

DARK EMU
(BRUCE PASCOE)

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Americans do not understand Australia. At all. If Australia is brought up, they think of a few movie and television stars. They think of a vast red desert, perhaps, with a big rock, what's-its-name (Ayers Rock), sticking up against a bright blue sky. They think Australians eat kangaroos (they don't; they're vermin). Most of all, they have a vague idea that Australians are a lot like Americans, only more informal, and more rugged and self-reliant. They once were, true, and a few still are. But the Australians are in many ways more ruined than Americans today (though we are accelerating to see if we can pass them). The 2014 book *Dark Emu*, or rather the insane racial-religious grift of which it is a small part, is one example.

Now, to be sure, I'm not Australian. However, I'm married to an Australian and I've spent a lot of time there in the past twenty years. Even in those two decades, I have watched the Australian spirit grow insipid in real time. Naturally, there are some who have not succumbed, but it appears (as in America, one cannot be sure what those outside the elites think) those brave few have even less power than in America. So from my perspective, the entire society is farther in the toilet than America—though the lack of conflict in Australia, along with great natural beauty and wealth, conceals the instability. It's a pleasant enough ride down, until it's not; just ignore that China and Mark Zuckerberg are the real sovereigns.

The chief symptom of this moral decline is that Australians today are mostly sheeple; the rugged individualism that characterized (no doubt with some exaggeration) Australia until the 1970s or even the 1980s is gone. Australia's ludicrous reaction to the Wuhan Plague, more uniformly hysterical than in America, is far from the only piece of evidence. More notably, several years ago, when the government confiscated most firearms and instituted an extremely intrusive regime, including unannounced house entry by police at any time, for those allowed to keep some neutered firearms, instead of rebelling, Australians meekly accepted. However, the most puzzling, to me, and most widespread, manifestation of sheepledom is that nearly the entire country

has adopted a complex of delusions about the Aborigines, who are somewhere around three percent of the population. Collectively, these delusions manifest as a bizarre self-flagellating secular religion, often named “reconciliation,” whose major sacraments are apologizing for nonexistent wrongs, handing out money to people who are not victims, and, most importantly from a societal perspective, treating the Aborigines, whose subculture is hugely dysfunctional and contributes very little to Australian society, as worthy of honors and distinctions.

I know what you’re thinking—isn’t this the same racial fraud that the people who brought us critical race theory and the 1619 Project are running in America? Why, yes. Or rather, it has a lot of similarity. But the background is different. Which means we need a brief history of Australia.

The land that is now Australia was settled around 50,000 years ago. As David Reich narrates in *Who We Are and How We Got Here*, the original inhabitants of Australia (and New Guinea) are the only extant human population with significant DNA from the Denisovans, an extinct archaic human population (named after the cave in Siberia where the first genetically-typed examples were found). The “Australo-Denisovans,” as Reich names them, now called the Australian Aborigines, probably originated from interbreeding with modern humans somewhere in China, and reached Australia over land bridges. This was not easy; as naturalists have long noted, there is a clear demarcation, called Huxley’s Line or Wallace’s Line, that separates Australian fauna from Asian fauna, the result of significant distance even during the lower sea levels of past ice ages. In Australia the Aborigines stayed; they did not go farther, and the rest of the Pacific was settled by the Polynesians, a group with no relation to the original inhabitants of what is now Australia.

The Aborigines formed many cultures—when the Europeans arrived, around 250 entirely distinct Aboriginal languages existed. This seems like a lot, though one should remember that Australia is very large and such hunter-gatherer cultures were typically widely separated. (A similar process took place in New Guinea; there it was not distance, but mountainous geography, that separated cultures.) Often today one hears loose claims that Aborigines were a civilization. But by universal agreement, to take Wikipedia as the sum of that agreement (a dangerous game, but workable here), a civilization is “any complex society characterized by

urban development, social stratification, a form of government, and symbolic systems of communication (such as writing)." Aborigines did not, ever, have a single one of those. They were the very definition of a primitive people; some were Stone Age, not even having fire (though this last point is argued), and none had any use of metal or of anything but the most basic stone and wood tools.

The Europeans, first the Dutch, cruised by in the early seventeenth century, but the history of Australia as a nation is tied to James Cook mapping the eastern coast and claiming the continent for Britain in 1770, and the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788. The latter was primarily composed of convicts, a source of annoyance for expatriate Australians, who constantly must converse with Americans who think it's an original icebreaker to mention this when introduced to an Australian. Throughout the nineteenth century, the European population (mostly English, but including some other immigrants, especially during periods of gold rushes) expanded rapidly, in both numbers and geographic scope. As with the original American colonies, there was no nation, just individual colonies administered by Britain. But in 1901, the colonies joined together as a federation as part of the British Empire, to which dates the modern Australian nation. World War I, most of all the fight against the Turks at Gallipoli, looms extremely large in the Australian consciousness. It forms the basic binding story of the nation, or it did, until the modern centrifugal force of identity politics arrived on the scene. Regardless, the past 120 years have been good to Australia, blessed with a modified English culture, enormous natural resources, and a position isolated from direct attack by major powers.

There is much more to say about Australia, but let's focus on the topic of *Dark Emu*, the Aborigines. In the usual manner upon the arrival of a powerful civilization, many Aboriginal cultures went extinct due to diseases introduced by the Europeans, and those cultures that survived often, or usually, changed to something new and unrecognizable to their ancestors, as a result of Christianization and the semi-voluntary switch from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle to Europeanized agriculture. Until very recently, moreover, almost nobody studied Aboriginal cultures, and no Aboriginal people had any written records, so our only knowledge of their cultures as they were when the Europeans arrived comes from military men with a side interest in anthropology, settler

diaries, and occasional references in official records (notably those of the Aboriginal Protector, an office early established by the British to guarantee the interests of the Aborigines). Almost all Aboriginal culture was, therefore, indubitably lost to history.

In the 1960s, in a similar vein as the American Indians, the Aborigines, under white tutelage, began aggressively making political demands. The Indians, however, who had far more advanced cultures than the Aborigines and often maintained a high degree of cohesion even after conquest, had been organized to achieve political ends since the Europeans arrived. Political activity was entirely new for the Aborigines, and more importantly, there appears to have been no Aboriginal culture to renew. You won't find it stated anywhere, but it's fairly obvious to anyone paying attention that what passes for Aboriginal culture today is something essentially made up out of whole cloth by sympathetic white people in the 1950s and 1960s, based on fragments of uncertain knowledge combined with what few fixed cultural artifacts remain, such as rock paintings. (For example, Geoffrey Bardon, an art teacher, in the early 1970s created the dot paintings associated with Aborigines near Alice Springs, and now commonly sold to tourists, although he tried to deny this, claiming he was merely helping the locals transfer their sand drawings to a more permanent medium. To be fair, no doubt similar dots and patterns were used at some point by the Aborigines in their various tribal ceremonies, so precisely how much of it was whole cloth is hard to tell—and we'll never know, since nobody has ever been allowed to investigate.) This well-meaning concoction was adopted by Aborigines, who were only too happy to be told they possessed a unique spiritual-racial memory. Thus, the stories you hear about the Dreamtime and so forth, as well as nearly all supposed Aboriginal folk stories "passed down" are, I'm quite sure, something more than ninety percent pleasant fictions, palmed off on unsuspecting tourists and gullible, self-hating white people in Australia who think that they are personally guilty of something, never specified, with respect to the Aborigines, and they can atone by paying homage to the wisdom and Michelangelo-level art of the Aborigines.

In truth, today's white Australians, like today's white Americans, owe their black compatriots nothing they do not equally owe to every other citizen of their country. But let's address a slightly more tangled

question, whether Europeans of the past were guilty of ill treatment of the Aborigines, and if so, to what degree. This is a topic it's equally hard to get a handle on, also because of the various myths and quasi-myths that have arisen over the past fifty or sixty years. Thus, for example, you will hear incessantly, if you pay attention to Australian matters, about the "Stolen Generations." According to this legend, in the first half of the twentieth century the white Australian government snatched some tens of thousands of Aboriginal children and put them into new homes or group homes, because the whites were mean racists who wanted to forcibly assimilate the children into white society. Maybe they did (and more of assimilation below), but the Aboriginal Protectorate saw it as removing children who were "neglected and destitute," and giving them stability and opportunity.

Were they neglected and destitute? Well, in 2007 the Northern Territory (an Australian territory/state with a large Aboriginal population), in the "Intervention," in essence stripped Aboriginal communities of self-rule and mandated strict rules forbidding, among other things, the sale of alcohol and pornography to Aborigines. Why? Because of the unbelievably high rates of sexual abuse of children by Aborigines in Aboriginal communities (alcoholism and the vices it breeds are an even bigger problem among Aborigines than American Indians, if you can believe that). This suggests the Protector was probably right. And hundreds of thousands of white children, many more than aboriginal children, were, for the same stated reasons, similarly taken from their parents during the same time period, another data point that suggests skepticism about today's dominant narrative. Not to mention that one primary political demand accompanying whining about the Stolen Generations was (and is) for massive cash payments to those supposedly wronged. This was eagerly granted, yet more reason for what's probably largely or totally a fiction to be treated as sacred writ, such that nobody lose face or be "stigmatized" for being paid for existing.

Thus, one should be very skeptical of most claims about deliberate European mistreatment of the Aborigines, at any point in Australian history. This includes claims that Aborigines were hunted like animals, or deliberately exterminated to the last woman in Tasmania, and so forth. The historian Keith Windschuttle has written several books (which I haven't read) that critically examined today's received truths

about these matters. He has been viciously attacked as a result, always without any rebuttals of his evidence, rather as a thought criminal, which again reinforces the conclusion that most of the rest of the history of Aboriginal-European relations taught today is at best half-truths. Of course, this is only an Australian manifestation of the broader problem with all stories widely taught today about the past of the West. One has to assume they are not objective, and are something between total fictions and significant distortions, because as told today they are ideologically useful to the Left in their goal of political domination, a process begun with indoctrination in nursery school.

Dark Emu falls squarely into this pattern. The author, Bruce Pascoe, is an Australian, white as rice, of pure English stock, who dreamed that he was an Aborigine. When he woke, he created for himself an Aboriginal ancestry, the evidence for which he smoothly declines to provide to anyone (though proof of his lack of any material Aboriginal ancestry has been published). You may think this is strange, for a white man to speak for the Aborigine while pretending to be Aborigine. Yes, similar charades have happened a few times recently in America, but in Australia it is the norm for Aboriginal “spokesmen,” all of whom seem to be self-appointed and refuse to give their “credentials,” to be as white as Queen Elizabeth. It’s true that children of Aborigines and Europeans tend to look far more European than Aborigine, and European features dominate over generations. But even so, after a while, the average person begins to understand that his leg is being pulled, and likely none of these people is actually an Aborigine in any meaningful sense of the term. Of course, you are forbidden to point this out; if you insist on doing so, you will not only be called a racist (boring), but silly justifications such as “my Aboriginal descent was permanently buried by my forefathers in shame” will be pulled out to justify white people pretending to be Aborigines.

Pascoe’s goal in writing *Dark Emu* is, to an American, hard to grasp without knowledge of Australian cultural politics. Ostensibly, Pascoe is mining old settler records, journals and books, to show that the Aborigines were more than simple hunter-gatherers. At first glance, this is trying to prove something that is not in dispute—anthropologists have long recognized that “hunter-gatherer” contains a wide range of cultures, from extremely primitive to somewhat more complex. When

the Europeans arrived Aboriginal cultures spanned this entire range. Thus, at the upper end of the range, in a small number of instances, Aborigines used constructed fish traps and harvested naturally-growing grasses from year to year. Pascoe emphasizes evidence for this, but none of it is new, or denied by anthropologists, although Pascoe makes grand claims on thin evidence throughout the book. He likes to imply that Aborigines were farmers in the modern sense and that they domesticated crops and animals, obvious falsehoods even on the evidence he offers (which is usually created by editing settler diaries to remove the inconvenient parts of quotes).

Pascoe's real goal, though, is not to correct the anthropological record. It is to make a present-day political claim, that Australia really belongs to the Aborigines, and that cash, power, and honors should be given to them. This claim has been welcomed by the elites in Australia, since it fits right into their new woke religion centered around fictitious narratives of oppression, through which leftist white people achieve meaning. (Americans have been jarringly woken up to a similar crazy reality in our own country just recently; even a few years ago it would be hard to convey the flavor of Australian cultural politics, but it's a lot like BLM without the burning, looting, and murdering.) Even though all original claims in Pascoe's book have been wholly debunked (there is an entire website devoted to pointing out his errors), Pascoe has been showered with honors and rewards, and an even more dumbed-down version is being pushed on Australian schoolchildren. This is all just a small part of the collective ruling-class Australian insanity around the Aborigines, which includes pretending the Aborigines own all the land and constantly thanking them for "permitting" white people to use it, renaming Australia Day "Invasion Day" (unofficially so far), and much, much more. The latest clownishness, in January, was changing Australia's national anthem to pretend that Australia is not a young country, born in 1901, but the organic continuation of an illusory Aboriginal civilization (the date for which is also continuously fictitiously pushed back, with some claiming the Aborigines have occupied Australia for 150,000 years). It's all so tedious that I won't list more examples; you can go find them yourself, if you care.

As part of this typical modern woke religion, Australians are desperate to award honors and distinctions to Aborigines. Frequently,

because Aborigines have accomplished very little (really, nothing) that is memorable or important in Australian history, these awards tend to be collective, or to focus on subjective fields such as art. When an award is given to an individual, not uncommonly this results in embarrassment when later a recipient turns out not only to look like a man named Sam Jones, but in fact to possess the name of Sam Jones, rather than Waramurungundi, as he told the awards committee, whereupon everyone quickly moves on and pretends not to notice. Again, it's quite tedious (though funny to a foreigner, especially after a few drinks), and I would say strange from an American perspective, except that as I say we have seen massive movement in the same direction here recently. After all, we all know that in any sensible society, Ta-Nehisi Coates would top out his career as a substitute English teacher at a third-rate high school, yet he's probably had to buy a new house just to store the medals he gets.

All societies allot honors and distinctions to some of their members. Seeking those honors and distinctions used to be the prime driver for many, if not most, men. That search is much of what drives a society forward, and the more keenly those honors are sought, the faster and higher the society goes. No society in human history, prior to the present day, has given the majority of honors to those who deserve none, because doing so is obviously destructive of the society. Yet that is what every society in the West, with only a few minor exceptions, does today, and Australia is just one example. The ideological rationale is to end oppression—for oppression is what is thought to befall any in select groups who, in the past, failed to earn honors and distinctions, because they deserved none. Are you a tranny? Honors for you! Are you a black tranny? Even more honors for you! Are you a Commie black tranny? Maximum honors for you! In fact, every month of the year is now reserved to honor those who deserve no honor, either because of something that is irrelevant to honor (race) or corrosive of honor (sexual immorality). Needless to say, this approach hurtles a society into the outer darkness.

Honors and distinctions can be formal, such as medals, or informal, such as collective recognition of heroic action. This latter is equally corrupted. For example, I discovered during Zoom school last spring, when our second-graders, at a high-end private school, were talking

about heroes in their social studies class. Not a single person discussed was an actual hero, or recognized by anybody as a hero in America before the modern woke era. For example, the children were lectured extensively, and forced to write on, one Bessie Coleman. Who, you say? She was a stunt pilot of mixed black and Indian heritage, a novelty act in the 1920s not primarily because of her race but because she was a woman. Although it's likely her story as told to children today is either exaggerated or contains lies, as all such stories do, maybe she was an interesting woman (she was a sharecropper's daughter and a tireless self-promoter). Maybe she could be a role model for a girl interested in a similar career (one of the five or so in the nation), though Coleman's was a short career; she died in 1926 falling out of a plane. Or a model for black or Indian youth (though why we would need more such celebration of racial identity is beyond me). Nonetheless, Coleman did nothing at all heroic, which means taking great risks, or making great sacrifices, to accomplish a highly meaningful goal benefitting others. Yet naturally her Wikipedia article has a long list headed "Honors," although to be fair one of them is "Coleman was honored with a toy character in season 5, episode 11a of the children's animated television program *Doc McStuffins*." Our children no longer attend that school; they attend a classical Christian academy, where they learn real heroes and real history.

Such silliness is possible only for a rich society, that can preen itself on top of its other comforts, while ignoring those who do the real work of keeping society together and moving forward. Until they don't, because a society gets more of what it honors, and less of what it does not honor, and no society can do without real heroes. We need more William Tells and Robert Gould Shaws; we will get more Bruce Pascoes and Bruce Jenners.

And to close with going back to Australia. Does Australia's arc of decline into insipidity have anything to teach Americans? I'm not sure. Cross-cultural comparisons are dicey at best, and sometimes least illuminating between cultures that appear to have commonality. However, my wife, deeply conversant in both cultures, feels strongly that Americans really are *sui generis*, and that even if matters appear bleak here, and we are following the Australian path, Americans will pull it out and renew the land. I'm not sure, but as someone said on Twitter the other day,

“The fool hath said in his heart, things will slow down next week.” We can be sure we will soon enough learn which way it’s going to go. It’s going to be a long summer, but perhaps one where the opportunity to begin the renewal will be offered.