrage have 'circulated a negative image of Mary Jane'. For Peers, 'this manipulation' by authors such as Frank Clune, Cyril Pearl, Alan Sharp and Donald McLean has 'implications, not only for the specific historical figure, but for the placement of women in critical and cultural discussion of late nineteenth century Australia, particularly when JF Archibald's unpleasant denial [in the *Bulletin*] of the fact of the rape and his slander of the victim are placed within the wider patterns of 1880s and 1890s nationalism' (1993:127–28). Clune seems to have been influenced primarily by the *Bulletin's* class analysis and focuses heavily on Mary Jane's virginity, claiming that she had had 'relations, when fourteen years of age, with a married man. She knew the facts of life' (1957:3). This 'analysis' does not emphasise that Mary Jane explained that she had been raped by the married man when she was 14 (*SMH* 6 October 1886:6). Donald McLean wrote in a vein similar to Clune in his 1962 'novel' *The World Turned Upside Down*. McLean dealt creatively with the Mt Rennie case, claiming that 'all the characters in this book are fictitious', despite naming Mary Jane Hicks and Sweetman as main protagonists, and quoting verbatim Justice Windeyer's sentencing statement. McLean was salaciously preoccupied with Mary Jane's virginity and tells a tale of young men led astray and abandoned by the state (1962).

and *our* police service in contempt ... Now they are showering their contempt for Australia and *our* police on these young girls' (in ADB 2003:56, emphasis added). In 2002 Justice Michael Finnane identified Bilal Skaf as 'in truth, a menace to any *civilised* society' (2002:8, emphasis added). He also invoked the timeless imagery of how 'wild animals treat prey they have just killed', in describing Skaf's crimes (2002:10). Justice Finnane should have been aware of the obvious Beirut connotations: when sentencing Bilal Skaf he described the nature of his crimes as that seen otherwise only in a 'war zone' (Spencer et al 2002). The notion of 'barbarism' surfaced again in Janet Albrechtsen's infamous 2002 article about the 'blind spot' allowing 'criminal barbarism to flourish' (2002:11).⁹

The political climate and the pressure of international scrutiny.

In response to Bilal Skaf, the opportunity was forsaken to examine mainstream society and determine its relationship to the crimes. Skaf's crimes took place in a period of heightened national profile, a time during which 'Australian values' were showcased for the international arena by way of the Sydney Olympics. Much was made in the press of the significance of the Olympics and the timing of the gang rapes in 2000, as if the rapists were particularly insidious and evil for daring to taint the home of the 'best Olympics ever' (*Athens News* 2000). Justice Finnane referred ominously to the Olympics in sentencing Bilal Skaf (Finnane 2002:1). The *Herald Sun* wrote in florid rhetoric:

22 days before the Olympic opening ceremony in 2000, when the brass is shining its buttons and the streets are draped in coloured flags...while Olympic euphoria built up, the actions of the gang members became more brazen (Wockner 2002b:35).

For the editor of the *Age* the rapes were perverse because 'paradoxically they took place in August and September, as Sydney was immersing itself in Olympics bonhomie' (2002:10). Writers in the mass media blamed the police for being too distracted by the Olympics to do their job, while the police whose media briefs had gone ignored, returned the same criticism to the journalists (*Media Watch*, 9 September 2002a).

In July 2001 Alan Jones demanded on 2UE:

we know now that these rapes have been going on for almost a year, but until now we have heard nothing about them ... How long would it have taken Commissioner Ryan to step forward to warn parents of potential victims, the dangers their daughters face on the streets of Sydney? (ADB 2003:56).

In a similar tone was Miranda Devine's theory of a politically correct 'conspiracy of silence' (*Media Watch* 9 September 2002a), when she implored in the *Sun Herald* in August 2001, 'how many girls and young women have been sacrificed because no-one wanted to offend ethnic sensibilities or inflame racist feelings in the community?' (2001:15).¹⁰ Yet the Police had contacted the tabloid press with details of the first charges against AEM and Co. almost a year before the tirades of Jones and Devine (*Media Watch* 9 September 2002a). According to ABC TV's *Media Watch* program, 'in the midst of Olympic fever ... the media barely touched the story for the next 10 months. That was an amazingly negligent performance despite press release after press release, from the police, detailing the raids and arrests carried out by their strike force' (9 September 2002a). In the shadow of the Olympics the international spotlight was on an indignant Sydney.

9 Iain Lygo described it as 'one of the most infamous articles ever published in Australia' (2004:7-8). For the controversy surrounding this article see note 2.

10 Rather than addressing the conspiracy theory of 'political correctness' as misleading and erroneous, the Premier Bob Carr echoed Devine's sentiments a week later when he criticised any 'paroxysm of political correctness' that objected to the racial profiling of the gang rapes (Chulov 2001:1).

Skaf's trials were also conducted in the prelude to a NSW state 'law and order' election in 2003 (Totaro 2003:1). In the aftermath of September 11 a 'spate of racist attacks in Australia ... against Muslims and immigrants of 'Middle Eastern appearance' took place (Poynting 2002:43). The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission found that the nature of these experiences of racism varied widely, 'from the most egregious forms of physical violence or threats of violence, to active discrimination in workplaces and other sites, to verbal abuse and general feelings of discomfort and being made to feel ill at ease, especially in public places' (HREOC 2004). In this environment of intolerance Bob Carr might have thought as Premier he had public licence to fortify extreme legislation in response to 'ethnic crime'. The Australian Labor Party's exploitation of the 'race' card in elections in NSW was criticised by the Anti Discrimination Board, which found in its 2003 inquiry into racism and media discourse that:

debates in the media about September 11, the international 'war on terror', the prospect of US led attacks on Iraq, the Tampa dispute, Australia's policies regarding asylum seekers, and the ongoing debates about law and order in Sydney, have had the cumulative effect of generating a 'moral panic' in Australia. The central feature linking, simplifying and blurring these debates is race, encompassing concepts of ethnicity, culture, religion and nationality (2003:40, emphasis added).

Bob Carr responded to the ADB report at length in Parliament, criticising it as 'ill informed', 'inflammatory', and 'tendentious' (2003). DD McNicoll was more explicit in the *Australian*, when he connected Skaf's 55 year sentence in August 2002 to the NSW March 2003 election. For McNicoll:

what a pity we aren't having a presidential election today. Judge Michael Finnane would be a shoo-in. But even if he doesn't get the top job in the country, Finnane will certainly top NSW Premier Bob Carr's Christmas card list this year. Carr faces an election in March, and law and order was shaping up to be one of the big issues. With Finnane jailing the head of Sydney's gang rape mob for 55 years, it is now virtually impossible for NSW Opposition Leader John Brogden to argue that Carr isn't tough enough on crime. And when the young man appeals the severity of his sentence - as he is sure to do - - the hearing is unlikely to be held before the election (2002:12).

Skaf lodged his 'inevitable' appeal in November 2003, eight months after the state election (*Geelong Advertiser* 2003:19).

In 1887 political indignation also influenced the Mt Rennie trial and sentencing. The trials occurred in the year of the Queen's jubilee, and the hangings coincided with the build up to the centenary of the colony in 1888. David Walker notes that 'there were deeply embedded uncertainties about the quality and degree of Australian civilisation; about the extent to which this continent had been won back from 'barbarism' (1986:34). Sir Henry Parkes hoped that the centenary celebrations would 'solely, exclusively, definitely, emphatically and grandly mark the great epoch in Australian history' (in Walker 1986:35). In early 1887 Parkes was in opposition in the NSW Parliament but according to Walker, he was 'still a major force in colonial politics' (1986:35). Parkes authored a deputation to the Governor of NSW Lord Carrington, to implore that mercy be shown the convicted larrikins. The deputation was published in the major daily papers and warned:

if we hang these six young criminals, that tragic spectacle of our criminal law will go forth to the world as the dark forerunner of all our endeavours to fix the world's attention on our national progress, and beyond question it will most forcibly attract the attention of the most thoughtful and the best class of men in all countries (*SMH* 6 January 1887:4).

Parkes was concerned that the use of capital punishment would be criticised internationally. But his concerns lay also with the international attention the hangings

would bring to the crime itself. He feared that attention drawn to the gang rape would suggest that, 'social morality, family life, the strength of parental control, steadiness of character among our young men in New South Wales were all well below the standard of the Mother Country' (in Walker 1986:35). However for the popular evening paper the *Echo*, the case was straightforward: 'if capital punishment is not to be inflicted because the proof is not perfect, then it is difficult to say when it should be inflicted' (6 January 1887:4). There were greater political issues at stake in sentencing than the deterrence of crime both in 1887 and 2002.

The response – the most severe sentence ever

As I noted, the response to the Mt Rennie outrage in 1887 was the most severe sentence for rape in the history of the colony. The sentence may be understood as a response to public demands. Frank Clune argues that in 1887 the general public was frustrated by a refusal of juries to convict in previous recent rape trials. He notes:

there had been several cases, just prior to the Mount Rennie outrage, in which juries had refused to convict for rape. In all of these cases, larrikin pushes had committed outrages on women, and had escaped punishment. Within three years, there had been seven cases of rape in Sydney suburbs, including Waterloo, and a shocking case in Woolloomooloo, in which the woman was found naked and dead in the street. A solid section of the public opinion considered that the time had come to make an example of a larrikin push in a rape case, and to enforce the law (1957:12).

As Judith Allen notes, 13 gang rapes were tried in NSW during the 1880s, with most of the trials dismissed or the defendants acquitted because 'either the character of the complainant or the Crown evidence was judged unable to withstand defence cross-examination' (1990:54). Clune points more to a hesitancy among jurors to inflict the death penalty as contributing to the lack of convictions (1957:12). Allen describes the Mt Rennie conviction as 'arguably a cumulative verdict' (1990:54). The Governor Lord Carrington had written that in Justice Windeyer's opinion 'the crime of which they had been convicted was on the increase, six or seven similar outrages by gangs of young men having come before the Courts within the last few years' (Carrington's Papers undated:2). There was fear expressed in the press that outraged citizens might 'take the law into their own hands', if the law did not respond swiftly and severely, with an editorial in *The Echo* suggesting a lynching 'might be an understandable act of desperation' (Walker 1986:31). In fact, Lord Carrington had received a deputation signed by over 150 Sydney residents that argued for the hangings, with the caveat that otherwise, 'it shall be necessary to for us to take such steps as may be necessary for the safety of those entrusted to us' (Carrington's Papers 5 January 1887:6). Carrington acknowledged the submission and thanked the concerned residents, though only after omitting the threats of recourse to 'lynch-law' in the deputation (Carrington's Papers 5 January 1887:6).

With little imagination the threat of 'lynch-law' could be read also as the sub-text of the 2001 rhetoric of the public *demanding* tougher sentencing. Bob Carr threatened the judiciary with the demands of the outraged general public, that 'will not tolerate light sentences' (Carmody 2001). On 2GB talkback radio there was talk of burning 'every Muslim house down in the area to get the Muslims out', if need be (*Media Watch*, 9 September 2002b).¹¹ On ABC radio advice was offered that, 'you just want to get 'em and

11 The ADB notes that in talkback land there was a theory promoted generally of a conspiracy, where the 'implication was not only that there was a covering up of the crimes [rapes] themselves, but about the broader problems of non-white immigration and multiculturalism' (2003:62).

string 'em up by their nuts, that's the only way they're going to learn' (Carmody 2001). In a throwback to the 19th century, Pauline Hanson advocated flogging the 'Lebanese' rapists (Poynting 2002:51). The judicial response to this rhetoric in the case of Bilal Skaf was the longest custodial sentence for rape in the history of Australia. With a non-parole period of 40 years, Skaf's sentence dwarfs, for example, the non-parole period of 27 years, set for Julian Knight who shot dead seven people and injured 46 others in the Hoddle Street massacre in Melbourne of 1987 (*Daily Telegraph* 17 August 2002:4).

However, in both cases of Skaf and Mt Rennie there was resistance to the sentencing as well. David Walker notes that in 1887 a public meeting in Sydney Town Hall held to protest against the hangings was 'packed to the doors' (1986:39). The hangings were viewed by many in the general public as evidence further of the barbarity of the colonies. As noted above, Sir Henry Parkes campaigned strongly for 'mercy', as the jury also had requested, because of the defendants' youth (*Echo* 29 November 1886:4). Cardinal Patrick Moran, Archbishop of Sydney, had written to Lord Carrington to plead for mercy, amidst the 'popular phrenzy [sic] for blood' (Carrington's Papers 5 January 1887:4). The *Bulletin* particularly was critical of the hangings, describing the trial as having been conducted in 'Noose South Wales' (1 January 1887:5) and as 'that horrible act of judicial savagery....In which the undiscerning and inexperienced Governor Carrington was bamboozled into hanging four boys, convicted after a legal travesty, upon the evidence of a street walker and a thief or two' (23 April 1887:6).

Bilal Skaf was not afforded such public sympathy. Indeed, despite the mass media's attempts to cast his crimes as a product of his community, the *Age* reported that even the nebulous 'Lebanese community' had 'disowned' the rapists (*Age* 17 August 2002:3). However, Skaf's sentence was criticised by legal academics like Mark Findlay who described it as 'shocking as the crime' in its implications for proportionality and a sensible justice system (*Age* 17 August 2002:3). Such sentences also are of major concern to the NSW Law Society, with President Nick Meagher suggesting that extreme sentences could lead to more murders, as a rapist faced with the same penalty for murder might decide he has 'nothing to lose and kill his victim' (*AAP* 29 August 2001). The *Bulletin* had identified this risk in 1886, warning that 'one thing at all events is certain. If this pack of degraded boys are all hanged, or in lieu of that, flogged at intervals, murder and rape will probably go hand in hand in the future' (18 December 1886:4). It is difficult to know whether this is a real risk. Do rapists weigh up the odds of their crimes? Bob Carr dismissed these concerns brusquely, saying, 'I've seen no evidence of that at all' (Carmody 2001).¹²

Conclusions – what is the point of Bilal Skaf's 55 year sentence?

The youth in Bankstown have their own opinions. One said of Bilal Skaf, 'if he was an Anglo Saxon he wouldn't have got that many years' (Ramsey 2002). However, elsewhere, the sentence was proclaimed to be 'true justice' (*Daily Telegraph* headline in ADB 2003:62). For Bob Carr it was 'the sort of sentence the community expects' (*Age* 17 August 2002:3). Presumably it was viewed as punishment for Bilal Skaf, and perhaps as a deterrent for other would-be offenders. However, there is evidence that harsher sentences for sexual offences simply are not working, with conviction rates and guilty pleas having almost halved in Victoria since the late 1980s (Neave in Munro 2002:2). Julie Stubbs notes that 'research has demonstrated that it is risk of detection and prosecution, rather than the severity of any likely sentence, that has the greatest deterrent value' for sexual offences

12 But then there is the testimony of convicted US rapist Tiny Mercer, 'Now, if I'd killed that leaky cunt 17 year old ... I wouldn't have been on any rape charges and the things I'm on now ...' (*Missouri v George C. 'Tiny' Mercer*, 618 SW 2d1 (mo. Banc 1981)).

(2003:8). Nonetheless, for the editor of the *Australian*, if Skaf's sentence means that 'all rapes and violent crimes are treated more seriously by society ... then the justice system will be working' (19 August 2002:10). This raises the question of exactly how Skaf's sentence could lead to all rapes being taken seriously. As Nick Meagher notes, the 'community' has said little about all the other rapes appearing before the courts over the years (in Carmody 2001).

In its extremity, Skaf's sentence reinforces the idea that he is alien, inhuman and a barbarian, suggesting he is someone for whom we must throw away the key. He is not one of us. The sentence suggests that Skaf's crimes are extreme and unusual. It is difficult to see how this demarcation could help 'the community', in which gang rape is a frequent occurrence, understand sexual violence and hatred *born of itself*. Much was made in the media that Skaf was named by Justice Finnane as the 'worst of offenders' (Crichton 2002:1). Indeed his crimes were abhorrent. But the meticulous and saturated media coverage provided disproportionate focus on the details of his rapes. Most rapes don't make the front page, or any page. For many in 'the community' the 'Lebanese' gang rapes seem to have provided the first insight into a practice of brutality that occurs often, about which we rarely are told. Even in the 19th century there was recognition in the press that gang rape was a common and systematic practice in Sydney (*SMH* 8 January 1887:6). It seems that not much has changed. In 1887 the press spared readers the intimate details of Mary-Jane Hicks's 'outrage'. But rumours circulated eventually and in fact the details looked much like the degradation involved in Skaf's crimes, such as allegations that Mary-Jane's vagina was filled with stones and that 'each of the rapists had urinated on her face' (Walker 1986:36).¹³

Skaf's sentence does two things. It situates his crimes outside the community and it suggests that the harm of rape comes with gangs and racial hatred. As Paul Tabar argues, 'it's a shame we have to be racist in order to recognise the rights of raped women. It seems to me the fact that the rapists are an "ethnic other" explains both the exceptional space given to the rape victims and the magnified moral outrage manifested by the dominant culture' (in Crichton & Stevenson 2002:30). Locking up Skaf for 55 years, in a sense is leaving him for dead. Or as Law Council Executive John North notes, if Skaf does survive and is released, 'he could be very damaged goods indeed' (in McDonnell 2002). Perhaps predictably, Bilal Skaf threatened to kill himself when he realised the sentence he was facing, and was met with little sympathy (Duff & Sutton 2002:11). NSW Opposition Leader John Brogden bothered with the tired cliché, 'I hope he rots in gaol' (Gibbs 2003). Sentencing Skaf to rot in gaol absolves the state and society of any responsibility for his crimes. It suggests that we have 'dealt with' the problem, and that the problem was never one of ours.

John Brogden understood the rapes as 'undoubtedly' concerning racial hatred (in Ramsey 2002). For him, such 'hate crimes are un-Australian and they should be treated seriously to show our community will not stand for hate crimes' (*AAP* 18 July 2002). So what of this racial hatred? Don't the threats to 'fuck her leb style', indicate the hatred of Skaf and his mates? Probably they indicate no more hatred than that of Mary Jane Hicks's

13 The details bear stark resemblance to the circumstances in which 14 year old Leigh Leigh was gang raped and murdered in 1989 in Stockton, Newcastle. No one has been charged with Leigh's rape despite evidence of brutal and repeated penetration of her vagina with various objects. Kerry Carrington notes the routine sexual harassment and taunting that accompanies rape, particularly gang rape amongst mates. She observes that 'Mathew Webster [convicted of Leigh's murder] and his mates didn't invent words like 'slut', 'mole' or 'bitch', nor the sense of mateship that accompanied the violence they collectively unleashed' (1998:160). Taunts of 'slut' and 'bitch' allegedly accompanied the 'Lebanese' gang rapes but were not presented in the press as evidence of hatred, this characteristic being reserved for taunts supposedly of 'racial hatred' alone.

rapists who commanded of her 'You bloody dog, lie still' as they held her down with their hands over her mouth to rape her repeatedly (Carrington's Papers undated:1). The hatred of women is probably equal in each instance. Peter Ryan, the erudite ex-Police Commissioner of New South Wales, confessed he had never come across a crime where the targets and the assailants had been so clearly demarcated. (Chulov 2001:1). For Ryan, the demarcation is one of race, and 'their culture' versus our culture. However I suggest Commissioner Ryan should have consulted a few rape crisis counsellors, for this demarcation is what occurs in rape, *every time*, within 'our' culture. This is what rape is about. Skaf's sentence has done nothing to combat or even to understand such ritualised sexual hatred. It appears we have learnt little since 1887.

For John Brogden these hate crimes were un-Australian. And similarly for the king of talkback radio John Laws, 'this is our country':

....This is a country that we have worked hard and our forebears worked hard to create. We've created it with strength of character. We've created it with goodwill, and we've created it with hard work, and we don't want people who have different points of view to the point of view we have in Australia in relation to how we live our lives, coming here and simply destroying it (in ADB 2003:63).

For Laws also this hatred is un-Australian. It is against our fundamental 'Australian values' that are under threat from invasion by the barbarians who have brought to our shores their hatred for *us*. But then there is the fate of Mary-Jane Hicks to comprehend. The barbarians, the faces of evil, *always* have been among us and of us.

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