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REFLECTION



“White Genocide” and the Ethics of Public Analysis

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By the time this reflection is published, at least a fortnight will have passed since the 28-year old Australian, Brenton Tarrant shot and killed 50 Muslims praying in a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 15 March 2019. More information about his background, formation, and intentions than I have access to at the time of writing (20 March 2019) will have come to light in the meantime. The extant commentary about Tarrant is necessarily journalistic, tentative, and fragmentary. Even so, we have sufficient material to venture some thoughts on the issue at the centre of his 73-page manifesto, namely the impending “white genocide” that he purported to be averting with mass murder. This notion and the broader discourse of which it is a part can be outlined with greater precision.

Studying Tarrant’s ideas is already controversial. Centre-right politicians and journalists are wary about taking them seriously because they have also been busy panicking populations with catastrophic declarations about Muslim immigration, and about the imminent collapse of “Western Civilization” due to the “war” that academics and feminists supposedly wage on it with their “cultural Marxism” and “political correctness.” He is thus dismissed as a misfit and a loner, a crazed product of an isolated, extremist milieu with no links to the mainstream, his violence “senseless.” Irrational rather than rational, by this comfortable assumption Tarrant’s thought as the source of his “hate” does not warrant investigation. In one notably myopic deflection and displacement tactic, a senior journalist ascribed Tarrant’s white nationalism to the “identity politics” he thinks leftists are responsible for introducing into the body politic after 1968 and their inexorable march through the institutions. In an alternative tactic of persecutory projective identification, other centre-right commentators denounced as “hateful” the suggestion that their contributions to the Islamophobic mood somehow incited the murders, indeed that the suggestion mirrors the hate of the far right. Insisting that they are on the side of the angels, these journalists proclaimed their right to continue what they call an open debate on immigration, by which they mean questioning Muslim migrants’ integratability and loyalty.¹ So it is business as usual, as it quickly was after Anders Breivik’s massacre of 76 Norwegian young social democrats in 2011, when conservatives rushed into print to reassure everyone that he was not one of them after all, and that his hostility to Islam had nothing to do with their own.²

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¹ They are repeating familiar arguments, like Bruce Bawer, “After the Oslo Massacre, an Assault on Free Speech Norway’s Left Seeks to Silence Islam’s Critics by Linking them to a Mass Murderer,” *Wall Street Journal*, 7 February 2012. Bawer’s work is cited positively by Anders Behring Breivik (Andrew Berwick) in his manifesto, *2083: A European Declaration of Independence* (London, 2011), 286.

² Again, these are familiar arguments: Bruce Bawer, “Inside the Mind of the Oslo Murderer,” *Wall Street Journal*, 25 July 2011; Brett Stephens, “What is Anders Breivik? The Oslo Terrorist is Neither Christian nor Conservative,” *Wall Street Journal*, 26 July 2011.

Muslim and left-liberal commentators do indeed point to the Islamophobia normalized in the mainstream in order to settle accounts with the media's platforming and even endorsement of propositions that cast Muslims as national outsiders (dual loyalties) and as security risks. For some Australian Muslim commentators, the mass murder in Christchurch is experienced as the culmination of harassment they have endured all their lives, whether in vandalized Muslim school buildings, attacks on veiled women, or other forms of public abuse. They are shocked but not surprised by the terrorist attack; it is a potential that has been building for some time and, accordingly, they cast Tarrant as the symptom of the underlying cultural pathology of "white supremacy."³ Given the prominence of politicians (even if few in number), like the Australian senator, Fraser Anning, who effectively blame the Christchurch massacre on Muslim immigration, there is plenty for critics to write about.

Certainly, as we will see, there is nothing new in Tarrant's manifesto, *The Great Replacement: Towards a New Society, We March Ever Forwards*.⁴ It is of a piece with familiar far-right thinking – consider Anders Breivik whom Tarrant credits with inspiration and insight – that feeds into the paranoid and apocalyptic slogan of "white genocide." What is more, his familiarity with Western culture is unlikely to be very deep (what does he really know about Bauhaus architecture that he breezily dismisses?⁵). Indeed, Tarrant, who admits – or perhaps makes a virtue of – his lack of university education, does not pretend to be sophisticated or erudite. Instead, he shares with members of the far-right the conviction that he has divined the race laws of history that only they understand – and that academics do not. Given this cognoscenti's conceit, and in view of the academy's contrasting commitment to communicative reason and critical self-reflection, a journal like this one could be forgiven for not taking Tarrant and "white genocide" very seriously, despite the enormity of his actions. In the esoteric knowledge claims and magical thinking intrinsic to belief in "white genocide," the academy's practice of rational analysis and evidence-based demonstration confronts its Other.

And yet, none of this means Tarrant's ideas are devoid of significance and are unworthy of investigation. In penning and issuing a manifesto, Tarrant engaged in a communicative act to win and inspire followers with (as he sees it) fact-based arguments. He tries to make a case for "white genocide" by presenting arguments (of sorts), and adducing "evidence" (however tendentious). He effectively invites readers to evaluate and contextualize his claims even if he is impervious to counter-arguments and evidence, which he would reject as "alternative facts," that lazy slogan to avoid confronting cognitive dissonance. Given the proliferation of "white genocide" fantasies and the seeming readiness of adherents to take its premises seriously and – for at least one of them – to match paranoid words with murderous deeds, it is important to briefly explore (a full-length treatment must wait for now) this rhetoric, in particular its currency today, and its attraction for many people. It may be hollow, but effective precisely for its repetition and bravado. Where ideas have such an effect in the world, we are bound to take them seriously. What is more, Tarrant's

³ Randa Abdel-Fattah, "We Told you the Threat is White Supremacy. You Ignored Us," *The New Arab*, 16 March 2008, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2019/3/16/we-told-you-the-threat-is-white-supremacy>.

⁴ References to this text will appear in parentheses in the text.

⁵ Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 35: "Art and beauty subverted beyond all recognition, bauhaus travesties replacing nouveau wonders, soulless metropolitan architecture of glass and steel reflecting no society, no culture, no people and therefore belonging everywhere, and no where."

words yield insights into the subjectivity of genocidaires more generally, namely that they commit terrorist acts with genocidal intent as – in their own mind – preventative self-defence; not as acts of aggression but, as he writes, “a partisan action against an occupying force” (11). Finally, identifying the sources of his vision will reveal a fuller picture of the various intellectual discourses and historical context that enable the possibility of thinking “white genocide.”

What is the “White Genocide” Claim?

In Tarrant’s telling, “white genocide” is the outcome of declining European (= white) birth rates coupled with mass immigration from faster reproducing non-Europeans (= non-whites). Taken together, they represent an “assault on the European people that, if not combatted, will ultimately result in the complete racial and cultural replacement of the European people” (2). He continues: “This is ethnic replacement. This is cultural replacement. This is racial replacement. This is WHITE GENOCIDE” (3). Tarrant’s urgency is driven by the *combination* of migration and declining European fertility: the time to address the latter is too short while migration continues apace. In other circumstances, the cultural degeneracy – “the current nihilistic, hedonistic, individualistic insanity that has taken control of Western thought” (5) – that results in small families could be addressed. The gender order is thus central to his vision of the “racial” order: not for nothing is the last page of his manifesto a collage of photographs of young white mothers and small children, men in the forest and dressed as heavily armed soldiers: symbols of white flourishing and assertion.⁶ Revolutionary action is required to reinstate this familial norm and rescue Europeans from replacement, extinction, that is, genocide.

Although from rural Australia, Tarrant declares that his racial awakening occurred while travelling in France, where he was struck by the number of non-Europeans (“invaders”) as well as by the scale of European mortality evident on the First World War battlefields (a common site to visit for Australians’ grand tour). Did they die only for “invaders” to inherit Europe, he asks plaintively? Witnessing the presidential election runoff between Marine Le Pen and Emmanuel Macron convinced him that a political solution was impossible; the demographics had been already tilted too far in the direction of the “internationalist, globalist, anti-white, ex-banker” Macron (7). Seduced by consumerism, “whites” could not be relied upon to vote for their racial salvation, Tarrant concluded with “despair.” He is no democrat (58), although he hopes eventually to build a “populist” movement (44). Consequently, he reasons that he needs to commence a violent racial revolution so “whites” would become aware of the historical development that is leading inexorably to “white genocide.” By attacking Muslims (“invaders”), he seeks to provoke an excessive reaction that will further polarize Western societies so their racial consciousnesses is heightened, multiculturalism is strangled, segregation ensues, and a white homeland is consolidated. He is particularly concerned with inciting a civil war in the US in order to destroy its “melting pot” ideal. The ensuing “balkanization” would also undercut its military projection, which Tarrant criticizes for supporting Muslim Albanians in Kosovo against Christian Orthodox Serbs in 1999 (5).

⁶ On such images, see Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Far from supporting US empire, he is an avatar of non-globalized white nations, in particular the Christian Balkan peoples that have struggled against Ottoman rule over the centuries, despite the fact that western western Europeans have long racialized Balkan peoples as oriental and as uncivilized.⁷ He portrays his perspective as hailing from Europe's periphery, then, which he cultivated during extensive travel in Turkey and the Balkans. With European travails in mind, he claims to commit murder to "take revenge" for "hundreds of thousands of deaths caused by foreign invaders in European lands throughout history," for the enslavement of Europeans "by the Islamic invaders," and for recent Islamist terror attacks (4). In Tarrant's apocalyptic vision, human history is a story of unrelenting violent racial/cultural struggle. Pondering the suffering of frontier Europeans terrorizes his consciousness, working as a source for revenge and retaliation.⁸ As an Australian, a catastrophic notion of being demographically overwhelmed by non-westerners could have been read in the Australian press in which in 2005 a local academic complained that "white Australians face a life-and-death-struggle to preserve their homeland" against the "Third World colonisation of Australia."⁹ Such messages continue to be communicated by some newspaper columnists, but Tarrant does not refer to them. The curious absence of the Australian context is considered further below.

As so often the case with genocide, a genocidal subjectivity develops in seeking to prevent genocide: perpetrators invariably think of themselves as acting in self-defence to avert imminent destruction. The murderer of Jews in a Pittsburgh synagogue thus infamously declared that "HIAS [a Jewish organization created in 1881 to aid Jewish refugees] likes to bring invaders in that kill our people. I can't sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I'm going in."¹⁰ Similar to Tarrant, he dismissed Trump as soft, but he shared the president's rhetoric about "invaders" among whom possibly lurked middle eastern terrorists. He thought he was acting in self-defence.

Moreover, because Tarrant conceives of human history as racial struggle, in which peoples are collectively guilty, non-combatants can and should be killed. "There are no innocents in an invasion," he avers, "all those who colonize other peoples [sic.] land share guilt" (12). This conviction applies to children as to adults, because the former "will one day become teens, then adults, voting against the wishes of our people, practicing the cultural and religious practices of the invaders, taking other people's lands, work, houses and even attacking and killing our children." Consequently, he concluded: "You burn the nest and kill the vipers, no matter their age" (52). Such assumptions are intrinsic to the permanent security thinking of genocidal actors.

By speaking for indigenous Europeans supposedly colonized by alien "invaders" who represent an "occupation," he was perpetrating what scholars of genocide call "subaltern

⁷ We know that he referenced epic battles with the Ottoman on his rifles: "Tours 732" is a French victory over Muslims invading from Spain; "1571" refers to the naval battle of Lepanto when a coalition of Christian powers defeated the Ottoman fleet; "1683 Vienna" refers to the successful defence of the city against an Ottoman siege. On this orientation, Robert Bideleux, "The 'Orientalization' and 'de-Orientalization' of East Central Europe and the Balkan Peninsula," *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 23, no. 1 (2015): 9–44.

⁸ On this theme, A. Dirk Moses, "Genocide and the Terror of History," *Parallax* 17, no. 4 (2011): 90–108.

⁹ Andrew Fraser, "Rethinking the White Australia Policy," *The Australian*, 21 September 2005. Fraser Anning's policies closely approximate Andrew Fraser's ideas.

¹⁰ US Department of Justice, "Additional Charges Filed in Tree of Life Synagogue Shooting," 29 January 2019, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-wdpa/pr/additional-charges-filed-tree-life-synagogue-shooting-0>.

genocide," that is, "genocide of the oppressed."¹¹ Of course, the oppression is a fantasy of his own imagining, though common in far-right circles. What do the battles of crusaders in the twelfth century, other clashes on the fringes of Europe, and recent terrorist attacks by Islamists in, say, France, have in common and to do with Muslims praying in far-off Christchurch in 2019? They can be linked only in a paranoid historical imaginary marked by religious-ethnic struggle – and by tremendous violence – as the driver of the human drama whose actors are entities called races and religions. These are not only fairy-tale assumptions about stable identities enduring over time that issue in nightmare scenarios; they are also deeply racist notions based on untenable dreams of racial purity and thus the pollution caused by "racial mixing" (miscegenation). Such racial apocalypticism intensified in the far right after the ISIL attacks in Paris in 2015.¹²

Misanthropic as his historical anthropology is, Tarrant regards himself as executing innate human laws in a rational, non-hateful manner. He claims to bear no ill-will to any culture, people, or religion, even Islam, which he opposes only because it has threatened Europe for 1,300 years. That is why ascribing his actions to an apolitical "hate" is unsatisfactory; he has profoundly *political* motivations. Strange as it seems, by expelling "invaders," he aims to promote racial and human "diversity." For that reason, three of the slogans on the pagan (and Nazi-adopted) Odal rune within the "sun wheel" (also used by the white supremacist "unite the right" demonstrator in Charlottesville on 12 August 2017) on the cover of his manifesto are "anti-imperialism," "ethnic autonomy," and "protection of heritage and culture." Despite eschewing European superiority, however, he presumes the supremacy of Europeans *within* Europe – and in the settler colonies (a point I take up below). He insists on homogeneity and hierarchy *within* countries. Tarrant's quotation of the white supremacist 14-word motto – "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children" (6) – indicates his allegiance.

The other slogans are: "environmentalism," "responsible markets," "addiction-free community," "law and order," and "worker's rights." As might be expected given this list, Tarrant is a vehement critic of neo-liberal capitalism and its legitimating conservative ideology, which he holds responsible for despoiling the environment and hooking Europeans on cheap consumer goods produced by an economic system reliant on cheap – that is, foreign – labour. He thus enjoins virtually autarchic economies cut off from the global market (66) in which workers' rights are protected by unions to keep up wages and keep out imported workers. A "green nationalism" will protect the environment by limiting immigration and urbanization that he accuses Green-left parties of supporting (37). Only in this way can whites avoid "genocide."

And in this way, Tarrant also differs markedly from centre-right conservatives. While sharing the aversion to inner-city residents (who vote Green) and the rhetoric about the corrupting influence of political correctness and cultural Marxism, conservatives either extol globalization or, even if their ardour has been cooled and they are now enamoured of leaders like the Hungarian Viktor Orbán, are generally climate-change sceptics, proponents of American empire, and opponents of organized labour. What is more, Tarrant's

¹¹ Nicholas A. Robins and Adam Jones, eds., *Genocides by the Oppressed: Subaltern Genocide in Theory and Practice* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); A. Dirk Moses, ed., *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2008).

¹² Andrew F. Wilson, "The Bitter End: Apocalypse and Conspiracy in White Nationalist Responses to the ISIL Paris Attacks," *Patterns of Prejudice* 51, no. 5 (2017): 412–31.

revolutionary rhetoric is explicitly exterminatory, seeking and welcoming (mass) quasi-militarized death in the name of the cause and the struggle. Death sentences are pronounced on NGOs (for guilt-shaming Europeans into paying foreign aid and importing refugees), drug dealers (for ruining families and thus “our people” [48]), on the “anti-white” economic elites that profit by importing cheap foreign labour (47), on German chancellor Angela Merkel (“at the top of the list”) for allowing Syrian refugees to enter the country, on Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for heading Europe’s most implacable foe, Turkey (though not ISIS or Al-Qaeda, which seek sovereignty in the Middle East, far from Europe), and on London mayor, Sadiq Khan, for being a “Pakistani Muslim invader” (38). Tarrant’s heroes are not mainstream conservatives – while Trump is “a symbol of renewed white identity and common purpose,” he is no “policy maker and leader” (15) – but the English fascist Oswald Mosley.¹³ Tarrant describes himself as an “eco-fascist” though, perhaps mischievously, names the People’s Republic of China as a model. He does not elaborate on the China reference, but presumably admires its statist commitment to the national economic interest and racial homogeneity, although it is in fact highly diverse and hardly a model of green nationalism (14, 32).

Tarrant’s eclectic bundle of views will be familiar to anyone who has studied fascism and modern right-wing terrorism. His eco-fascism and use of pagan symbols references German nineteenth-century “blood and soil” notions of national culture’s rootedness in particular geographies. German writers at the time also expressed “cultural despair” about the onset of industrial modernity and its effects on rural society.¹⁴ Unlike this tradition, however, Tarrant does not subscribe to antisemitic conspiracy theories: Jews (“Semites”) should leave Europe but otherwise pose no threat to Europeans (14). As with Anders Breivik, there is no adoration for Nazi Germany and Hitler whose excesses paved the way for the anti-nationalist reaction that they think paralyses Europe today. It is the *demographic* threat supposedly posed by Muslim and other Third World migrants that is the problem for them. Striking is the systematic and calm manner in which Tarrant and Breivik build their specious case, recalling for the reader Hitler’s distinction between “emotional” and “rational” antisemitism; only the latter could lead to a “final solution” (a term used by Fraser Anning to refer to Muslims in Australia).¹⁵

Purely emotional anti-Semitism finds its final expression in the form of pogroms. Rational anti-Semitism, by contrast, must lead to a systematic and legal struggle against, and eradication of, the privileges the Jews enjoy over the other foreigners living among us. Its final objective, however, must be the total removal of all Jews from our midst.¹⁶

The total removal of non-Europeans is Tarrant’s goal, as it is Anders Breivik’s. How they intend to achieve this goal by mobilizing the genocide concept is thus of signal importance.

¹³ If Tarrant takes his eco-fascism seriously, he should focus on Jorian Jenks (1899–1963), agricultural advisor to the British Union of Fascists, rather than on Mosley who was dazzled by modern science. See Dan Stone, *Responses to Nazism in Britain, 1933–1939: Before War and Holocaust* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

¹⁴ Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961). For this reason, it is historically inaccurate for centre-right commentators now to attribute Tarrant’s “green nationalism” to “leftist” sources. For an excellent analysis, see Jason Wilson, “Eco-Fascism is Undergoing a Revival in the Fetid Culture of the Extreme Right,” *The Guardian*, 19 March 2019.

¹⁵ Phillippa Carisbrooke, “Why the Term ‘Final Solution’ is so Offensive,” *SBS News*, 16 August 2019, <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/why-the-term-final-solution-is-so-offensive>.

¹⁶ Hitler on “Rational Anti-Semitism” (1919): <https://alphahistory.com/nazigermany/hitler-on-rational-anti-semitism-1919/>.

The Roots and Currency of “White Genocide”

Although Breivik refers on multiple occasions to genocides committed by Ottomans against Christian minorities, he uses the term “white genocide” only once in his 1524-page manifesto: it appears in a quotation about white South African farmers in a section titled “The European Afrikaner/Boer Genocide in Africa.”¹⁷ (The South African connection’s relevance will become apparent shortly.) Why genocide? Neither Breivik nor Tarrant invoke the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide (1948). Instead, Breivik quotes Raphael Lemkin’s famous statement from his *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* to the effect that genocides can be incremental: “Generally speaking, genocide does not mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation.”¹⁸ From Lemkin’s broad definition of genocide, which is not reflected in its legal codification, they infer that demographic changes via immigration can be genocidal, especially since governments control migration, thus suggesting state intentionality. In keeping with this paranoid view of the state, Breivik regards European Union structures as a conspiracy to Islamize Europe by supporting migration from Muslim countries, multiculturalism, and granting Islam equal status to Christianity and Judaism.¹⁹ On one of his ammunition clips, Tarrant wrote “Here’s your migration compact,” referring to the UN Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (<https://refugeesmigrants.un.org>), a non-binding intergovernmental agreement negotiated in 2018 that he plainly thought violated the natural order of racially homogeneous countries.

Other far-right authors draw on the Genocide Convention to make their “white genocide” case by creatively adapting its articles to their ends, in particular three of the five clauses in Article II:

- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.²⁰

The inculcation of “collective guilt as White People” for conquest and slavery, indeed as the only people who should be punished for historical crimes, it is argued, is tantamount to mental harm (clause [a]). Likewise, abortion has led to a low birth-rate while migrants are imported to make up the labour shortfall (clause [d]). It is clause (c) that is most salient, however: “relentless massive Third World immigration to all White countries, and only White countries,” open borders, multicultural and diversity policies lead inexorably to a “blended humanity” only in “White countries,” thereby entailing “(white) genocide.”²¹

The likely origin of the “white genocide” notion is David Lane’s 1988 “white genocide manifesto.” A neo-Nazi terrorist who died in jail in 2007, Lane also penned the 14-word

¹⁷ Breivik, 2083, 1200–1201. For Ottoman genocides of Christians, see 31, *passim*.

¹⁸ Breivik, 2083, 1200; Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), 79.

¹⁹ Breivik, 2083, e.g. 285.

²⁰ Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, United Nations, Office of the Commission for Human Rights, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crimeofgenocide.aspx>.

²¹ “What is ‘White Genocide’?: A Thorough Explanation,” *This is Europe*, 21 January 2016, <http://thisiseuropa.net/whatiswhitegenocide/>.

white nationalist motto mentioned above that appears at the end of his manifesto. It repeats now familiar themes, especially about miscegenation, while adding the typically Nazi aversion to “Judeo-Christianity” for its universalism, to the “Zionist conspiracy” that he thinks rules “all Western nations” for encouraging racial mixing, while emphasizing the nuclear family and the female role in reproducing the “White race.” He was acutely conscious that his ideas were alien to “so-called ‘higher education,’” which he disparaged as “advanced brain pollution” and as part “of a corrupt, destructive, and tyrannical system.” By contrast, he posited and invoked “Nature’s laws, common sense, and current circumstances” that “men of good conscience and reasonable mind” could recognize. Such was his appeal to those alienated by “current circumstances.”²²

Similar ideas were current more than a century ago in the notion of “race suicide” about the survival of white settlers in the USA and Canada, leading to restrictive immigration policies and draconian eugenic laws in some states. Australia instituted its “White Australia Policy” (which Fraser Anning wants to re-institute) at about the same time.²³ Now this old fear has been revived with a new slogan. Others have traced how the “white genocide” notion has travelled from David Lane to South African farmers trying to gain attention for their claimed plight, to Canada, Australia, the USA, and even Russia, where white nationalists have popularized their stories. Breivik, we know, also wrote about them. In the US, functional equivalents circulate, like the slogan of “you will not replace us” chanted by white nationalist demonstrators in Charlottesville in 2017.²⁴ This term itself derives from the French writer Renaud Camus whose 2012 book *Le grand remplacement* (The Great Replacement) has found immense resonance in white nationalist circles in many countries. Its simple thesis is that Europeans are the most threatened with “replacement” by non-Europeans for the reasons that Tarrant states in his manifesto: mass immigration of non-Europeans is overwhelming and will ultimately “replace” European populations.²⁵ In its fixation on demographic substitution, the fear mimics settler colonial theory, which highlights how this form of colonialism is marked not primarily exploitation of native labour but through its elimination and replacement by immigrant-settlers: one society displaces

²² David Lane, “White Genocide Manifesto” (1988), <https://www.davidlane1488.com/whitegenocide.html>. For analysis of the white power movement, see Kathleen Below, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).

²³ Cynthia Levine-Rasky, “The 100-Year-Old Rallying Cry of ‘White Genocide,’” *The Conversation*, 8 July 2018, <https://theconversation.com/the-100-year-old-rallying-cry-of-white-genocide-98378>; Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

²⁴ Paul Jackson, “‘White Genocide’: Postwar Fascism and the Ideological Value of Evoking Existential Conflicts,” in *The Routledge History of Genocide*, ed. Cathie Carmichael and Richard C. Maguire (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 207–226; Kevan A. “Fear of White Genocide: Tracing the History of a Myth from Germany to Charlottesville,” *Lapham’s Quarterly*, 6 September 2017; Brent Patterson, “The Myth of a White Genocide in South Africa Comes to Ottawa,” *Rabble.ca*, 1 November 2018, <http://www.rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/brent-patterson/2018/11/myth-white-genocide-south-africa-comes-ottawa>; Chris Zappone, “The High Price of ‘White Genocide’ Politics for Australia,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 August 2018; Michael Bueckert, “Searching for White Genocide in S Africa,” *Africa’s Country*, <https://africasacountry.com/2018/02/searching-for-white-genocide-in-south-africa>; Rosa Lyster, “The Creeping Spectre of ‘White Genocide’: The Conspiracy Theory that was Once Contained to South Africa is Spreading Worldwide,” *The Outline*, 9 May 2018, <https://theoutline.com/post/4486/the-creeping-spectre-of-white-genocide?zd=1&zi=oppmsml4s>; Kaz Ross, “How Believers in ‘White Genocide’ are Spreading their Hate-Filled Message in Australia,” *The Conversation*, 29 November 2018, <https://theconversation.com/how-believers-in-white-genocide-are-spreading-their-hate-filled-message-in-australia-106605>; James Pogue, “The Myth of White Genocide: An Unfinished Civil War Inspires a Global Delusion,” *Harper’s Magazine*, 6 March 2019.

²⁵ Thomas Chatterton Williams, “The French Origins of ‘You Will Not Replace Us’: The European thinkers Behind the White-Nationalist Rallying Cry,” *New Yorker*, 4 December 2017.

another.²⁶ Camus – and Tarrant who likely takes the French site of his “enlightenment” story from him – fear they are native victims of reverse settler colonialism. Not for nothing does he talk about the “colonization of Europe today.”²⁷

For the managers of the “Great Replacement” website, the term should substitute for “white genocide”:

The purpose of this site is the documentation of European decline both demographically and culturally, and spreading awareness of this term “The Great Replacement” both on the internet through hashtags like #TheGreatReplacement and #GreatReplacement and in conversations in the real world, which hopefully inspires change in cultural and political attitudes before it is too late. In addition, it should replace the previous term that was used to describe the same population replacement phenomenon as #WhiteGenocide, which hasn’t been as effective outside the United States, although YouTube alone shows over 50,000 results when you do an exact search for “white genocide” – most of them in English.²⁸

Tarrant clearly decided to use both terms. Needless to say, invoking genocide is highly metaphorical and tendentious. Whether by Lemkin’s general definition or by the restrictive UN one, in no way can the processes traced by these neo-fascist white nationalists be understood as genocide. Lemkin did not think cultural and demographic change were genocidal; only coercive measures could be, and then only with the intention to destroy a group.²⁹ Such an intention cannot be attributed to European or the other states Tarrant and others mention. This is fantastical paranoia based on obdurate blindness to how power works, policy is generated, and processes unfold.

Why this dangerous hysteria now? Analysts are pointing to the capacity of the Internet to network and create communities of conspiracy theorists in a semi-clandestine way, whether within countries or across borders. Certainly, the rapid spread of imagery and information means that the case of South African farmers can quickly assume the status of fact (i.e. that they are victims of “white genocide” when the evidence suggests otherwise). Thus established in the white nationalist imagination, South Africa represents the future they fear in the former British settler colonies of Australia, Canada, and the USA, even in Europe.

Seen in epochal terms, however, another context is more important: decolonization and the unravelling of the settler colonial mythology and its masculine norms. Since the massive settlement of Europeans in the extra-European world in the nineteenth century – where and when they inaugurated “settler revolutions” – the global tide has slowly turned on European empires, even if they hung on (often violently) until the 1960s and even 1970s in the Portuguese case.³⁰ In short: these decades marked the end of a process of European economic and demographic expansion that began in the late fifteenth century. With the end of empire came the return of settlers and also the

²⁶ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409.

²⁷ Joel Helm and James McAuley, “New Zealand Attacks Offer the Latest Evidence of a Web of Supremacist Extremism,” *Washington Post*, 15 March 2019.

²⁸ The Great Replacement, <http://www.great-replacement.com>.

²⁹ See A. Dirk Moses, “Raphael Lemkin, Culture, and the Concept of Genocide,” in *The Oxford Handbook on Genocide Studies*, ed. Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 19–41.

³⁰ James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2009); Martin Thomas and Andrew S. Thompson, eds., *Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

immigration of the former colonized who were required to work in European factories.³¹ Countries without recent colonial pasts, like West Germany, took workers from Turkey and southern European countries. Migration and refugee patterns have indeed changed, then, though not to the extent claimed by the far-right ideologues, who catastrophize them as a reverse colonization, in which the Indigenous Europeans are now occupied by dominant foreigners. Tarrant's use of the language of occupation is no accident, even if it is fanciful given the class location of non-European migrants in Europe. Economically, the "great divergence" between Europe and the US on the one hand, and China and India on the other, also began to end as these eastern countries – especially China – challenged the global European and American economic hegemony that endured after the end of empire, accelerating their deindustrialization and producing millions of economically precarious and resentful men. It is time to consider the proposition that the "white genocide" hysteria is one reaction to the end of white entitlement as the global norm.³²

Another, related, reaction is the current campaign in the USA and Australia to embed corporately funded "Western Civilization" programmes in universities to combat the "cultural Marxism" and "political correctness" that conservatives think have run amok and brainwashed students.³³ All of them are also seized by the fear that feminism is attacking traditional masculinity and the family unit as the fundamentals of Western Civilization. They thus vehemently defend the heterosexual union against marriage equality campaigns (they failed in Australia) and seek to end abortion rights. If ethno-fascists fixate on racial hygiene and "white" fertility as the core gender issue, conservatives are likewise vexed by new talk of fluid gender identities. These are, they all say, manifestations of "cultural Marxism." In the US in particular, the owning and wielding of firearms adds another layer to the constitution of frontier masculinity. Tarrant understands this cultural peculiarity and makes much of it in his manifesto, hoping that leftist attempts to ban gun ownership in the USA will stimulate the cathartic civil war and revolutionary process he fervently desires (5, 10).

White self-confidence is also at issue for Tarrant and his ilk. It is true that public apologies for various historical crimes by settler societies have been issued by their leaders.³⁴ But their interpretation by far-right (and conservative) ideologues as forcing them to don the perpetual hairshirt of inferiority is ludicrously excessive. Experiencing criticism of national mythologies as genocidal says more about the person involved than the arguments advanced. Striking the pose of the victim now seems emotionally gratifying, having felt entitled to govern the world for centuries. So blaming "identity politics" for the gravitational pull of "white" identity is hardly a satisfactory explanation, given that colonial rule has always entailed identity politics, one in which race/colour lines were most strictly

³¹ Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

³² On this sense of entitlement in domestic politics, see Ghassan Hage, "White Entitlement is Part of the Very Structure of Australian Society," *The Guardian*, 18 March 2019. On the great divergence debate, see Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Pomeranz, "Ten Years After: Responses and Reconsiderations," *Historically Speaking* 12, no. 4 (2011): 20–25.

³³ A. Dirk Moses, "Western Civilization and Conservative Hysteria," *ABC Religion and Ethics*, 7 June 2018, <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2018/06/07/4853745.htm>; Moses, "Western Civilization, the Media, and Political Irresponsibility," *Online Opinion*, 18 June 2018, <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=19801&page=0>.

³⁴ Melissa Nobles, *The Politics of Official Apologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Danielle Celermajer and A. Dirk Moses, "Australian Memory and the Apology to the Stolen Generations of Indigenous People," in *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices, and Trajectories*, ed. Aleida Assman and Sebastian Conrad (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 32–58.

drawn in the Protestant empires.³⁵ The legacies of this racism continue to haunt these societies in the form of Indigenous marginalization and African-American incarceration, but proponents of the “white genocide” myth insist they are history’s principle victim.

The absence of this history in Tarrant’s manifesto is noteworthy given that he hails from a settler colony – indeed from a country town with Indigenous traditional owners – founded on the genocide and enslavement of Indigenous peoples and imported Melanesian workers. We know that he supported far-right groups in Australia but conceals the local sources and story of his radicalization.³⁶ If anyone is an invader (or descendent of invaders), it is Tarrant. In an act of brazen displacement, he barely mentions Australia and instead trains his focus on Europe so he can cast whites (and himself) as the indigenous people overwhelmed by non-whites. Likewise, the exaggerations about the violence against white South African farmers can be interpreted as displaced guilt about the process that their forebears undertook to wrest the land from Africans in the first place.

As might be expected, Breivik and others have a ready answer to such arguments: Muslim empire-building has caused infinitely more suffering than Western expansion.³⁷ These are meta-claims about historical injustice on which scholars of genocide do not usually pronounce. Who is to say which empires are “worse” than others? Historians write about genocidal episodes in all of them. It is difficult to reason with those who refuse to see reason. In the interests of preventing genocidal terror, however, everyone engaged in public analysis of this phenomenon is obliged to keep trying.

Conclusion

Marginal as Tarrant’s and Breivik’s ideas seem, particularly when garbed with neo-Nazi conspiracy theories, the notion that Europe is being swamped by Third World migrants, and especially by Muslims, is mainstream discourse. Since the mid-2000s, popular and respected authors have been advancing this thesis in best-selling and widely reviewed publications that are picked up by the major newspapers. They were then devoured by Breivik. He praised Bruce Bawer’s *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within*, and in particular Bat Ye’or’s *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis*, which attempt to forge a Europe-Israel front against the common Muslim foe by evoking the nightmare scenario of an Islamized Europe.³⁸ Like these authors, Breivik is aggrieved by what he sees as Europeans’ underestimation of a Muslim threat in a postulated “clash of cultures.” He consequently denounces the insinuation of Muslim-funded research

³⁵ Robert Aldrich and Kirsten McKenzie, eds., *The Routledge History of Western Empires* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

³⁶ This journal publishes extensively on the subject: Thomas James Rogers and Stephen Bain, “Genocide and Frontier Violence in Australia,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 18, no. 1 (2016): 83–100. Alex Mann, Kevin Nguyen, and Katherine Gregory, “Christchurch Shooting Accused Brenton Tarrant Supports Australian Far-Right figure Blair Cottrell,” ABC News, 23 March 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-03-23/christchurch-shooting-accused-praised-blair-cottrell/10930632>.

³⁷ Breivik, 2083, 31.

³⁸ Bruce Bawer, *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within* (New York: Broadway Books, 2006); Bat Ye’or, *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis* (Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006). Other books with the same message about an Islamic take-over of Europe and the West include Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan: How Britain is Creating a Terror State Within* (London: Encounter Books, 2006), and Mark Steyn, *America Alone: The End of the World as we Know it* (New York: Regnery Publishing, 2006); Breivik, 2083, 286, 312. In this section, Breivik reproduces text by “Fjordman.”

institutes at Western universities that he thinks lead to an uncritical analysis of Islam and trivialization of serial Islamic genocides of Middle Eastern Christians. How does Breivik argue that this malaise come about? The answer is the rise of “political correctness.” His analysis has a familiar ring:

This generation of [1960s] “Cultural Marxist radicals” has now become the establishment in the vast majority of our institutions of higher learning. As university head masters, deans, and department chairmen, they have set about hiring other ideologues in their own image and have instigated the repressive policies we know as political correctness. These politicised academics will be extremely difficult to dislodge from their current positions of power.³⁹

The point of political correctness, he continues, is cultural relativism that attacks what he calls the “Western tradition” based on the following proposition: “Since all cultures are equal, there is no need to preserve Western civilization ...” He elaborates these points in relation to the key flashpoint of higher education:

The proponents of political correctness have concentrated their efforts on the core of a liberal education, the curriculum. Their efforts will radically alter what new generations of Western Europeans and Americans will learn. In this battle the handmaiden of political correctness has been the “multicultural” movement. A number of critics have rightly pointed out that multiculturalism is more than an argument for courses that concentrate on groups that at one time were disadvantaged or oppressed. Rather, multiculturalism involves the systematic restructuring of the curriculum so as to hinder students from learning about the Western tradition.⁴⁰

These are entirely mainstream ideas in Western countries, and so it is unsurprising that Breivik cites mainstream conservatives – including Australians Keith Windschuttle, Cardinal George Pell and John Howard (“one of the most sensible leaders in the Western world”) – with approval.⁴¹

Those advancing an alarmist “decline of the West” narrative need to think carefully about how they are intellectually equipping those with catastrophized subjectivities to take their proclaimed state of emergency as a green light for desperate measures. If you postulate a cultural and/or demographic “war,” we now know all too well that some will take your words literally and arrogate to themselves the role of your words’ executor: it only takes one or two. In this regard, Bat Ye’or’s response to Breivik’s enthusiastic adaption of her work was woefully inadequate, namely the usual deflection manoeuvre of calling him an “insane person” while continuing to pronounce on the dangers that Islam presents to the West.⁴² Renaud Camus likewise disavowed any responsibility for Tarrant’s adoption of his “great replacement” slogan, accusing him of “plagiarism,”⁴³ despite its popularity in far-right circles. And in the mainstream ones: no less than the French-Jewish intellectual Alain Finkielkraut praises Camus as “a great writer” who has “forged

³⁹ Breivik, 2083, 13.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 14.

⁴¹ Ibid., 670.

⁴² “Jewish Author Cited by Gunman Voices Regret,” *Ynet*, 25 July 2011, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4100064,00.html>. Israel is central to her conception of the West. Niram Ferretti, “Eurabia and the Selling Out of Israel: An Interview with Bat Ye’or,” *L’Informale*, 3 December 2017, <http://www.linformale.eu/eurabia-and-the-selling-out-of-israel-an-interview-with-bat-yeor/>.

⁴³ “French ‘Great Replacement’ Writer Denounces ‘Appalling’ NZealand Attack,” *France 24*, 15 March 2019, <https://www.france24.com/en/20190315-french-great-replacement-writer-denounces-appalling-nzealand-attack>

an expression that is heard all the time and everywhere.”⁴⁴ It concedes too much to the likes of Tarrant to agree that “*Everything Tarrant identifies as qualities of a disintegrating Western civilization is true,*” as one American conservative intellectual wrote the day of Christchurch massacre.⁴⁵

To be sure, it is one thing to have partially overlapping diagnoses, quite another to agree on remedies. The conservatives whom Breivik admires are not responsible for his decision to engage in mass murder. Nor would the commentators who now sow panic in sections of the population by banging on about political correctness, and who identify the inner enemy culpable for every malaise (Muslims and race-traitor and/or corrupting academics), be responsible for the actions of people like Tarrant. Shooting dozens of leftist youths like Breivik is not their solution; it is, rather, re-educating their ilk to love Western Civilization while stoking hypervigilance about Islamist terrorism. Even so, given the presence of marginal and suggestable individuals with access to weapons, what do journalists and politicians think they are doing when they call immigration an “invasion” (as one Australian media figure claims) and the “Green New Deal” proposal of some US-Democrats as “tantamount to genocide” (as one Republican politician does regarding his rural constituents)?⁴⁶ It is all very well to monitor the networks of ultra-nationalists who bandy about notions like “white genocide,” but will that be sufficient to lower the temperature if mainstream public figures fail to contain the potential for “white genocide” to be construed from their own apocalyptic slogans and arguments?

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⁴⁴ Williams, “The French Origins of ‘You Will Not Replace Us.’”

⁴⁵ Rod Dreher, “Radicalization & Degeneration,” *The American Conservative*, 15 March 2019, <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/radicalization-degeneration-brenton-tarrant-white-supremacist/>. Emphasis in the original. He responds to his many critics in “Disintegration and its Discontents,” *The American Conservative*, 19 March 2019, <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/disintegration-and-its-discontents/>

⁴⁶ Robert Manne, “Andrew Bolt Got his Facts Wrong. But that’s not the Only Thing Wrong with his Column,” *The Guardian*, 6 August 2018; Antony Adragna, “GOP Lawmaker: Green New Deal ‘Tantamount to Genocide,’” *Politico*, 14 March 2019, <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/03/14/green-new-deal-genocide-1270839>.