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In recent years, and particularly since the events of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent ‘war on terror’, much scholarly attention has been paid to the Australian news media’s role in stereotyping, homogenising, victimising and demonising people of Middle Eastern descent or of the Islamic faith. One very specific example is Peter Manning’s investigation of the reporting of issues related to Islam, Arabs and the Middle East for a two-year period, including the 12 months before and after the September 11 attacks, in two major Sydney newspapers. Although this period included coverage of events as diverse as the Palestinian Intifada, the controversial ‘ethnic’ gang rapes in Sydney, the arrival of asylum seekers in Australia, the events of September 11, and the Australian federal election of 2001, Manning found that there was a ‘remarkably consistent view of Arab people and people of Muslim belief’ which relied on racialist stereotypes that portray them as ‘violent to the point of terrorism’ and ‘as tricky, ungrateful, undeserving, often disgusting and barely human’. In *Bin Laden in the Suburbs: Criminalising the Arab Other*, the authors go one step further to argue that these media discourses have served to create a climate of fear and paranoia surrounding issues relating
to Arab/Middle Eastern/Islamic ‘others’. These people have been reduced to the role of ‘folk devil’, caught up in an ongoing cycle of ‘moral panic’ where ‘Middle Eastern can become conflated with Arab, Arab with Muslim, Muslim with rapist, rapist with gang, gang with terrorist, terrorist with ‘boat people’, ‘boat people’ with barbaric, and so on in interminable permutations’.3

Arguably, this construction of the Middle Eastern/Arab/Islamic ‘other’ has also played a role in the Australian news media’s coverage of broader global events, such as the Iraq War. Indeed, a recent body of literature has accused the Australian news media—particularly the Murdoch-controlled newspapers4—of displaying ‘an intellectual orthodoxy and an ideological uniformity that is remarkable, overt and long-standing’.5 For many of these authors, this ‘ideological uniformity’ is best illustrated by the coverage of the Iraq War in the Australian newspapers owned by News Corp.6 Along these lines, Robert Manne states that ‘[o]n the road to the invasion of Iraq, and through the ... bloody chaos since Baghdad’s fall, almost every Australian newspaper owned by Rupert Murdoch has, supported each twist and turn of the American, British and Australian policy line’.7 In this way, the contemporary Australian news media have not only played a part in propagating racialist discourses concerning the people of the Middle East and of the Islamic faith, they have also, failed to offer a robust discussion of Australia’s role in the ‘Coalition of the Willing’. Instead, it has provided the Australian populace with a limited discursive field that continues to engender the kind of myths and images that have long demarcated the divide between Oriental backwardness and Western civility.

However, contemporary Australian journalists have not so much invented the tropes and stereotypes that they have used to construct this negative image and limited discursive field, as they have invoked a rich tapestry of pre-existing notions about the non-Western world. Indeed, as this chapter will illustrate, the construction of the Islamic/Arab/Middle Eastern ‘other’ in the news media is not in itself a new phenomenon and arguably dates back to the very earliest days of the modern media industry. Tracing such negative portrayals to the origins of the printing press in Europe, this chapter seeks to investigate the relationship between Edward Said’s notion of Orientalism and the printing press. Moving forward, the chapter will also examine the impact this lineage had on the Australian press of the late nineteenth
and early twentieth centuries. Beginning with its deplorable coverage of Australia's Indigenous people and the paranoia surrounding the 'Asian Invasion', this chapter sheds new light on the coverage of Islam and the Middle East in the early Australian press and the emergence of the 'Muslim Menace'. Finally, this chapter concludes by noting that such a racialist history raises a host of questions and challenges for the contemporary Australian news media.

Orientalism and the printing press
In the early fifteenth century Europe began, in haphazard and sometimes unsuccessful ways at first, to harness its military and technological advantage to explore and then colonise distant regions of the globe. Beginning with Portuguese ventures into northern Africa, the ensuing centuries saw the establishment of trading posts, permanent settlements, and then fully occupied territories controlled by European empires from the Near East to the Americas. While on the surface colonialism was driven by the expanse of empire and the exploitation of the resources—both material and human—of the non-European world, it was underpinned by a certain ideology in which Europe came to see itself not only as the world's moral authority, but also as carrying the burden of subjugating and then civilising the 'lesser breeds'. This period of rapid expansion brought with it a fundamental change in the global order as Europe set out to recreate the world in its own image. 'By the time of the First World War', as Robert Young notes, 'imperial powers occupied, or by various means controlled, nine-tenths of the surface territory of the globe; Britain governed one-fifth of the area of the world and a quarter of its population'.

It was Edward W. Said who first noted that the colonial period also saw the West (or more specifically the European colonial powers) approach the East (and here Said focuses on the Islamic/Arab world) with a sense of superiority—intellectually, politically, culturally and militarily—and that this superiority, therefore, justified the domination and domestication of the Orient. Via his discourse analysis of an astounding number of academic, bureaucratic and literary texts from the colonial period, Said was able to demonstrate that this sense of superiority was underpinned by a matrix of interdependent discourses, institutions and practices, which he termed Orientalism. The net output of Orientalism was an ideological fantasy, a fantasy
that bore no relation to the reality and complexity of Middle Eastern society—its myriad of cultures, religions, peoples, customs, histories, etc. Firstly, this Orientalist fantasy served to homogenise, demonise and stereotype the Middle East according to fairly reductive and negative terms, such that the Oriental was viewed as the ‘other’. Here, Said pointed out that the hegemonic group or colonisers generate certain forms of knowledge about those that are subordinated or colonised, and that this knowledge is disseminated to the general public in various ways. During the nineteenth century, these knowledges were distilled down from ‘essential ideas about the Orient—its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness—into a separate and unchallenged coherence’. Clearly the unquestioned tendency to view the people of the Orient as deficient and inferior ‘others’ served the colonial agenda in continuing to dominate and control sections of the East. Secondly, the ideological fantasy of Orientalism had the effect of marginalising or, more accurately, silencing, the histories and cultures of these ‘others’. In this way, Said concluded that the people of the Orient have been ‘rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analysed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined as the colonial powers openly coveted their territory—taken over’.

Utilising the framework outlined by Said’s analysis of Orientalism also enables an understanding of the emergent and constituent role played by the printing press in the propagation of Orientalist ideologies during the colonial period. Indeed, it is worth noting that the same century of dramatic technological advances that enabled Europe to begin the colonial project also saw Johannes Gutenberg design the first movable-type printing press in 1450. While it is now commonly known that the early printing press was used to print the Bible (such as the ‘42 Line Bible’ of 1455), it is perhaps less well known that this same technology was also used to print Volkskalender, early lunar calendars that also contained lengthy poems of a political nature. The first example extant is the Turkenkalender: An Urgent Appeal to Christendom Against the Turks (printed in late 1454) which, as its name suggests, urges the leaders of Christian Europe to take up arms against the Turks after their capture of Constantinople in 1453. The pamphlet begins by asking
God to help 'us Christians against our enemy, the Turks and pagans ... and to avenge the atrocities committed against the Christians of Constantinople.'\textsuperscript{16} From here, the pamphleteer moves on to incite each of the heads of Europe 'to take up arms against the Turkish infidel' and to leave 'no Turk alive in Turkey, Greece, Asia and Europe'.\textsuperscript{17} In this way, the text sharply contrasts the Turks as 'enemies', 'pagans' and 'infidels' who deserve no less than complete extermination, against Europeans who are portrayed as 'noble', 'privileged' and in possession of 'superior and spirited strength'.\textsuperscript{18} These themes are reiterated in a later lunar calendar entitled \textit{Call for a Crusade Against the Turks} (1478) which urges 'Christian Europe to launch a campaign against the Turkish infidel, citing for inspiration the crusades of old'.\textsuperscript{19}

Later, as the Ottoman Empire expanded through Belgrade and Hungary and on towards Vienna, the printing press continued in its role as the disseminator of early Orientalist propaganda.\textsuperscript{20} Across Germany, pamphleteers ran off scores of polemical texts against the Turks and Islam, creating a whole new genre known as \textit{Türkenbüchlein}.\textsuperscript{21} Even the highly esteemed monk and theologian Martin Luther, whose challenges to the papacy gave birth to modern Protestantism, wrote several treatises against the Turks.\textsuperscript{22} At the time, there was much debate in Europe about the correct response of Christianity to the Muslim encroachment and, in the same year that the Turks reached Vienna in 1529, Luther's tract \textit{On War Against the Turk} sought to make clear his own personal opinion that the Turks were the 'servants of the Devil', 'wild and barbarous people' who led 'an abandoned and carnal life' full of 'wickedness and vice'.\textsuperscript{23} Here, invoking the kind of rhetoric that is indicative of Orientalism, Luther states:

In the first place, the Turk certainly has no right or command to begin war and to attack lands that are not his. Therefore his war is nothing but an outrage and robbery with which God is punishing the world, as he often does through wicked scoundrels, and sometimes through godly people. The Turk does not fight from necessity or to protect his land in peace, as the right kind of ruler does; but, like a pirate or highwayman, he seeks to rob and ravage...
other lands which do and have done nothing to him. He is
God's rod and the devil's servant; there is no doubt about
that.24

What is particularly significant about these early media texts of
the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is not only that they mark the
beginning of the political press but that they also signify the first use
of this new technology to propagate Orientalist discourses within
Europe. This demonstrates the extent to which Europe was familiar
with the supposed dualism between Occident and Orient, and the
ubiquitous nature of the myths and stereotypes that had long deline­
ated this divide. In another sense, tracts such as the Türkenkalender
and the later genre of Türkenbüchlein also raise interesting questions
about the history of the Western mainstream media and its ongoing
use as an ideological tool in maintaining the separation between East
and West. Here, at the very roots of the modern media industry we
find evident the kind of anti-Asiatic discourses that have become
familiar to Western audiences of more recent times, whether at the
height of the colonial period or in the world since September 11. It
may well be argued that throughout its long history, the Western
mainstream media have failed to develop a nuanced understanding
of the myriad peoples, religions, cultures and practices of the Middle
East and the broader Oriental world, instead preferring to reduce and
homogenise these groups into an all-encompassing Middle Eastern
'other', their rich and complex reality distilled down to demarcate the
region as the very antithesis of Europe: non-white, non-Western,
non-Christian, non-civilised.

Throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centu­
ries, the technology of the printing press improved and literacy rates
climbed across Europe, bringing with them a burgeoning market for
printed books, journals, pamphlets and newspapers. While these
early media formats are so often lauded for their role in fostering the
bourgeois civil society that was to provide the impetus for the emer­
gence of modern representative democracy, they have rarely been
critiqued for their contemporaneous construction of the Oriental
'other'. Indeed, right throughout this era, the early editors, journalists
and printers of Europe were busy publishing and distributing a
plethora of new genres and formats, from the daily newspaper
through to substantial works on philosophy, history and politics, many of which exhibited familiar Orientalist discourses.

One particularly popular example is the early travelogue in which wealthy aristocratic British and French explorers, such as Master Thomas Dallam, Sir George Courthope, Sir Jean Chardin and Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, recorded their adventures. In *Sir Jean Chardin's Travels in Persia* for example, we see the drunken, brutal and arbitrary despotism of the Persian king through the eyes of a rational French merchant and diplomat. The king is seen to command absolute obedience to his every whim, no matter how heinous his request or how inebriated he is at the time of his demands. This is perhaps best illustrated in the relationship between the king and his prime minister, who admits to the king, 'I am your Slave, I will ever do what your Majesty shall command me'. Despite such submission, the king repeatedly humiliates the prime minister in front of the court by using ill language, by striking him, by throwing wine in his face and 'a thousand Indignities of this Nature'. What is particularly poignant about the travelogues of wealthy European aristocrats, such as Chardin, is that the exotic cruelty of the Persian 'other' was reported back to Europe as indicative of the broader Oriental world—a world that would have contrasted sharply with the apparent civility of Europe at the time.

At the peak of the colonial period, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the printing press had begun openly to serve the interests of the empire. This is evident in the works of influential scholars as diverse as French philosopher Charles Louis de Secondat Montesquieu, the English historian and member of parliament Edward Gibbon, the Scottish moral philosopher Adam Smith, and in a series of lectures given during the early nineteenth century by the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. In Hegel's work for example, we find the philosopher developing a very Eurocentric approach to world history in which the Asiatic civilisations that had once contributed to the narrative of human history now lay at its periphery. Overall, he argues that:

> It was not given to the Asiatics to unite self-dependence, freedom, and substantial vigour of mind, with culture, *i.e.*, an interest for diverse pursuits and an acquaintance with
the conveniences of life. Military valour among them is consistent only with barbarity of manners. It is not the calm courage of order; and when their mind opens to a sympathy with various interests, it immediately passes into effeminacy; allows its energies to sink, and makes men slaves of an enervated sensuality.31

This picture of the Orient as naturally despotic, barbarous, enslaved, disorderly, degenerate, culture-less and effeminate was particularly useful to the imperial forces of Europe in justifying their control over, and abuses of, the increasing number of territories and peoples who came under their control. This is particularly evident in the case of the British Raj, where the English-owned East India Company employed scholars such as James Mill, who had never been to India, to pen the six-volume The History of British India32. Throughout this classically reductive and hegemonic text, Mill seeks to justify the actions of both the company and the Crown by relying on pejorative assumptions and racialist ideologies.33

By the turn of the twentieth century, the familiar tropes and stereotypes regarding the Oriental ‘other’ had obtained the status of received wisdom and were drawn upon without scrutiny or independent research. Indeed, the German political economist Maximilian Weber began his work on the sociology of religion by writing The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.34 Following Hegel and relying mostly on secondary Orientalist sources, Weber argued that religion had played a pivotal role in the unique development of Western capitalist society and, simultaneously, in preventing regions such as the Orient from achieving analogous civilisational heights. He claimed that while Protestantism required believers to strive towards salvation, Asiatic religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism and Islam encouraged the faithful to accept the world as it is. More specifically, Weber viewed Islam as a religion guided by ‘patrimonial instability (or ‘Sultanism’)’35 which thereby disabled the Ummah (the Islamic community) from successfully challenging the political order and instigating social change.36 Perhaps the most problematical fact about the work of Weber is that even though he never directly studied Islam, his work went on to have a profound impact on European scholarship of the religion where, at least until very recently, ‘the great majority of studies of
social movements in Islamic societies tended (either implicitly or explicitly) to be situated within the Weberian tradition'.

What is evident here is that the colonial project and the printing press do not just have a temporal relationship in the sense that they are associated via the era in which they were first developed and then gradually spread out across the world. Instead, the two can be thought of as having a relationship in which the printing press played a very real and tangible role in legitimating and propagating the Eurocentric world view that underscored the colonial project and its subjugation of non-Europeans. From its very earliest inception, the modern mass media have run off a host of Orientalist texts, from early lunar calendars to journalism and from political tracts to major works on philosophy, history and sociology. Much of this body of work has concerned itself with ‘others’, with demarcating the valour of Europe against the Orient, and in reducing, homogenising and stereotyping the complexities of the Islamic religion, and the Middle East in particular. As is detailed in the following section, it was this relationship—between colonisation, the printing press and its construction of the ‘other’—that had a particular impact on the early Australian news media throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an impact that raises a number of questions for Australian journalists today.

**Orientalism and the early Australian news media**
The supposed divide between the enlightened and righteous forces of the Occident and those of the nefarious and benighted Orient has a host of implications for a large but sparsely populated, predominantly Anglo-Saxon nation on the fringe of Asia. Modern Australia is, of course, a direct result of the colonial era, a nation forged and designed by a European power at the very height of its grandeur. It is thereby also the direct legatee of the matrices of discourses that underpinned Eurocentrism and drove the colonial project. Embedded into this narrative was a staunch belief in the implicit superiority of the ‘white man/woman’ and little more than contempt for those who stood in the way of their mission to recreate the world in Europe's image. At the same time, Australia also inherited from Europe the technology of the printing press and the sincere belief in its positive role within society. However, the first Australian newspaper extant from 1803, the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, can
hardly be considered indicative of a free press; instead, the tawdry four-page weekly was used as a vehicle for disseminating information about, and endorsements of, the administration of the time. The *Gazette* was soon followed by several similar governmental organs across Australia, as well as a host of independent and quite forthright papers, such as the Sydney-based *Australian* in 1824, the *Sydney Monitor* in 1826, the *Sydney Herald* in 1831, the Melbourne-based *Argus* in 1846 and the Brisbane-based *Boomerang* in 1886.

Throughout these early Australian organs, as Michael Meadows has amply demonstrated in his *Voices in the Wilderness*, Indigenous Australians became the first peoples to be constructed according to the racially driven reportage of the time. Despite the sheer volume of articles concerning the Aboriginal people, early Australian journalists played a constituent role in developing and propagating an overwhelmingly negative image of Australia's indigenous people, reducing them to exotic savages, 'at “the far end of the scale of being”'. In addition, much of the early Australian press took for granted the long-held divide between Europe and its 'others', where 'it was usual for Indigenous people to commit “atrocities” while white settlers applied policies of “dispersal”'. As just one example, the *Gazette* painstakingly documented the deplored idiosyncrasies of the 'natives' which were juxtaposed against the civility of the European colonialists. Consider for example a letter written by A. Woodman and published in the *Gazette* on 21 August 1808, in which he makes a clear distinction between '[t]he civilized adventurer and the uncultivated barbarian [who] discover in each other perhaps a universal difference, save only in the human shape'.

While Indigenous Australians remained (and arguably remain today) a topic of much racial-driven media coverage, a new framework of xenophobia gradually unfolded across the pages of the Australian news media, the fear of an 'Asian Invasion'. In this narrative, Australia was constructed 'as an isolated White British colony in the heart of a non-European (read also uncivilised) Asia-Pacific region ... [gradually developing] a fear of being “swamped” by what is perceived as a surrounding hostile and uncivilised otherness'. This perhaps began with the arrival of scores of immigrants, including many Chinese, following the onset of the Victorian gold rush in the 1850s. As the Chinese population grew and spread out across the country, many of the familiar discourses concerning the Oriental
'other' were reiterated in popular parlance, including the news media. Perhaps the best example of this is the coverage found in *The Boomerang* where, as early as 1888, journalists such as Francis Adams and William Lane were arguing that 'The Asiatic and the Turanian must either conquer or be conquered by, must either wipe out or be wiped out by the Aryan and the European'.

At the time of Australia's Federation in 1901, the concern over the 'Asian Invasion' had reached such fervour that this same year also saw the passing of the foundational *Immigration Restriction Act*, colloquially known as the 'White Australia Policy'. Driven by the motivation to keep Australia for the white man/woman, this policy not only sought to limit and control the arrival of non-European immigrants, it also sought to further disenfranchise and marginalise those few who had already arrived. Not surprisingly, the policy was wholeheartedly endorsed by the nation's political elite, made up mostly of Anglo-Saxon Protestants, and the newspapers that this elite controlled. According to Jen Ang, the 'White Australia Policy' has left behind an array of latent fears regarding the Oriental 'other' in the Australian consciousness. These deep-seated and acutely ingrained anxieties have manifested themselves in a whole host of socio-political movements, such as the One Nation Party of the 1990s, that strive to clearly define and defend the purity of what Ang refers to as 'Fortress Australia'.

Interestingly, while the early Australian press featured report after report on the 'natives' and on the threat of an 'Asian Invasion', references to Islam and the Middle East are few and far between. This comes despite the fact that, as Regina Ganter notes, Australia's earliest foreign cultural influence were the Islamic Macassan fisherman who had visited (and even settled and had families) across the northern shores of the continent well before the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788. Later, Muslims of various ethnicities and backgrounds arrived as convicts and sailors at the very beginning of the British colony. Almost a century later, Australia imported other Muslims, such as Afghan camel drivers, who helped the early explorers and pastoralists forge their way through the harsh interior and established the trade networks of the nation from the 1860s, and the Malay pearl divers, who helped Australia to dominate the international pearling industry from the 1870s. Despite these long-held relations between Islam and Australia and the crucial role that Muslims
played in settling, exploring and developing the nation, records of their efforts and acknowledgement of their achievements are paltry at best. This may, to some extent, be explained by the fact that, in a typically Orientalist example of homogenising the 'other', the Muslims of Australia were 'tarred with the same brush', viewed as just another example of a degenerate lower breed. Indeed, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, this had become official policy, when 'anti-Chinese legislation had been extended to all Asiatic and coloured persons', including Muslims of a variety of backgrounds.53

Despite this homogenisation and the little that Australians of this era seem to have known about Islam, the early colonial period was no stranger to Orientalist imagery regarding Muslims and the Middle East. For example, in her study of Orientalism in Early Australian Theatre, Veronica Kelly demonstrates that Orientalist motifs 'consistently pervaded theatrical forms as diverse in their class appeal as opera, pantomime, burlesque, Shakespeare, drama and melodrama, besides living a vigorous extra-dramatic life in fashion, art, architecture and literature'.54

Interestingly, Kelly does not mention that these same Orientalist motifs were evident in the early Australian press. This is perhaps in part because an exhaustive study of the early Australian press and its coverage of the Middle East or the broader Islamic world is yet to be written. However, preliminary investigations by the author suggest that many of the familiar tropes and stereotypes are evident in the Australian press of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Indeed, early coverage in the Argus includes reports on a series of lectures given by the Reverend T. F. Bird at the Oxford Street Congregational Church in Collingwood, Melbourne, in mid-1875. The first such lecture, entitled 'Mahomet, the Arabian Moses' reveals much admiration and knowledge of the doctrines of Islam and the life of Mohammad who is thought to be

not only great in the sense that he left the impress of his life on the history of his country, and that he united the wandering hordes of Ishmaelites by the bonds of a common faith and purpose, but he was great in the wider sense that he aroused a nation by the potent lever of his personal influence to a higher level of intellectual, life, and to a nobler sense of destiny.55
In his second lecture however, Rev. Bird is reported to have taken to task the Qur'an and its author by describing 'the utter monotony and weariness that fell upon the mind in studying the Koran, which, he said, seemed to have been written by a man who was sadly deficient in thought and knowledge'. From here, Rev. Bird goes on to argue that Islam had degenerated from 'Mahomet's success' down to the 'stagnant fatalism of today'. By the third lecture, Rev. Bird gave 'a graphic and interesting description of the rise of the Ottoman Empire' and of 'Oriental magnificence', and by the fourth lecture, he had begun to argue that 'Moslemism was exhibiting increased vitality in the Turkish empire'. In ways not at all dissimilar to Martin Luther some 350 years earlier, Rev. Bird goes on to argue that 'the only way to deal successfully with it [Islam] would be to gradually leaven it with the spirit of Christianity'.

In a far less scholarly fashion, these themes are developed further in the anonymous reportage of a lecture given by another member of the local clergy, Reverend W. R. Fletcher, at the Kew Congregational Church in 1877, entitled 'Mohammedanism and the Turkish State'. Here, Rev. Fletcher argues that Mohammad's influence had 'in many respects ... been the reverse of a blessing'. In making a distinction between the worlds of Islam and Christianity and predicting their ultimate battle, Rev. Fletcher is reported to have said:

The rule of the crescent in Eastern Europe had grown feebler and more feeble; retrogression had been its characteristic, whilst progress had been that of Christendom; and he believed that in the last supreme conflict that must ensue between the Turk and his European foe, the 'crescent would bow before the cross'.

In building his case regarding the ultimate battle between the Ottomans and Europe, Rev. Fletcher also utilises a typically Hegelian picture of world history in which the Orient is seen as prone to retrogression and ineptitude, while the Occident continued in its civilisational progress. Indeed, this theme of an ultimate battle between Islam and Christendom resurfaces a number of times throughout the early Australian news media. For example, later in 1877, in a lecture given by Mr Peebles at the Opera House on 'the Mahomedans, their doctrines, worship, wars', the speaker is
reported to have invoked the oft-cited but rarely understood notion of *jihad*. Here, Peebles argued that the Muslims, ‘at the cry of “The Prophet,” under the banner of the crescent ... felt it duty done to defeat and overthrow the cross’.\textsuperscript{64}

While it should be duly noted here that in the following year, 1878, the *Argus* published similar reports on a series of overwhelmingly positive lectures given by a Professor Strong on the topics of 'Mahomet and His Followers' and 'Mahommedanism',\textsuperscript{65} the predominant picture of Islam and the Middle East in the Australian news media of the late nineteenth century can be seen to foreground the kind of racialist discourse that is indicative of Orientalism. Overwhelmingly, it is concerned with the potential threat that Islam poses to Christianity. To reiterate and reinforce this in the minds of its readers, newspapers such as the *Argus* focus on familiar but widely misunderstood notions of *jihad* and 'holy war' to posit that a battle between the two faiths is inevitable. Invoking the Crusades, this battle transforms from the annals of medieval history into a contemporary reality, taking the form of the Ottomans against Europe. Indeed, this was to carry through into the early twentieth century as events moved towards World War I.

This becomes startlingly evident in an anonymous *Sydney Morning Herald* article of 1908, entitled 'Asia's Movement', in which the author describes the various socio-political changes that Asia had recently undergone, including those in Persia, Morocco, Egypt, India, China and Japan. 'Never since the dawn of the Christian Era', claims the author, 'have the minds of non-Christian peoples been so much exercised upon problems of internal condition and external attitude'.\textsuperscript{66} According to this particular Australian journalist, this has a number of consequences for the world and especially for the British Empire. One such concern is the fact that the British Empire was host to 'some 82 million Mohammedan subjects' making it 'in a political sense, the greatest Mohammedan power in the world'.\textsuperscript{67} The problem, however, is not British hegemony over the people of Islam, but that these subjects of the British Empire owe their allegiance not to the King, but to the Sultan who 'has spiritual jurisdiction over orthodox Mohammedans'.\textsuperscript{68} This sentiment was in fact rather common in Australia. Indeed, the notion that Muslims posed an internal threat to the British Empire and its colonies due to their allegiance to the Sultan was tabled in the West Australian Parliament as early as 1898.
Here, early Afghani settlers were banned from working the goldfields on the premise that they were traitors-in-waiting, ready to side with the Ottomans should a Jihad be declared. This is particularly problematic for this Sydney Morning Herald journalist because there is a marked difference between the attitude of the Ottoman Empire, 'which is prompted by considerations of material gain in territory or otherwise, and the attitude of Britain, which is dictated by purely Christian motives'.

Building on this distinction between the Ottoman and British Empires, the journalist moves forward to discuss another key divide between Occident and Orient, namely that constitutional government is 'a purely Western invention' that is merely impossible in countries like 'India, China, Persia, Egypt, bred as they have been for hundreds, we could say thousands, of years in an atmosphere of autocracy'. Once again the assumptions made throughout such journalism rely heavily on the pervasive nature of Orientalism, and the works of scholars such as Hegel and Weber, who had foregrounded a pejorative picture of the Orient and Islam as antithetical to social change and incapable of civil institutions and governments. Indeed, the author goes on to parallel the works of Mill by concentrating on the contemporaneous political situation of India—home to a significant minority of Muslims—arguing that 'the Indians have not yet shown any aptitude for the discharge of the very large powers of self-government which they at present possess'. Here, the benefit of hindsight certainly illuminates the kind of Orientalism evident in such passages, particularly given the events that led up to Indian independence in 1947, and its current status as the world's largest democracy.

As the First World War drew ever closer, the Australian press played a constituent role in continuing and confirming the binary opposition between the Ottoman and British empires, invoking the perceived apocalyptic nature of the looming battle between the forces of Islam and Christendom. For example, a number of highly inflammatory reports appear throughout 1912, including an anonymous article printed in the Argus under the eye-catching headline, 'Future of Islamism: Ameer's Ambitions, New Gospel Preached'. In it, the author invokes many classically Orientalist images regarding the decadent nature of Asiatic despotism. Here, the unnamed Ameer of Afghanistan is said to be claiming 'spiritual supremacy ... over the
Mohammedans throughout the world'. The impetus for his claim is that much of the Islamic world had, at this point, been subjugated under the auspices of European influence, while Afghanistan remained 'the last of the really independent Mohammedan States'. The portrait of the Ameer himself is far from flattering; he is reported to be 'intoxicated by petty successes, inflated with pride, and desirous of standing forth before all the world as the champion of Islam, [and that he] may one day proclaim that jihad which his mullahs have been constantly preaching for years past'. In this way, the Ameer of Afghanistan, like the Persian king in the eighteenth-century travelogue of Jean Chardin, is constructed as a powerful but conceited megalomaniac, suffering a penchant for religious fervour and a tendency towards violence and barbarity. Indeed, this kind of coverage has some parallels with more contemporary examples, such as the Western media's coverage of Saddam Hussein in the lead up to the Gulf War and the current Iraq War. Such 'Oriental despots' have, therefore, long been seen to pose a clear and present threat to the world of Christendom and to the forces of civilisation.

It is worth noting here that on the same page and directly below the 'Future of Islamism' article, a letter to the editor appears entitled 'A Moslem's Prediction' by Fatta Deen. What is of interest here is that Deen confirms and reiterates many of the Orientalist fears evident in the Australian press at the time, arguing that the Islamic world is one 'of unrest and seething ferment that may at any moment explode and envelop the Christian world in the most devastating war the world has ever seen'. In this war, according to Deen, 'Over 100,000,000 of Moslems ... to a man, will concentrate in one huge uprising to crush their Christian oppressors'. What makes this letter particularly curious is not so much its contents or the fact that it appears to have been written by an Australian Muslim, but that it has been included in the Argus to begin with. On the one hand, there is something admirable about an editorial policy that allows such counter-hegemonic texts to appear across its pages. On the other hand, its content lends itself to the suspicion that it was included precisely because it confirms the pervading understanding of Islam and its purportedly inevitable clash with Christendom. In a sense, whatever counter-argument the author was trying to make becomes lost in its provocative language, which in turn works to confirm the notion that Islam stands ready to confront the West—and even Australia—in
‘the deadliest war ... a seething maelstrom ... the fulfilment of the prophecies of Islam’.79

Perhaps even more provocative is a series of articles appearing in the Argus under the populist headline ‘The Muslim Menace’. The first of these concerned a lecture by Reverend G. Brown (itself entitled ‘The Muslim Menace’) in which he is reported to have argued that the growing tensions between Islam and Christendom were ‘the first for centuries between Cross and Crescent’ where ‘the East expected a second heroic age’.80 To demonstrate the menace that such a second age of Islam would bring to the West, and particularly its threat to women, Rev. Brown made the startling claim that he ‘would almost like Melbourne to be a Mohammedan city, say, for 24 hours, and then Australians would realise the danger to wife or sisters going in the streets unattended or unguarded’.81 As various authors have recently noted, sentiments such as those expressed by Rev. Brown serve as something of a precursor to more contemporary Australian discourse in which Islam has come to be seen as incompatible with ‘Australian values’ and a very specific threat to the safety and sanctity of Australian women.82

However, it should also be noted here that Rev. Brown’s lecture on ‘The Muslim Menace’ was heavily critiqued and refuted by Sheikh Abdul Kader in a letter to the Argus a week later, entitled ‘Moslem Loyalty’. He begins by pointing out that members of the clergy, such as Rev. Brown, have a duty to ‘promote peace and good-feeling among human beings, irrespective of their nationality, or religion, in accordance with the Christian doctrine, and not to incite or create ill-feeling on actually undeservedly false accusations’.83 He also takes the Australian media to task for their emphasis on Turkish atrocities which, Sheikh Kader argues, have been ‘extremely exaggerated and falsified by prejudiced persons, whose chief aim is to alienate the sympathy of Europe from the Turks’.84 Sheikh Kader goes on to point out that when ‘it comes to barbarism, the Turks are a long way from the head of the list’,85 detailing a number of recent atrocities committed by so-called Christian countries such as Russia, Belgium, America and Italy. ‘Where were these holy preachers then?’ asks Sheikh Kader. ‘Did they preach against these cruelties? No, because they were committed by Christians. But anything done by Turks is exaggerated twenty-fold, and criticised by such unjust persons, who can see only one side of affairs’.86 He concludes his cogent and
erudite argument by dismissing Rev. Brown's lecture on the 'Muslim Menace' as 'nothing but a delusion'.

Whilst printing such a robust debate between the leaders of both the Christian and Islamic communities does go some way to suggest that the Argus fostered public deliberation and discussion over key global and local issues, it is interesting to note that Sheikh Kader's letter is published on the very same page as another article which also carries the same title as Rev. Brown's address, 'The Muslim Menace' (this time accompanied by the subtitle 'Prospects for Foreigners'). This particular report seems to work entirely against Sheikh Kader's advocacy of inter-faith dialogue and tolerance to instead speculate on whether the Ottoman Empire had declared a holy war against Christendom. While the article is quick to note the unverified nature of its claims, it nonetheless reports that 'Sheikh-ul-Islam, head of the Mohammedan clergy, is sending 100 eloquent and influential Ulemas [priests] to Hadem-koi, to raise the spirits of the army and to excite the warlike ardour of the men'.

Collectively, Australian news media reports of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries paint a familiar picture of Islam and the Middle East. Beginning with the religion itself, the Australian press constructed a damning image of Islam, its holy book and Prophet. It moved from here to discuss the purported stagnation and retrogression that this religion brought to the world and focused on the inability of Islamic and other Asian states to comprehend and implement sophisticated Western political models, such as constitutional government and democracy. Instead, Asia is thought to be prone to autocracy and fond of Oriental despots, who are themselves portrayed as power-hungry fundamentalists. Despite its support of such despots and its retrogressive nature, Islam is said to be gaining renewed vitality in Turkey, a vitality that is reminiscent of earlier eras of Islamic strength. Here, the Australian news media placed particular emphasis on the notion of jihad to illustrate that a new and final battle between Islam and Christianity was imminent. As the First World War approached, reports circulated that such a holy war had effectively begun, and the forces of Islam were rallying in preparation
for the annihilation of their Christian rivals. The net effect of this picture of Islam and the Middle East was the assertion of a ‘Muslim Menace’, a force that was seen to pose both an increasing threat to the world of Christendom as a whole, and a more specific threat to the Australian way of life.

**Conclusion**

The construction of the Arab/Middle Eastern/Islamic ‘other’ in the news media can, therefore, be seen to have a lineage tracing back as far as the modern media industry itself. Its ancestry lies in some of the earliest known media texts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which adamantly called on Europe to avenge Muslim incursions into the world of Christendom. Using the pejorative language indicative of the colonial era, such texts reveal the complex relationship between the colonial project, the printing press and Orientalism. This is perhaps more clearly demonstrated by the use of the printing press throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as new formats such as the daily newspaper, the travelogue and major works on philosophy, politics and history offered a reductive and overwhelmingly negative picture of the Orient. In turn, this was to have a very specific impact on the early news media of Australia, which set about invoking such discourses in their construction of Indigenous people and, in time, the alleged threat of an ‘Asian Invasion’. Gradually, the Australian news media of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries turned their attention to the so-called ‘Muslim Menace’, a threat that was not only seen to pose grave challenges for Western civilisation as a whole, but also had specific implications for Australian society.

This racialist history of the Australian news media sets something of a precedent for the Orientalist stereotypes evident in much media coverage of Islam and the Middle East in Australia today. In this way, many contemporary Australian journalists can be seen to have inherited a long and poignant tradition of reporting on the non-Western world and, like many Orientalist scholars and journalists before them, they have failed to question pervading ideologies. Instead of offering a nuanced, robust and insightful discussion of contemporary global and domestic events pertaining to Islam and the Middle East, the Australian news media have invoked a familiar catalogue of assumptions, images and motifs that demarcate the
Orient and its peoples as ‘other’. This has resulted in a kind of Orientalist shorthand, where the long-held binary between the inherently superior West and the backward East unfolds across the pages of the press, is condensed into the sound-bites of radio, or is converted into the emotive imagery of the nightly news.

The question remains as to whether or not the contemporary Australian media can overcome this history of Orientalism to instead provide a well-balanced and non-racialist picture of the Middle East and Islam in this difficult age. It is precisely this question that poses one of the greatest challenges to the Australian news media in the post–September 11 world, and which lies at the heart of the remaining chapters in this volume. If this challenge is met, the Australian media may well play a crucial role in arriving at what Rana Kabbani has termed a ‘West–East discourse liberated from the obstinacy of the colonial legacy’. This would of course require a ‘serious effort ... to review and reject a great many inherited representations. For these inherited representations are so persistent and so damaging ... that they cloud our urges to see beyond them, to our common humanity’.90

Notes
2 Manning, Dog Whistle Politics and Journalism, pp. 44–5.
3 Poynting, et al., Bin Laden in the Suburbs, p. 49.
4 The vast majority of Australian papers are owned by Murdoch's News Corporation.
5 McKnight, 'Murdoch and the culture war', p. 54.
7 Manne, 'Murdoch and the war on Iraq', p. 75.
9 Young, Postcolonialism, p. 2.
It should be duly noted here that while Said's Orientalism is widely recognised as an unprecedented breakthrough in understanding and critiquing Western conceptions of the Asiatic world, it was somewhat pre-empted (and paralleled) by the work of several scholars. See, for example, Abdel-Malek, 'Orientalism in crisis', pp. 103–40; Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*; Asad, 'Two European images of non-European rule'; Asad, (ed), *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*; Grossrichard, *The Sultan's Court*; Jameelah, *Islam and Orientalism*; Tibawi, *English Speaking Orientalists*; Turner, *Marx and the End of Orientalism*.


Ibid., p. 205.

Ibid., p. 207.


Bréart, 'The German Volkskalender of the fifteenth century', pp. 312–42.


Ibid., pp. 7, 10.

Ibid., pp. 11–12.

Ibid., p. 25.


Edwards, 'Luther's polemical controversies', p. 203; Smith, 'Luther, the Turks, and Islam', p. 352.


Ibid., p. 125.


Ibid.

Ibid., p. 17; see also pp. 118–23.

Grossrichard, *The Sultan's Court*.


Mill, *The History of British India*.

Inden, *Imagining India*; Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*.


Burke, 'Islam and social movements', p. 20.
39 Not to be confused with the Murdoch-owned national broadsheet of today.
40 The Sydney Herald eventually became Australia's first daily paper in 1840 and today the renamed Sydney Morning Herald stands as Australia's oldest newspaper.
41 Blair, 'The convict press', pp. 19–20; Carroll, 'The development of national newspapers in the second half of the twentieth century', p. 20; Hand, Australian Mass Media through 200 Years, p. 4; Vine, 'Does the lovable larrakin live?', p. 68.
42 Meadows, Voices in the Wilderness, p. 39.
43 Ibid., p. 41.
45 Burke, In Fear of Security; Hage, Against Paranoid Nationalism; Hage, White Nation; Hage and Couch (eds), The Future of Australian Multiculturalism; Jayasuriya, Walker and Gothard (eds), Legacies of White Australia; Walker, Anxious Nation.
46 Hage, Against Paranoid Nationalism, p. 52.
47 Walker, Anxious Nation, p. 40.
48 Jaensch and Manning, 'We want a white man's continent', pp. 95–116; Jupp, 'Ethnicity, race and sectarianism', pp. 135–48.
49 Ang, 'From White Australia to Fortress Australia', pp. 51–70; Ang, 'Racial/spatial anxiety', pp. 189–204.
50 Ganter, Mixed Relations.
52 Ibid.; Jones, 'Muslim impact on early Australian life', pp. 40–8; Stevens, 'Afghan camel drivers', pp. 49–62; Stevens, Tin Mosques and Ghantowns.
53 Monsour, 'Whitewashed', p. 16.
54 Kelly, 'Orientalism in early Australian theatre', p. 32.
55 The Argus, 'Mahomet, the Arabian Moses', p. 5.
56 The Argus 'Islam, the Mahometan Gospel', p. 5.
57 Ibid.
58 The Argus, 'Islam, or the crescent and the victories of the sword-armed faith', p. 5.
59 The Argus, 'Mohammedanism', p. 5.
60 Ibid.
61 The Argus, 'Mohammedanism and the Turkish states', p. 5.
62 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 The Argus, 'Mahomet and his followers', p. 5; The Argus, 'Mohammedanism', p. 5.
66 Sydney Morning Herald, 'Asia's movement', p. 12.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Jones, 'The years of decline', p. 64.
70 Sydney Morning Herald, 'Asia's movement', p. 12.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
77 Deen, 'A Moslem's prediction', p. 13.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
83 Kader, 'Moslem loyalty', p. 7.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
89 Ibid.