

A Political Theory of Progressive Individualism?

Western Australia and the America's Cup, Thirty Years On

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For Thesis Eleven

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Abstract

This paper considers Western Australia (WA) as a sign, comparing what it meant during the America's Cup campaign of 1986-7, when world media attention was focused on the state, with what it represents thirty years later. In the 1980s, it is argued (Part 1), WA was hard to represent at all, with natural, governmental and social horrors bespeaking a place unable to signify itself. These realities had to be 'forgotten' if a 'politics of euphoria' suitable to the Cup festival – and to the mood of credit-fuelled capitalist deregulation – was to prevail. The media, popular culture and tourism were on hand for that task. They far outstripped official efforts to represent WA as a symbol of mobility, globalisation and the progressive development of state and capital, arm in arm. Returning after a generation (Part 2) it seems clear that the state apparatus is motivated by a will to control, but that the same horrors attend the lives and deaths of first-nation citizens. What has changed is that policy has shifted from deregulation to privatisation, which means an authoritarian state leaves both development and social justice to individuals. The *progressive* individualism of the 'WA Inc.' era has given way to what might be called 'tradie individualism' – signalling sociality with a boat of one's own, a funny car rego or a coin in the charity donation box. Now, if you want to express euphoria, then you must paddle your own canoe.

Western Australia and the America's Cup, Thirty Years On

This paper spans thirty years. I lived in WA for over a decade, arriving in the build-up to the America's Cup. I moved on again in 1996 and did not expect to return.

However, I was offered a job at Curtin University in 2012, and now I'm living again in Fremantle, where the Cup was staged (1986-7). The opening part of the paper, 'A State of Excitement', is an abridged and edited version of a 'review' of it that I wrote at the time; the second part, "Nation-building is a Tough Caper": WA and the importance of "Inc.", contains revenant reflections on WA now.



Fig. 1: The waters off Fremantle: euphoria, anyone? (Photo: author, 29 Jan 2016)

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1. A State of Excitement: Western Australia and the America's Cup¹

A state of excitement

Western Australia is a sign in need of a referent. According to a TV commercial for Roy Weston Real Estate Co. – the ‘House\$old Name in Real Estate’ – its metropolis is the ‘loneliest, most isolated capital city in the world’ (1986).² WA is characterised by space, emptiness, isolation, disequilibrium, enigma. Its European history is of successive immigrations – rushes; followed by disappointment, stagnation – depopulation. Founded in 1829, in 1987 it still had more immigrants from overseas or ‘over east’ than native-born citizens.³ Successively, land areas and specific means of economic exploitation are worked out; mines are abandoned, forests are felled, crops are swallowed up in salt and sand. People are reminded that they belong elsewhere. They go. Some leave, some die.

After the America's Cup – another cycle of rush, defeat, and depopulation – Western Australia raised questions. Like its industries, these were *primary* questions. It was not ‘What kind of a place is WA?’ or ‘How do people look at it?’ Those are interpretative, value-added queries, relying on the familiar manufacturing processes of realist intellection, where signs and discourses are combined with referents in an expanding, self-sustaining economy of knowledge. They concentrate on fitting suitable fictions to known facts, presupposing the prior existence of primary referents. For Western Australia, this would be premature. Here, the questions were primary: ‘Is it?’ ‘Is there anything to look at?’ ‘Is there anyone to look?’

Of course, there's a land mass and a population. But, just as the state's economy has

¹ This part is an abridged and edited version of a paper first published in 1988 in *Cultural Studies*, 2:1, 117-126 (DOI: 10.1080/09502388800490061).

² Not *quite*: Perth is now claimed as the most isolated *continental* capital city (Honolulu is more isolated), and also the world's *biggest* remote city: ‘There's no city of comparable size [pop.1.8m 2015] anywhere in the world that's so remote.’ <http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/aug/19/where-worlds-most-remote-city>.

³ WA has Australia's highest proportion of overseas-born residents (<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/3412.0Media%20Release12011-12%20and%202012-13>), but the national figure is also rising, hitting a ‘120-year peak’ in 2013-14: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/latestProducts/3412.0Media%20Release12013-14>.

not, as yet, achieved integration, complexity, or self-sustaining expansion, so the people and territory are not, as yet, integrated into a sign that self-evidently proclaims ‘Western Australianness’. They have not achieved legibility within an economy of coherence. Like the slogans on the state’s vehicle license plates, which proclaim WA as ‘Home of the America’s Cup’, or ‘State of Excitement’, they are pure signs, uncontaminated by referents. In the familiar, white, Western economy of knowledge, Western Australia must be tamed, shorn of its realities and then spun and woven into realism. It must be transformed from nature to culture. As it stands, it cannot *stand for*. To white, Western eyes, it is a giant, fearful, unthinkable Other – the only remaining vestige, perhaps, of the old imperial *Heart of Darkness*, ‘the horror, the horror’.

In an entirely appropriate exchange of symbols, after the America’s Cup, victory is – literally – swallowed up in death. A *representative of culture* in the shape of a 24-year-old American part-time model, partaking of the ultimate tourist experience, has attended the Cup event and is now cruising round the Kimberley coast in the state’s far north-west, accessible only by sea. She stops for a swim, or the call of nature, under the falls on the Prince Regent River. In a latter day version of ‘The convergence of the twain’ (Hardy, 1930), the ‘grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent’ *representative of nature*, in the shape of a large crocodile, queries ‘What does this vaingloriousness down here?’ The weapons of culture, in the shape of a shoe hurled at the crocodile’s head, do not prevail. As the local euphemism has it, the young woman is ‘taken’.

But horror is not confined to the natural world in Western Australia; it suffuses the social world too, both public and private. Just as the competing crews were taking a few days off over Christmas 1986, there was another death, in Perth. A 25-year-old Murdoch University student had been imprisoned for a month for driving while under suspension. In prison he fell ill. As is customary in Western Australia, the authorities assumed he was under the influence of illicit liquor or illegal drugs. So it was only after some days that, dying, he was taken to hospital. He was shackled to his hospital bed with a stainless-steel leg-iron, guarded by two warders. No one from the prison bothered to inform his mother. She said afterwards: ‘Nothing can justify the State being worse than the worst among us. It was the most barbaric thing I have ever seen – something you wouldn’t inflict on the wildest, most brutal animal’ (*Sydney Morning*

Herald, 18 April 1987). In the same news story, Tony Vinson, former head of NSW Corrective Services Department, said that the custom of chaining sick prisoners to hospital beds was ‘very common’ in WA, and was ‘medieval and barbaric’: ‘It’s something that is practised by no other country that pretends to be nearly civilised. I cannot find words to express my horror.’

And horror visits the private sector too, in this State of Excitement. Two boys, aged 16 and 17, who were employed to look after two giant cattle stations in the state’s North West, disappeared just as the finalists for the America’s Cup defence and challenge were sorting themselves out. Five months later, the boys’ bodies were found, one with a bullet hole in the skull, on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert. Their Datsun ute had become bogged down, and there was little they could do but walk, sit under trees and wait for, or hasten, death. This was the fate of two school-leavers, one from South Australia and one from New South Wales, who had no reason to know what life as a ‘jackaroo’ in WA was like, and no training to deal with it. They had simply answered an ad in the paper.

Such is the potential reality of WA, the limit-case of the referent, and the type of story that catches the attention of outsiders. Small wonder, among this gigantism, inhumanity and horror, to find that knowledge of it, constructed into realist coherence, is not what characterises its own discourses. On the contrary, and necessarily, Western Australia, both natural and social, must be *forgotten* by its citizens. The forgetting process is, historically, racial – as always, each type of death noted here attracted widespread media and conversational coverage precisely because all the victims were white. Even so, projecting white terrors on to Aborigines is not enough. Hence, the first thing needful now is not facts but ignorance; an economy that produces ignorance of what is all too well known, in favour of new knowledge, ignorance that brings the possibility of comfort, of coherence, even of survival. A part of the economy of ignorance is the America’s Cup.

‘The primary activity of existence’

Western Australia is a laboratory of locomotion; distance, heat, time, space and isolation exert their tyrannous imperatives. To get in, to get out, to get around – these are all *hard*. It was only as the America’s Cup preliminary races were getting under

way off Fremantle in September 1986 that bitumen was laid on the road from Fitzroy Crossing to Hall's Creek, thereby completing the biggest civil-engineering project ever undertaken in Australia, a sealed 'ring road' right round the continent – 85 years after Federation.

Twelve-metre yachts⁴ travel at about nine miles an hour. The difference between the best in the world and the also-rans is about one-twentieth of a knot. But the investment, imagination and effort needed to make a 30-tonne sailing boat travel that bit faster than others – this too is hard. And, like a strip of bitumen just wide enough to allow two road-trains to pass, it is not by itself very spectacular.

But the America's Cup is a spectacular, euphoric, historic, nationalistic, excessive performance of the ability to transgress the laws of space/time and to dissolve distinctions between here/now and there/then. It is a *ritual of locomotion*. It celebrates a prime achievement of the modern military-industrial democracies – to *mobilise* their citizens. Mobility excites not just the bodies of the citizens but meanings too: there is mobility of signification. Mobility – of sign if not referent – is the essence of modernity:

In recent decades, mobility has exploded to the point of characterizing everyday life much more than the traditional image of the 'home and family'. Transport ceases to function as a metaphor of progress or at least of 'modern' life, and becomes instead the primary activity of existence. (Prato and Trivero 1985)

Organised around the familiar fictions of sporting, corporate, and political competition, the America's Cup is a ritual in which the supplementary aspects take precedence over the supposed primary event (no one can see the races clearly in any case, except on television). In and around Fremantle the old-fashioned, titanic struggle of the age of realism, between the icy truth of actuality and the vainglorious falsehood of media hype, is simply superseded. The traditional course of events is

⁴ 12 metres (about 40 feet) is not the length of the boat. They are typically 20-23 metres long at the waterline (65-75 feet), with a single 26-metre mast (85 feet). They were used for the America's Cup between 1958 and 1987; they have not been used for that purpose – and no more have been built – since then (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12-metre_class).

inverted; actuality becomes a media production.

The photo-parade led off, naturally, with ships.⁵ An armada of private luxury boats cruised in, belonging to moguls like Alan Bond, the Aga Khan and John (Foster's lager) Elliott, whose historic Cardiff-registered *Welsh Falcon* later sank off Djibouti. Unique wonders appeared, like a Māori war-canoe imported to enhance the 'Kiwi Magic' team, or a replica Viking longship, built in a shed in the landlocked Perth suburb of Myaree, not to mention a giant Japanese cargo ship that blithely sailed straight through one of the races. Among the ocean liners were the *Achille Lauro*, recent stage for terrorist politics, one of P & O's Princesses, star of TV's *Love Boat* (which missed the finals); and a couple of imperial-echo Cunarders. They were joined by the replica *Bounty*, star of the eponymous film, arrived, ready for a trip to Portsmouth to become the flagship of the First Fleet Re-Enactment for Australia's bicentennial celebration (1988). The newly recommissioned battleship *USS Missouri* stopped by, to remind everyone what real warships look like, recalling the day when World War 2 was brought formally to a close at a signing ceremony on board, inaugurating the new post-war era of mass mobility. Now it circumnavigated the globe to 'celebrate the rebirth of American sea power'.⁶

Not only at sea, but also on land and in the air, the transportation flocked. Jumbos luxuriated at Perth's new international air terminal; helicopters thronged Fremantle's short-lived heliport, little ones dancing above the regatta, occasionally towing a giant Australian flag, big ones clattering across to Rottnest, holiday island. Lumbering over them all was the anachronistic Bond airship, futuristic high-tech retro throwback, flagship for and constant visual reminder of its ubiquitous, tubby, friendly owner. Naturally, it advertised Bond's Swan lager brand, stylishly outshining the noisy little mono- and biplanes that hawked their way up and down the beaches, towing advertising banners up to the final day, when an enthusiastic but over-hasty message

⁵ The America's Cup Media Centre consumed 20,000 rolls of film and 36,550 sheets of monochrome print-paper per month during 5 months of the Cup (*Western Mail Magazine*, 27 September 1986, 38).

⁶ Source:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20061207002750/http://www.chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/ships/battleships/missouri/bb63-mo.html>. Nobody mentioned the ill-fated *USS Phoenix*, even though that cruiser had spent much of 1942 in Fremantle waters. It had survived Pearl Harbour and World War 2 but – renamed the *General Belgrano* of the Argentine navy – it was sunk by British torpedoes, with the loss of over 320 lives, just a year before *Australia II* won the 1983 America's Cup.

is unfurled: ‘CONGRATULATIONS STARS AND STRIPS’ (sic).

On the ground, transportation intensified. Roadworks were signposted: ‘THIS IS A COMMONWEALTH FUNDED AMERICA’S CUP PROJECT’. On them scurried white pedal-bikes, rented out to advertise Radio 6PR. You could also rent mopeds, alluding to Eileen Bond’s favoured mode of transport; or Mini Mokes, last seen on the cult TV series *The Prisoner*, filmed in the Welsh ‘town’ of Portmeirion, a full-scale architectural folly or *trompe l’oeil* designed to look like a Mediterranean city. Fremantle was perhaps the first example of the ‘Portmeirionisation’ of an existing city, though opinions differed on whether its pastel colours were quoting the Mediterranean or *Miami Vice*. Just in case residents wanted to emulate *Danger Man*,⁷ the biggest force of traffic cops ever assembled in WA lurked, crocodilian, ready to enforce the law’s dim view of spectacular behaviour and (chemically induced) euphoria. Perth’s vehicular cup overflowed when, en route from kissed airport tarmac to local racecourse, it caught a collective glimpse of the one vehicle that is a mode of transport by itself, the ultimate in uniqueness and spectacularity: the Popemobile (with pope).

The challenge

From the state government’s point of view, the point of view of surveillance, the local population is not to be trusted; it displays a disorganised gaze, a lack of bodily integrity, a need for discipline. However, during the Cup, the authorities averted their punitive eye and handed the people over to the media, to be mobilised as a cast of thousands, extras in the performance of modernity. Their gaze was deregulated, privatised, their bodies let loose, their spaces, sounds, times, and movements were untrammelled. Of course, this was countenanced mainly to impress the visitors from over east and overseas, to flatter them with the idea that Western Australia isn’t a parochial backwater but a teeming, colourful image of their expectations of it – a flattery which also declared that Western Australians haven’t really got an identity of their own, but exist only as products of the visitors’ perceptions, figments of the foreign imagination.

⁷ *Danger Man* and *The Prisoner* both starred Patrick McGoohan. One might say that it was OK for residents to emulate the latter, not the former.

After the Cup, in defeat, the people were required to delegate their desires back to the state and local government, to submit to the former regime of untrustworthiness in which the authorities decide where and at what they can look. Exuberance was regulated wherever it appeared. Hotels must ban the strip and lingerie shows that had proliferated during the Cup. Drive-in theatres mustn't let the neighbours catch glimpses of movie sex scenes. Even tall buildings mustn't be too exuberant: the planning minister regulated the city's skyline. Constabulary boots tramped laboriously across the windblown sands of the city's beaches, putting a stop to topless sunbathing – an illegal practice for women, to which the authorities had turned a blind eye during the Cup.

The people's gaze was reorganised, directed, made respectable once more. But, once invoked, rights cannot be revoked with impunity. Now people displayed mobility of another kind, by voting on the new regime with their feet: they deserted not just the hotels, drive-ins and beaches, but the city and streets as well. In an attempt to win them back, Perth City Council could think of nothing better than to regulate their hearing. It banned buskers from the city centre during peak hours, so that shoppers wouldn't be distracted from single-minded concentration on their civic duty – to enter shops and spend money. During the Cup, shopping had been promoted not as a duty but as a pleasure; for the first time stores had been allowed to stay open on Saturday afternoons. Now they were forced to shut again, along with most of the city's petrol stations at weekends.

As if to confirm their power over people's senses, the powers-that-be celebrated the end of the Cup with a reminder to the citizens of Fremantle that their city's primary purpose and function was to serve as a conduit, removing the produce that primary industry had managed to scrape from the surface of the land. The famous Fremantle Doctor, the breeze that had so recently carried Dennis Conner to victory and the Cup to San Diego, was now the bearer of other, olfactory realities. Day and night, the otherwise empty Commonwealth-Funded America's Cup streets reverberated to the sound of trucks laden with hundreds of thousands of live sheep, to be herded on to strange, Beirut-registered ships with twelve-storey superstructures to house the animals on their way to an exotic death in Libya. As the smell of shit pervades the city, the citizens are reminded just how close they are, from the point of view of the

state, to sheep.

To official eyes, then, the population of Western Australia are not yet people. They are bits of people – eyes, ears, noses. They are bodies, to be put into the time and space deemed fit for them. They are bodily functions, to be protected from the accidental discovery that life is sexually transmitted. In short, the people are merely one more example of the primary produce for which Western Australia is so justly famous; they are raw materials.

The challenge, however, is not just to extract this material from the hole in the ground, as is customary in Western Australia, but to transform it – from nature to culture, from bits and pieces into a complex, fully functioning product, from immobility to self-sustaining activity, from raw materials to surplus value. That is, those gazes, times, sounds, movements, and functions have to be made into people. And those people have to be made into a community. This is a challenge that the state is content to leave to others – specifically, to television.

The politics of euphoria

Alan Bond first arrived in Fremantle on the P & O liner *Himalaya* aged 13, and took a job as a signwriter before getting into property development and brewing. An epitome of social mobility, he's the ambiguation of opposites – worker capitalist, popular rich man, 'our' Bondy whose corporations operate globally. He famously won the Cup in 1983, thereby permitting this rematch in Fremantle, which was eventually fought out between the American *Stars and Stripes 1987* belonging to 1983 rival Dennis Conner, and *Kookaburra III*. Bond's syndicate didn't even make the finals. But he's ready to supply the America's Cup 1987 with its crowning *coup de theatre*. He doesn't bewail his loss; he celebrates, by buying Kerry Packer's broadcasting interests,⁸ selling his yachts to the Japanese (apart from *Australia II*, which had already been acquired by the Commonwealth as a national treasure), and so turning, overnight, from Australia's biggest brewer into Australia's biggest media baron as well. Mythic magic – in Perth he was known, at least on T-shirts, as 'Crocodile Bondee'.

⁸ Packer sold the Channel 9 network to Bond for a billion dollars; later he bought it back for \$200m. But that's another story (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Bond).

But his power isn't just purchasing power, it's the power of mobilisation, and it's not Bond's personal power but the power of what he personifies: the power of television. It converts a city into a set, people into performers. In a secular equivalent of the papal visit, the presence here of the world's media is symbolised by the arrival of global celebrities: Pope (John Paul II), princess (Anne), presenter (Walter Cronkite); essence of media. The excitement, euphoria and activity generated during the Cup were there for the taking, emancipating Perth from the horrors, barbarities and rules that lurk so close, and plugging it in, momentarily, to the global economy of surplus meaning that induces forgetfulness of the confines of regulated routine, and reminds the people of the possibilities (as yet unrealised) of new freedoms, of movement, of choice, of pleasure.

In the end, then, the power of television is to mobilise the citizens of military-industrial democracies in ways that official authorities seem not only unable to match, but actively to resent. However, the presence of Bob Hawke, genial Prime Minister of Australia, strolling the sunny streets of the Fremantle set after officially unfurling yet another gigantic Australian flag over the Roundhouse, WA's oldest building and first prison, suggests that the higher levels of government, at least, understand only too well the need to unify the people into an imagined community of citizens who can be mobilised to see themselves as free to choose in the name not of ideology but of euphoria. In the new age of signs without referents, of media-produced reality, of pedagogic seduction, the people can make sense of democracy as competition; they can understand economics, politics, and social structure in terms of sport – no longer the sport of kings but of transnational corporations and their 'barons'; they can become in the end what the media hype require of them: 'The People', ultimate fiction, stars of the show, who exercise their historic right to join the party ... by partying.

* * *

2. ‘Nation-building is a Tough Caper’: WA now that the ‘Inc.’ has Dried

‘Perth, you’re not remote, you’ve been abandoned.’

(Billy Connolly)⁹

WA is not everyone’s cup of tea. A friend of mine once visited from London and inquired: ‘What do you do here; sit and watch the traffic lights change?’ In some ways little has changed since the Cup, except that the excesses – of energy, capital, semiosis, optimism – have evaporated, abandoning the state like laid-off FIFO (fly-in-fly-out) workers. Meanwhile, Fremantle’s night-time economy has been run out of town, the nightclubs have gone, the streets are empty, the beggars moved along,¹⁰ the decaying but opulent port buildings have become the blank façade of a Catholic university. But Freo’s Italianate ‘cappuccino strip’ (a one-street-wonder) attracts weekend tourists; its state-owned port (soon to be privatised) is very busy – millions of cars and containers *in*; millions of live sheep *out*. Fremantle town hasn’t been reimagined since the Cup. Some days it feels like a tired dormitory suburb with overpriced property, empty shopfronts, an addiction to parking fees and a chronic infestation of ageing Rajneeshi hippies (O’Brien 2008). It was founded before Perth but is now the ‘quaint’ pole of these binary cities: alternately bullied and ignored by a ‘we-are-in-charge’ state government that continues to hate it for being the state’s Labor stronghold. Is that what ‘left’ means now: left out; left over?

Business as usual

Soon after the America’s Cup mob moved out, the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (1987-91) began its hearings. After several years’ work it concluded:

⁹ Attributed: see: <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/derek-rielly-ten-steps-to-making-perth-the-greatest-city-on-earth-20151022-gkfm.html> (comment #75).

¹⁰ Live beggars have been replaced by tamper-proof pillars in which you may deposit your donation without the messy necessity of contact with the object of your charity (which will be decided for you by the authorities): <https://au.news.yahoo.com/a/30612774/fremantle-launches-controversial-donation-boxes-in-crackdown-on-beggars/>.

Commissioners did find that, generally, there appeared to be little appreciation of and less dedication to the duty of care owed by custodial authorities and their officers to persons in custody. We found many system defects in relation to care, many failures to exercise proper care and in general a poor standard of care ... it can certainly be said that in many cases death was contributed to by system failures or absence of due care. (Royal Commission, vol. 1: Ch1.2).

But horror still attends what passes for justice in this authoritarian state, where control of citizens' (not to mention migrants') bodies overrules human kindness and fellow-feeling, even that of judges and magistrates. Despite the passage of a quarter of a century since the Royal Commission reported, not much has changed in the custodial game. Thus, in 2015, the year in which Rosie Batty, during her term as *Australian of the Year*, was putting family violence on the national agenda and drawing praise from the Victorian Police Chief Commissioner as 'the most "remarkable victim" he has ever met',¹¹ things were going very differently in Broome, tourism capital of the Kimberley region of WA. A man had assaulted his partner; then returned when she was hospitalised to abduct and torture her 10-month old son, who died of his injuries. The ABC reported the ensuing court proceedings (two years later):

Mervyn Bell, 27, repeatedly punched and kicked Tamica Mullaley in Broome in March 2013. He also stripped her of her clothing to humiliate her and left her naked and bleeding by the side of the road. The District Court in Perth heard she suffered severe bruising to her face, back and abdomen as well as a laceration to her kidney and a badly bruised spleen. ... It was after bashing Ms Mullaley that Bell took her 10-month-old baby, Charlie, and over the next 15 hours tortured and sexually assaulted him. (ABC 2015a)

The judge described the bashing as 'prolonged' and 'persistent', saying it had 'left Ms Mullaley traumatised'; but that the assault was 'overshadowed' by the 'horror' of

¹¹ Source: <http://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/honour-roll/?view=fullView&recipientID=1179>; but see: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-01-13/lawyers-unhappy-with-victoria-police-response-to-family-violence/7086286>.

Bell's murder of her child (ABC 2015a). This was in May 2015. Four months later, despite the 'horror' of her experience, police proceeded to lay charges against *her*:

The mother of a baby tortured and murdered by her partner in WA's north has been found guilty of assaulting Broome police on the night the 10-month-old was taken. ... When police arrived at the house to investigate the assault, Mullaley kicked, punched and spat on the officers. (ABC 2015b)¹²

But the magistrate said: 'If ever there was a time for the court to be merciful, it's this matter today'. 'Mercy' meant a prison sentence, but suspended, not immediately custodial (ABC 2015c). No-one seemed to have the power to support this victim of family violence as the wronged party. The police 'definition of the situation' (Cohen 1972: 44) prevailed. She and her family did have something to say about that:

Following today's verdict, Mullaley questioned why police seemed more interested in prosecuting her that night than searching for her 10-month-old son. 'They never looked for Charlie at all, and the police need to be accountable for not looking for him,' Mullaley said outside court. 'They could have looked for him and he'd still be alive. It's all wrong, but this is the law and this is how things work.' (ABC 2015b)

Tamica Mullaley's father Ted tried to stop officers arresting his daughter, and he 'made repeated requests at the Broome police station for an alert to be issued for Bell's car.' He was told, 'we can't, we've got no vehicles'. Outside the court, he commented: 'They never even thought about looking for them' (ABC 2015b). Instead, you guessed it, the police charged *him* – father and grandfather of the victims – with 'obstructing police' (their name for 'protecting family'), for which he too was convicted at the same hearing.

Instead of supporting victims of crime, the law could only manage to give the survivors a criminal record. This is a spectacular example, contrary to the

¹² See also: <http://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-12/mother-tells-of-pain-after-baby-murder-mervyn-bell/5963292> (12 Dec 2014); <http://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-08/baby-murderer-mervyn-bell-found-dead-in-casuarina-prison-cell/6759990> (9 Sept 2015); <http://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-09/mother-of-murdered-toddler-comments-on-killer27s-death/6762480> (9 Sept 2015).

recommendations of the Royal Commission, of continuing dereliction of the ‘duty of care owed by custodial authorities and their officers to persons in custody’. The police did not inform themselves of the extent of Ms Mullaley’s injuries, did not take notice of the baby’s grandfather when he reported the abduction, and did not look for the perpetrator’s car or try to rescue the child before it was too late.¹³ But their accountability was effectively nil: an unexplained ‘WA Police managerial intervention process’ for the arresting officers and a bureaucratic smokescreen for the media. Reporters were told: ‘The Corruption and Crime Commission has had oversight of the WA Police investigation and you will need to contact them direct for any comments about their findings’ (ABC 2015b).

More broadly, this is also a story about the *imperative of control* in WA (Stratton 2013). On the arrival of the police, an injured mother was transformed instantly into a threat that had to be subdued. Her circumstances were comparable to those of Rosie Batty, except that this family was Aboriginal and the police did not deem the badly injured woman to be ‘remarkable’. Also noteworthy is that she is routinely referred to as ‘Mullaley’ in the media, surname only, a sure sign of criminality in the news (I can’t find any reference to ‘Batty’). This story was not seeking to elicit community sympathy for her ordeals, as the reporting of the Batty case had been.¹⁴ The final outcome was yet another death in custody: in September 2015, a fortnight before Ms Mullaley appeared in court, the perpetrator killed himself in Casuarina Prison. In short, despite a generation of activism and public debate about ‘closing the gap’, life remains very different for Indigenous Western Australians. The routine discourse of control still applies. The police, courts, and media cannot escape its grinding logic. Tamica Mullaley has not been nominated for an award; nor has her father. Their story raises barely a ripple in the state. The river of media just keeps rolling along.

‘A Tough Caper’

‘Nation-building is a tough caper.’

¹³ See: <https://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/wa/a/16444426/family-struggles-with-loss-of-toddler/>.

¹⁴ See, e.g.: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/luke-batty-had-trusted-his-father-who-killed-his-son-before-being-fatally-shot-by-police/story-e6frg6nf-1226825644467>.

(Paul Keating)¹⁵

Alan Bond's funeral at Fremantle's Catholic cathedral (June 12, 2015) attracted widespread media coverage. It was a curiously ambivalent event. Bond was still admired for the thrills and spills of the America's Cup adventure, but the collapse of his corporate empire, a consequent term in gaol and, later, his daughter's and second wife's tragic deaths, made it hard to narrate his life as an Aussie triumph. Political leaders, local and national, stayed away.

The eulogy was given by one of Perth's biggest car dealers, John Hughes.¹⁶ Young reporters who covered the event didn't recognise the mourners, long-forgotten figures from the never-to-be-repeated days of 'WA Inc.'¹⁷ This ignorance became the story: "That's the problem," one journalist was heard barking down the phone. "We don't know who they are" (*Sydney Morning Herald*).¹⁸ There's no doubt *where* they all were, though, dead or alive: swept well under the carpet of the national imaginary.

Although local mythmaking casts Kerry Packer as Alan Bond's nemesis (Bond acquired Packer's TV network for \$1bn but had to sell it back for a reputed \$200m), he met his match in Roland Walter Fuhrhop, who had served in both the Hitler Youth and the British Army, but is better known to history as 'Tiny' Rowland. Rowland built a global conglomerate out of Lonrho (London and Rhodesia Mining Co.). Boardroom shenanigans at Lonrho had famously prompted Britain's Conservative prime minister Edward Heath to denounce 'the unacceptable face of capitalism', but Rowland survived and went on to become the 'symbol of buccaneering capitalism' (*Financial Times*),¹⁹ owner of *The Observer* and a global tycoon.

¹⁵ Quoted in O'Brien (2015): 377.

¹⁶ Hughes is the cousin of Bond's first wife Eileen.

¹⁷ Exponents of WA's high-risk, debt-capital expansionism included Laurie Connell (Rothwells), Robert Holmes à Court (Bell Group), Kevin Parry (Parry Corporation), and entrepreneurs Dallas Dempster (Burswood Casino), John Roberts (Multiplex) and Denis Horgan (Barrack Mines, Leeuwin Estate winery, Notre Dame University). Of these, only Dempster is still alive: he was a pall bearer at Bond's funeral. See: <http://www.crikey.com.au/2002/01/21/where-are-australias-true-business-legends/>.

¹⁸ Source: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/alan-bond-funeral-at-st-patricks-basilica-in-fremantle-20150611-ghlsz2.html>.

¹⁹ Source: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/99719ddc-bd38-11e2-a735-00144feab7de.html#axzz3ym5rObS3>.

At Alan Bond's funeral, John Hughes told mourners: 'He said to me once, "get me inside any boardroom in Europe, and I'll get them."'”²⁰ Well, not quite: it was Bond's attempt to 'get' Lonrho that set in train the collapse of his own empire. After first welcoming Bond into his boardroom as a 'white knight' (to see off another corporate predator), Rowland then 'turned on him with savage intensity' (*Daily Telegraph*). He issued a document claiming that Bond's heavily indebted corporate vehicle Bell Group (acquired from Robert Holmes à Court) was insolvent, which spooked the banks, and the unravelling began. It was 'Rowland's most merciless victory'.²¹ But soon afterwards he suffered the same fate:

The [Lonrho] empire unravelled in the early 1990s, hit by debt and declining metal prices, and in 1993 its controversial boss, who claimed numbers of African despots as friends, was ousted (*Financial Times*).²²

What seems never to have been discussed, at least in Western Australia, is why Bond Corp and its ilk were so prominent in the 1980s, and why Western Australia in particular became notorious as WA Inc. Was there something especially 'buccaneer' about WA; was corruption, moral/political failure and 'greed-is-good' self-interest especially strong there? Nowadays it is taken for granted that all this was an example of cowboy capitalism in the wild West and that we're well rid of it. But, coming back after the 'Inc.' has dried, I'm not so sure.

Thinking again about the 'state of excitement', what lessons should be learned from that time about *nation building*? The answer, surprisingly, comes from Paul Keating. In a series of interviews with the ABC's Kerry O'Brien (2015), Keating made a revealing remark about his formative influences during the Menzies era. To the boy from Bankstown, Menzies was merely a 'political dandy, the master of the glib phrase'. But despite the lack of political vision at the top, the young Keating observed that among ordinary Australians 'there were people trying to assemble capital and make it work':

²⁰ Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-06-12/funeral-for-alan-bond-held-in-fremantle/6540364>.

²¹ See Rowland's obit in the *Daily Telegraph*:
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/7900088/RW-Tiny-Rowland.html>.

²² Source: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/99719ddc-bd38-11e2-a735-00144feab7de.html#ixzz3ymK64QTQ>.

What was apparent ... was that it was so difficult to corporately save, so difficult to garner capital, so difficult to borrow money to invest, and there was a great struggle in building businesses. ... It wasn't beyond the wit of man to do capital but the Liberals couldn't do it. (*Keating*, 2015: 12-13)

So here was a question for progressive politicians, who wanted to develop the nation and at the same time make Labor the natural party of government. How to 'do capital'? The answer for Keating was to deregulate the economy: not to favour *business* (he saw that as the mission of the Liberal Party), but to allow *markets* to work, which would favour capital *and* labour. He got his chance as Treasurer in the Hawke Government (1983-91). By early 1988 Australia was going through a triple deregulatory boom: a boom in export income (commodity prices were high), a boom in investment, and boom in housing and construction. The 'politics of euphoria' was in full swing; but the economy was overheating. Keating wanted interest rates to rise to curb inflation, but he'd deregulated the Reserve Bank, which was reluctant to use monetary policy to force a slowdown: by the end of 1988 the demand boom was 'a house of fire' (*Keating* 2015: 374). Apart from the dangers of inflation and boom-and-bust, there was corporate debt. Keating recalls:

Bob [Johnston, Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA)] was saying, 'Treasurer, we've still got Holmes à Court with \$10 billion in debt, we've got Bond with billions and we've got Murdoch for billions, and the banks' balance sheets may not be able to suffer losses of this kind'. (379)

The RBA was afraid of a repeat of the Depression if demand was dampened too far or fast; it wanted to support the banks, which were exposed to massive corporate debts.

Keating points out that the banks were not stupid, just self-interested:

... lending at an unprecedented rate because they were trying to burn off the foreign banks to stop them gaining a foothold in the [deregulated] market. ... In the process they picked up a lot of rubbish in their lending portfolios, a lot of ill-advised risk' (380).

When it came, the 'recession we had to have' was harsh and prolonged. My mortgage interest rate rose to 17.5%. It is easy to remember the political cost to Keating: but we seem to have forgotten that one of the causes was the big banks' exposure to risky

‘rubbish’ – debts incurred by entrepreneurs, many of them from WA. In the event, the banks survived, and so did Murdoch. But Holmes à Court, who once tried to buy BHP, wasn’t so lucky. His Bell Group collapsed. In the defining move of WA Inc., it was bailed out by a consortium led by the WA government and Bond Corp. Bond ended up owning most of Bell Group and used the cashed-up Bell Resources to refinance his own debt-ridden Bond Corp (and the rest is history).²³

Meanwhile, back at the Treasury, Paul Keating put his finger on the fundamentals of all this:

You see, Australia is a large continent operating as a single country. We require a great deal of capital: long railways, multiple ports around a vast coastline, along with mining infrastructure. ... The capital requirements of a large continental country like Australia will always be greater than the country’s savings, so we would always be running a current account deficit. But the world recognises this and is prepared to fund and bank it because they believe they’re banking the continent. That it represents a good bet. (387)

A Political Theory of Progressive Individualism?

Over in Western Australia, the Labor state government of Brian Burke thought it was a good bet too. Faced with a giant landmass, tiny population, and a desire to build a progressive (and Labor-voting) community, it grasped deregulation, debt-financing and corporate investment in public infrastructure as the means towards state-building with social ends. It became almost a civic duty to be indebted, in order to fuel growth. WA Inc. was understood as a partnership between public and private sectors. How else would you ‘do capital’ in a place with so few people? Nor was there any need to stop at the state border: why should WA not be built via global enterprise (a bit like Singapore)? Bond, Holmes à Court and Murdoch all harboured international ambitions (unlike Kerry Packer). And the government in Perth egged them on – for the good of the state.

²³ See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WA_Inc.

While credit was cheap and plentiful, and while growth continued, all went well. The state didn't just prosper: it *developed*. Infrastructure was laid down. People got rich. The population grew. Euphoria, exuberance, excess were reasonable emotions. Fremantle got a once-in-a-century makeover. But of course it didn't last. Keating had reckoned without the irrational exuberance of a deregulation boom: a contraction was bound to follow, made deeper by global trends (commodity and currency prices) that were beyond his control. But the fact that the riskier enterprises were 'burnt off' was not proof that they had been wrong to take those risks. There was a high probability that some would fail, but some survived, and meanwhile the net gain to the state was palpable, especially on the streets of Fremantle. There's a case for saying that the supposed excesses of WA Inc. were in fact a textbook demonstration of what entrepreneurial capitalism is supposed to be about: high risk; high return; net growth. The retreat to bureaucratic caution afterwards has served the state no better.

So – what's it like to be back? As everyone knows, a recent Prime Minister has 'stopped the boats' in the very antithesis of the America's Cup, when boats were going viral. Keating's 'vast coastline' presents an unwelcoming prospect to stray people, even though trade, tourism, drug smuggling and leisure craft continue to pound the sands. Why, only last week, I saw Fortescue Metals' magnate Andrew 'Twiggy' Forrest make landfall at Port Beach in Fremantle. It turned out that his 'cargo' was none other than an Aboriginal national leader (from Far North Queensland), who was picked up from the sands, suit-trousers rolled up and porkpie hat pulled down, minders-on-phones flitting this way and that, to be whisked off to the waiting party-boat in a fast zodiac piloted by Twiggy himself (Figs. 1 and 2).



Fig. 2: Port Beach Fremantle 2016; Twiggy Forrest and friend (Photo: author)

Not exactly cloak and dagger stuff, just WA in holiday mode, few degrees of separation between the classes, but still it was intriguing to see two of Australia's most prominent personalities rendezvous on our family beach. What's afoot? Will Twiggy step up where everyone else has failed? He's known to interfere in Indigenous politics for self-interested ends,²⁴ but equally he's known for trying to do

²⁴ See for instance: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-28/fortescue-helped-aboriginal-elders-campaign-against-land-owners/6652118>; and <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-27/andrew-twiggy-forest-a-bundle-of-contradictions/6649272>.

something practical to end Aboriginal disadvantage: for instance he sponsors Generation One, in which context he says:

As I get around, I have become even more enthused about the fact that Australians are unified around a desire to ensure that this is the last generation to suffer Indigenous disparity. ... Along with the many employers who want to help directly, and those organisations and volunteers who do a tremendous job mentoring and getting kids to school, it will take all Australians to achieve this important goal to end Indigenous disadvantage in our lifetime. (<http://generationone.org.au/our-founders>)

In other words, social justice has been privatised: it's voluntary work for individuals, not public policy for states. Are 'all Australians' awake to the call? Certainly, Indigenous leader Noel Pearson is. In a recent speech to the National Press Club (to mark Australia Day), he summed up the frustration of trying to fix things using state apparatuses:

"We've reached the kind of dead end of Indigenous affairs presided over by a Minister and a department," Mr Pearson said. "I'm not saying that the people involved are insincere. It is just that the system by which they attempt to deal with our communities is not one that works. It can't discern excrement from clay. It just cannot."²⁵

The Mullaley family would agree with that! Perhaps Noel and Twiggy are cooking something up? Perhaps they can tell the difference between crap and clay: waste and work. Private enterprise and individual activism to build the state: is this the future for progressive politics?

Semiotic self-determination

Since the America's Cup, someone invented the internet and social media. Semiosis migrated from community-wide broadcast media to personal-preference social media, making local television – and possibly localities themselves as distinct entities – a thing of the past. The ruined TV wreckage, pumped up on the semiotic steroids of too-many ads and promos, even on the National Broadcasters, is not where you'd look

²⁵ Source: <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2016/01/27/noel-pearson-says-1788-one-three-defining-moments-australia>.

to find out how things are, or what to do about them. Who needs local TV when you can get *Jessica Jones* off Netflix? Contemporary citizens of Western Australia now know more about New York (at least as a semiotic fantasy) than about New Norcia, and pay more attention to the US West Coast than to their own West Coast – as when darkness and horror visit sunny Broome. Do we even need states when we've outsourced infrastructure to California? Semiotically, at least, it seems not.

Of course, car numberplates bearing the legend 'State of Excitement' (not to mention 'Home of the America's Cup') have long been unscrewed, and that seems about right (Fig. 3). Now, if exuberance is to be expressed, it's not in the voice of the state but that of the individual. The state has privatised slogans along with everything else: taking its cut from permitting citizens to compete with each other's personalised plates in a 'costly signalling' arms race. At Curtin University I sometimes park next to SEXI LEXI. On Gumtree I can buy PINK CHIC or at the hospital try to avoid sporty MEDIC 8. Around the metropolitan area I can admire a yellow ute called MINGE 2 or sympathise with IN DEBT (on a Ferrari); I can envy CHICMAGNT or try my luck with AQUICKIE.²⁶ Out on the street – as on broadcast television – the semiotic wit and wisdom of tradies and bogans now seems to be the default mode of expressing excitement among the citizens of this leaderless polity.



Fig. 3: Left: *Not any more...* (photo: Wikimedia);²⁷ Right: *'This item (\$5) is currently out of stock'* (photo: Platebarn)²⁸

'Doing capital'

Meanwhile, is anyone 'doing capital' in WA? There's Gina Rinehart, the mining heiress who lost a quarter of her wealth in 2015 as iron ore prices plunged, and is set

²⁶ See more at IMACAR on Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/301741243758162706/>.

²⁷ Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WA_Home_of_the_America's_Cup.jpg.

²⁸ 'ALL plates on this site are for collection or display purposes ONLY'. Source: <http://platebarn.com/Western-Australia-State-Of-Excitement-XRZ-635-P759745.aspx>

to lose more (*Sydney Morning Herald*).²⁹ But Gina is still pretty rich: ‘Rinehart’s worth is estimated by *Forbes* at \$US8.5 billion (\$A12 billion), \$US3.2 billion (\$A4.5 billion) less than last year (*Business Insider*, January 28, 2016).³⁰ She’s a lot richer than you. In fact an amusing app will calculate just how many minutes it takes Gina to earn your annual salary.³¹ The app points out that what she has earned since 2010 (\$9.27bn) would take the ‘average Australian’ nearly 160,000 years to earn. It also reckons that her net worth could buy three Nimitz class aircraft carriers, or a Space Shuttle and 27 launches, or ... Jamaica!

Gina Rinehart is no Bondy; nor is she a Twiggy, come to that. She’s locked in a long-running legal dispute with her own children over a family trust. Like other Aussie moguls, including Holmes à Court, Bond, Murdoch, Packer, Skase and Stokes, she bought heavily into media stocks, including Channel 10 and Fairfax Media, which refused her a seat on its board when she refused to sign its charter of editorial independence. She has well-publicised trenchant views on Aussie workers (they drink too much; socialise too much; are paid too much) and wanted a media vehicle to express them.³² She has since sold her media shareholdings.³³ She has diversified into beef and dairy (with an eye on China), industries which are also trying to manage down Australian wages,³⁴ but she is not the ubiquitous presence as Bond was in Perth in the 80s, where you might spot him at lunch in the Mediterranean (now Foreign Minister Julie Bishop’s constituency office), or you might encounter his largesse anywhere from the FTI (Fremantle Television Institute) to yet another exorbitant boat: the *Endeavour* Replica, built using local jarrah wood in a big shed just across the road from my house.

²⁹ Source: <http://www.smh.com.au/business/how-the-worlds-richest-including-gina-rinehart-got-poorer-in-2015-20151229-glwamc.html>.

³⁰ Source: <http://www.businessinsider.com.au/gina-rinehart-is-no-longer-australias-richest-2016-1>

³¹ : <http://www.howrichareyou.com.au/>

³² Sources: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-08-30/rinehart-sets-out-road-to-riches/4232326>;
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-09-05/rinehart-says-aussie-workers-overpaid-unproductive/4243866>

³³ Source: <http://www.smh.com.au/business/media-and-marketing/gina-rinehart-sells-out-of-fairfax-media-20150206-138b5i.html>

³⁴ Source: <http://www.smh.com.au/business/workplace-relations/young-australians-arent-prepared-to-do-what-needs-doing-says-gina-rinehartbacked-company-20150818-gj295l.html>

The kind of capital that builds infrastructure for use of the general population or as a Bicentennial gift to the nation, like the *Endeavour*,³⁵ and not just for the enrichment of the rich, may now have to come from overseas investors, primarily from China,³⁶ because it is certainly not coming from the government or the mining companies.³⁷ Fremantle Port, historic point of origin of the settler state, is a state-owned asset, but the government has announced plans for its privatisation. In pursuit of the best price, they have proven willing to go to war with Fremantle itself. Fremantle Council recently proposed to develop the side of the port that faces the city (currently fenced off along a long, deserted, windswept stretch of concrete) as an ‘entertainment precinct’ with waterfront facilities for the city and tourists. Mayor Brad Pettitt envisioned it as a ‘once-in-a-generation’ project:

Imagine the Fremantle Passenger Terminal not surrounded by a sea of parked cars but instead being part of an attractive precinct to greet cruise ship tourists. Imagine restaurants, bars and cafes overlooking the working cranes across the water on North Quay. (*WA Today*)

But the state government was quick to pour scorn: ‘Treasurer Mike Nahan didn’t pull any punches about the project, saying Fremantle council “simply didn’t understand the needs of the port”.’³⁸ In turn, the state saw no need to ‘understand’ – even to hear – the needs of residents and visitors, who must continue to put up with being fenced out of the ‘safety zone’ – presumably to keep animal rights activists away from the sheep ships. The port itself may be profitable (the state has certainly made sure of that in the run up to privatisation),³⁹ but it is clear that the government sees no need for any capital gains to be returned to the city (profits are earmarked to cover state deficit). But the Treasurer doesn’t have the last say: after activist opposition, supported by Fremantle Council, the state can’t even provide a new road to the port

³⁵ See: <http://www.anmm.gov.au/whats-on/vessels/hmb-endeavour>.

³⁶ <http://www.dsd.wa.gov.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/wa-china-trade-and-investment-relationship-0915?sfvrsn=10>.

³⁷ WA is not ready for China in the post mining boom era: It needs to invest in agriculture, infrastructure, tourism and education to attract new Chinese investment: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-21/wa-must-revitalise-image-to-draw-chinese-investment-group-warns/6638366>.

³⁸ Source: <http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/fremantles-port-waterfront-plans-flawed-wa-government-says-20160119-gm8zdm.html>.

³⁹ 1,780,978 sheep were exported in 2014-15: 82% of Australia’s total live sheep exports. See: <http://www.fremantleports.com.au/News/Publications/AnnualReport/Documents/2015%20Annual%20Report%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>, p. 40.

for the trucks that continue to thunder in their hundreds through unimproved suburban streets.⁴⁰ Nobody wins.

Individualism, Possessive or *Progressive*?

Them that asks no questions isn't told a lie –

Watch the wall my darling while the Gentlemen go by! (Rudyard Kipling)⁴¹

So there it is. ‘Banking the continent’, as a social partnership of capital and labour, developers and residents, government and citizens, is a thing of the past. Ships come and go, but ‘there’s nothing to see here’ now. Just move along. The government will tell you what’s excrement and what’s clay. Levels of government will squabble with each other, and meanwhile the physical fabric, community spirit and international standing of the place all deteriorate. Progressive politics retreats to social media. Everyone’s on their own, free to make themselves richer or to earn less (take your pick), to volunteer as activists or to seek their identity via Californian corporates; but everyone is well-advised to keep their heads down when the police, the government or a mining magnate go by.

It seems to me that during the 80s there was a brief burst of what Yuri Lotman (2009) would have called an ‘explosion’ or step increase in dynamic growth and differentiation, cultural as well as economic. Following C.B. Macpherson (1962), who gave us *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, I would like to call that period – the reviled era of WA Inc. – the era of the ‘political theory of *progressive individualism*’. Individualist, yes; but not just in the classical liberal sense of each person owning their own persons and owing nothing to society for their capacities. Instead, the possessiveness that has underpinned liberal capitalism from the time of

⁴⁰ The state government proposed a controversial ‘freight link’ for trucks to access the port through wetlands and residential areas:

<https://www.mainroads.wa.gov.au/Documents/Perth%20Freight%20Link-Information%20Sheet%20April%202015-web.RCN-D15%5E23197747.PDF>. It was opposed by activists: <http://www.rethinkthelink.com.au/>; and by Fremantle City Council: <http://www.fremantle.wa.gov.au/PFL>; and is currently in planning limbo, with all three levels of government (city, state, federal) at loggerheads: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-17/wa-and-canberra-negotiate-new-perth-freight-link-funding-deal/6948250>.

⁴¹ See: http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poems_smuggler.htm.

Thomas Hobbes was expanded, in a short burst of deregulated semiotic and economic energy, to include everyone in its glow, robber barons and ordinary citizens alike, pursuing a *progressive* vision of the polity and its place in the sun, using the latest technologies, media and business heft.

Now, old-style possessiveness has returned with a vengeance. Captains of industry and government alike hector the populace as they cut off the place from the planet. The government has no commitment to a vision for the state: it goes out of its way to prove how possessive and individualist it can be. Caring for the land or sea, for the community or fellow citizens, is a voluntary choice (a.k.a. a mug's game). In the 'resources' state with the highest per capita private boat ownership in Australia, electoral politics seems to extend little further than making sure the tradies stay quiescent. If they can afford their own personalised boat and trailer, well, as they say, '... too easy'. Another dose of 'the politics of euphoria', anyone? Keep quiet and paddle your own canoe.

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