On 25 October 2018, Kevin Rudd headlined a function at Sydney Town Hall entitled ‘After the Crash: Australia in the World Ten Years on from the Global Financial Crisis’ (GFC). Following a panel conversation, Rudd dutifully signed copies of his new book, *The PM Years*, which had been officially launched just days earlier at Parliament House. Noticing my relative youth, he asked whether or not I was studying. I replied that I had just written an Honours thesis about Labor political memoirs, including his earlier work, *Not for the Faint-hearted*. He paused for a moment, prompting an immediate fear that I had made a faux pas. Eventually, he settled on an uncharacteristically succinct reply: ‘You poor bastard’.

Rudd’s self-deprecating barb, as well as the title of the book we referred to, tell us something about his approach to political autobiography and political memoir; they are a serious endeavour. A far cry from an older tradition of political memoirists eschewing any claims to the status of historian, Rudd is bold in his ambitions.¹ That much is evident in the scope of his work alone. Few Australian politicians have required two large volumes to tell a comprehensive story of their political career; Menzies and Whitlam are notable exceptions to the rule. Rudd has produced two full-length books, replete with more than 70 pages of endnotes in total, which he acknowledges is ‘a feat not for the faint-hearted itself, even to read, let alone to have assembled’.² His authorial ambitions are crystal clear in both texts. In the first volume, he sets out to: furnish the public with ‘an honest account of my own political formation’; encourage his readers to question ‘their deepest beliefs, values and vocational instincts’; reflect on the virtues of labourism as well as ‘the frequently sickening dimensions of raw factional power’; and recount his ‘battle royale’ with John Howard prior to November 2007 (FH, pp. x, xi, xii). Juxtaposed against this wide-ranging set of impulses, the stated goals for the second volume are politically narrow. Rudd seeks to: ‘provide an account of what our government delivered’;

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better educate policy-makers grappling with the ‘complex challenges’ of foreign policy today; and, inevitably, conduct a ‘formal right of reply’ to his enemies’ version of the history of June 2010 (PM, pp. xii, xiv). All in all, Rudd demonstrates a wide spectrum of authorial ambition, necessitating an abnormally high word count and a pair of expectedly dense narratives.

For all the similarities in their size and packaging, there are fundamental differences in these two publications. The first volume is a political autobiography. Conforming to traditional notions of autobiography, the narrative deals meaningfully and at length with fundamental character questions about the author himself, including his challenging childhood, the importance of his mother in shaping his world-view, and an explanation of his theological journey. In fact, so much page space is dedicated to these revelatory passages that Robert Manne suggested that Rudd may have been in want of a more ‘courageous editor’.³ By contrast, the second volume is almost exclusively political in its focus, with enormous segments of narrative assigned for the dismantling of Labor’s 2010 leadership change. Seldom is this political narrative interrupted in favour of a philosophical reflection on personal values or private reminiscences. By conventional definition, Rudd’s first volume is a genuine autobiography, a medium intended to explicate ‘the history of a soul’.⁴ The second, by contrast, is political memoir pure and simple, for it ‘deals essentially with a person’s public role’.⁵ Though the latter may make for a more pointed political attack in the present the former is arguably far better placed to withstand the test of time.

There is something unique about Rudd’s framing of the first book. Beginning with a ‘Letter of Encouragement’, Rudd positions his readership alongside a class of ‘thirty or forty Harvard Undergraduates’ whom he taught in late 2013 (FH, p. x). The effect is not necessarily to belittle the reader, but simply to emphasise the seriousness of Rudd’s authorial mission. He is the man delivering a 600-page masterclass, and we are encouraged to be humble listeners, prepared to soak up his version of history and then sign up for a life of progressivism. On some level, the prerogative for most political memoirists is to encourage young people to join the party and engage in the fight, but few are as explicit about that purpose as Rudd.

Unlike some political memoirists, who bypass their pre-political lives in favour of the political story (Whitlam and Gillard are prime examples), Rudd gives extensive attention to his childhood, his family and his personal development in Not for the Faint-hearted. In a chapter entitled ‘Towards a Political Vocation’, Rudd outlines the path that led him to work for Wayne Goss and engage in the political project of

the Queensland branch of the Australian Labor Party (ALP). Prior to that, 123 pages are used to outline Rudd’s pre-political life. Much of the first chapter recounts stories that predate even the author’s birth: he tells of his family history and of his ancestor Thomas Rudd, who ‘landed here as a guest of His Majesty on the Second Fleet in 1790’ (FH, p. 2); he tells of his father’s war stories, and of his mother, who he describes as ‘a woman ahead of her time’ (FH, p. 9). Indeed, Rudd’s mother is carefully curated in the first chapter as a placeholder for good values, a generous person who contributed to community life by often ‘taking in other people’s kids’ (FH, p. 8). He recounts in detail his early hardships, childhood illnesses, his time as a pupil of the Catholic Marist Brothers, and the impactful experience of his father’s death (FH, pp. 18, 22–24, 27–35). And following this, several chapters are spent delineating his early struggles with money, his intellectual awakening, his growing spirituality and his early romances. Though a more economical approach to syntax may have shortened and strengthened these early chapters, the narrative is mostly enjoyable to read.

There is a strong moralising undercurrent in this text, a dividing line that sets people apart as either ‘good’ or ‘bad’. That the book should be morally assertive is no shock, given Rudd’s highly publicised Christian adherence. Indeed, he outlines the myriad ‘pillars of faith’ in his life to date, though these pillars are slightly indistinguishable from one another (FH, p. 55). The upshot of this proselytising is that Rudd’s depictions of friends, loved ones and former colleagues are measured up positively or negatively against this moral compass. Former Queensland premier Wayne Goss, is described as a ‘kindred soul’ in the way that he ‘thought and felt about the world’ (FH, p. 134). So, too, with Rudd’s wife Therese Rein, who is celebrated for her ‘loving support and counsel’ (FH, p. 216). In fact, the Rudd–Rein family is the central source of morality in this book. Rudd’s ambitious first attempts to sound out support for his own leadership candidacy are normalised because they are given the blessing of a ‘family conference’ on the ‘four-poster bed’, where all major family decisions were made (FH, p. 355). This is perhaps Rudd at his most striking, at once involved in the cut-throat Canberra lion’s den and still maintaining his innocent moral profile as a Christian man making family decisions on the family bed. By contrast, his factional opponents are depicted as morally broken or bankrupt. Stephen Smith is ‘the most ice-cold politician I had ever met’; Stephen Conroy, by 2007, ‘no longer had a Labor bone in his body’ (FH, pp. 234, 468). These aspersions are not just political, they are at their core highly moralised judgements about empathy, compassion and a humanism that Rudd perceives to be lacking in many former caucus colleagues.
On the political side of things, Rudd’s first volume offers a valuable window into the complex factional warfare of the parliamentary ALP in the first decade of this century. The Crean–Latham–Beazley leadership saga is narrated at length and in depth, though most of this narrative is furnished first and foremost to demonise the three ‘Roosters’, MPs Smith, Conroy and, of course, Wayne Swan. In Rudd’s words, ‘they hunted in a pack’ (FH, p. 233). Describing the aftermath of Beazley’s challenge against Crean in mid-2003, Rudd writes of a sense of alienation and disillusionment with his colleagues: ‘I almost reached a point where I no longer cared, so utterly dysfunctional had the caucus become’ (FH, p. 343). Mark Latham is given expected short shrift here: ‘Mark seems happier hating, and being hated, than running the risk of being forgotten’ (FH, p. 382). Swan is dismissed as being ‘not up to the job’ of Treasury spokesperson, and it is here that Rudd most obviously indulges in retrospective retribution (FH, p. 388). Naturally, the chapter outlining the formation of the Rudd–Gillard Pact makes for compelling reading as well, although the predictable foreshadowing of the 2010 leadership change is rather trite. Ultimately, retrojection makes these chapters less reliable as historical sources, but more revealing as expressions of surviving animosity. Rudd is simply retracing scars that have never quite healed over.

It is on questions of foreign policy and the Howard Government that this book begins to move toward the political historiographical style of the second volume. At the outset, Rudd writes that his electoral battle with Howard is the main theme of the book. This does not, however, account for the fact that the Iraq War is the subject of five chapters, and a large majority of the total endnotes. He explains his focus on Iraq thus: ‘[Howard] is totally unrepentant to this day, insisting his decision to go to war was right all along. [This account] is intended to provide a balance to the narrative before Howard’s self-hagiography becomes entrenched in the Australian historical memory’ (FH, p. 334). That Rudd should tackle Howard’s version of history is not unexpected, but the force of the narrative and expansiveness of the evidence collated in the endnotes is astonishing. Similarly, Rudd is frighteningly forensic in his retelling of the Wheat for Weapons scandal, which he describes as ‘the single biggest corruption scandal in Australian history’ (FH, p. 407). In some ways, these are simply episodes in the ‘greatest hits’ of Rudd’s parliamentary career, but they make a meaningful contribution to the historiography of Iraq and that of the Howard Government more generally.

The book ends with a rapid crescendo, in which Rudd becomes Labor leader, rebuilds the ALP’s brand ahead of the 2007 election, and suffers the heat of ‘Howard’s Dirt Unit’ along with his wife and deputy. An extensive account of the Kevin07 campaign is given. The most audacious inclusion—and possibly only new revelation—of these last chapters is an anecdote in which Rudd describes having his buttocks grabbed during a campaign photo by an unseen woman, who gave it ‘one giant, prolonged, well-coordinated squeeze’ (FH, p. 545). The joviality here
soon turns to the elation of Labor’s election victory, followed by a small epilogue outlining the Rudd Government’s greatest achievements, foreshadowing the second volume. Two major speeches—his maiden speech and a 2006 speech to the Centre for Independent Studies—are appended to the book, though these additions will perhaps be a little too much for most of the reading public. On the whole, the volume loses its strong autobiographical touch as the narrative enters the Labor leadership woes of the 2000s, and certainly Rudd abandons autobiography in favour of academic historiography when dealing with Howard and Iraq. However, there are clear autobiographical virtues in this text; its aesthetics reveal much about the author, and the importance of purpose and values in political life is espoused throughout much of the narrative.

Not so with the second volume, *The PM Years*. Rudd’s follow-up work, dealing exclusively with Labor’s period in government from 2007 to 2013, is a political memoir that abandons any pretence to autobiography, and quite often indulges in shameless revision of political history. Facets of this book may prove valuable for researchers in the future, but much of it is designed to skew the historic record in his favour, much to the detriment of his adversaries. The introduction is headlined ‘The Coup That Killed Australian Politics’, and one gets the sense that Rudd’s feelings of betrayal and heartache from 2010 have not dimmed in the slightest, no matter how much he may publicly protest to the contrary. According to Rudd, the historiography of the 2010 leadership challenge is essentially a battle between two models of explanation: in the first, Julia Gillard is drafted by the factions to take the leadership ‘to save the government from inevitable electoral defeat’ in 2010; in the second, Gillard decides more than six months before the event that she will challenge Rudd for the leadership simply because she cannot wait ‘to achieve her ambitions’ (*PM*, pp. xiv–xv). Naturally, Rudd argues the latter case. Treasurer Swan is similarly a target from the get-go: reflecting on his first ministerial line-up, Rudd writes that Swan’s ‘interests in numbers were more to be found in Newspoll than the national accounts’ (*PM*, p. 5). Gillard and Swan are the bogeymen haunting Rudd’s narrative in a manner than can only be considered unhealthy. This unhappy introduction greatly limits the potential of the rest of the narrative.

The chapter about the National Apology to the Stolen Generations is indicative of the flaws inherent throughout the book. On the one hand, it would be remiss for Rudd not to include powerful excerpts of the speech in this chapter. However, much of the chapter is simply a reproduction of the speech itself, all of which is already accessible online and in print. Little new is added to our understanding of the lead-up to this event. On the other, Rudd allows even this beautiful moment in his life to be tarnished by his hatred toward Gillard. He writes: ‘Julia said nothing much about the speech, although the following day in parliament she finally, almost grudgingly, conceded it was a good speech’ (*PM*, p. 36). Similarly, when recounting the momentous occasion of the announcement of Australia’s first female
governor-general, Quentin Bryce, Rudd says of Gillard, ‘Julia, who was agnostic on the question of gender, seemed nonplussed about Quentin’ (PM, p. 54). The Apology and the first female governor-general are legacies of which Rudd should be proud, but he does himself a great disservice by infusing them with his anti-Gillard obsession.

One of the great stories that this book tells is that of Australia’s response to the GFC. Several bulky chapters are set aside for this task, and Rudd spares few details. The central anxiety, given Australia’s dependence on overseas capital, was about ‘the liquidity requirements of the Australian economy’, which would naturally be jeopardised in the event of a global financial collapse (PM, p. 63). The collapse of the US investment bank Lehman Brothers is, of course, the point at which Rudd decided ‘the crisis was upon us’ (PM, p. 73). Helpfully for historians, Rudd goes further than some journalistic accounts of this period in an effort to situate Australia’s response in its international context. For instance, he records that around the same time as Lehman Brothers fell, ‘some twenty-seven financial institutions’ around the globe also collapsed (PM, p. 80). Equally interesting is the role of Australia in defending the American Insurance Group from collapse, which would have jeopardised 30 per cent of the insurance market in Australia had it been allowed to fail (PM, p. 81). International figures, such as British PM Gordon Brown, US Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson and, of course, newly minted US President Barack Obama, become crucial to Rudd’s narrative about the global management of the GFC. In the process of responding to the GFC, Australia’s international reputation was ascendant. Rudd’s pride in his successful advocacy of the G20, a leading international multilateral decision-making forum in which the world’s 20 largest national economies are represented, is well justified: ‘Not only did Australia have a seat at the top global table, it was now a permanent seat’ (PM, p. 190). However, the great stain upon these chapters is the absence of Rudd’s own treasurer from the narrative. According to Rudd, ‘the core policy work throughout this period was undertaken by Ken Henry, Nigel Ray and David Gruen in Treasury, Jim Chalmers in the treasurer’s office, and Andrew Charlton and Steven Kennedy in my own. Swan’s talent, in fact, may have lain in knowing to not get in their way’ (PM, p. 98). Given that Swan was highly visible in engaging in national and international forums and announcing government decisions throughout 2008–09, this erasure is untenable. Swan, by contrast, took the high road in his memoir The Good Fight, praising Rudd for ‘the role he played in the way we dealt with that imminent threat to the nation’s economic security’. Rudd’s airbrushing of Swan from this history is to the detriment of anyone seeking to better understand the relationship between the offices of Treasurer and Prime Minister in times of economic difficulty. If Rudd was truly devoted to serving the historical record, these chapters would have included Swan.

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Of course, the other enormous challenge of Rudd’s first prime ministership was climate change policy, globally and domestically. There are attempts in this book to point to global climate policy achievements that Rudd contributed to, including the Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute, or the communique on rising sea levels issued at the Pacific Islands Forum in August 2009 (PM, p. 184–85). However, the Copenhagen climate change conference inevitably overshadows everything in this policy space. In fact, the tentacles of this global debacle stretch their way right through both volumes of Rudd’s writing; narrating the story of a United Nations (UN) conference on carbon abatement in the 1980s, Rudd writes in volume one, ‘Would that negotiations on a global climate change convention [in 2009] had proceeded as smoothly’ (FH, p. 101). This teleology is propelled chiefly by Rudd’s burning sense of injustice about the perceived legacy of the conference itself; ‘In cold hard policy terms, we had achieved remarkable success in the midst of a chaotic process. But back at home Copenhagen would be ridiculed as a failure and a farce’ (PM, p. 229). On the domestic front, Rudd adds nothing new to our understanding of his government’s Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS); it is Copenhagen that drives this story.

Immediately following the ‘Copenhagen chapters’, Rudd establishes the Gillard ‘coup’ as the primary subject of his recollections. He perceives Copenhagen as the moment at which Gillard began agitating for leadership change: ‘Julia did not so much see difficulty for the government but rather an opportunity for herself’ (PM, p. 231). The Rudd Government’s decision to abandon the CPRS is given an entire chapter, and is used to blame Gillard’s office for leaking the story to Lenore Taylor (PM, pp. 257–64). Following a few short prelude chapters dealing with the Mining Tax, Rudd then dedicates almost 100 pages to the events of June 2010. He carefully lists all the people he believes to have been implicated, he argues that the oft-nominated trigger of the challenge—a Peter Hartcher story in the *Sydney Morning Herald* suggesting that Rudd no longer trusted Gillard—simply ‘wasn’t true’; and, as he has claimed many times, Rudd outlines the secret conversation between Rudd and Gillard on the night of 23 June 2010, a conversation in which he claims that she agreed to allow him more time, and then minutes later ‘reneged on the deal’ (PM, pp. 293, 307, 314). Four chapters are spent examining the historiography of the 2010 leadership change, including the accounts published by Gillard, Swan, Craig Emerson and Peter Garrett. Rudd indirectly provided the justification for this in his first volume, accusing his enemies of producing ‘an orchestrated defenestration of my character’ (PM, p. 570). In volume two, the purpose is clear: ‘the time for silence is over … for those prepared to navigate their way through an account of what I believe actually transpired in the lead-up to the coup, please read on’ (PM, p. 327). This is accompanied by an explicit suggestion to readers not interested in self-serving historiography: ‘fast-forward to chapter thirty-two’ (PM, p. 327). At the centre of these chapters is the spectre of Gillard, who Rudd describes as ‘a political chameleon capable of changing her position on
any issue at the drop of a hat, if it happened to suit her political interests at the
time’ (PM, p. 382). The forensic approach to the events of June 2010 makes for
fascinating reading and debate, but it must be said that it makes for neither good
autobiography nor political memoir. Political memoir accounts should always be
welcomed by scholars for their potential insight, but this type of analysis is the
responsibility of trained historians or those with some distance, and these chapters
only reinforce that point.

The chapters in *The PM Years* dealing with Rudd’s time as foreign minister vacillate
wildly between an outright assault on Gillard’s prime ministerial legacy and moments
of offhand civility and politeness. The phone call inviting Rudd to become the
foreign minister is described as ‘businesslike, but friendly’ (PM, p. 419). An episode
in which the pair discuss a Cabinet leak is profound: ‘she knew I wasn’t the source
of the leak … Occasionally, there could be civility in our relationship’ (PM, p. 484). These
pockets of humanity are stashed away among a broadly bitter narrative. According to Rudd, Australia’s partnership with Indonesia was ‘completely derailed
in 2011 by Gillard’s unilateral decision … to ban live cattle exports’ (PM, p. 436).
On the Arab Spring in Libya and the initiative of a ‘no-fly zone’, Gillard is accused of
backgrounding against Rudd in the press (PM, pp. 461–62). Gillard’s carbon pricing
package was ‘wrong on so many levels’ (PM, p. 473). On asylum seeker policy, he
suggests that Gillard ‘had managed to lurch from one exploding cigar to the next in
her efforts to look tough’ (PM, p. 482). Even that mundane international conference,
the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), becomes grist to
Rudd’s anti-Gillard mill; a conspiracy is narrated in which Gillard reportedly sent
Rudd from the Perth CHOGM venue back to Canberra but simultaneously expected
him to continue drafting a joint communique in Perth, all of which he sees as ‘a ploy
by Gillard designed to humiliate her predecessor’ (PM, p. 485). By contrast, Gillard
in her memoir is uniquely kind to Rudd in her retelling of this story: ‘CHOGM
saw some of the best of Kevin Rudd’.7 Amid his anti-Gillard narratives, Rudd is
able to slip a few brief gems of foreign policy-making experience, including a crafty
piece of diplomacy involving Rudd, Myanmar’s Aung San Suu Kyi, the regime’s
home minister, and a letter persuading the latter to guarantee the former’s safety in
a democratic election (PM, pp. 443–44). Aside from this however, most of Rudd’s
narrative reveals little that is new about his foreign ministership, and that which
is new is exclusively to Gillard’s detriment.

The final two years of the Rudd–Gillard Government make for highly depressing
reading in this book. Expectedly, Rudd absolves himself of any responsibility for
undermining Gillard while serving as foreign minister: ‘I had kept my head down
for more than eighteen months’ (PM, p. 490). Given the volume of literature to
the contrary, this is hardly tenable. In the lead-up to March 2013, Rudd explains,

7 Gillard, *My Story*, 220.
a ‘sense of crisis was steadily building in the caucus day by day’, but does not accept any responsibility for his role in creating that atmosphere (PM, p. 515). Blame for the caucus spill on 21 March 2013 is attributed exclusively to Simon Crean, with Rudd writing sarcastically, ‘Thanks a lot, Simon’. The chapter dealing with his return to the leadership is entitled ‘Accepting the Poisoned Chalice’, and although Rudd finally implicates himself in the putsch against Gillard, he still seems not to understand the ‘eyes of liquid hatred’ he received from Gillard and Swan in the caucus room on 26 June 2013 (PM, p. 540). The rest of the book deals with Labor’s quest to win the 2013 election, an outcome that proved elusive for three reasons: (1) a media environment of ‘total war against the government by Murdoch’; (2) the fact that the ‘Liberals were totally cashed up and Labor had virtually none’; and (3) a ‘series of internal leaks from Labor campaign headquarters’, orchestrated by former Gillard loyalists (PM, p. 565). There is little or no introspection about Rudd’s own performance or morale in the campaign, though supporters and enemies have both critiqued Rudd’s efforts on the hustings in 2013; for Swan, Rudd’s campaign was only “‘selfie’ deep’, while Bob Carr saw Rudd as a ‘tone-deaf campaigner’. Either way, Labor lost, and Rudd resigned his seat months later. Though the book does not deal with his post-prime ministerial afterlife, he leaves his reader under no illusion that the Turnbull Government’s refusal to nominate him as a candidate for UN secretary-general in 2016 smacked badly: Turnbull capitulated ‘to political pressure from Abbott, Dutton and the far right’, leaving Rudd once again out in the wilderness (PM, p. 176). All in all, there is little joy to be found in this volume. To the unprepared reader, one might say, ‘you poor bastard’.

Like his prime ministership, Rudd’s political memoirs are destined to achieve some of their goals, while others elusively pass by. Where he sets out to encourage his readers to reflect on their values, their life purpose and their political allegiance, he is likely to succeed. His political and philosophical exegeses are often clear and impactful, and the simplicity of the message he offers is deeply akin to that of his maiden speech, in which he argued that politics was ultimately about power being used ‘for the benefit of the few or the many’. Few could argue that he fails to offer a solid account of his own political formation. Where he seeks to disgust his readers by narrating the trappings and pitfalls of the ALP’s factional systems, he will also most likely succeed, though his broader message about Labor’s political virtues is hardly well served by his extensive anti-faction rants. On the flipside, Rudd’s attempts to extricate himself completely from the factional history of the caucus is transparent to any alert reader. In neither 2006 nor 2013 did Rudd fall into the leadership by accident. He, of course, conceived of his first volume as a ‘letter of encouragement’. Not for the Faint-hearted scores highly on this count, but The PM Years is its ultimate antithesis.

9 Kevin Rudd, Maiden Speech to the House of Representatives, 11 November 1998, in Rudd, Faint-hearted, 573.
There is perhaps less to be learned about policy-making in these accounts than in other political memoirs and diaries, such as Gillard’s *My Story* or Bob Carr’s *Diary of a Foreign Minister*. As a record of the Labor Government’s achievements over six years, Rudd’s *The PM Years* will be somewhat useful. However, measured against the benchmark of Rudd’s intention to enlighten an audience about foreign policy-making, his foreign minister recollections fall extremely short. There is something to be said about his account of the GFC, but, even here, his refusal to properly include the office of the treasurer amounts to a distortion of the record, something that runs counter to his sincere claim that writing a political memoir was his service to ‘the accuracy of the historical record’ (PM, p. 598). Despite the copious amounts of endnotes used across these works, there is little that is new or revolutionary in historiographical terms, and little that shines a light on how good policy-making works.

Both of these books are governed, to varying extents, by the presence of Rudd’s political enemies. In the first volume, it is Howard who performs that role, up until Rudd comes to government ‘blessed with a deputy who was competent, effective and loyal’ (FH, p. 563). In volume two, it is that same deputy who assumes the antagonist’s role, plotting ‘over many, many months’ to dispatch him from the leadership (PM, p. 597). Across both volumes, Swan is extraordinarily demonised (as are to some degree his peers Smith and Conroy) as a personal traitor to Rudd, and as an economic illiterate incapable of discharging his office. From go to woe, the spectre of Rupert Murdoch hangs above Rudd’s political narrative, a man whose empire is collectively described as the ‘third coalition partner’ (FH, p. 457). Despite all of these personal animosities, it is Tony Abbott who earns the moniker of being the ‘giant wrecking ball of Australian politics’ (PM, p. 594). In his prosecution of the case against many of his enemies, Rudd is clinically effective. Against Howard and his decision to go to war in Iraq, for instance, Rudd proves that Labor was on ‘the right side, if not exactly the convenient side, of history’ (FH, p. 305). He is arguably less effective against Gillard, who is reduced to a caricature in *The PM Years*. However, the great strength of the narrative in the first half of *Not for the Faint-hearted* is that Rudd refuses to be defined by enemies. Halfway through, that resolution is weakened, and in volume two, it becomes non-existent.

Finally, has this two-volume mammoth succeeded as a formal right of reply? Thus far, the odds are firmly stacked against the former prime minister’s accounts for a number of reasons. First, many of his opponents across the political spectrum have beaten him to the printing press by a number of years. As Mark McKenna says, ‘wait more than eighteen months in a 24/7 media culture and the subject risks being forgotten’. Rudd has simply waited too long to make his mark. Second,

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these volumes have suffered greatly in the way of marketing. A surprisingly small promotional tour accompanied the first publication in 2017, and a marginally larger endeavour including a book launch at Parliament House accompanied the second. The first release was met with less than stellar sales, with journalists reporting that the first month saw less than 4,000 copies sold, while Jimmy Barnes’s *Working Class Man* was allegedly selling 8,000 copies per week.\(^\text{11}\) Similarly, *The PM Years* underperformed with less than 4,200 sales in the first two months of shelf-life, even factoring in the Christmas rush; ‘The book is projected to sell about a 20th of the copies sold of Gillard’s memoirs, weighing in at 73,000 and even fewer than Swan’s 6000 copies’.\(^\text{12}\) The statistics suggest, therefore, that there is a hungry market for Gillard’s testimony but not for Rudd’s. Time, of course, will be the ultimate arbiter of success in this protracted history war. However, for the time being, neither of Rudd’s volumes will achieve the serious political or historical impact that may have been desired by their author.

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