‘Breathing the Ashes of Empire’

The journeys of four Australian historians in belonging, identity and in the Australian experience of empire.

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Abstract

As Australians define their identity at the turn of the new millennium, very few would consider that their Australianness should be compromised by a concurrent belonging to a greater empire. Even when a majority of Australians voted against a republic in the 1999 referendum, few appear to have done so out of an enduring loyalty to the imperial ties which had once bound Australia and Great Britain so tightly. The ashes of empire today are certainly very cold.

This, though, is a far cry from the nature of Australian identity over much of the twentieth century. Australia’s ‘rite of passage’ through dedominionisation and into independence has captured the imagination and attention of many of today’s historians. Some of those people have also lived through that same period of history. The Australian story which they tell is often, therefore, an account of their own journeys in belonging, identity, and in the pursuit of what it means to be Australian.

Australians who were raised in the inter-war years were of an age which directly participated in the changing fortunes of the empire, witnessing its presence in Australia prior to 1939 at almost the height of its strength, only to see it crumble into ashes in the decades which followed. Historians who emerged from that generation were therefore able to capture the progress of Australia’s changing relations with Great Britain with the insight of personal experience. Each, of course, had different journeys and stories to tell, just as all Australians may have looked on the ashes of empire with different perspectives. This thesis captures the story of Australia and empire, the changing sense of what it meant to be Australian, and the way it was recorded in history by exploring the lives and writings of four of our most prominent historians, Geoffrey Blainey, Geoffrey Bolton, W.J. Hudson and Manning Clark.
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‘Praise the Lord all you nations; extol him all you peoples;
For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.’

Psalm 117.1-2.

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Introduction

Breathing the Ashes

‘everything a man writes or says is a fragment in a gigantic confession about his own life’.

Manning Clark.

As Australians define their identity at the turn of the new millennium, few would even consider that their Australianness should be compromised by a concurrent belonging to a greater empire. Even when a majority of Australians voted against a republic in the 1999 referendum, few appear to have done so out of an enduring loyalty to the imperial ties which had once bound Australia and Great Britain so tightly. The ashes of empire today are certainly very cold.

This is a far cry, though, from the nature of Australian identity over much of the twentieth century. The flames of empire burned brightly at Federation when Australians defended their close relationship with the ‘Mother Country’ – despite the fact that by 1901 over eighty percent of Australians were ‘native born’.¹ In the following decades Australians made it clear that their ongoing loyalties and identity remained subsumed in their membership of the British Empire. Undoubtedly this membership served Australia’s own interests, providing valuable military protection in a troubled international environment, as well as ensuring its ongoing trade and cultural relations between Great Britain and other wealthy Dominions. But it also served to mould the emerging Australian identity of the time into something which was equally British. Australians of the early twentieth century belonged as much to Australia as they did to the British Empire, and perceived no inconsistency in these dual loyalties.

By the 1930s when such well-known historians as Geoffrey Blainey, Geoffrey Bolton and W.J. Hudson were growing up, very little had changed in the nature of Australian attitudes to the Empire. Many of their contemporaries have since recalled the innate Britishness of life in Australia during the inter-war years, and their reminiscences
will hardly come as a surprise. When a round of interviews was conducted in mid-1997 in preparation for this thesis, the outspoken republican, Donald Horne, likened the nature of the Anglo-Australian relationship to a type of ‘vassalage’. He suggested that two parties would have been engaged in the feudal practice, at least as we imagine it now, those being the monarch or lord, and the person (or vassal) who was being protected:

‘Vassalage was a reciprocal relationship in which each side bestowed on the other both honour and material support. The vassal was honoured by his relation to the lord or the prince, and also of course was offered the support of the superior person. The superior person gained honour from the association of all those vassals’.²

Likewise, reasoned Horne, Australia in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries maintained a reciprocal relationship with Great Britain in which it was offered protection from the imperial power and which, in turn, saw Australians bestow their ongoing loyalty and affection on the United Kingdom. Being British, Horne continued, was an essential part of being Australian; nationalism in Australia ‘was not about being Australian, but being British’.³

Other prominent Australians also recalled the Britishness of their society while growing up in the years between the wars, and the ongoing sense of belonging to the Empire. Geoffrey Serle maintained that he was an Australian nationalist, but conceded that England had always retained a ‘special focus’ in his life.⁴ A.G.L. Shaw mused on the Britishness of his schooling and remembered calling Great Britain ‘home’, simply because ‘that was the way it was taught’.⁵ Ken Inglis carefully differentiated between Australian attitudes to England and to the Empire. Kipling’s remark while in India, Inglis argued, that ‘what do they know of England, who only England know’, equally captured the experience of Australians. Australians may have been British and part of the Empire, they may have been attracted to the symbolism of the Empire which mostly resided in the United Kingdom, but British Australians were not therefore also English. In this manner, Inglis suggested,

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² Donald Horne, Interview with Author, Sydney, 15 July 1997.
³ ibid.
⁴ Geoffrey Serle, Interview with Author, Melbourne, 22 July 1997.
⁵ A.G.L. Shaw, Interview with Author, Melbourne, 22 July 1997.
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‘the way Australians interpreted Gallipoli in that generation was anti-
English without in any way being anti-imperial: that we were the ones who
did the job, and that we don’t regret it, but we did it for empire. And if it
hadn’t been for those ‘effete’ English twits, we’d have done a better job.’

This deep affinity with the empire was etched into Australia’s history through the public
commemoration of Australia’s war service. In his book Sacred Places: War Memorials in
the Australian Landscape, Inglis traced the changing attitudes to empire as they were
represented in the inscriptions on the memorials. Most of those erected prior to the
Second World War honoured the fallen for their service to ‘King and Empire’, he noted.
Of those commemorating the services in the Great War, Inglis added,

‘I haven’t come across one inscription in over a thousand which says ‘For
Country and Empire’…. My interpretation is that the notion of ‘country’ so
blurred in the minds of those people in that generation who made the war
memorials, that there’s not enough difference, not enough room between
those two words, to use them both…. Often in the South African War and
World War One unveiling speeches, when people say ‘country’ you can’t
tell whether they mean the British Empire or Australia.’

We know now that the fundamental changes which took place in Australia’s
relationship with Great Britain over the succeeding decades were rarely influenced by the
changing interests of Australians themselves. When increasing constitutional
independence was achieved prior to World War Two, it was due mostly to the
concessions won for the Dominions by more pro-active countries such as Canada and
South Africa. When Australia’s defence and foreign policy ties with Great Britain later
ruptured, it was mostly because Britain could no longer fulfil its obligations to Australia
in the region, leaving them to rely increasingly on the United States. When the traditional
economic and trade links with the United Kingdom altered in the 1960s, it was mostly
because Britain considered its future interests to lie with Europe. As nationalist
movements around the world increased in strength in the post-war years, the British
Empire as Australians had known it was collapsing in ruins. Living in its ashes,
Australians struggled to comprehend the magnitude of the changes and to redefine their
own identity.

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6 Ken Inglis, Interview with Author, Australian National University, Canberra, 16 July 1997.
7 ibid. For more discussion by Inglis on war memorials in Australia, and their representation of imperial
sentiments, see K.S. Inglis, Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape, Miegunyah Press
8 For more recent discussion on the fall of the British Empire, see P.J. Marshall (ed.), The Cambridge
Leading the movement in the following years to capture the spirit of Australianness and the story of its past were many members of the Australian historical profession. Ernest Scott, one of the earliest practitioners within Australian history, had passed on before this re-evaluation of Australianness occurred. A number of his younger contemporaries, though, continued to support the growth of Australian history in their ageing years. Keith Hancock, Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Fred Alexander and Max Crawford all maintained a keen interest in the historical profession well into the 1980s. Manning Clark, A.G.L. Shaw and Geoffrey Serle were contemporaries who were born in the years of the First World War or soon after, and they too were active participants in the re-writing of Australian history in the later half of the twentieth century. Most who followed them are still ‘making history’ today. Geoffrey Bolton, Geoffrey Blainey, Ken Inglis, W.J. Hudson and Michael Roe, for example, were all raised in the inter-war years and continue to influence the profession in varying degrees. Their students who rose to the fore in the 1960s and after, are now arguably the leaders of Australian history at the beginning of the new century. Focusing on a far greater variety of themes and experiences found within history, these men and women are too numerous to mention here, but have undoubtedly revolutionised the study of such experiences as gender, race, migration and society in Australia’s past. They, perhaps more than any before them, have helped determine Australia’s identity in the ashes of empire, and have likewise ensured a vibrant future for the study of Australian history. Books such as *Creating a Nation*, *Australian Civilisation* and *Creating Australia* showcase the writings of many of these historians, and discuss some of the pivotal issues confronting Australians today.10
A multitude of experiences in the lives of historians will invariably influence their search for historical truth, and each has therefore offered a unique perspective when telling their story of Australia’s experience of empire. When exploring the encounter between Australia and empire since 1788, historians have been influenced randomly by such issues as their age, religion, class, ethnicity, family, politics and perhaps even gender. It is little wonder, then, that we have witnessed so many differences in the interpretation of Australia’s history such as that, say, between Humphrey McQueen, Brian Fitzpatrick, Miriam Dixson and Geoffrey Blainey. This does not mean, though, that where historians disagree on interpretation they necessarily negate the value of another perspective – regardless of what reviews and debates within the profession may have one believe. Instead, as each historian presents another or different perspective of the past, each is serving in the quest to recover ‘historical truth’. For example, the study of women’s history in the last few decades has significantly improved our appreciation of the experience of women in the past, and has therefore added to our wider collection of historical truth. Likewise, the study of Aboriginal history since the 1970s has also added more pieces to the jigsaw over which historians ponder.

The search for truth within the past is, of course, often questioned by some philosophers of history. Postmodernists argue that language has no real relation to the world and that descriptions of the past are therefore not likely to ‘reveal reality’. Keith Jenkins, too, argued against the existence of historical truth in his 1991 book, *Re-thinking History*. There he wrote:

‘‘truth’ and similar expressions are devices to open, regulate and shut down interpretations. Truth acts as a censor – it draws the line. We know that such truths are really ‘useful fictions’ that are in discourse by virtue of power … and power uses the term ‘truth’ to exercise control’.12

Others, though, disagree. Murray Murphey likened the quest for historical truth to the search for the elusive Holy Grail, but considered that truth was more likely to be recovered. Keith Windschuttle wrote *The Killing of History* in 1994 to ‘defend the

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integrity of history as a properly scientific endeavour'. Likewise, Joyce Appleby and her associates argued that ‘truths about the past are possible, even if they are not absolute, and hence are worth struggling for’.

Much of the controversy surrounding the attainability of truth has been influenced by the debate concerning ‘historical objectivity’. In the 1960s E.H. Carr rejected the opinion that there could be “no ‘objective’ historical truth”. He accepted, though, that historical fact was determined and selected by the historian. In fact, few philosophers of history would agree that history is completely ‘value-free’. Jenkins, particularly, argued that ‘the historian’s viewpoint and predilections still shape the choice of historical materials, and our own personal constructs determine what we make of them’. Nonetheless, the fact that historical interpretation is subject to the historian’s values, does not mean that the study of the past cannot be conducted, in principle, in an objective manner. Carr explained this theory beautifully:

‘It does not follow that, because a mountain appears to take on different shapes from different angles of vision, it has objectively either no shape at all or an infinity of shapes.’

If Geoffrey Blainey’s story of Australia and empire differs from that of Manning Clark or Geoffrey Bolton, it retains its value if considered as another perspective of the ‘mountain of history’ and, in which case, serves in the effort to recover the totality of historical experience.

Those historians who have lived to witness the changing fortunes of the British Empire in the twentieth century have particularly unique stories to tell. Not only can they tell of Australia's experience under empire with the skills of the historical practitioner, they can also relate to that same story in a very personal manner. When recalling the dual loyalties of Australians in the earlier twentieth-century, historians such as Clark, Bolton and Hudson will remember their own reaction to, or even ownership of, that Britishness.

14 Keith Windschuttle, *The Killing of History: How a Discipline is Being Murdered by Literary Critics and Social Theorists*, Macleay Press, Sydney, p.3.
In fact, their belonging to British Australia may well have influenced their early explorations of Australian history. Blainey, as will be discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, apparently came from a 'more Australian' background than the others, and so may have begun his historical practice with a subdued consciousness of empire in Australia. Each of them, though, has undergone a personal journey as they have participated in and explored the changing nature of the Anglo-Australian relationship in the twentieth century. Some started their journeys enmeshed in the folds of British Australia, but ended by taking a stand against the values of imperialism. Others experienced the opposite and journeyed from a greater nationalism to increased sympathy for the legacy of the British Empire in Australia as their careers progressed. The course over time of each of these journeys can be traced in the writings and testimonies of the historians, their families and their colleagues, and it is the purpose of this thesis to capture those stories.

One factor which may, of course, influence a historian's journey in empire consciousness is the impact of different cultural experiences determined by geography. If we consider the process of Australia's decolonisation, we must also consider whether that process may have occurred in different degrees and times across the Australian continent. While historians normally regard Australia as a uniform or static state when examining its relations with Great Britain in the twentieth century, it may in fact be that the experience of decolonisation in New South Wales, for example, may not have been copied exactly in Western Australia. If Western Australian society stayed more 'British' than New South Wales or Victoria for longer, it may well be true that a historian such as Geoffrey Bolton would have considered empire in a different manner to that of his eastern states colleagues. Rob Pascoe recognised as much recently when he argued that the 'Anglophilic' nature of Bolton's school and community in Western Australia meant that 'for him the question of Britishness is fundamental to Australian life'.\(^1\) Likewise, Pascoe added, Geoffrey Blainey was raised in rural Ballarat and was therefore largely untouched by many of the changes which were occurring in Australian society at the time.

\(^1\) Rob Pascoe, Interview with Author, Victorian University of Technology, Melbourne, 23 July 1997.
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Blainey, he argued, would not have appreciated the impact of changing migration in Melbourne during the 1930s in the same way that Manning Clark may have done.\(^{20}\)

The impact, too, of family must not be underestimated in the lives of Australia’s historians. The Australianness of Geoffrey Blainey’s childhood home may well have blinded him to the loyalties to empire of others. Geoffrey Bolton, on the other hand, was probably made more conscious of empire because of the Britishness of his parents. This is not to suggest that a historian’s ideas and philosophies will have been decisively moulded for life by the beliefs of his or her parents. In fact, many have echoed Manning Clark’s experience by reacting against the values of their childhood in their adult years. It still emphasises, though, the value of examining the earlier experiences in the journeys of those historians who tell the story of Australia. To do this, Bolton, Blainey and Hudson have been consulted directly, in the hope that their memories of their childhood will assist in interpreting the effect of those years on their subsequent historical practices. Regrettably I was not able to do the same with Clark, but prior to his death in 1991 he left us with a valuable trilogy of autobiographical volumes. To these and to his family I have turned in the hope of understanding those childhood influences which haunted his understanding of Australia and its society.

The way in which historians experienced and portrayed empire in Australia could have been approached in a number of ways. A comparative analysis, for example, could have been attempted between generations within the historical profession. This method would have had the advantage of presenting the changing attitudes to Australia and empire over the whole course of twentieth century historiography, allowing for the comparison of such historians as Keith Hancock, Geoffrey Serle, Marilyn Lake and Kate Darian-Smith. But the scope of such an approach would have necessarily weakened our attention to the differences existing within each generation – a condition which would have been at least a grave injustice. Likewise, comparing the interpretations of empire by historical themes such as gender, race, economics or politics, may also have discounted the variety of opinion which exists within each of those genres. Therefore, it seemed, a comparison of historians belonging mostly to one generation provided the most suitable

\(^{20}\) ibid.
means to exploring the stories of Australia and empire within the historical profession—both in the way it was experienced personally, and accounted for historically.

The next difficulty, of course, was to select the generation which would be represented in the study. Keith Hancock, Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Max Crawford and their contemporaries would certainly have been interesting subjects of such a study, given that they were witness to the decline of the British Empire in the twentieth century. But Stuart Macintyre and Julian Thomas produced a collection of essays in 1995 which explored the prominent historians of their generation, and, while that study did not specifically deal with the issues of empire, identity or Britishness, it seemed inappropriate to recover the ground which had been so skilfully examined in that book. Moreover, the historians who followed them appeared even more suitable to a study such as this. Those raised in the inter-war years were of an age which directly participated in the changing fortunes of the empire, witnessing its presence in Australia prior to 1939 at almost the height of its strength, only to see it crumble to ashes in the decades which followed. Entering the historical profession at the same time, these scholars were then able to capture the progress of Australia's changing relations with Great Britain with the insight of personal experience. Unlike the very capable generations of historians who followed, the contemporaries of Clark and Blainey were not only writing that history, they had also lived it.

Finally, it was decided to select four historians upon whom to particularly focus in the study of Australia and empire. Regrettably, this approach has left many other historians undiscussed in the thesis, but this can be partly excused by the fact that Rob Pascoe had already made inroads on the comparative study of many historians in his earlier thesis, *The Manufacture of Australian History*. And although Pascoe's publication was first released twenty years ago, the generation of historians under investigation here has been at least partly covered in his analysis. This left only the selection of the four historians to be done.

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21 Macintyre and Thomas, *Discovery of Australian History*.
Geoffrey Blainey is undoubtedly one of Australia's most prominent historians. With the amount of public attention focused on the controversial scholar, it is perhaps not surprising that a lot of supposition exists about his history, values and philosophies. Blainey is widely perceived within and without the historical profession as a conservative, Anglophilic historian, and it is partly for this reason that Blainey presents as an interesting figure in this study. In fact, as will be discussed in the first chapter, Blainey commenced his journey in Australian history with a consciousness of empire largely tempered by a strong Australian nationalism. Over time, though, Blainey's respect for the legacy of empire in Australian history increased, and when he considered it was being unfairly disparaged in the 1980s, he became one of the most public champions of Australia's British heritage. The question will be asked, was Blainey a 'white ghost of empire'?

Geoffrey Bolton has encountered a very different journey in Australianness over his career. Raised in British Australia during the 1930s and 1940s, Bolton demonstrated an early awareness of the imperial legacy in Australia's history. But as the ties between Britain and Australia gradually eroded in the following decades, so too did his sense of Britishness and his loyalties to the former imperial relationship. Always walking the middle way, Bolton was calling for important changes at the end of the twentieth century, advocating an Australian republic, Aboriginal land rights and even a new flag. In this study, Bolton probably best represents the journey of the many Australians who were raised under a British Australia, only to see their former conceptions of identity and belonging change irrevocably as time progressed.

Likewise, W.J. Hudson was raised being particularly conscious of the strength of British Australia. In his case, though, it was as a member of the Irish Catholic community, and he was therefore less sympathetic to the legacies of imperialism. A prolific historian of Australia's foreign policy and diplomacy, Hudson worked for many years as the Editor of Historical Documents at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. He stands against the others as a fairly unique historian, having worked first as a journalist and completing political science studies prior to starting an academic career in history. Even then, of course, much of his career was spent outside of the university
environment. Hudson, as will be demonstrated in the third chapter of this thesis, focused particularly on the political nature of the Anglo-Australian relationship, and attempted ground breaking research when trying to date Australia's independence.

Despite being about fifteen years older than Blainey, Bolton and Hudson, Manning Clark appears to fit this study particularly well. He, too, belonged to a British Australia while it was in its peak, and was one of the most outspoken public speakers against the remnants of imperialism in Australia as the empire disintegrated. Like Blainey, Clark has attracted significant public attention and supposition. Critics such as his former editor, Peter Ryan, have long denounced him as a left-wing Anglophobe, and this perception appears to be widely accepted by both ordinary and prominent Australians. It is time, though, to question those interpretations of Clark’s work. The last chapter of this thesis will suggest instead that the renowned historian was to his death a ‘child of his age’, maintaining an affinity with the Old World, despite his attempts to shake off the mantle of his heritage. Adding Clark to this discussion runs the risk of displeasing the many commentators on his life who have so far voiced an opinion on his historiography. Clark, of course, must be one of the most disputed and contested figures within the Australian historical profession, having earned both strong allies and strong enemies. This discussion will seek to avoid participating in those existing debates, and will offer instead a new assessment of his work and, particularly, of his experience of empire.

It will be immediately obvious that this selection does not include a female historian. There was no deliberate intention to exclude the work of women from this discussion, but few female historians of the inter-war generation have equalled the influence or profile of Bolton, Blainey or even Hudson, let alone contributed to the broad discussion on Australia and empire to the extent which these others have done. Marjorie Barnard was perhaps one of the most prolific historians during the mid-twentieth century, touching on the broader experience of Australian history in such renowned books as Macquarie’s World, Australian Outline and A History of Australia. 23 Yet she was born in the late nineteenth century, and so was more a

23 Marjorie Barnard, Macquarie’s World, Melbourne University Press in association with Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1946; Marjorie Barnard, Australian Outline, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1943;
contemporary of Scott and Crawford. Likewise, her colleagues Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Margaret Kiddle also wrote a number of respected books of Australian history, although these were not as broad or numerous as those of Barnard.24 Of course, many more women followed in the post-war decades who have also produced excellent histories of Australia with both general and specific themes. They have not lived in the ashes of empire, though, in the same way as their colleagues born in the inter-war years have done, and so have not the same story to tell.

The fact that it has been mostly men who have written on Australia's imperial experience does, though, raise some interesting issues about masculinity and empire. Robert Dixon has recently linked imperialism to masculinity in his study of ‘masculine adventure’ novels in the Victorian and Edwardian periods.25 In *Writing the Colonial Adventure*, he argued that the revival of adventure romances then in the tradition of *Robinson Crusoe* and *King Solomon's Mines*, was a ‘men’s literary revolution’. By the time of George Eliot’s death, Dixon suggested, forty per cent of Britain’s major novelists were women, a fact which he thought compelled male writers to want to reclaim the Victorian novel in masculine terms.26 So, authors such as Robert Louis Stevenson and Henry Rider Haggard, captured the attention of “big and little boys” with their stories of swashbuckling British heroes, conquering the lost races and finding great treasures. But these stories were more than just ‘ripping yarns’. Martin Green reasons that novels such as *Robinson Crusoe* “energised the myth of English imperialism”.27 Dixon believed that the imperialist romances were an attempt to deflect the growing working class radicalism and middle class reformism, such as the women’s suffrage movement, and that they helped preserve the ‘fantasies of masculine authority at home and abroad’.28


26 *ibid.*, p.4.

27 *ibid.*, p.1.

28 *ibid.*, p.5.
Where Dixon's work has mostly focused on the masculinity of the imperialist adventure novel and its reader, the connection between gender and imperialism is also an increasingly popular topic in the study of post-colonial theory and history. Sheila Rowbotham and Marilyn French were among the earliest writers to explore this issue. Rowbotham recognised in 1972 that similarities existed between the "colonisation of the underdeveloped country and female oppression within capitalism".29 French, similarly, discussed a 'man=coloniser, woman=colonised' homology, suggesting that 'if we transpose the descriptions of colonised and coloniser to women and men, they fit at almost every point'.30 Others have since explored the issue further. Laura Donaldson warned that French's simple image did not recognise the diversity of women's experiences of empire. In 1992 Donaldson argued that white middle class women could be 'colonised patriarchal objects', at the same time as being 'colonising race-privileged subjects'.31 Anna Leonowens' character in The King and I demonstrated this complication well.

The study of the connection between gender and imperialism, while still relatively young, has been stimulated by the rising interest since the 1980s in gender history and in reinterpretations of imperial histories. Where historians of empire in the years prior to the Second World War were mostly enthusiasts of imperial activities, the legacies of imperialism in former colonial countries are now being reassessed. Already in that process, the issue of gender has received significant attention. For example, Carolyn Martin Shaw has recently produced a study of race, sex and class in colonial Kenya, while Paula M. Krebs has explored similar themes in South African history.32 Few Australian historians are yet to provide much space to the issue of gender in Australia's imperial experience and certainly the historians claiming most attention in this thesis have

31 Donaldson, Decolonizing Feminisms, p.6.
32 See Carolyn Martin Shaw, Colonial Inscriptions: Race, Sex and Class in Kenya, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1995; and Paula M. Krebs, Gender, Race and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999. See also Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (eds), Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender and Family Life in French and Dutch colonialism, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1998; and Clare Midgley
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not done so. Marilyn Lake, though, has provided some discussion on the relationship between gender and imperialism in Australia. Lake has demonstrated an interest over many years in the relationship between women and the state in her respected histories, so it is not surprising that she was among the first to apply the more recent post-colonial theory to her feminist interests.

Geoffrey Bolton is probably the most sympathetic to the work of Lake and other historians in reinterpreting both the relationship between gender and imperialism, and the broader discussion of women in Australia’s history. More than any of the other historians featured in the following discussion, Bolton has been an ally of women’s history as it has grown in strength in recent decades. Clark, towards the end of his life, admitted that he was ‘sorry, very sorry’ to have paid such scant attention to both women and Aborigines in his histories, although he made no serious amends for his neglect. Blainey is perhaps the most ‘anti-feminist’ of all the historians under discussion in this thesis. Certainly much of his history is dedicated to a very masculine Australian story and spirit, and this is particularly evident in his books such as The Peaks of Lyell, A Land Half Won and The Tyranny of Distance. Finally, Hudson is probably the least gender conscious of them all. Perhaps partly influenced by the masculinist nature of foreign policy and international relations which he has studied, Hudson has demonstrated negligible interest in women in his discussions on Australia’s diplomatic and constitutional history. Despite the differences in their sympathies, though, neither


Bolton, Blainey, Hudson or Clark have seriously considered the masculinity of their approach to Australia's experience of empire.

In 1942 the Oxford historian, E.L. Woodward, wrote of his life as a 'short journey'. He, too, had captured the sense that the progress of one's life through the writing of history, and the experiences with the modern world, was like a journey, or even a pilgrimage. Manning Clark later likened his life to a quest for grace and wisdom, but Woodward reasoned that the search for these qualities would be never ending. 'I could extend over many pages,' he wrote, 'a record of this wisdom which I can never grasp, but know to be as near to me as my own hands.' It may be that the historians discussed in this thesis found in the same way to Woodward that the journey they started never really ended; they may never have attained the objects of their quests. But the journeys themselves are special and unique stories, often reflecting the issues which humanity as a whole must address.

Each story will be different, just as each of their histories are different. This will not negate the varying interpretations of Australia's past which they present. Rather, the different approaches, values and interests which have influenced the writings of Blainey, Bolton, Hudson and Clark have actually added to our understanding of historical experience and historical truth. Clark confessed in his later years that 'everything a man writes or says is a fragment in a gigantic confession about his own life'. In his case, we must rely mostly on the written word which he has left behind, although Dymphna and Axel Clark were especially generous in their assistance with this research, and in the freedom they both encouraged in my interpretation of Clark's work. With Bolton, Blainey and Hudson, we will likewise rely heavily on their writing, but will couple that with the insights they, too, have provided to this author. Each of these historians has a different story to tell of what it was like to be an Australian, and to live in the ashes of empire. Each of these historians has had to interpret that experience in a different

manner, and those experiences and stories will be at least partly recovered in the following pages. In so doing, it may also be possible to reconcile the different interpretations of Australia and empire, and to provide a greater legacy in the quest to recover the past.
Chapter One

Geoffrey Blainey

‘White Ghost of Empire?’

Geoffrey Blainey is undoubtedly one of Australia's most widely recognised and controversial historians. Often outspoken, and not shy of challenging previously accepted ideas, Blainey and his histories have attracted a great deal of attention from members of the media, the public and his colleagues within the historical profession. Much of this has had to do with his public stance in the mid-1980s on the sensitive issues of immigration, Aboriginality and ethnicity in Australia. Works such as the 1985 collaborative effort, *Surrender Australia*,¹ and Humphrey McQueen’s *Suspect History*² in 1997, offered critical analyses of Blainey’s histories and his public denunciation of Australia’s immigration policy. They also demonstrate the level of controversy which surrounds the historian among even his own peers.

The now well known occasion of Blainey’s speech to the Warrnambool Rotarians in March 1984 incited a turbulent debate in Australia’s public discourse over the following years. Asian immigration to Australia, and the ramifications of multiculturalism, were two of the most contentious topics in that debate, emphasised particularly by the nation’s sudden introspection in anticipation of the Bicentenary. With Blainey’s continued high profile in the ensuing debate, charges were levelled liberally against him of conservatism and racism in angry response. His own colleagues from the University of Melbourne, publicly disassociated themselves from Blainey’s views.³ Gradually, other historians also entered the debate, denying his claims to

authority or legitimacy on the issue of immigration in Australia. Geoffrey Bolton announced in the *West Australian*, for example, that Blainey’s comments on immigration should be regarded as ‘of no more value’ than the views of ‘the man in the street’. In the following year, the contributors to *Surrender Australia* sought to criticise his work on the whole for ‘misconceptions, misunderstandings and faulty judgments’.

A significant cause of Blainey’s reaction in the 1980s to what he termed ‘official multiculturalism’ and the decline in the perceived value of Australia’s British heritage, was engendered by his own persisting sympathies for Australia’s experience of empire and of Britain’s legacy in Australia. By his own admission, Blainey fought against what he later called the ‘black armband’ view of history, an approach which he considered was accompanying much of the 1980s reassessment of Australia’s British heritage. Instead, Blainey insisted that Australia’s time under empire was a period in history of which Australians should also be proud:

> ‘we should be proud of much of the ancient Aboriginal history of this land, we should be proud of the British history of this land; and we should be proud – early as it is to judge – of much that has happened in the last third of a century, when immigration has come from diverse sources.’

Elsewhere, too, Blainey talked of the intertwined ‘success and failure’ of Australia’s British history, and hotly opposed that strand of multiculturalism which he considered ‘anti-British’. In fact, Blainey went so far as to propose that a ‘European miracle’ had occurred since British settlement in Australia, and implored Australians ‘not to throw away the gains of that miracle’.

There is a significant link, then, between Blainey’s campaign against official

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multiculturalism and excessive immigration, and his defence and sympathies for Australia's imperial experience under Britain. So it remains surprising that despite widespread attention to Blainey's work from other historians over the last two decades, there is still such little examination of his encounter with, and representation of, the British imperial presence in Australia. For surely many keys to Blainey's outspokenness in the 1980s would be found in this type of analysis. In fact, it is a worrying and embarrassing oversight. Marian Aveling and Humphrey McQueen have, to a degree, implied a connection between Blainey's view of Australian history and an interest in Britain; Aveling spoke of Blainey as belonging to the historical tradition of 'males of British descent', while McQueen called him a "little Englander" in his personal preferences. Yet neither they, nor others, pursued the issue further or with serious interest.

Regardless of the absence of any serious analysis of Blainey's account of Australia under empire, or of the impact which his imperial consciousness has made on his writings, Blainey is still widely considered an Anglophile, hankering for a return to the old-style, British Australia. Geoffrey Bolton suggested as much in 1990, writing that:

'Some such as Blainey and the Australian Chamber of Commerce seem to think that the national character was decisively moulded in the nineteenth century, or at the latest by Gallipoli, and that later comers could be expected to assimilate to this model.'

Despite this popular expectation that Blainey harbours a deep Anglophilic loyalty, though, there is actually substantial evidence in much of his histories to indicate a far greater interest in the uniqueness of Australia, the difference between Australians and Britons, and a nationalist desire to see Australia develop into a successful and

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9 Blainey, 'Europe's Legacy', p.4.
10 Marian Aveling, 'Blainey and being Australian', in Markus and Ricklefs, *Surrender Australia?*, p.92.
11 McQueen, *Suspect History*, p.197.
independent nation. His early works, *The Peaks of Lyell* and *Gold and Paper*, make it particularly clear that Blainey 'barracked' for Australian industries which prospered without British support or assistance, and they often demonstrated his obvious pride in the Australian owned company which functioned to serve the Australian people.

Having said that, though an undeniable tension did surface in Blainey’s treatment of Australia and Britain by the early 1980s. At that time, Blainey discerned an increasing bias in reassessments of Australian history, influenced partly by the previously silenced interest groups of multiculturalism, Aborigines and women. A new kind of social history was being developed in the 1980s, partly encouraged by the national interest and interpretation of identity in the face of the impending Bicentenary. Suddenly, many participants in Australia’s history who had so far been removed from the public discourse, were re-writing that record. Suddenly, it seemed, women, migrants and Aborigines were finding a voice in the pages of that history. What was a necessary and over-due stock take of Australian history, though, seemed to Blainey to have resulted in an over-correction – a swing to the extreme in which Australia’s British heritage was unfairly disparaged.

He may, of course, have been correct. Certainly by the 1990s, Australian history had largely corrected the silences of the past, and had settled to a more balanced equilibrium in which wide ranges of the Australian social, cultural, political and economic experience have been represented in discussion. Nor is the subject of Australia’s former imperial relationship with the United Kingdom viewed as such a pariah, as the recent works of Mark McKenna, Christopher Waters, David Lowe and David Day demonstrate. Even the Australian Historical Association dedicated its

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1999 conference to the theme of ‘Australia and Britain’. But in the early 1980s, without knowing how this would change over the next decade, Blainey firmly denounced the contemporary denigration of Britain’s role in Australia's development. Unfortunately, in doing so, he corrected others’ biases with his own bias, and hence attracted the kind of criticism which we have already noted.

Nonetheless, Blainey's outbursts in the 1980s on issues such as immigration, multiculturalism and indigenous land rights reward us with an illuminating insight into his own sympathies for the role of Great Britain in Australian history. To a certain degree, this sympathy had been foreshadowed in his 1966 book, *The Tyranny of Distance*, where Blainey first discussed the extent of British participation in Australian development. His later books, *A Land Half Won* and *The Blainey View*, further explored Anglo-Australian partnership and identity. A distinctive shift, though, in Blainey’s loyalties to Australia and empire became evident in his direct rebuttals of the trend during the 1980s towards a 'black armband' approach to history. In those years, Blainey actively defended the past role of Britain in Australia, and he called for pride in that period of history. When he released *The Great Seesaw* in the Bicentennial year, Blainey connected the image of empire to the optimism of the human spirit. At the same time, he reasoned, the increasing disenchantment in the twentieth century with the achievements of man and of the British Empire was determined by pessimism. To recapture human optimism, then, meant that the values of empire had to be recaptured.15 Blainey’s nationalist, separatist pride of the 1950s was not so evident thirty years later.

This confusion in the manner in which Blainey alternately represented Australia's experience of empire, lends an interesting light in which to re-examine his


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treatment of such issues as Australian independence, the republic, the flag and
Australian Britishness in the twentieth century. In examining Blainey’s appreciation of
Australia’s imperial ties with the United Kingdom, we will also gain a greater
understanding of his treatment of the Aboriginal experience in Australia, of ethnicity
and of Australian history in general.

It will be argued in the second chapter that the early works of Geoffrey Bolton
made little apparent connection between nineteenth century Australia and its place
within the British empire. Rather, Bolton’s exploration of Australia and empire
developed over the course of his career and as he became increasingly conscious of its
significance. In marked contrast, Geoffrey Blainey demonstrated a thorough
consciousness of Australia and empire from his most early works in Australian history.
Moreover, if Bolton could be described as undergoing a ‘journey in imperial
consciousness’, so too could Blainey. Blainey’s journey, though, has started and ended
at remarkably different places from those of Bolton.

From the very beginning Blainey established a clear link between Australian
colonial development and the partnership it had with the United Kingdom. His 1950s
corporate histories of the Mount Lyell Mining Corporation and the National Bank of
Australasia, first dealt with the economic and investment relationship between
Australians and Britons. Later, he extended his attention to other levels of the Anglo-
Australian relationship such as trade, culture, polity, migration, defence and foreign
policy. Yet also at the beginning of Blainey’s historical practice, there was an equally
clear sense of ‘Australianness’ in his histories – an awareness of an Australian identity
dissociated from British influence. Furthermore, when pitting Britishness and
Australianness together, Blainey made it very clear in his early works that his
sympathies lay with Australian nationalism. In other words, while Blainey mostly

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treated Britain's role in Australia's past with respect, there was always a greater pride in the capacity of Australians to forge their own history.

One of the key elements of Australian development in which Blainey has had particular pride, is the early evolution of a progressive and unique form of democracy. In fact, Blainey delighted at times in stressing the gulf which existed between the political freedoms of Australians and of Britons: Australia in the nineteenth century practiced a democracy which offered wide scale participation in its operation, and which alternately impressed, concerned and awed its British observers. By the mid-nineteenth century, he noted, Australia was experiencing a significant rise in the numbers of free settlers migrating from the United Kingdom and a growing population at home of native-born citizens and emancipated convicts. Neither Australian nor British authorities could withhold the rights to self-government in the colonies in the face of increasing social agitation for civil rights. Some concessions had already been granted, with trials by jury being introduced in New South Wales for civil matters in 1823 and for criminal matters in 1838. In 1843, a legislative council was first established in New South Wales with limited electoral rights. The push towards real self-government still gathered increasing momentum. William Charles Wentworth, the native-born "son of a highwayman and a convict woman", had perhaps been most articulate in promoting political autonomy in New South Wales.16 Making it clear that he considered the 1843 legislative council to be a 'trifling' concession to democracy, Wentworth

'simply enquired why thirty-six citizens, "clods of the earth", should in their collective wisdom be thought inferior to the thirty-seventh "clod", the Governor Sir George Gipps?'17

With the cessation of transportation to New South Wales in 1840, Blainey argued, the British government had less incentive to maintain tight control of the

16 McKenna, *The Captive Republic*, p.15.
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colony. Bowing, too, to the increasing pressure from Melbourne’s citizens for separation from New South Wales, Britain announced in 1850 its plans for self-government in New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia and the soon-to-be created Victoria. With self-government came popular elections and a wide franchise for the first time in Australia. Politicians and philosophers in Europe, Blainey noted, wondered about the future of democracy in Australia, and what kind of representatives Australians would elect. Some observers even feared for the stability of the country if it were to appoint a government:

‘which entrusted ultimate power to people of whom many could not write, many owned no property, many had served long criminal sentences and most had probably voted in no previous election.’18

Blainey, in fact, appeared almost amused at the fears which were held by British observers of Australia’s burgeoning democracy. Undoubtedly, though, he gained much pride in the success of Australia as a world leader in the exercise. Almost boastfully he claimed that Australia is one of the world’s five or six oldest democracies,19 and recounted that by 1860 nine out of ten Australians lived in colonies where every man had the right to vote and where politicians stood for re-election not longer than every three years. Australia, he argued, could claim to be the world’s ‘stronghold of democracy’,20 and although Tasmania and Western Australia were not yet fully democratic, the lower houses or assemblies of the remaining Australian colonies ‘were amongst the most democratic in the world’.21

Other democratic innovations in Australia also caught Blainey’s eye. While Westminster had apparently shunned the introduction of a secret ballot in the 1830s and 1840s, British interest was nevertheless aroused when Australia introduced that same

18 ibid., pp.115, 220.
measure in the 1850s. Charles Dilke took special note of its operation while he visited Victoria in the 1860s, and Blainey suggested that other British migrants to Australia were also quickly persuaded of the merits of a secret ballot. Blainey also contended that its use meant abuse of the voting privilege was less likely to occur in Australia than in Britain. The historian even found pride in the difference between the new Australian politicians and their British counterparts, those men of self-made means and, to the eyes of the critical English, 'of scant polish'. Of the effect which Australian democracy had in the United Kingdom, Blainey wrote:

'In England the brave democratic experiment was looked on with mingled delight, awe and alarm. Would it succeed? Most of the Australian politicians who became ministers of the crown had had no experience of governing. Most did not even have the right to vote before they emigrated.'

Of course the experiment succeeded, and, in the 1980s and 1990s, Blainey repeatedly called on Australians to mark their success in democracy as 'one of the major credits on the national balance sheet'.

There are other conditions, too, which Blainey regards highly and which he has claimed are unique to the Australian experience. Firstly, he suggested that almost from the time of the first British settlement, Australians had greater opportunities for prosperity and higher standards of living than were available in Britain. While Blainey conceded that convicts in colonial Australia were never really forgiven their crimes or the stigma of their past, he still maintained that convicts fared better eventually in Australia than they would have done in Britain. One success story which he recounted was of the emancipated convict, Samuel Terry, who was reputedly worth £250 000 by

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21 Blainey, Land Half Won, p.220.
23 Blainey, Land Half Won, p.223.
24 ibid., p.225.
25 Blainey, Shorter History, p.78.
26 Blainey, 'Drawing Up a Balance Sheet', p.13; See also Blainey, 'Mr Hawke's Bicentennial Scandal', p.17.
the time he ended a fruitful, post-sentence life. Others, too, went on to prosper at the completion of their sentence. So much so, in fact, that Blainey suggested 'Rarely in the history of the world can there have been a scheme of punishment which handed out such rewards'. He also proposed that the anticipation with which many convicts eventually viewed their voyage to Australia actually forced British authorities to reconsider the practice of transportation, fearing that it was beginning to seem as a 'lottery' rather than a deterrent to crime. Australia, according to Blainey, was a land of opportunity where Britain was not.

Poverty, he also reasoned, was known on a lesser scale in nineteenth century Australia than it had been in Britain. Not that the poor managed well in a country where governments provided few social services, Blainey conceded, but employment was more readily available and all Australians had an opportunity for making their fortune in an environment Blainey argued, being less inclined to flaunt their wealth and often sheltered from view on country properties, but the poor also held more possessions than their counterparts may have done in the United Kingdom. Destitution or poverty on the scale found in Britain, he wrote, were 'unknown and unthinkable' in Australia:

'In England a large family of young children was especially prone to poverty, but in Australia it was easier for the children of a large family to find work after school, easier for the husband to grow vegetables and gather firewood, and easier for the wife to find part-time work as a domestic servant.'

Combined with more leisure hours, better working conditions, fewer class distinctions and a more favourable climate and environment, the social experience in Australia was apparently far more rewarding than in the United Kingdom.

27 Blainey, Land Half Won, p.43.
28 Geoffrey Blainey, The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History (1966), Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1975, p.95.
This pride in Australianness over Britishness which is evident in much of Blainey's histories, comes largely from his rather unique background. Geoffrey Bolton can apparently claim to exemplify the experience of the many British-Australians growing up in Australian society of the 1930s and 1940s, and W.J. Hudson those of the significant minority group, the Irish-Australians. Blainey, though, claimed rather to have had the rather unusual experience that neither he, nor his family, drew any sense of connection between Australia and Britain. He was, apparently, one of the few Australians of his time who could claim to have had little sense of belonging to the British Empire. This, of course, did not mean that he was unaware of the significance of the empire, or of Australia's membership within it. It did mean, though, that unlike Robert Menzies, Richard Casey and other 'Anglo-Australians' of that period, Blainey felt no identification with Britishness, no sense of loyalty to a British 'motherland', and no perception of himself as an Australian-Briton.31

Blainey commenced a 1997 interview by affirming his awareness of the British Empire while growing up in the Victorian region of South Gippsland. He said at the time that: 'I believed in the British Empire and knew it was vast. I knew that I was born in the British Empire; it was part of one's announced heritage.' He also recalled that while attending school in the dairy town of Leongatha,

'we celebrated Empire Day and one knew one was part of the British Empire and that it was a powerful force for good. That's what I was brought up to believe'.32

There were a number of reminders in Blainey's childhood of the presence of the British Empire. One of the most striking which he recalled were the brightly coloured maps distributed to householders by insurance companies of the time. With coloured printing not so common in those days, the Mercator distorted map depicting large areas

30 ibid., pp.245-246.
of the world in the strong British red was undoubtedly a 'powerful influence' on children. The impression of the 'vastness' of the empire which Blainey had referred to, would have been a compelling belief in the face of the red-coloured countries spanning the full width of an oblong shaped map. Furthermore, Blainey was born into the inter-war period in which the importance and awareness of Australia's defence links with the United Kingdom were at their peak. Blainey suggested in his interview that 'war heightens defence connections and alliance connections,' and that it also 'cemented a relationship' which might otherwise have 'become looser'. With international relations as they were in the 1930s and 1940s, Blainey could not have escaped the presence and significance of the British Empire, nor the value which Australia placed on its relationship with the United Kingdom.

To the surprise, probably, of those critics who would consider Blainey a conservative historian of Anglo-Australia, the historian actually went on to claim in the same interview that despite his awareness and respect for the empire in his childhood and upbringing, he nonetheless quickly developed a sense of Australianness, and rejected a personal identification with Great Britain. He admitted that:

'my world was essentially Australian. My parents were Australian, my grandparents were Australian, and we had no connections with anyone who was English. We saw ourselves as Australians and not belonging to anywhere else; we didn’t see ourselves as belonging to the British Isles in any sense.'

A number of factors in Blainey’s early years probably helped develop this unique Australianness. Partly it was through his family’s religion, partly through the company he kept, and partly due to the rural Victorian setting he grew up in. Many churches of that time, and particularly the mainstream Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian denominations, tended to employ most of their staff from areas of their

32 ibid.
33 ibid.
34 ibid.
35 ibid.
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ethnic origins. Priests or ministers of these churches in the 1930s and 1940s, were often born and trained in Ireland, England or Scotland. Blainey’s father, though, was a Methodist minister, and therefore belonged to a denomination which placed far less emphasis on its links to the United Kingdom. Blainey’s long-term friend and colleague, Ken Inglis, mused over this fact several years ago. In an interview at the Australian National University, Inglis noted that Blainey had always had ‘an unaffected Australian manner’, and thought it came partly from the fact that he had been raised within the Methodist culture. ‘Australian Methodist ministers talked more with Australian accents than the Anglicans and the Presbyterians did,’ suggested Inglis. Blainey, too, noted the uniqueness of the Methodist church:

‘The Methodist church is essentially a British church transplanted in Australia which broke loose very early.... The Methodist church, while it had tenuous links with England, was still very independent and there would have been very few ministers in it who were brought up in England – at least in Victoria.

‘So in that sense, my background as someone who was brought up in the Methodist church was probably further removed from British influences than any other of the major churches.’

Another contributing factor to Blainey’s early Australianness may have been his friends and environment. The rural towns of Leongatha and Ballarat in which he spent his childhood, and of which he still retains strong memories, were, according to the historian, towns where there would have been ‘very, very few British migrants’. Accordingly, Blainey noted that until he was fifteen he was not aware of any friends who had come from the British Isles. Only after the tragic death of a class-mate at Leongatha did Blainey become aware of her ‘British’ identity:

‘I can remember her vividly – I didn’t know she came from Britain, but when she was murdered her parents went home to England, and that’s how I knew she came from Britain.... After her murder and my parents

35 ibid.
36 Ken Inglis, Interview with Author, Australian National University, Canberra, 16 July 1997.
Deborah Gare said her parents were going back to England, well it was only then that I realised she wasn’t Australian.38

Blainey suggested that it was perhaps due to him being in Victoria that he did not develop a greater sense of Britishness or belonging to the British Empire. He also proposed that it may have been a common experience of all Victorians, since ‘Victoria didn’t have much migration after the 1850s’.39 This, though, is not very probable. In fact, it is more likely that living in a rural environment, such as Blainey did, meant that far less British influence would have been apparent than for those living in the city. For the greater proportion of the population living in major urban centres, the presence of British capital, industry, trade and even news would have been felt far more keenly.

Friends of Blainey, such as A.G.L. Shaw, Geoffrey Serle and Ken Inglis, all testified later to a certain level of affinity with Great Britain and empire when they were young.40 Their experiences, in fact, are far more likely to be representative of Victorians in the 1920s to the 1940s.

The net result, then, of Blainey’s early appreciation of Britain and Australia was a coinciding respect for Britain, and an appreciation of Australian identity dissociated from Britishness:

‘In other words, while I was brought up in an environment that was very respectful of things British, our environment was overwhelmingly Australian…. [C]ertainly the atmosphere at school and at home was one of respect towards Britain and the British Empire, but I don’t think a sense of close affinity to the British people.’41

This concurrent Australian nationalism and respect for Britain is actually a fair representation of Blainey’s histories in general – at least until the 1980s. For on the whole, Blainey demonstrated in his ‘mainstream’ Australian histories a keen pride in Australian achievement and a coinciding respect, but not patriotism, for Britain’s

38 ibid.
39 ibid.
40 Professor, A.G.L. Shaw, Interview with Author, Melbourne, 22 July 1997; Professor Geoffrey Serle, Interview with Author, Melbourne, 22 July 1997; Professor Ken Inglis, Interview with Author, Australian National University, Canberra, 16 July 1997.
contribution to the country’s development. The dual appreciation from thereafter, informed a large proportion of Blainey’s work, influencing his treatment of the Aboriginal experience of Australian history, the development of Australian industry, and the trends in Australian migration. Later, when the dichotomy in Blainey’s treatment of Britain in Australia increased in tension, it further influenced his comments on reconciliation, Asian immigration, the republic and Australian independence. Above all, it has determined Blainey’s representation as a whole of Australia’s experience of empire.

Aboriginality, indigenous use of the land, and relations between Aborigines and white Australians form a significant theme which is discussed extensively and thoughtfully by Blainey in his histories and public commentaries. It is also a subject which displays at its best Blainey’s concurrent Australian nationalism and interest in British imperial behaviour in Australia. Blainey’s representation of the Aboriginal experience under the British Empire, and later under an independent Australia, ranges unhappily across a plateau of conflicting sympathies, speaking at times for and against the outcome of Aborigines’ encounter with Europeans in Australia. Blainey, as we shall see, attempts in his mainstream histories to persuade readers that the legacy of empire in Australia since 1770 resulted in intertwined successes and failures. By the 1980s, though, his attempts at portraying this balance became subject to mounting tension, raising questions of his apparent complacency regarding the connection between Australia, empire and the indigenous people.

Blainey has undoubtedly been a leading contributor in creating interest and recognition among twentieth century Australians of Aboriginal history and culture. It is true that Blainey’s mainstream histories usually include only sparing mention of the

41 Blainey, Interview, 25 July 1997.
Aboriginal experience in Australia since 1788, and his cursory treatment has often been regretted by his critics. But his limited attention to Aboriginal history elsewhere was partially rectified in 1975 by his large and detailed history of ancient Aboriginal Australia, *Triumphs of the Nomads*. A widely celebrated book, *Triumph of the Nomads* reputedly 'played a major role in changing Australian perceptions of traditional Aboriginal society by making available in readable form the fruits of archaeological and prehistoric research'. Yet it, too, was not without its critics. In 1985, Henry Reynolds encouraged a re-assessment of Blainey's 'interpretation of the Aboriginal place in Australian history and to examine how it relates to the intensifying debate about Aboriginal land rights'. Today, a re-examination of Blainey's interpretation of Aboriginal history and his participation in the land rights debate would allow further insight to his appreciation of Australia's empire experience.

On the surface of Blainey's mainstream histories, he appears to be a historian of great sympathy for the Aboriginal experience. In fact, this sympathy often mounts to a certain pride in the ancient culture of the first Australians. At the same time, Blainey's championship of Aboriginal history is also accompanied by a certain level of rejection, or disapproval, of the effect which white colonial Australia had on their existence. In a strange kind of nationalism, Blainey writes with regretful pride of the unique identity of Australia's indigenous people, made astonishingly apparent by the cultural collision between the Aborigines and the incoming British Australians.

In an initial display of admiration for indigenous culture, Blainey demanded respect from readers for a civilisation which he wrote existed well in advance of the

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42 See, for example, Tom Stannage, 'How Blainey Half Won the Land', and Henry Reynolds, 'Blainey and Aboriginal History', in Markus and Ricklefs, *Surrender Australia?*, pp.74-77 and pp.82-89.
44 Markus and Ricklefs, 'Introduction', p.5.
45 Reynolds, 'Blainey and Aboriginal History', p.82.
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'rise of the empires of the Egyptians, the Persians, and the Romans'.46 Introducing *Triumph of the Nomads*, Blainey added this note of praise:

> 'Long before the rise of Babylon and Athens, the early Australians had impressive achievements. They were the only people in the world's history to sail across the seas and discover an inhabitable continent. They bred a brave procession of coastal and inland explorers; they were brown Colombuses, Major Mitchells and even Dr Livingstones, I presume.'47

It is a fact he repeated elsewhere, and with such persuasion that one is left believing that such history has deeply impressed him.48 Blainey also followed Aborigines' long established links to the land, their knowledge of its seasons, plant life and precious underground water supplies.49 In an important comparison, Blainey announced to a national television audience in 1982 that Aborigines were 'masters of the land',50 when only two years previously he had published his theory that European Australians had never more than 'half won' the land.51

Discussing Aboriginal history is also one of the instances in which Blainey determinedly displayed British imperialism in Australia with negative overtones. Having discussed the longevity of Aboriginal culture, Blainey greeted the arrival of British convicts and settlers with a voice of ominous doom. Aborigines witnessing the incoming of Britain's first fleet of ships to New South Wales, he wrote, failed to realise that the coming of these billowing white sails 'marked, far more for Aboriginals than for the British convicts, the dropping of a curtain on their history'.52 He suggested,

> 'the white sails of the English ships were a symbol of the gale which in the following hundred years would slowly cross the continent, blowing out the flames of countless camp-fires, covering with drift sand the grinding stones and fishing nets, silencing the sounds of hundreds of

48 See Blainey, *Shorter History*, pp.3-7.
49 See Blainey, *Triumph of the Nomads*, pp.125-184 for an exhaustive discussion on indigenous use of land, flora and fauna for food, shelter, medicine and cosmetics.
51 Blainey, *Land Half Won*.
52 *ibid.*, p.20.
languages, and stripping the ancient Aboriginal names from nearly every valley and headland.  

In the fifty years after the British arrival in Port Jackson, the boundaries of the colonial settlement in New South Wales were being strained by the white men's push for new pastures in which to house and feed a burgeoning wool industry. Blainey left his students in no doubt that Australia's wool growers were indissolubly linked with the demands of British markets, demonstrating the interdependency of an Australian shepherd and an English weaver. Yet while Blainey suggested that wool was gradually undermining the convict system in Australia, he also recorded that the flourishing colonial wool industry was equally preparing the way for the 'invasion of Aboriginal territories and of the increasing tension wherever the shepherds and Aboriginals met'. Thus a direct connection is established between Australia's experience under empire and the theft of indigenous land – as well as the hostilities which arose thereof.

The greater part of Blainey's depiction of Aboriginal history, though, has been moderated by his appreciation of Britain's role in Australia's development. As a result, his story of indigenous and European Australians over the last two centuries became a juggling act of different interests. His disappointment with the consequences of imperialism on Aboriginal life and culture is at times apparent, but most often it is matched by comment ultimately justifying the initial (white) actions. Likewise, 'positive' outcomes of Europe in Australia have been countered with recognition of the Aboriginal sufferings which it caused. The story, in Blainey's view, is one of success and failure intertwined. For example, in the first few decades of British settlement in Australia, and with the gradual drive of Europeans further into Aboriginal lands, Blainey vividly depicted the initial encounters between white and black Australians.

54 Blainey, *Land Half Won*, p.60.
Above all, he reasoned that the trouble and grief which often resulted from these confrontations, rose out of the misunderstandings and ignorance of both peoples for each other. So, he wrote:

‘Here were the inhabitants of the land which had just invented the steam engine meeting people who, making no pottery and working no metals, did not know how to boil water. Here was an utter contrast in peoples, for they spoke very different languages, had very different histories, customs, rituals, religions, and contrasting attitudes to property, plants and livestock. In their use of the land and their technology they were ages apart: in short, even with goodwill on both sides, they were incompatible.’

Governor Phillip and the arriving British settlers, Blainey suggested, did harbour good intentions to foster amicable relations with the Aborigines. He noted that Phillip admired their dignity, and pledged on arrival that “nothing less than the absolute necessity should ever make me fire upon them”.

On the other hand, Blainey recorded elsewhere that while the ‘good governor’ attempted to live in harmony with the Aborigines, trouble existed on the edges of the settlement: Aborigines were shot and white men, in turn, were speared. Escaping convicts and isolated settlers were rarely as sympathetic to the Aborigines as Phillip. Nonetheless, many inter-racial killings which occurred were the result of tragic misunderstandings, Blainey argued. The lack of a common language and shared social customs increased the chances for misinterpretation of goodwill, and ‘many targets of violence were haphazard symbols of the enemy’.

Blainey condemned the death of Aborigines from white guns and imported disease. He also deplored the theft of their land. In *A Land Half Won*, the historian spoke of the white invaders of Aboriginal land who attacked and murdered Aborigines in their path, particularly in the 1820s. He spoke of the devastation of the Aboriginal

55 *ibid.*, p.61; italics added.
56 Blainey, *Shorter History*, p.22.
population caused by white disease and inter-racial violence. He also maintained a clear association between the troubles in Australia, and the imperial interests of Britain which assisted the perpetuation of such difficulties:

'Across the world, many families living in the safety of a Bristol or Berlin house and sleeping each night beneath blankets of Australian wool did not know the bloodshed which had accompanied part of the raising of that wool.'

On the other hand, Blainey countered the death and destruction endured by the Aborigines with the reasoning that many white settlers were acting out of fear, ignorance and, most importantly, misinterpretation of the Aborigines' behaviour. Many pastoralists involved in inter-racial conflict were reacting to instances where Aborigines speared their cattle and set fires on their properties, we are told, not realising that these were traditional hunting practices of the indigenous people. In this argument, Blainey almost excused the outcome of the conflict on the grasslands – white men fought the Aborigines because Aborigines seemingly attacked them first. Furthermore, he continued his apparent defence of the theft of Aboriginal land by arguing that Aborigines were both unable to defend their land, and unable to use it. Australia's inland territories, so Blainey would have us believe, were ripe for the picking.

A number of Blainey's histories detail the nature of Aboriginal tribal life prior to British settlement. While it is discussed in most depth in Triumphs of the Nomads, there is also intermittent mention made in his other major Australian histories such as A Land Half Won and A Shorter History of Australia. In these works, Blainey suggested that having spent the last thirty thousand years wandering nomadically over Australia, forming hundreds of distinct communities and often engaging in inter-tribal warfare, Aborigines were unprepared and 'intensely vulnerable when, unscathed by the neolithic revolution, they were confronted less than two centuries ago by Europe's industrial

59 ibid., p.77.
60 ibid., p.77.
revolution'. Blainey had already argued that tribal conflict had been prevalent in Australia before 1788, with strong evidence pointing to an indigenous culture of violence and warfare. Death through fighting, he suggested, was significant enough to be a major factor in curbing Aboriginal population growth well before the white men's guns and disease did so. The lack of unity which existed between the Aboriginal tribes, then, meant that they were less effective in countering the white invasion and was ultimately one of the primary causes of their own defeat and subjection.

In fact, Blainey suggested that deaths due to Aboriginal warfare would proportionally have produced more devastation on the indigenous population over time than a century of war would have done on Europe. Hence he noted the reason why 'Aborigines had trouble, after Britons arrived, in uniting to fight the 'common foe'. Often the common foe remained black'. The tragedy, then, of Aboriginal conflict was that they missed the opportunity to jointly expel the British invaders, or at least to gain greater concessions from the loss of their land. On the grasslands, Blainey wrote, Aborigines held superior numbers and knowledge of the terrain with which they could have dispelled white invaders. Their lack of cooperation, though, made this impossible:

'At a time when Aboriginal alliances could have been a vital defence, the tribes rarely united. Tribal warfare went on during the invasion, and in some regions the white settlers were invited by Aboriginals to attack their tribal enemies or were applauded when they drove them away.'

Had they fought more effectively, Blainey concluded, the indigenous people in Australia may have benefited from such treaties or agreements as had been established in North America, New Zealand and Papua. As it was, Aborigines' lack of unity and absence of any kind of 'chieftain' with whom to conduct negotiations, deprived them of

61 ibid., p.72.
62 Blainey, Triumph of the Nomads, p.230.
63 Blainey, Shorter History, p.10.
64 ibid., p.10.
65 Blainey, Land Half Won, pp.83-84.
We are further persuaded that while Aborigines may have had long-standing and ancestral links to the land, the fact that they were not able to use it to its full efficiency was another reason to deny the full injustice of British settlement and annexation of their territory. This is a reasoning which Blainey gradually developed, but which came to the fore of his discussion in the mid-1980s as he was grappling with issues such as Aboriginal land rights. So, he considered, the progress which white Australians had made since settlement, compared to the non-productivity of the land prior to that, apparently justified their occupation. While the Aborigines’ loss was tragic, British sins were later atoned because the world ultimately benefited. In an address to the National Press Club in November 1983, Blainey argued that Australian history was something to be proud of, and worthy of defence. One of the greatest triumphs in that history, he added, was the progress in the use of the land since Aboriginal times:

‘Today this land supports some forty times as many people as it supported in Aboriginal times. This land, today, not only supplies the 15 million Australians with nearly all their needs but supplies tens of millions in other lands — stretching from China to the Soviet Union to Egypt — and supplies fibres to tens of millions of other lands, and supplies minerals to hundreds of millions in other lands. Our occupation of this continent, tragic for the Aboriginals, has been a gain to mankind as a whole.’

He frequently voiced these and similar sentiments elsewhere. In the Institute of Public Affairs Review, the Blainey View and the Aboriginal Law Bulletin, Blainey made the same claims: that Australia is ‘infinitely more productive’ now than it was two hundred years ago, and that to ‘make an arid, unfamiliar and isolated continent so fruitful is an achievement’.

Blainey assured his students that he sympathised with the loss endured by the
Aborigines of their material and spiritual ownership of the land, and hastened to add that the 'grievances of the Aborigines were legitimate'.69 He also urged Australians to recognise that white success is 'accompanied by failure' – the Aborigines had an ancient culture and presence, but their 'civilization has largely vanished'.70 On the other hand, Blainey made it clear where his final allegiances lay by announcing at the annual Mount Eliza Community Lecture that:

'a sense of sympathy towards Aborigines should not prevent a celebration of all the gains that have come since 1788. Many celebrations take account of gains as well as losses: Anzac Day is a simple example'.71

The previous year he replied in a Courier-Mail interview that 'by modern standards the Aborigines couldn't make full use of the land – and it's in the interests of the world that someone else got them'.72

These comments incited outrage from Blainey's critics. Henry Reynolds condemned Blainey's interpretation that Aborigines were to be admired, but that 'their right to Australia could not be sustained'. He also deplored Blainey's theory that the destruction of Aboriginal life and culture was for the 'greater good', and that the subsequent 'production of food, fibres and minerals justified the invasion'.73 Humphrey McQueen later wrote that:

'Blainey's justification for British possession of this land by the more productive users is dangerous since it can be extended into the future. If the Aborigines lost their land rights because they could not develop resources as efficiently as their conquerors, why should the rule 'technical might is right' not apply to white Australians vis-à-vis some qualitatively more advanced society?'74

Blainey merely answered these judgements with the conclusion that the invasion of the Australian continent by an outside power was inevitable. While he conceded that

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69 Blainey, Shorter History, p.47.
70 Blainey, 'Europe's Legacy', p.4.
71 Geoffrey Blainey, 'They View Australia's History as a Saga of Shame', 4 October 1985, in Blainey, Eye on Australia, p.46.
72 Geoffrey Blainey, Courier-Mail, 2 May 1984.
73 Reynolds, 'Blainey and Aboriginal History', p.89.
74 McQueen, Suspect History, p.187.
Aborigines may have been happier without British settlement in Australia, he added that 'no peoples of the earth can continue to live in isolation', and the inevitability of Britain's imperial takeover meant much to the world's gain.\textsuperscript{75}

Blainey's representation of Aboriginal history gives great insight to his interpretation of Australia's experience of empire. His story of indigenous Australians is laced with confusion and conflicting sympathies: for a time his pioneering work in *Triumph of the Nomads* inspired other advancements in the popular study of Aboriginal history, and yet he also qualified the death of that history by championing the results which British settlement wrought. For most of his mainstream histories, Blainey attempted a balance in discussing indigenous and British relations in Australia. It was a story mostly of both successes and failures, although undoubtedly tinged with a special sympathy or nationalist interest in the Aborigines. By the 1980s, though, the forces of multiculturalism were challenging his previous equilibrium. And as the public and legal debate over native title and Aboriginal land rights extended into the 1990s, Blainey began to speak against the awarding of such concessions whereas once he had offered tenuous support for land rights in the name of reconciliation.\textsuperscript{76} While sympathy for the Aboriginal experience remained, justification and championship of white behaviour or policy rose to the fore in his expression. After all, he noted, the injustice was tragic, but not unique.\textsuperscript{77}

It is not, perhaps, surprising. That one people caused the destruction of the other, meant that Blainey's concurrent sympathies for them both were as incompatible as the two cultures colliding in colonial Australia. Widespread, politically motivated reassessments in the 1980s of the Aboriginal experience of British Australia, provided

\textsuperscript{75} Blainey, *Blainey View*, p.20.

\textsuperscript{76} Geoffrey Blainey, '50 Years Back, 20 Years On', *IPA Review*, vol.46(3),1993, p.43; and Geoffrey Blainey, 'Not Because they are Aborigines, but Because they are Australians', 4 December 1986, in Blainey, *Eye on Australia*, p.122.

\textsuperscript{77} Blainey, 'Not Because they are Aborigines', p.124.
the catalyst which caused the tenuous equilibrium in Blainey's histories to become unbalanced. In this instance, Blainey came down on the side of empire.

Of course, the flip side of Blainey's representation of Aboriginal history is his interpretation of Britain's role in assisting the development and prosperity of Australia's white population. Again, this matter becomes subject to his dual sympathies: those for Australian nationalism and self-fulfilment, and those urging respect for Britain's involvement in Australia's advancement. While, again, Blainey enjoys demonstrating a distinction between Australian achievement and British assistance, ultimately any separatist or nationalist interpretation which he draws of Australian history is moderated by his depiction of Britain's role in that history. And, yet again, his emphasis on the partnership which occurred between Australia and Britain in the white settlement or development of this country, gained increasing emphasis the further Blainey's historical career progressed.

Blainey's early awareness of Australia's connection to Britain and to the empire is very evident in his first corporate histories in the 1950s, *The Peaks of Lyell* and *Gold and Paper*. In these works Blainey makes clear the connection between Australian enterprise and British investment, giving detailed descriptions of the role of British investors in the industries of mining and finance. In a way this is not surprising. After all, corporate histories would be one of the most effective ways to demonstrate the imperial connection of any two countries, through the tangled web of financial relations, investment and trade. At the same time, the two books are perhaps his best examples of exploring a separate, nationalist process of Australian self-determination. For *Peaks of Lyell* and *Gold and Paper* both place a heavy emphasis on Australian owned and operated companies, the rigours of the Australian environment, the accomplishments of Australian workers and successes of Australian companies making
it good against the competition or disinterest of the British.

Blainey’s first serious research project on completion of his undergraduate degree from the University of Melbourne was the history of the Mount Lyell Mining and Railway Company, situated on the west coast of Tasmania. He informed his readers that in its height of production, Mount Lyell was the largest copper mine in the British Empire, and the largest in the southern hemisphere; it was the “first, the last and the dominant company on a great Australian copperfield”. For the most part, *Peaks of Lyell* is dedicated to the nineteenth century discoveries of Tasmania’s mineral resources and the development of its copper industry. But it is also a story covering the ranging experiences of life in the mining industry of its time - it commits much space to the stories of the prospectors, miners, employers, and small towns which struggled alongside the mineral-rich ranges of the west coast.

In *Suspect History*, Humphrey McQueen delivered strong criticism of Blainey’s treatment of workers in his histories, and particularly in *Peaks of Lyell*. McQueen argued that an ‘anti-union bias has recurred with varying intensities’ in Blainey’s company histories, and suggested that the historian romanticised the conditions of Australian workers employed in Tasmania’s copper industry. This allegation, though, is both unwarranted and unfair, and suggests that McQueen has failed to conduct an exhaustive analysis of Blainey’s Mount Lyell project. There is no doubt that the Australian characters are the real heroes in the story of Mount Lyell. Furthermore, it is through Blainey’s depiction of them, their work and their struggle with the environment, that he most clearly demonstrates a nationalist interest in Australian development, and most keenly identifies a separation between Australian and British development in Australia. While Britons are seen as the investors and providers of capital in Australian industry, Blainey portrayed Australian workers and investors as

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being the driving force behind its progress.

Blainey turned his attention first to the explorers, geologists and diggers whose efforts initially demonstrated Tasmania’s copper producing capacity, and who opened up the west coast region. Nor did he attempt to romanticise the experience of these workers engaged in initial expeditions. Blainey wrote that in the late 1850s, the financially troubled Tasmanian government sent the geologist Charles Gould into the barely explored regions of the colony in the search for gold. There Gould led two teams through the bush where his men ‘dug holes, diverted creaks, fired scrub, hacked and pushed through sodden undergrowth’, forded rivers and battled bushfires. For their troubles they usually returned home bereft of mineral trophies. After a discovery of enough gold in the region to create some serious public interest, Blainey turned his attention to the prospectors who panned and dug at Lyell. Painstakingly he recorded their efforts at locating mineral deposits in the wild hills of the region, often using vibrant and colourful language with which to depict their stories:

‘On a frosty spring morning one of the boys was digging a shallow trench in the red clay when he struck white quartz. He cracked it open and his eyes almost left his head when he saw splashes of gold. [Con] Lynch hurried up and in his broad brogue swore the boy to secrecy.’

Nor did he ignore the men who worked as packers and rail builders to maintain communication and supplies to the miners. Of the summer of 1884 he noted that:

‘less than sixty men worked in the [Mount Lyell] valley; but they were giants. Every pound of food, every tent, crowbar, shovel, and stick of dynamite was strapped to the back and carried from Strahan, thirty miles away. A return trip took three days of perspiring toil, and in winter the last miles were covered by candlelight - dim light for a track strewn with fallen trees and thick scrub, and often veiled by mist and rain.’

Every fortnight, Blainey wrote, each digger had to make this trip to the coast to purchase his supplies, or was obliged to pay a professional packer £1 to make the same

79 McQueen, Suspect History, pp.193-194.
80 Blainey, Peaks of Lyell, pp.5-7.
81 ibid., p.27.
journey, returning with 50 to 60 pounds of new rations. Life as a pioneering prospector in the bush and climate of Tasmania was far more than an arduous task, and Blainey clearly admired the workers who struggled on in this environment, laying foundations for a prosperous industry to follow.

It is a similar theme which is developed in the successor to *Lyell*, Blainey's *Gold and Paper*. Published in 1958, Blainey was presumably approached by the directors of the National Bank of Australasia after the success of the Lyell project. Again, focus on Australian workers as the driving force of Australian development remained a key theme in his history. While admittedly there is a greater proportion of his attention levelled at the 'management' or middle class level than at lower working classes in the bank’s history, this could reasonably be pardoned by the fact that employees of the National Bank for the better part its history were mostly managers of small, frontier branches. Banks more often required skilled office workers operating in small teams in their years of expansion, whereas mining companies demanded large teams of labouring workers to mine the ore, and fewer overseers.

Despite the greater attention paid to what might be termed the 'bourgeois' workers in *Gold and Paper*, Blainey's admiration for the same hard working pioneer, toiling for the benefit of the Australian company, remained as apparent. So, too, did his respect of those working to advance native industries. Special mention deserves to be made of Francis Grey Smith, general manager of the National Bank from 1872 to 1900, who commanded the bank and formulated the policies which assisted its Australian clients. Also deserving of mention are the countless and nameless pioneers who toiled in appalling conditions, servicing the needs of miners and farmers in rural Australia. Employment in a bank may have been desirable for its social prestige and tempting

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remuneration, but the conditions many endured were highly discouraging:

‘Corrugated iron was the mainstay of the early branches in outback Queensland and Western Australia, and the low shed-like buildings were furnaces that dried the ink in the wells and curled the stationery. Often a blanket suspended on wire divided the banking chamber from the manager’s bedroom, and when there were no chairs the manager stood while clients sat on his bed; if the bank inspectors were due, chairs were borrowed from the local store.’

Staff also had to endure the dangers associated with their industry, particularly the menace of bushrangers to isolated branches. In December 1878 the manager of the National’s Euroa outpost, as well as his staff and family, were captured by Ned Kelly’s gang and held hostage. Blainey praised the workers of the bank who endured such odds and dangers, and operated with versatility and dedication:

‘They often acted as bush lawyers for their clients, wrote and read letters for the illiterate, inspected reefs of gold for the miners and cattle runs for the pastoralist, ran the ‘tote’ at picnic races, drew up wills and sometimes read the service of burial.’

Blainey’s attention to the ordinary Australian in his 1958 publication is less direct than it may have been elsewhere. Yet his interest in their welfare remains apparent. Blainey employed the activities of the National Bank as a tool to facilitate discussion of the Australian experience in the late nineteenth century, and demonstrated the impact of the bank on Australian development. Firstly, he wrote, the bank was floated in the 1850s on discounted shares, to encourage the ‘industrious classes to identify themselves with the monetary interests of the country, and to invest their savings in the national institution’. Twenty years later, the shareholders and directors still believed that the National:

‘was the people’s bank, the institution for the smaller merchants, storekeepers, and farmers, not for those squatters and merchants whose

83 Blainey, Gold and Paper, p.229.
84 ibid., p.105.
85 ibid., p.228.
86 ibid., p.12.
coaches so often waited outside the offices of the Anglo-Australian banks'. 87

He also took care to examine the services of the bank to Australians, and the particular efforts it made to ensure their welfare. Of the managers in outback Victorian branches, Blainey noted that they 'had the task of refusing borrowers when money was scarce, the satisfaction of assisting farmers through bad harvests and shopkeepers through slackness of trade'. 88 Then there was the Melbourne widow of an insolvent engineer who lived for thirty years in a suburban house at the bank's expense, or the occasion when farmers in northern Victoria had their properties destroyed by fire and were supplied with 'miles of new fencing even though they were hopelessly indebted to the bank'. 89 The National Bank of Blainey’s image, was a home-owned bank assisting the development of its own people.

In Blainey's July 1997 interview he appeared a keen supporter of national industry, and claimed to be a historian who would 'barrack' for the Australian owned companies. These sentiments are demonstrated in Peaks of Lyell, and are also well in evidence in Gold and Paper. A result of this fact is his presentation of the National Bank as a benevolent institution, serving the nation's pastoralists and urban industries where foreign owned interests would not. Hence, if Australian farming and manufacturing are accepted as 'good things', then the directors and managers of Blainey's bank could be considered the 'good guys' for advancing the cause of these industries. For example, the 1859 Act of Incorporation of the National Bank prohibited the bank from advancing money 'in anticipation or expectation of receiving title deeds of land as security'. Unfortunately, many pastoralists and factory owners had little but property to nominate as security. 90 On the other hand, Blainey informed

87 ibid., pp.91-92.
88 ibid., p.217; italics added.
89 ibid., p.186.
90 ibid., p.53.
his readers that the bank bravely overstepped its charter and began championing the
Australian underdog, advancing money on the security of land. To an English banker,
land and livestock were unsound securities, 'for they could easily deteriorate by drought
and could not be quickly sold if the bank suddenly wanted money'. Australian bankers,
though, increasingly rebelled against this British edict in the mid-nineteenth century,
and the National Bank lead the way 'boldly and firmly' in defiance. 'Consisting of
more than a thousand shareholders,' Blainey wrote, 'it was in sympathy with the
national problem of creating an economy that did not hinge on gold.' Interestingly, the
1860s saw the Victorian parliament and governor approve legislation allowing for
landed securities, followed by the swift action of the Imperial government in 1867 to
disallow such legislation. Blainey wrote that the National protested the imperial action,
and continued to fight for the cause of Australian development:

'The National Bank in turn rebelled at these 'very objectionable
restrictions' and resolved to unite with other colonial banks and petition
the Victorian parliament to introduce a bill permitting the illegal security.
The National Bank hoped that parliament would pass the bill again and
again, until the objections of the British government finally ceased....
The storm of public protest humbled Whitehall, and the bank was
confident that it would not interfere lightly in colonial politics again.'

Certainly Blainey believed it was the National Bank which fostered much of
Australia's colonial industry, despite the restrictions of the Imperial parliament and
some unhelpful practices of Australian governments. Blainey suggested that the 1860s
web of protective tariffs enforced by the Victorian government in an attempt to promote
native industry, would have been 'futile verbiage on the statute book' if it had not been
for the investment of a few banks, and particularly the National, in these industries.
'The National Bank,' he added, 'certainly encouraged local enterprises'. Blainey
furthered this observation with the comment that the 'generous credit' of the banks
indisputably prevented Victorian gold towns from collapse, the National showing

91 ibid., pp.52,54,58.
particular generosity in Ballarat. And compared to London banks, Blainey wrote that Australian banks far surpassed their British counterparts in the numbers of branches available to clients and the ‘courtesy and efficiency of the Australian bankers compared with their staid London colleagues’.  

In both *Lyell* and *Gold and Paper*, Blainey praised these kinds of qualities of Australian companies and industry, but presented British activity in corporate Australia with only a disappointed or dispassionate ‘wash’. In both these histories, British actors in the story were made mention of only as investors and financiers where Australian resources could not stretch. They remained mostly nameless, and were usually mentioned infrequently. When British actors did appear in the narrative, they occasionally featured as in the above fiasco between the colonies and the Imperial government – acting detrimentally to Australian interests. In this way Blainey demonstrated large pride in the Australianness of the two institutions which he chronicled. Most other banks in the 1850s, we are told, were owned and run by British businessmen. This meant, of course, that all profits of the banks were returned to the United Kingdom, and the institutions themselves were inclined to act in favour of British, not Australian, interests. As well as robbing colonists of the profits of their own money, Blainey reasoned that British banks were also engaged in practices suppressive of national industry, such as the reluctance to advance capital on the security of land or livestock. It is little wonder that he took particular interest in the establishment of the National and the Colonial, two institutions launching themselves on the ticket of being Australian. Blainey recorded a section of the Colonial’s prospectus at its inception:

‘The principal Banking Establishments in Victoria have hitherto derived immense profits payable chiefly to a foreign proprietary though purely resulting from a local trade, carried on with the funds of the colonists themselves. This consideration leads to the conviction that the Colonists

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92 ibid., pp.60,61,64.
of Victoria are in a position to enjoy *and ought to receive* whatever advantages can be derived from the employment of their own capital.\(^{93}\)

Again, it is the Australianness of the institutions – distinctly separate from British influence – which caused Blainey most interest. The banks of Blainey’s favour were Australian owned, and served Australian interests where British rivals would not.

The large group of shareholders in the United Kingdom with interests in Australia's mineral and finance industries were also key British protagonists in the stories of Mount Lyell and the National Bank. In both of these histories, Blainey allowed a distinct connection between British investors and Australian commercial and industrial development. Interestingly, it was not always in the Britons' favour. For the most part, British investors in both these histories were anonymous groups of people, who were seen to be providers of finance to Australia's corporate sector where Australian resources could not meet – they were, in a sense, a 'last resort'. And whereas Blainey enthusiastically told the stories of Australian workers and the success of Australian initiative in national development, British shareholders were more often depicted as reluctant spectators or foolish speculators.

Undoubtedly Blainey was very conscious of the service which was paid to Australian industry, and to the developing colonial economies by the steady inflow of British finance. In his histories such as *Tyranny of Distance, Land Half Won* and *The Blainey View*, the historian chronicled a long and fruitful partnership between the two countries in the advancement of Australian productivity. But in *Lyell* and *Gold and Paper*, there appeared less enthusiasm for British participation in that process. Instead, British shareholders in Australian industry were often presented with little enthusiasm. A further twist in his depiction of the British as the ‘money-bags’ of Australian development, was Blainey’s characterisation of Britons as gullible or foolish investors.

Whether consciously intended or not, Blainey reported time and again in *The

\(^{93}\) *ibid.*, p.4.
Peaks of Lyell stories of British investors rejecting opportunities for participation in what the historian could see in hindsight would have been monumentally successful projects. For example, in 1893, William Knox, then managing director of the Mount Lyell mine, offered shares to private London investors at £3 each. Scoffed at by the British markets, Knox returned to Australia with little to show for his campaigning in the United Kingdom. By late 1896, though, shares in the same mine had increased in value to £9.5s each; in September 1897 they reached their peak of £16.10s. There is no doubt that in not taking the chance earlier on Knox’s offer, many reluctant British investors missed the opportunity to hold shares in what was soon to be the biggest copper mine in the British empire.94

Furthermore, Blainey repeatedly detailed evidence of British investors being duped into unsound commercial ventures by the high promises of unethical promoters. Not only could the British miss golden opportunities through their exaggerated caution, they could also be gullible and easily misled on other occasions by their eager response to brash salesmen. Of prime example were the mining companies who operated leases on the borders of the Mount Lyell Company. Often their prospectuses boasted mad, unsubstantiated claims of sharing the famous Mount Lyell copper lode. The Great Mount Lyell Company claimed after its launch in 1899 that it its mine would equal the value of the Mount Lyell Company. It went on to claim ‘every reasonable expectation’ that the southern extension of the Mount Lyell lode would conveniently cross its leasehold where ‘great richness of ore may be expected’. Forty years later, though,

‘systmatic sampling of this tunnel revealed that the richest ore in the first 140 feet carried only 0.3 per cent copper. English investors were not to know this. They subscribed £25,000 and lined the pockets of the promoters.’95

The Mount Lyell Comstock Copper Company was another mine of the late 1890s

94 Blainey, Peaks of Lyell, pp.61,75.
95 ibid., p.79.
pursuing British shareholders by unhealthy promises. It apparently held an isolated ore body, different in composition to the Iron Blow of the Mount Lyell Company's mine, and 'too poor to be mined at a profit'. To raise money for the construction of a railway and for exploration of their deposit, the company printed a 'glowing English prospectus and a gaily-coloured map', indicating the course of the Mount Lyell lode travelling 'north of the Iron Blow, across five leases and through the middle of the mountain, to arrive safe and sound at the Comstock mine, a mile and a half away'. This bold lie, wrote Blainey, 'drew £50,000 from gullible English and Scottish investors'. A pattern of British gullibility developed in Blainey's story of Lyell mining. He wrote at the same time:

'Each of these companies raised a large sum in London on the strength of assertions which would have been laughed to scorn by Melbourne investors; assertions which were feasible in 1896 but which had been exposed as lies in the intervening three years. Not every company distorted its prospects, but the companies which raised the largest sums certainly deceived the British investors.\textsuperscript{96}

Hence the British, as discussed in \textit{The Peaks of Lyell}, were presented primarily as nameless, overseas investors. Certainly they received no great honour or respect in Blainey's treatment of them; too often they turned down a rewarding investment, and more often they were easily duped by high stories which Australian investors apparently would have recognised immediately as false. Their contribution to the development of Australian industry, and in particular to the Mount Lyell Mining and Railway Company, did not gain the admiration of Geoffrey Blainey in the same manner as the miners and smelter operators in their employ, or of like fashion with the company's hard working managers and directors. It appears to be that those who performed the hard work, and who toiled ceaselessly for the good of the company, were those who gained Blainey's respect – not those who reclined overseas and waited impatiently for their dividends to appear in the mail.
A significant shift occurred in Blainey's representation of Britain in Australia after he completed the Mount Lyell and National Bank histories. These first projects demonstrated a keen Australian nationalism and pride in native initiative, which tempered his concurrent appreciation of Britain's imperial role in Australian colonial development. Blainey, though, increasingly placed greater emphasis on the successful partnership between the Australian colonies and the British motherland in his successive histories. No longer was British involvement in Australian development portrayed so dispassionately. Instead, Blainey accorded greater attention and sympathy to the close Anglo-Australian relationship and cooperation in advancing colonial interests.

A number of themes of Anglo-Australian cooperation recur in Blainey's post-1950s histories. These include a shared British and Australian interest in the advancement of Australia's whaling, mining, wool, finance and agricultural industries. In addition to this, Blainey began to give substantial attention to the impact on the growth and development of the Australian colonies by the forced migration of thousands of British convicts. British investment in Australian urban building and expansion, as well as in large-scale colonial public works, also received a fair proportion of the historian's attention after *Gold and Paper*. Finally, Blainey's frequent allegations that Australian colonial development and the Australian economy was inseparably linked to that of the United Kingdom, becomes particularly important.

The work which demonstrated the most marked shift in Blainey's treatment of the Anglo-Australian relationship is his 1966 book, *Tyranny of Distance*. Blainey informed his readers that the book began as an attempt to discuss the effect of technology and transport on the Australian experience, but that it later became an

\[96\text{ibid., p.79.}\]
Geoffrey Blainey: White Ghost of Empire?

analysis of how distance shaped Australian history, suggesting that distance was a 'central and unifying factor' which warranted a reassessment of Australia's past. 97 In that discussion, Blainey offered his students his first exhaustive analysis of the depth of Britain's partnership in Australian development.

It was something of a bombshell which Blainey dropped in 1966, suggesting that Australia was colonised equally for its position along European trade routes to Asia and Africa, and for its natural resources of flax and pine, as much as it was to house a penal colony of Britain's most vile outcasts. Marian Aveling suggested, in fact, that his thesis 'made it impossible for historians ever again to write off the colony merely as a British prison'. 98 The transportation of British convicts to Australian shores, and the subsequent hunt for flax and Norfolk Island pine, became one of the first instances of Blainey exploring the partnership between British investment and market demands, and Australian industrial or agricultural development. Blainey suggested in the opening pages of his Tyrranny of Distance that Britain had for long transported its convicts overseas into employment, which would then directly benefit the United Kingdom:

‘In the eighteenth century the British practice of transporting many of its convicts rested on the idea that they should be useful servants of, rather than an encumbrance on, the State which they had sinned against. Transportation was not only a method of punishment but also a sound economic policy.’ 99

Hence, convicts had been sold to private contractors in the United States, prior to the American Revolution, with this reason in mind. It would follow then, Blainey proffered, that the cost of transporting British criminals in the late eighteenth century to Botany Bay would have been too excessive without the additional compensation of strategic and commercial gain. In fact, he argued, London must have believed that Botany Bay could provide a suitable port of call on British trading routes to China and

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97 Blainey, Tyranny of Distance, p.vii.
98 Aveling, 'Blainey and being Australian', pp.90-91.
99 Blainey, Tyranny of Distance, p.11.
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the Dutch spice islands, as well as for whaling expeditions and traders in sea otter skins. Furthermore, in the belligerent European climate of the time, the United Kingdom was looking increasingly for alternative naval supplies of flax and pine – the materials needed for canvas sails and ship masts:

‘In that era Britain’s military strength and an increasing part of her commerce relied on seapower, and flax and ship’s timber were as vital to seapower as steel and oil are today.... It is perhaps not a coincidence that at a time when England was reviewing its sources of naval stores, it should suddenly announce that it intended to send its unwanted convicts to a land that seemed rich in these strategic materials.’

The basic facts of economic life in Britain at this time meant that flax and pine were valuable commodities. This gave rise, then, to the first example of Australian industry which was tied inescapably with British markets and economy. Norfolk Island, rich in both flax and tall pines, was a key incentive for the colonial settlement in New South Wales. Blainey suggested that at first it was hoped to use Norfolk Island as a nursery for these products, and to transplant the prized vegetation to the mainland of Australia where it could be grown limitlessly under the supervision of forced labour.

Discussed further in *A Land Half Won* and *A Shorter History*, Blainey recorded that within a month of the first settlement in Port Jackson, 24 people were dispatched to settle on Norfolk Island. Followed shortly by others, the island’s population equalled that of Sydney within a few years. Ultimately, we’re told, Australia’s first attempt in exporting materials to the hungry United Kingdom markets failed miserably. The survival of the colony was, of course, the highest priority, and flax could not be cultivated extensively while every available inch of the ground was required to produce grain. Then it took several years before sufficient flax was able to be produced and woven into canvas for the first time. When the first bolts of fabric were finally manufactured, the material proved too weak in strength for use, and too costly a venture.

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100 *ibid.*, pp.16,18.
101 *ibid.*, p.19.
to continue. Even the harvesting of Norfolk pine proved unsuccessful – while the tall
trees were not only difficult to fell, many were then found to be rotten beneath their
bark, and not as strong as expected. Finally, hopes to furnish the British fleet in the
East Indies gave way, and the pine forests were used as firewood for the colony.

The connection between Australian resources and British markets continued in
Blainey’s histories, with his exploration of imperial interests in Australia’s whaling
industry. The value of whaling in Australia’s history, he suggested, seemed to have
been ‘almost forgotten’. Instead, wool traditionally dominated the pages of Australia’s
history, especially in the years after the first Blue Mountains expeditions in 1813, and
after the soaring of wool’s prices in the 1820s. Yet it would be surprising, Blainey
continued, if Australian whaling was any less productive than the much famed wool
industry in its first forty years. Certainly, whaling was still Australia’s primary export
industry as late as 1833, a fact often forgotten or ignored because of a lack of interest in
Australian maritime history and the contemporary opposition to such a cruel and brutal
activity. Nonetheless, whaling in Australia’s offshore environment certainly assisted
its early development. Blainey particularly established a connection between that
industry and the interest of British markets and traders. Whaling, he argued, was one of
the most dangerous and ‘masculine of all seafaring trades’. The biggest whales in
Australian waters weighed as much as twenty five elephants, and equalled the weight of
some of the smaller ships chasing them. Yet, he added, the most ‘insidious enemies of
whales … were not the crews with harpoons and lances but rather women and their
households in Europe and North America’. Prized in Britain for their whale bone, wax,
oil and blubber, sperm whales were soon the most sought after species in Australia’s

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103 Blainey, *Tyranny of Distance*, pp.21-22.
104 *ibid.*, p.69.
fishing waters.\textsuperscript{105}

Ships which dominated Australia's early whaling industry were from England or New England, and did not at first substantially enhance the New South Wales economy by their activities. For the first generation of British settlement in Australia, whaling fleets were purchased in the United Kingdom or in America, operated mostly by a crew from the northern hemisphere, and supplies were acquired well before the whalers entered either Sydney or Hobart. Once replete with their prized cargoes, captains of whaling expeditions usually then sailed eagerly for home without returning to Australian ports. Hence whaling's influence on the budding Australian economy was slim until the first Australian whalers were sent to join the chase some time later. This in itself was delayed initially, because there were few in Australian ports who could finance a whaling ship and its risky journey.\textsuperscript{106}

The United Kingdom, according to Blainey, had a number of good reasons to hope for the expansion of a successful trade in whales from Australian waters. Firstly, Britain fostered the industry because a strong whaling fleet was 'a magnificent school of seamen and a source of vital raw materials' from which it could draw. Not only were domestic demands for perfumes, corsets, soaps and household candles being met by the import of whale products, but in the uncertain naval period in which they were operating, whaling expeditions trained up a valuable source of experienced sailors who could be called on in a time of war to aid the British cause. Furthermore, this came with little demand on the public purse. Secondly, it was especially convenient for Britain to encourage a healthy whaling practice in Australia's maritime region, for this would ensure cheaper fares for their convicts and supplies which required transportation to Australian ports.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{105} ibid., p.58.
\textsuperscript{106} ibid., pp.58,61.
\textsuperscript{107} ibid., pp.58,60.
While Blainey indicated that at first the British interest in Australia's capacity for whale exports was purely mercenary, he also conceded that initial British investment in the industry encouraged a far greater involvement by Australian merchants in the following years, and significantly enriched Australian commerce. Certainly it assisted in employing free settlers by apprenticing many young men as sailors. By the nineteenth century, conditions in the rapidly growing industry were apparently more favourable for the Australian sailor than for those from either the United Kingdom or the United States: Australian sailors were expected to endure a voyage of less than 12 months, while their American counterparts had to last between two and three years at sea. Whalers were also the only Australian workers to share in their employer's profits from the voyage, boosting their incentive for a successful expedition, and increasing their spending power when returning home. Furthermore, whaling opened up large areas of previously uncharted Australian coastline, as Australian ships competed with British, American and French operators for suitable landing sites where whales could be boiled down after being caught.\(^{108}\)

If Australia's early history had been influenced by its proximity to trade routes and by its suitability as a port of call for extended British shipping lines, Blainey suggested that by the 1830s this was to change dramatically. Instead, Australia began to be more of a terminus for shipping, and the colony's direct trading links with Europe were strengthened considerably:

'Australia was becoming useful, not so much as a dead-end house for English criminals and a half-way house for English ships, than as a source of Britain's raw materials - wool from the land and whale oil from the sea.'\(^{109}\)

Wool, perhaps more than any other industry or commodity, received particular attention from Blainey in most of his histories since the 1950s. It was also the industry in which

\(^{108}\) ibid., pp.62,64. 
\(^{109}\) ibid., p.57.
he placed the greatest emphasis on an Anglo-Australian partnership of interests.

Wool, of course, also did much in the nineteenth century to advance the economy, population and general growth of Australia. Initially, Blainey wrote, sheep were more valuable in the colony for their mutton than for their wool, and it was not until the 1820s that the export of wool became increasingly important to Australia. Soon flocks were becoming so large that pastoralists were escaping from the confines of the penal settlement and beyond the Blue Mountains in search of more grazing land. In 1825, one third of Australia’s flock were centred around Bathurst, and by the 1830s eastern Australia’s sheep population was exploding. Blainey argued that to service the colony’s settlers west of Katoomba, the governor used convict labour to construct main roads into and over the hills, soon halving the costs of transporting wool by the breeders.

The ‘quick march of the sheep’ out of Sydney soon led to heightened demand for land, and the settlement of such cities as Melbourne, Canberra, Geelong and Bathurst. It also paved the way for the discovery of gold and the great Australian boom which followed. With the inland progress of their flocks, shepherds were left to wander over land lined beneath the surface with alluvial gold deposits. While it was not until 1851 that the first major discoveries of gold took place, shepherds were apparently uncovering certain quantities of gold while tending their sheep during much of the 1840s. Yet even before the subsequent gold rushes dramatically interrupted Australia’s sleepy progress, wool was quickly becoming a major provider of finance to the colonies through exports to Europe.

It is little wonder then that Britain’s role in the growth of Australia’s wool industry was of such particular interest to Blainey. Wool was fast becoming the staple

110 Blainey, *Shorter History*, p.36.
111 Blainey, *Tyranny of Distance*, pp.77, 80.
commodity of Australia's economy, and Britain's demand for the fibre served only to increase its profitability. In many of his histories, Blainey established a very clear connection between Australia's wool industry and the markets of the United Kingdom. In matters such as transportation costs, fluctuating market requirements, and secondary manufacturing processes, Blainey suggested that Australia's success in the industry depended entirely on the product's reception in the United Kingdom. While a number of breweries, soap and candle factories and foundries may have been operating successfully in Australia in the 1840s, few were able to sustain the high costs in transportation to the United Kingdom as could wool. Even the sales of wheat in metropolitan Sydney barely covered the costs of its transportation from the inland. Wool, on the other hand, was usually worth ten times the value of wheat, and the cost of wool in England was high enough to warrant its production on a large scale in inland Australia as well as its transportation to British textile mills.

In other ways, too, Blainey demonstrated a joint Anglo-Australian interest in Australian wool. He wrote that by 1840 Britain was purchasing more wool from Australian flock owners than from Germany, Spain and the rest of Europe combined: 'The astonishing rise of the wool industry changed Australian life. It tied faraway Australia's economy to Europe'. The extent to which Australia's export economy was becoming increasingly tied to Britain's markets, was highlighted in the 1840s when the demand for wool in England slowed. Blainey wrote that when England changed its needs, Australia changed its production. If Australia's flocks were no longer in such high demand for their fleece, other uses for the sheep were quickly devised. One such use for the animals was as a source of tallow, the main ingredient in household candles and cheap soaps:

114 Blainey, Tyranny of Distance, p.86.
115 ibid., p.76.
Possibly four million sheep and a quarter of a million cattle were melted down in Australia between 1843 and 1851. Millions of hands in the British Isles were now washed with the soap made from surplus Australian livestock.\textsuperscript{117}

Here, again, Blainey has demonstrated the close link between the British and Australian colonial economies, establishing that Australian industry cooperated with British interests in a manner which advanced the cause of colonial development and the Australian economy.

There is no doubt that Blainey believes the Australian export market and United Kingdom economy were indissolubly linked in the manufacturing of wool. He wrote in 1980 that:

'A shepherd dozing under a tree on an Australian plain and a weaver working in a noisy English woollen mill depended on each other. By 1850 more than half of the wool shipped into England came from Australia, and Melbourne and Sydney dwarfed the wool trade of such famous wool ports as Hamburg and Bremen in Germany and Odessa in Russia. If Australia in 1850 was not already the largest producer of wool in the world, it was about to become so.'\textsuperscript{118}

Nor is he alone in recognising the links between Australian colonial development and the sale of wool to the United Kingdom. Brian Fitzpatrick, of course, dedicated several chapters of \textit{The British Empire in Australia} to the rise of pastoralism in the colonial economy. English capital, he wrote, financed the expansion of the pastoral industry of New South Wales into vast new territories. Furthermore, Fitzpatrick recognised that the rise of the wool industry also aided the increases in free immigration, land value, and bank capital which occurred at the same time. But where Blainey emphasised the reciprocal benefits of Britain's investment in Australia's wool trade, Fitzpatrick considered it an 'exploitation of Australasian land for private profit'.\textsuperscript{119}

Blainey did hint that Britain earned more out of the refinement and uses of

\textsuperscript{116} Blainey, \textit{Shorter History}, p.40.
\textsuperscript{117} Blainey, \textit{Land Half Won}, p.6.
\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.60-61.
Australian wool than did the Australian pastoralists who produced the raw fibre. Far more people in England than in Australia, he conceded, earned their living from Australian wool. In fact, there were thousands of people from northern England who lived by sorting, washing, dyeing, spinning and weaving the Australian fleece, while Australians actually paid for the return of their wool in the shape of:

'woollen overcoats, blankets, scarves, socks or as skeins of knitting wool, for Australia was still primarily a producer of raw materials and an importer of manufactured goods. Australia's wool had to circle the globe in order to move from the backs of its sheep to the backs of its people.'

There appears to be a hint of Fitzpatrick's argument in Blainey's story. The above passage, for example, implies Blainey's dissatisfaction with Britain's exploitation of Australian resources, or at least with Australia's inability to produce such goods on its own. But on the whole, the historian appears more sympathetic to the partnership of Anglo-Australian interests in the growth of Australia's wool industry than not.

In mining and finance, as we have already seen, Blainey has placed some interest in the imperial connection with both industries, and in many ways the two can be discussed together. For while mineral exploration and excavation provided the biggest boost to Australia's population and fiscal development in the nineteenth century, the banking industry often assisted the growth of that venture by providing necessary finance for company development. Both, of course, were valuable industries contributing towards colonial development. Mining, and in particular the gold boom of the mid-nineteenth century, generated great wealth for the colonies, provided another major export product, increased employment and attracted unprecedented rates of immigration to Australia. Banking assisted both individual prospectors and large mining companies, invested in agricultural and pastoral development, financed urban building projects and assisted many new businesses. Any British contribution, then, to either of these industries was another example of an Anglo-Australian partnership.
While in the earlier works of *Lyell* and *Gold and Paper* Blainey appeared reluctant to praise the inflow of British capital to the Australian colonies, there is greater evidence of his sympathy with their investment in his succeeding histories. In fact, he soon made it abundantly clear that the development of colonial infrastructure stemmed almost wholly from the willingness of British investors to provide their sterling for use in the fertile lands of the antipodes. In 1994 he wrote of the collaboration of British capital and hard Australian work in the push for Australian growth:

'England, the world’s money lender, financed telegraphs, tens of thousands of kilometres of wire fences for sheep stations, and the railways built far inland. Australia’s progress seemed easy in the forty years from 1850 to 1890, because the combination of hard work and natural wealth, bright technical ideas and sober English capital worked wonders.'\(^{121}\)

In addition to the practicalities of creating new work and amenities in the colonies, Blainey also suggested that British investment in these works further assisted the unity of the Australian people. British loans meant that regions which had previously been neglected or under-equipped were afforded new public works and supporting utilities. British loans also increased the sense of unity among the Australian people, numbing that ‘sense of isolation’ and deprivation which had been crucial to the secessionism of Queensland and Victoria prior to their separation from New South Wales. This, in turn, lead to a greater likelihood of Federation in the decades to come.

The extent of Australia's reliance on the continuing inflow of British capital was demonstrated vividly by the economic crash and depression of the 1890s – a subject of which Blainey speaks often. In 1890, he suggested, it was inconceivable that prosperity in Australia would fade. Disaster soon struck, though, and it was not until 1945 to 1970 that Australia regained the economic buoyancy of a century ago. A moderate slump in 1891 first set the stage for the impending financial crisis in colonial Australia. According to *A Land Half Won*, social optimism at the time was replaced by sobriety

\(^{120}\) *ibid.*, p.60.
and increased caution. In the face of unemployment, falling investments and general uneasiness, Australians stalled in their economic progress. In part, the slump was encouraged by the increasing wariness of British investors who had so far done so much towards creating jobs by providing loans to the Australian governments, and by buying shares in Australian mining, pastoral and finance companies.122

Almost twenty per cent of new British investments overseas in the 1880s were diverted to Australia, we are told. Blainey added that 'Here was the great financier of the world pouring money into a continent holding fewer than three million people'.123 Certainly Fitzpatrick would have perceived little altruism in the motives of the British investors, and Blainey did concede that the extent of that investment in Australia was foolhardy. It was impossible, he reasoned, for the Australian economy to absorb so much capital sensibly in so short a period of time:

'The rising flood of capital was at first profitably absorbed, but it soon exceeded the country's power of absorption. Nevertheless, Australia did not lack bold financiers who thought they could use the money, and Britain did not lack investors who thought they could safely lend the money. And so Australia, unwilling to disappoint the widows of Glasgow and the retired colonels of Bournemouth, lived up to its soaring income and squandered so much of it in useless ventures that the day of reckoning was to be marked by disaster. In effect, Britain thoughtlessly gave Australia a large overdraft.'124

As the ramifications of unwise expenditures in previous decades began to mount, Australian businessmen quaked and funds from the United Kingdom slowed. Then, to the horror and surprise of all, an unprecedented run on the banks occurred in Victoria and New South Wales. Many unsound institutions collapsed under the weight of their gross over-commitments, and in 1893 fifty per cent of Australians were denied access to their deposits when their banks closed. While banks gradually returned to business, unemployment by the end of that year had reached record levels. Colonies such as

121 Blainey, Shorter History, pp.98-99.
122 Blainey, Land Half Won, p.318.
123 ibid., p.319.
Victoria had to retreat from spending at the very time when their people needed charity and employment the most. At the same time, feeling the 'scarcity of British money', Melbourne's building industry was crushed, leaving a glut of 'skyscrapers' and unfinished buildings unoccupied for much of the following decade.\textsuperscript{125}

The overwhelming conclusion of Blainey's analysis of imperial interests in colonial Australia, is that the Australian economy was tied inseparably to the markets and economy of the United Kingdom:

'Australia received most of its migrants and capital and manufactured goods and shipping services from Britain, and in return exported most of its wool and minerals to Britain. Australia's economic life was dovetailed to Britain's.'\textsuperscript{126}

Australian industry and exports revolved entirely around British requirements, starting with the harvesting of Norfolk Island materials in the 1780s, and continuing to the export of fibres and minerals in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the inflow of British capital meant that growth of colonial infrastructure and private enterprise was made possible, and life in developing Australia was made infinitely more comfortable.

In 1997 Blainey explained that his work in corporate and economic histories furnished him with a greater knowledge of the extent of British economic ties in Australia, adding 'I suppose if I hadn't written any corporate histories then I wouldn't have realised how extensive [these ties] were in industries about which I had no knowledge'. Yet where Brian Fitzpatrick, the distinguished economic historian, was 'generally against British investment', Blainey believed in the necessity of international assistance in Australian colonial development. He may have preferred Australian based investment, but recognised the necessity of British participation in Australia's economic growth and mostly appreciated the results:

\textsuperscript{124} Blainey, \textit{Gold and Paper}, p.130.  
\textsuperscript{125} Blainey, \textit{Land Half Won}, p.333.  
\textsuperscript{126} Blainey, \textit{Tyranny of Distance}, p.139.
'My view was that it would be better if were Australian, but that there was no alternative since we didn't have enough savings, enough wealth, to control our own economy.

'So I myself am not against overseas investment, although I'd sooner it be local than overseas. I think if you're a small country you've got no alternative to borrowing money from overseas if you want to develop and have a high standard of living. The United States did it for most of its history.

'I would always barrack for the Australian owned [companies], mentally.'

Hence, according to Blainey, overseas investment in Australian material growth may not have been preferable, but it was better than nothing. Britain's partnership and imperialism in Australia may have resulted in some unfortunate consequences – the loss of indigenous land, lives and culture being a prime example – but combined with the efforts of Australian workers and Australian ingenuity, it led to a progressive and democratic nation with a sound economy and the capacity to sustain millions.

If Blainey's presentation of Australian history had been first characterised by an inherent nationalism favouring Australian self-determination, and then by an increasing respect for British participation in its national development, another swing appeared in the 1980s which put in even more positive terms Britain's imperial role within Australia. Incited by the socially turbulent climate of that decade, Blainey believed that Britain's contribution to Australian history was under challenge and he launched a public campaign in the defence of Anglo-Australia. Newspapers and prominent journals across the country frequently printed his arguments that Australia had a history worthy of pride which was, to a large extent, assisted by Britain's participation. Even in his 'mainstream' histories since 1980, Blainey began a more exhaustive analysis of the partnership between Australia and the United Kingdom. It was a significant development in the focus of the historian, in which he reassessed the nature of Britishness in Australia, the process of Australia's separation from Britain, Australian
independence and the republic.

For some time since 1980, Blainey had cited three main groups in Australian society which he considered were unfairly disparaging Australia's British history, and working against the gains made in that period. Receiving his most critical appraisal was a prominent strand of multiculturalism he accused of being anti-British.\textsuperscript{128} Musing on this issue recently, Blainey wrote:

'Since the 1980s, in newspaper articles but not in books, I have sometimes defended various facets of Australia's past relationship with Britain. I have done this because Official Multiculturalism since the early 1980s has tended to be anti-British, in a manner that I think has been extremely unfair. While my loyalty is essentially to Australia, I sometimes see a need to remind people of Britain's vital contribution to Australian history, especially since that contribution is now attacked unduly. Fifty years ago there was no shortage of such reminders: indeed they were almost too numerous.'\textsuperscript{129}

Much earlier he had announced to the town of Mount Eliza that:

'The multicultural lobby has little respect for the history of Australia between 1788 and 1950. In the eyes of the multicultural supporters, Australia was a desert between 1788 and 1950 because it was populated largely by people from the British Isles and because it seemed to have a cultural unity, a homogeneity, which is the very antithesis of multiculturalism.'\textsuperscript{130}

Blainey answered their challenge with the allegation that Australia had long been a true multicultural society, because differences between Irish Catholics, Scottish Presbyterians and Cornish Methodists had been apparent in all levels of politics, culture, society, sport and business since British settlement. 'Serious multiculturalism,' he continued, was a dangerous and divisive element, as lessons in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Malaysia had demonstrated. Furthermore, those supporters of multiculturalism in Australia who dismissed Australian history - 'the history, that is, until they themselves arrived in this land' - as hardly worth celebrating, denied the unique and valuable past

\textsuperscript{127} Blainey, Interview, 25 July 1997.
\textsuperscript{128} Blainey, Interview, 17 September 1998.
\textsuperscript{129} Geoffrey Blainey, Correspondence with Author, 23 August 1998.
\textsuperscript{130} Blainey, 'Mr Hawke's Bicentennial Scandal', p.16.
which many Australians held dear.\textsuperscript{131}

Aborigines were the second ‘minority group’ which received Blainey’s disapproval in this period. Most indigenous Australians, he conceded, were not pleased to celebrate the events of 1788. But resting on his previous argument that Australian history was characterised by success and failure, Blainey urged that ‘a sense of sympathy towards Aborigines should not prevent a celebration of all the gains that have come since 1788’.\textsuperscript{132} Finally, Blainey also turned his attention to those entertaining a ‘certain form of socialism’ and espousing a black armband view of history:

‘They see Australia’s history as largely the story of violence, exploitation, repression, racism, sexism, capitalism, colonialism, and a few other isms. Some of their books on Australian history appear now in thundering prose, delivered from a moral height.’\textsuperscript{133}

Blainey, though, disputed their claims, and argued instead that Australia has a history worthy of pride and of celebration. He also questioned the right of the multicultural lobby, indigenous spokespersons, and that left-wing section to command extensive attention in public and political discussions, announcing ‘I would be surprised if they, together, form 5 per cent of the adult population of this country, and certainly no more than 10 per cent’.\textsuperscript{134}

Blainey’s rebuff to these controversial forces of the 1980s encouraged, then, a new and positive image of British imperial history within Australia. In both supporting Australia’s history between 1788 and 1950, and defending the Britishness of that era, Blainey progressed from having a strong respect for the Anglo-Australian relationship, to taking a public stance of support for Australia’s British history. For instance, Blainey found great interest and pride in Australia’s successful experiment in democracy – a great Australian achievement but in part an import from the United Kingdom. In 1993

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{ibid.}, p.16.
\item \textit{ibid.}, p.15.
\item \textit{ibid.}, p.16.
\item \textit{ibid.}, p.17.
\end{enumerate}
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he wrote in *Quadrant* that 'I count democracy as one of the major credits on the national balance sheet'. Participating in a Westminster-styled parliament and democracy, most Australian men were eligible to vote for members of their legislative houses by the 1860s. By 1903 Australian women were given the same privilege, making Australia the 'oldest continuous democracy in the world'.135 Where others were portraying Australian history as dismal in the years of the Bicentenary, Blainey believed there was more to celebrate.

A further achievement in Australia's history which Blainey used frequently after 1980 to champion Australia's British past, is the economic progress which occurred in areas such as agriculture and mineral production. Two industries already discussed in this chapter – pastoralism and mining – were heavily supported in their development by British investment. The benefits of these industries were two-fold: they increased Australia's domestic wealth and prosperity, and increased Australia's ability to feed millions of people at home and overseas. So, in his *Quadrant* article, Blainey wrote:

> 'All in all it was a great achievement to turn Australia into one of the world's great producers of foods and fibres. The natural fibres are costlier and less in favour in this era of synthetic fibres but in the cold winters of the Northern Hemisphere how many hundreds of millions of lives were made more livable or even prolonged by Australian wool? Likewise Australian-grown food is not so urgently needed at present but its era will probably come again. Meanwhile in a reasonably favourable year of the last decade Australia was probably producing enough food to sustain – on a modest intake of calories – close to one hundred million people here and overseas.'136

This was a remarkable achievement, he concluded, to have occurred within 200 years. And as we have seen, Australian initiative and hard work are coupled with British investment in Blainey's mind to have made this possible.

Australia since the late 1970s has been witness to an 'aboriginal renaissance'. Increasingly, the history of Australia's indigenous people gained attention within the

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136 *ibid.*, p.12.
broad reassessments of the 1980s, and issues such as land rights and reconciliation were brought to the fore. It was also the third major issue which Blainey dealt with in his defence of British Australia. As has already been demonstrated, Blainey established very distinct connections between British imperialism and the suffering of Aborigines in Australia: the expansion of the wool industry which resulted in further Aboriginal loss of land and life was done to feed the hungry markets of the United Kingdom and Europe; traditional hunting and fishing practices were restricted, and hundreds of indigenous languages were destroyed under the early years of Britain's settlement in its new colonies. But Blainey believes that Australia's British history, especially in relation to the Aboriginal experience, was characterised by intertwined successes and failures: 'Contact creates as well as destroys, it enriches as well as impoverishes'.

Sympathy for the Aboriginal experience in British Australia, he argued, should not prevent pride in the achievements of that period, for 'on the whole it stands out as one of the world's success stories'.

In the midst of Blainey's outspokenness and championship of British Australia in the 1980s, came his re-release of two nineteenth century autobiographies of British travellers to Australia. Charles Dilke and James Froude arrived in the Australian colonies in 1866 and 1884 respectively. Both were esteemed as intellectual leaders in the United Kingdom, Froude being a famous historian of sixteenth century England, and Dilke a 'young encyclopaedia', with a promising political career ahead of him.

Both were supporters of empire and believers in the 'British race'. Both, too, were keenly interested in the progress of the Australian colonies which they visited, the continuing Britishness of the Australian people, and the ties to empire which

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137 Blainey, 'Europe's Legacy', p.4.
138 Blainey, 'Drawing up a Balance Sheet', p.15.
140 Blainey, Greater Britain, p.vii.
Australians maintained.

It remains intriguing, then, why Blainey chose to publish the travelling tales of Froude and Dilke at the time which he did. In 1997 he discussed his motivations for their release, saying that he identified both Dilke and Froude when requested by a publisher to recommend out-of-print texts for re-publication, and to edit the books for greater contemporary relevance. Blainey denied favouring either Froude or Dilke because of their Britishness, or interest in Australia and empire. Rather, he claimed that the two texts were chosen for their general literary appeal:

'I think both were historians as well as 'men of letters' and other things, and they both visited Australia and New Zealand and wrote books about their experience. It may be that they were the two most capable historians who came to Australia in the period 1800 to 1890 - so that might have been the reason they were selected. And also they were both good prose writers. If you were going to republish a book that has long been out of print, they have to be able to address a later generation with some skill. But I don't think they were chosen for any reason of British-Australian thinking, or anything like that.'

It is difficult to accept, though, that there was not more to the two British travellers than their prose styles which attracted Blainey's attention. Both texts are so steeped in empire and concentrate on the imperial connection between Australia and Britain, that it must be more than coincidental that they gained Blainey's attention in the very years he started to defend Britain in his writings so vociferously. In fact, it is more likely that Blainey chose Froude and Dilke because they appealed to his particular interest at the time in British Australia.

Froude, apparently, was a historian who attracted substantial criticism both in the 1880s and in the 1980s. The *Australian Dictionary of Biography* warns readers to be cautious of Froude, believing his text to be riddled with inaccuracies and bias, and Blainey believes it was a reputation which the historian had already acquired in

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141 Blainey, Interview, 17 September 1997.
England during his lifetime (although with only some justice). But where Froude may have been occasionally 'careless in detail', Blainey believed that in his 'assessments and predictions of relations between Britain and her most southerly colonies, he was astute'. It is possible that Blainey considered *Oceana*’s greatest value to be its insight to the British-Australian relationship, in a period which saw many British and Australian voices encouraging greater colonial independence.

‘Froude was English, deep-eyed.’ He found the coloured world map, the Royal Navy and the authorised version of the Bible to be the symbols of ‘England’s greatness’. In 1884 he ventured on a long intended voyage to the antipodes to witness the British people flourishing in the strange environment of the Australian and New Zealand colonies. ‘The British Race! There was never such magic in that idea as in the decade when Froude set out.’ England was the world power on the seas, and her people were crossing the oceans and proving their greatness. It is likely, then, that Froude was pleased by the Britishness of the Australian people whom he encountered, and it was certainly a quality he drew frequent attention to in his notes. On arrival, Froude wrote ‘We were 12,000 miles from England; yet we were in England still, and England at its best’. Nearer to the completion of his journey he recorded that the colonists

> ‘prize their privilege as British subjects. They are proud of belonging to a nationality on whose flag the sun never sets. They honour and love their sovereign, though they never look upon her presence. Separation, if it comes, will be no work of theirs.’

Finally, he added, ‘the colonies have shown more clearly than before that they are as much English as we are, and deny our right to part with them’.

While most of *Oceana* is dedicated to Froude’s experiences and observations while in the antipodes, he concluded his book by arguing for continued solidarity.

144 *ibid.*, pp.vi-viii.
147 Froude, *ibid.*, p.196.
between the colonies and Britain, rather than for their separation. Politicians in Westminster, he thought, believed that the colonies were of no use to the United Kingdom, and that Britain would be ‘better off and stronger without them’. Froude, though, decried the possibility of severing links with its own citizens residing overseas. He believed that England could only continue to grow in greatness by maintaining its imperial links with its colonies in the south seas. Hence, on return to England, he wrote that the colonies:

‘enable the British people to increase and multiply. The value of the British man lies in his being the aggregate of which the British nation is made…. These islands are small, and are full to overflowing. In the colonies only we can safely multiply’.

If maintaining links with the colonies ensured a free flow of the population from the industrial plains of England to the free airs of the colonies, so too would it safeguard the United Kingdom against ‘shifts and changes’ by forming strong trade links with ‘purchasers for our goods from whom we should fear no rivalry’. In every way conceivable, Froude believed that maintaining close relations between Britain and the Australian colonies was for the greater good of both the United Kingdom and the Australians.

Separation was also an issue featuring prominently in Dilke’s account of his travels to Australia – despite the fact that it had occurred some twenty years prior to Froude’s voyage. Dilke, Blainey informed us, was one of the first people to travel round the world purely as a tourist, visiting the United States, New Zealand, Australia, India and Cairo. Before entering politics in the United Kingdom, Dilke apparently decided to inspect the Empire and some of the distant world. On his return, he completed a best selling account of his travels, which also served as a ‘parliamentary

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Froude, \textit{ibid.}, p.192.

Froude, \textit{ibid.}, p.195.
manifesto' and a 'bugle-like statement' on issues such as the empire and its future.150

Dilke was apparently unhappy with the current state of the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Australian colonies. Where Froude later pleaded for a continuing association between Britain and Australia, Dilke argued instead that either separation or closer ties were acceptable, as long as reform was encouraged in the current imperial system. He noted, like Froude, the Britishness which characterised much of Australian society and architecture of the time. In Sydney he commented that Australian ladies at the New Year's Day races were 'scarcely to be diminished from Englishwomen in dress or countenance,' and of Melburnians, declared their success likely to be because they were so 'thoroughly British'.151 On the other hand, Dilke also noted some key differences between the United Kingdom and the Australian colonies. A great champion of democracy, wide franchise, and the secret ballot, he admired the progressiveness of Australian democracy, and noting the high standards of living in Australia, he queried the unequal relationship between Britain and her colonies:

'When a Briton takes a survey of the colonies, he finds much matter for surprise in the one-sided nature of the partnership which exists between the mother and the daughter lands. No reason presents itself to him why our artisans and merchants should be taxed in aid of the populations far more wealthy than our own, who have not, as we have, millions of paupers to support.'152

If Australians were better off than Britons in so many ways, Dilke challenged, why were they still so dependent on the United Kingdom?

It is in this light that the young intellectual and aspiring politician discussed the future of the imperial relationship and tested the arguments for and against separation of Australia and the United Kingdom. In its favour, Dilke believed that the expense on the British taxpayers to protect the Australian gold-diggers from their 'imaginary dangers' and other untold expenses, would be eased. With some remorse, he noted that

150 Blainey, Greater Britain, pp.vii-x.
151 Dilke, ibid., pp.87,96.
Australians used British soldiers not as troops, but for ‘guard-of-honour’ roles and for general policing. Nor did he believe that Australian colonists would really come to Britain’s aid in a European conflict, despite the expense the United Kingdom undertook to defend Australia in times of peace – an expectation disproved, of course, at the first opportunity. Furthermore, trade between the United Kingdom and the former colonies of the Ionian Islands and the United States, actually increased after separation, indicating, he reasoned, that connections such as trade and friendship have more to do with common institutions, freedom and language, than union.\(^\text{153}\)

Alternatively, Dilke countered that if in losing the colonies Britain would become small minded and insular, as were other small island countries, then it would be a forceful argument for retaining the colonies. And while separation may have brought to the Australians the ‘moral’ advantage of encouraging new visions for a new nation such as was experienced in the United States, he doubted that separation would ultimately be in the best interest of either Australia or Britain:

‘If we allow that it is to the interest both of our race and of the world that the Australias should prosper, we have to ask whether they would do so in a higher degree if separated from the mother country than if they remained connected with her and with each other by a federation. It has often been said that, instead of the varying relations which now exist between Britain and America, we should have seen a perfect friendship had we but permitted the Australian colonies to go their way in peace; but the example does not hold in the case of Australia, which is by no means wishful to go at all.’\(^\text{154}\)

Coming to his personal conclusion that a continuing close relationship between the United Kingdom and Australia would suit both their interests, Dilke concluded the account of his Australian travels with a plea for some decisive interim reform in the association. Any change in the relationship, he wrote, would be better than its current status. As he ended his essay, Dilke decreed that ‘The worst thing that can happen to us

\(^{152}\) Dilke, \textit{ibid.}, p.142.

\(^{153}\) Dilke, \textit{ibid.}, pp.143-145.

\(^{154}\) Dilke, \textit{ibid.}, p.146.
is that we should ‘drift’ blindly into separation’.155 Ironically, though, it was precisely that which occurred in the twentieth century, and Blainey was to become one of the greatest defenders of Australia's blind drift.

Blainey’s heightened interest since the early 1980s in Australia’s experience of empire and the British connection, led to a gradual reassessment by the historian of many aspects of the imperial legacy in Australia. Britishness and the decline of the imperial state in Australia were first re-appraised seriously in his 1980 history *A Land Half Won*, and furthered in *The Blainey View, All for Australia*, and a series of articles following in their wake. As we have seen, Blainey acknowledged the strong colonial ties between Britain and Australia several decades earlier. The extent of these ties had passed mostly unnoticed by Australians at the time, and by English visitors such as Froude and Dilke – so much a part of normal life was their cultural and economic connection to the United Kingdom. But with the retrospective advantage at the close of the twentieth century, the closeness of the two countries on opposite sides of the globe seems almost ridiculous:

‘In geography England and her Antipodes were far apart, but the Antipodes developed the kind of community one would expect to find within a few miles of Lands End or the Cinque Ports. Nearly all their people spoke English, conformed to British political or social customs, obeyed or disobeyed most of the laws which Britons obeyed, and were subjects of the British monarch. Most of the money which was invested in Australasia came from the British Isles and most of the new techniques, ideas, and machines came also from the British Isles. Poles apart in position, in commerce they behaved as if they were neighbours.... Australia and New Zealand depended so much on Britain, were in most senses imitations of Britain, that their geographical position near the end of Asia’s tail and near the islands of Oceania seemed irrelevant.’156

In *A Land Half Won*, Blainey addressed the efforts of many Australians in the nineteenth century to transform Australia into another England. Like Manning Clark,

155 Dilke, *ibid.*, p.147.
156 Blainey, *Tyranny of Distance*, p.200.
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he suggested that those who had migrated from the British Isles probably hankered ‘all their remaining years for a sight of green fields and hedgerows and skyline of English oaks and elms’. It was probably this kind of sentiment, and a reluctance to perceive Australia as ‘home’, which motivated such activities as school children drawing pictures of English landscapes from English text books, and the introduction of such pests as rabbits by a Geelong gentleman, who longed for the sport of hunting as he had experienced it in Britain.

To make themselves feel ‘more at home’, we are told, many newcomers to Australia in the nineteenth century planted English gardens, with shrubs such as roses and lavender. Some grew to place greater emphasis on traditional holidays, pastimes and associations which bore resemblance to their lives in the United Kingdom. Blainey argued that even some of the keenest nationalists in Australia, such as the Heidelberg artists, the Bulletin school, and writers such as Dorothea McKellar, found it difficult to admire the Australian landscape and experience in its harshest form. For example, while McKellar was to write ‘I love a sunburnt country,’ her ragged mountain ranges and brown plains were actually those of the ‘fertile valley of the Hunter River, not far from Newcastle’. Blainey also suggested that Henry Lawson, widely regarded as a young heroic nationalist poet, never loved Australia’s sunbrowned plains either. A gifted short story writer, Blainey added that Lawson never wrote of Australia in a manner to ‘inspire a burning desire’ in Glasgow school children to emigrate to Australia.

It was not until the years between the 1890s and the Great War that Blainey believes Australians began to recognise their differences with Britons, and to cherish

\[157\] Blainey, 'Sydney 1788', p.432.
\[159\] Blainey, Shorter History, p.103.
\[160\] Blainey, Land Half Won, pp.360-361.
\[161\] Blainey, Shorter History, pp.105-106.
their own environment. The establishment of the Australian Natives’ Association in the 1870s was probably the first indication that Australians were awakening to their differences with Britons, and while at the end of the century some Australians continued to dislike their new country, Blainey suggested that many embraced the new land and began to ‘nourish the idea that it was the Australian environment and especially the bush which made Australians a different people in attitude’.  

By the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, Blainey could write that:

‘Of the adults born in Australia or for long resident here, most were proud to belong to the British Empire but saw themselves as different to Britons. They believed they had a fuller dose of what they saw as the stoutest British qualities – courage, self-reliance, and the appropriate blend of independence and loyalty. The average Australians of 1914 were more advanced physically than their English-born cousins.’

One of the greatest symbols of the early twentieth century which recognised the increasing sense of Australian nationalism, was the launch of the federation flag in 1903. Australians apparently admired the combination of the Southern Cross and the Union Jack, approving the use of both Australian and British symbols in their national ensign. The gradual introduction of Australian currency prior to the war was another such symbol of nationalist interest. In 1910 Australia designed its own coins from the copper halfpenny and upwards, and three years later issued the first round of banknotes depicting scenes from Australian landscapes and industry. So by such tests of identity, we are persuaded by Blainey that Australians by the time of World War One were proud of their Britishness, but also equally proud of their differences as Australians.

But separation from Great Britain was far from definitive or complete. Australians maintained their association with the United Kingdom, and continued to see themselves as members of the British race overseas. In fact, the ties between the two countries remained as strong as ever. Blainey wrote in 1994 that:

162 ibid., p.106.
163 ibid., p.149.
On the eve of World War I, Britain was close to the peak of its power. Australians bathed in the warmth of the British sun. In many ways the two nations were one. Between them the flow of migrants, commodities and ideas was usually smooth. In 1914 most of the high posts in Australia were still occupied by people born and educated in the British Isles.

Almost all the clergy of all denominations in Australia were born in the United Kingdom, he continued, and schools and universities retained close links with their counterparts in Great Britain. Even media reports were studded with British news, while the only influential newspaper to ‘sneer regularly at Britain and royalty was the weekly Sydney Bulletin, and it was quietening down’. Australia's loyalty to the British sovereign and the British people was far from failing. ‘Most Australians,’ Blainey wrote, ‘were proud to be British.’

The events of the Great War and the immediate post-war years further enhanced the cause of Australian nationalism or identity to a degree. Australia, Blainey argued, entered the war not automatically as a dependency of Britain, but as a partner of Britain in an international alliance. And national pride was again advanced by the heroic actions of Australia's troops at such sites as Gallipoli. Blainey suggested that Australians had 'longed for Australia to parade in triumph before the nations of Europe,' and that the Gallipoli landing meant that Australians could stand tall with pride before the watchful eyes of those whose opinion mattered most to them. Moreover, war in that period of world history was seen as a moulding influence on nations, and Australia seized the opportunity to prove its nationhood and maturity. In the face of high international acclaim for their sons and daughters serving in the war, Australians could not resist a surge in their own self-respect.

As W.J. Hudson was also to do, Blainey identified the post-war years until the early 1930s as being characterised by certain tensions in Australia's relationship with

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164 ibid., p.149.
165 Blainey, Blainey View, p.111.
166 Blainey, Interview, 25 July 1997.
the United Kingdom. On the one hand, Australians remained loyal subjects to the British Empire as ever. On the other, stirrings of national identity and patriotism at certain levels of society and politics meant that Australians were gradually turning away from British influences. Initially, Blainey suggested that Australian relations with Britain had been tightened by their wartime alliance. The crisis of war, he reasoned, 'made most Australians more British than they had ever been, and would ever be'.

Then, despite the certain independence which Australia had flaunted during the Versailles conference, a disloyal and angry remark about Britain in 1920 by the member for Kalgoorlie, Hugh Mahon, lead to his formal expulsion from the federal parliament and the calling of a by-election for his seat. Although he stood for re-election, Mahon lost at the polls by 443 votes. Loyalty to Britain, Blainey argued, was still high at that time on emotional, if not pragmatic, issues.

Practically, though, there were a number of changes in the Anglo-Australian relationship after the war. Imported American influences were a key factor in this new direction, with Australians increasingly being entertained by American music, 'talkies', and cars, and being financed by American investors. In 1930, to the consternation of some Australians and of George V, Jimmy Scullin’s government appointed the first Australian born governor-general, Sir Isaac Isaacs – refuting the expectation that the governor-general should be purely a representative of the sovereign and of Britain in Australia. At the same time, exploration into Australia's interior was renewed, and hopes were raised that the country could be developed to eventually sustain 100 million people. At the annexation of large parts of Antarctica after Sir Douglas Mawson’s last expedition and exercising an administrative mandate in New Guinea, Australians began

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168 Blainey, Blainey View, p.112.
169 Blainey, Shorter History, p.166.
170 Blainey, Blainey View, p.114.
to regard themselves as a 'great territorial power', with a land volume only exceeded by the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{171} There was much about Australia to be proud of.

Nonetheless, despite the separative forces at work during the 1920s and early 1930s in Australia, Blainey maintains that Australians' loyalty to the British Empire lingered, and that the relationship between the dominion and the mother country remained firm. In fact, it was not until the crises of World War Two, Blainey suggested, that Australia turned effectively away from the United Kingdom – a similar argument to that of Geoffrey Bolton. Australians, he suggested on a number of occasions, were blind to the declining strength of Britain in the region:

'We did not notice quickly enough that Britain had declined, and that she could not defend her empire adequately. We did not know that Britain was now more powerful on the map than she was on land and sea. We thought Britain's strategic interests were virtually the same as ours, and so in the initial phase of the Second World War we sent our troops to the Middle East, thus defending Britain more than we defended ourselves.'\textsuperscript{172}

Australians, he agreed, depended too much on Britain, and in the end were victims of their own misplaced dependencies. At the fall of Singapore, of course, Australia was compelled to seek American assistance in securing their regional defence for the remainder of the war. It was at this point that Blainey considers the traditional imperial connection between Australia and Great Britain was severed permanently. While some remnants of the former relationship persisted, there was no denying the momentous change which had occurred:

'If one can select any year which marks Australia's transition from its traditional role as echo and image of Britain and an outpost of Europe, the year which stands out is 1941. One can go further and select 7 December 1941, when Japanese planes bombed an American fleet at Pearl Harbour, Honolulu, 4000 miles to the north east of Australian soil, or alternatively select 10 December – three days later – when the British cruisers Prince of Wales and Repulse went down off the Malayan coast. These two shocks marked for Australia the waning of an era in which history or tradition was dominant and the emergence of a new era when geography was probably as crucial as history. To use another analogy, they marked the

\textsuperscript{171} Blainey, Shorter History, p.171.
\textsuperscript{172} Blainey, Blainey View, p.116.
end of a time when hereditary ceased to be so powerful, when Australians ceased to have nearly all their emotional, commercial, military, financial and human ties with Britain. It marked the start of a time when Australia's environment – her position on the tail of Asia and on the shores of the Pacific – became more important.173

In Blainey's story, Australians began to sense by 1941 that they had been plunged into a new world environment, and that the vision of empire which they had perpetuated past its expiry date was in need of amendment. While the role of America in Australia's theatre of war was recognised and honoured, the realisation that Australia was no longer an outpost of Britain in Asia was slow in coming. As Bolton was to do in the Oxford History of Australia, Blainey recognised the inevitable change which occurred in Australia's post-war decades, the confusion in Australia at the necessity to relinquish their romantic notions of empire, and the struggle between Britishness and Australianness which was to follow. Ultimately, of course, an independent Australian nationalism evolved. But this was not before Australians passed through further tests of their spirits. Blainey makes special mention of the 1954 Royal Tour, Calwell's new migration schemes, the crumbling empire, the death of the White Australia Policy, Australia's turn to the United States for oil and defence, their partnership in the Vietnam War, and Britain's own withdrawal from the imperial relationship by its entry to the European Economic Community in 1966.174 If the first major blow to the Anglo-Australian relationship occurred in 1941, he implies that the separation between the Dominion and the Motherland was well and truly definitive by the time Gough Whitlam ushered in a new national spirit in the 1970s.

The final chapter, then, to Blainey's assessment of the Anglo-Australian separation and the death of Australian Britishness, comes in his response to the 1990s push towards an Australian republic. The links to Britain, he agrees, are now all but gone. To his television audience in 1982 Blainey conceded:

173 Blainey, Tyranny of Distance, p.208.
Our links to Britain are fading. Even in music, sport, fashion and eating we no longer look primarily to Britain. In many facets of our life, the British influence is far from weak but today it has to compete with many national influences and nowhere can it expect to retain that dominance it possessed seventy years ago. Curiously we have slowly moved apart while often pretending that we weren't moving apart. The debate of the role of the monarchy – especially since 1975 – illustrates how quietly change has come. We do not fully realise that Australia is now a republic except in name.\(^{175}\)

It was a comment he was to make repeatedly – that Australia is already a republic, a pseudo-republic.\(^{176}\) But Blainey has also long argued that any steps taken to further qualify that republican status would be nationally divisive and costly at a time when Australians had better things to worry about.\(^{177}\) At the Constitutional Convention in February 1998, Blainey announced to the world that he held grave concerns at the prospect of an Australian republic, and voted consistently for retaining the present system of government. Similarly, he expressed his reservations about an Australian republic in 1997, commenting:

> ‘Well to me its not a very important issue. But I qualify that by saying since statistically significantly high proportions of people think it is an important issue then it becomes an important issue....
> ‘I’d accept it if the majority of Australians voted for it, I’d accept it straight away. I wouldn’t dream of opposing it if it were accepted by the majority of people. But if the referendum which called for the change wasn’t calling for, to my mind, the best kind of change, then I would oppose the change. Simply on the grounds that the Queen has no real power in Australia now, and were she to be seen to exercise any power that would be the end of her.
> ‘So I don’t see a crying need for change in the way that some nationalists do, and I’m a nationalist.’\(^{178}\)

In part, Blainey’s reluctance to sanction Australia’s move to a republic stems from his belief that Australia is sufficiently independent as it is, without the necessity to prove its autonomy by means of constitutional change. It is an intriguing position on

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\(^{175}\) Blainey, *Blainey View*, p.120.


Geoffrey Blainey: White Ghost of Empire?

his part, given that Blainey has consistently skirted the question of when Australian achieved its independence. While occasionally the historian mentions Australia's independent status from Britain at a certain time, he has neglected to formally identify how that process came about. The most he has attempted was to discuss the long process of separation, which we have just traced. This, then, leaves his observers wondering whether independence is an issue with which he has ever seriously grappled during his career, and particularly before appearing at the Constitutional Convention. Certainly his own beliefs on a date of Australian independence are difficult to identify. In his *Shorter History of Australia*, Blainey suggested that when in the 1860s the Australian colonies placed import duties on British goods, they were demonstrating their complete economic autonomy from the imperial power. On the other hand, he added, full political independence was not to come 'until the next century'. In the 1990s, he commented on several occasions that Australia had certainly achieved independence prior to the Versailles Conference and the Statute of Westminster: if the Great War had made Australia a nation then its independence was recognised by its own representation at the peace negotiations. Moreover, the 1931 Statute of Westminster was passed by the imperial parliament to 'give Australia an independence it already possessed'. He further argued that Australian independence may have been achieved at least prior to the Great War:

'I think some historians argue that Australia wasn’t independent because it regarded itself as automatically at war because Britain was at war. But that’s what an alliance is.... If you’re in a tight alliance, your decisions are preordained.'

Yet that is as far as Blainey will venture. There is barely a decade between the turn of the century and the start of World War One, and most historians would join

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179 Blainey, *Shorter History*, p.78.
180 ibid., p.160.
Hudson in denying emphatically that Australia had achieved independence at that other
great milestone of the period – Federation. So Blainey is left without an answer. It is
perhaps an accurate reflection of the true nature of Blainey and his experience of
empire: he claims only respect, yet becomes too passionate a supporter of the Anglo-
Australian association when it comes under challenge; he claims that Australia is
already a republic, yet resists the constitutional amendments which would see that
become a reality; he claims that Australia is independent, but cannot identify how or
when that occurred, and is content to let it rest without further question.

In fact, for all Blainey’s vast experience in examining the imperial relationship
which existed between Australia and the United Kingdom, it seems fair to suggest that
he has never effectively grappled with the process or ramifications of Australian
separation and independence. While a delegate to the recent Constitutional Convention,
he made clear his unwillingness to effect further separation in Australia’s connection to
Britain, and has previously defended the rights of Australians of British descent to
‘retain some symbolic link to their homeland’.182 Blainey is apparently content to retain
the Anglo-Australian association as it is at present – mostly independent, but with some
remnant of the former imperial relationship intact. This leaves his observers with the
question: is he perhaps now more in favour with Britain and the British monarchy, than
he was at the beginning of his lifetime? He is probably no less an Australian
nationalist, and he has admitted that Britain cannot be Australia’s future.183 Yet at the
turn of the new century, he is certainly more secure in Britain’s past role in Australia’s
history, and is less inclined to relinquish those remaining imperial links, than he ever
was at the beginning of his illustrious career fifty years ago.

It seems an extraordinary thesis, but when assessing Geoffrey Blainey’s
treatment of such historical issues as the Aboriginal experience of Australian history


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and the story of European civilisation in Australia, as well as his reaction to contemporary issues such as indigenous land rights, reconciliation and the republic, it is evident that the historian's defence of the imperial legacy in Australia increased over his life time. His colleagues, Manning Clark and Geoffrey Bolton, as we shall see in the coming chapters, were securely rooted in British Australia from a young age, but evidently became more Australian or more 'nationalist' as their consciousness of Australian identity and history grew. In stark contrast, Blainey grew up in a uniquely Australian environment, made early demonstrations of his nationalist sympathies, but became a champion of empire in his later years. Despite all the nationalist potential of Australians at the start of this new century, Blainey chose to retain the legacies of a centuries-old relationship.

It is ironic that in avoiding the identification of real independence in the Anglo-Australian relationship, and in defending the status quo at the 1998 Constitutional Convention, Blainey has in fact sanctioned that 'blind drift into separation' against which Charles Dilke cautioned in 1867. For surely Australians will continue to drift further apart in identity and interests from their British cousins as the decades pass. Decisive action on issues such as the republic would be likely to give form, direction and reason for such a departure in common interests. When Blainey concluded in 1966 that the 'Antipodes were drifting, though where they were drifting no one knew,' he must easily recognise thirty years later that it is to the separation of which Dilke had warned.

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183 Blainey, Interview, 17 September 1998.
184 Blainey, *Tyranny of Distance*, p.213.
Chapter Two

Geoffrey Bolton

‘The Middle Way’

Rae Frances and Bruce Scates wrote at the departure of their colleague Geoffrey Bolton from Murdoch University, that his work while with them was ‘like a platypus: a bit of everything’.1 An exhaustive analysis is hardly required of his historiography to appreciate that this is a particularly apt description, for Geoffrey Bolton has written convincingly on a wide and diverse range of subjects. These have included topics such as nineteenth century Western Australian settlement, Queensland politics, Australian environmental history, the end of the British Empire, and the Treaty of Mauritius. In truth, Bolton is a difficult professional historian to ‘categorise’. As Frances and Scates viewed it, Bolton

‘defies all the conventional categories of his age. Some have labelled him a political historian, noting his interest in statues, statesmen and parliamentary intrigue. Others have seen him as a champion of ‘social history’: a persuasive practitioner of labour history, Aboriginal history and all such ‘history from below’.’

Add to this his almost Annales-like attention to subjects ranging in size from the colossal British Empire, to a microcosmic analysis of Daphne Street,3 and it could be convincingly argued that ‘Bolton’s interests are far too evasive to define with any precision’.4

Yet, on closer analysis, it becomes apparent that despite the eclecticism of Geoffrey Bolton’s histories, a sense of personal ‘journey’ emerges in the discourse of his collected writings. In fact, he appears almost as one on a quest to discover the many facets of E.H. Carr’s proverbial mountain, or like Christian of Pilgrim’s Progress. So it may seem to the interested observer that Bolton has undertaken a journey through his professional employ to discover and unravel the many parts of ‘historical truth’.

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1 Rae Frances and Bruce Scates, ‘Editorial Comment’, in Rae Frances and Bruce Scates (eds), The Murdoch Ethos: Essays in Honour of Foundation Professor Geoffrey Bolton, Murdoch University, Murdoch, 1989, p.2.
2 ibid., p.2.
Likewise, he may have dabbled in a wide range of subjects, but there are specific and recurring themes which he has developed over time, and it is within the exploration of these themes that Bolton ventures on the pilgrimage which characterises his practice in history.

This journey and development within a given theme is exemplified by Bolton’s evolving consciousness of the Aboriginal experience in Australian history. Although the story of the Aboriginal people appeared to be of great interest to Geoffrey Bolton in the 1980s and 1990s, it was not nearly as evident in his writings in the 1950s and 1960s. Bolton, arguably, had yet to cultivate a real insight in his early years to Aboriginal history. In the 1994 collective publication, Being Whitefella, Bolton recorded his childhood experience with local Aborigines – or, rather, the lack thereof.\(^5\) It was not a surprising confession. Many of Bolton’s early works, such as his 1952 Honours thesis on Alexander Forrest’s life and times, maintained a relative silence on indigenous issues. The Forrest thesis was later published by Melbourne University Press, and, in its now ageing pages, we can find detailed description of Forrest’s exploration of Western Australia and of the metropolitan settlement in Perth. Very little mention, though, was made of the Aboriginal population, or of inter-racial relations of the day. In fact, it was not until Bolton’s research in the following year carried him to the Kimberleys that he first had any real experience of Aboriginal community. He later revealed that the encounter ‘had taken the crude edges off my ignorant prejudices’, and recalled:

\[\text{‘I returned from the Kimberley convinced of the need to free Aborigines from their legal restrictions, and had written my first letter to the West Australian on the subject before the end of the year. I still had a long way to go, but I had learned respect for Aboriginal capacity.’}\]^6

This budding awareness of Aboriginality was partly reflected in Bolton’s Masters thesis, \textit{A Survey of the Kimberley Pastoral Industry from 1885 to the Present}. Even then, mention of indigenous involvement in the history of the state remained small and was


\(^6\) \textit{Ibid.}, p.125.
limited to crude terminology reminiscent of Manning Clark's language at the time, such as 'natives' and 'blacks'.

By the 1970s, however, Geoffrey Bolton was gradually increasing the space dedicated to the Aboriginal experience in his histories. In 1975 he confessed a desire to broaden his non-European sympathies, and only two years earlier in Britain's Legacy Overseas had begun to examine aspects of Aboriginal history such as land rights, the effect of European diseases, federal assimilation policies and displacement. Within two decades he had become a forthright supporter of Aboriginal reconciliation, land rights and the need for 'satisfactory reparation to the Aboriginal Australians for deprivations they have suffered'. The process over time by which Bolton passed from a limited exposure and understanding of Aboriginal history, to his recommendation that the Union Jack be removed from the Australian flag as a measure to assist reconciliation, is the sum of Bolton's journey through 'Aboriginality'.

Yet Bolton's journey in Australian history has not been confined to the indigenous participation and experience. Equally, he has grown in awareness and regard of other elements within the social discourse of Australia's past. Attention to women, while meagre in his early works, gained much greater prominence in his later publications such as the Oxford History of Australia. Instead of merely apologising for his earlier lack of attention to gender differences, Bolton determined by the 1970s and 1980s to understand as much as he was able women's experience of marriage and family in Australia, and even gave special consideration in his volume of the Oxford History to such issues as the unusual appeal of Robert Menzies to 'women voters'. Bolton has also journeyed through issues of ethnicity in Australia, repeatedly exploring changing federal

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10 ibid., p.46.
immigration policies and the like. In his ABC Boyer Lectures of 1992, Bolton accepted Australian multiculturalism as a reality, and offered the challenge:

'We can't afford complacency, but by world standards we have achieved a successful balance of population growth - so far. Continued success depends in part on a readiness by all groups, including the British and Irish, to recognise that, while cherishing their ancestral baggage, their primary loyalty is Australian.'

The journey of Geoffrey Bolton's with which this paper is particularly concerned is his experience of Australia and empire. As with Geoffrey Blainey, W.J. Hudson and Manning Clark, there are two facets to Bolton's empire consciousness: his personal exposure to Australia's changing relations with Great Britain since the 1930s and his consciousness of the imperial legacy which he then developed through historical research and hypothesis. The first of these facets will be explored by an analysis of his life and of the related influences on him. In particular, it will be argued that significant influences on his consciousness of the Anglo-Australian relationship came from his parents, his schooling and some tertiary educators. For the second, material will be mustered from Bolton's own publications, from interviews with him on the subject, and from the related testimonies of associated friends and colleagues.

It is an indisputable fact that the contemporary Anglo-Australian relationship is vastly different to that of its origins in 1788, and even from how it operated fifty years ago at the end of World War Two. Yet a single, unquestionable blueprint for the evolution of that relationship is still to be widely accepted or endorsed by the Australian historical profession. Each concerned historian has his or her own thesis on the experience of Australia under empire, including how and when they would date Australian independence or separation from Great Britain. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, Geoffrey Bolton suggests there was a lengthy transition in the Anglo-Australian relationship from decolonisation into almost complete separation, a process which was characterised by much inner turmoil and vacillation on the part of the Australian nation. It will also be assessed whether Bolton has, as W.J. Hudson

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13 Bolton, View from the Edge, pp.11-12.
attempted to do, advocated a date of Australian independence from the United Kingdom. Finally, in the light of his history of the Australian relationship with Great Britain, Bolton's perception of Australian identity at the close of the twentieth century will be reviewed. What future, for example, does Bolton see for Australia, where should the nation be heading, and, ultimately, 'who are the Australians'?

A fundamental element which has determined much of Geoffrey Bolton's experience of empire is his consistent endeavour to 'walk the middle way', or to take a centre point of view. It is a philosophy of life which has affected every aspect of his scholastic career from his most early years. Almost without exception, Bolton has rejected extremist views from either end of the ideological or political spectrum in his journey through history. Indeed, he has often previously earned the displeasure of both the far left and the far right in his interpretation of the Australian story. It was not particularly in answer to those critics that the historian formed his ideological approach to the past, but it is clear, nonetheless, that he has consistently taken a stand between both extremes in order to present a balanced perspective of events to the world. It is perhaps surprising that such a learned scholar with such a passionate interest in the past has not more regularly taken a more passionate stance in his views. Nonetheless, the result is that Bolton has not written of Australia and empire with the increasing fervour with which Manning Clark eventually employed. Nor has he taken the alternative, conservative perspective of a historian such as Geoffrey Blainey. Rather, Bolton has taken a position somewhere between them both. So it was in this spirit that Bolton wrote:

'I do not have much imagination for ideas, and when confronted by what Professor Manning Clark calls 'the great questions of mind and spirit' tend to take a middle position.'

14 Arthur Marwick first wrote of the 'middle way' theme in his article, 'Middle Opinion in the Thirties: Planning, progress and 'political agreement'', English Historical Review, vol.79, April 1964, pp.285-298. There he suggested that the 'large groundwork of social and political agreement' which characterised Britain during the 1930s was a result of the 'continuity' of economic policy between its successive Conservative and Labour governments. (p.285). Bolton, aware of Marwick's article, was influenced for many years by the approach of the middle way, which he recognised in 'The History of the Historian', p.272; and in his volume of the Oxford History of Australia, subtitled 'The Middle Way'.

When it comes to the matter of Australian relations with the United Kingdom, this 'middle position' has affected his stance on a number of issues. Of the recurring debate of Britain's alleged betrayal of Australian defence and security in World War Two, Bolton has stepped between both sides to say that it was too long ago to debate now who was right or wrong. Of Australian separation from Great Britain, he described a long and relatively peaceful evolution towards detachment in the relationship. Of Australian cultural identity, he has simply argued that Australians need to make up their minds between an Anglo-centric or multicultural consciousness, but that it is probably 'time for a change'. Of the debate over the republic, he was disappointed to note that:

'It has done our relationship with Britain no good that its maintenance should have fallen so largely into the hands of Australian conservatives; and it has done the cause of Australian nationalism no good that its standard-bearers should have come so much from the Irish-Australians. The ancient grievances between Ireland and England indubitably helped to divide the Australian people; but that was three generations ago.'

Bolton's journey down the middle way does run the risk of becoming a distraction in this wider analysis of his experience of empire. Yet it deserves special attention here because it remains the fundamental position from which Bolton perceives Australia and Great Britain. As the *modus operandi* by which Bolton pursues all his histories, his 'middle way' deserves much greater attention in its own right as a key aspect of Bolton's historiography. Such a discussion, though, must be deferred to an alternative forum. In this discussion it must remain only that the middle way is the guiding element in Bolton's vision of Australia and empire, and that his 'middle walk' should be accepted at least as an integral sub-theme of his historical discussion.

Geoffrey Bolton was born in Western Australia in 1931, the first son of Frank and Winifred Bolton. Spending much of his childhood and youth growing up in the metropolitan suburb of North Perth, Bolton first attended North Perth State School until

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16 Bolton, *View from the Edge*, p.45.
17 See Bolton, *Oxford History of Australia*; 'Australia, 1939-51'; *View from the Edge*; and 'Who are the Australians?'.
19 Bolton, *View from the Edge*, p.44.
he obtained a scholarship from the prestigious Wesley College in South Perth. Through his familial and educational environment, Bolton was able to acquire an early awareness of both United Kingdom history and the contemporary British Empire. Later he remembered that his father had introduced him to the England of Charles Dickens, and his mother to some of the great ‘English landscape poetry’. In primary school, he was accustomed to the portraits of the Kings George V and George VI hanging in the main hall, and in the same environment was regularly made to sing the national anthem, ‘God Save the King’. A unique, but probably very impressionable, introduction to the British Empire came to Bolton at a young age through his philatelic interests. Musing on his awareness of empire as a child, he remembered:

‘I was an avid stamp collector, and that was marvellous for familiarising you with all those colonies in the West Indies and the Pacific Islands and such places... and I guess for me at the age of about eight or nine part of the pleasure of empire was the pleasure of stamp collecting.’

Bolton’s early education was not, though, entirely devoid of exposure to Australian history and literature. He was presented as a child with Mary Grant Bruce’s *Billabong* stories and similar literature which was kept in his mother’s library, and despite being at school in the 1930’s, his text books were not so exclusively English as may have been expected. Rather, as Bolton recalled recently, his school books included a variety of renowned English and Australian literature.

International events in Bolton’s early years were dominated by the mounting aggression of Hitler’s Germany in Europe, culminating in the outbreak of war in September 1939. By the time war was announced Australia remained as strongly attached to its powerful British protector as ever, and Australians proudly threw themselves into the war effort as an ‘auxiliary, providing troops and warships to fight battles for her allies on fronts far removed from her own shores’. By December 1941,
of course, the Pacific War had become a forceful reality, and the risk of invasion along the Australian coastline was a real threat. Bolton, however, testified that his childhood was not unduly affected by international events of the time. Rather, he recalled that the reality of war in his life was reduced to childish stalks through the bush with friends in search of German and Japanese spies and, being the 'thorough little patriot' that he was, disappointment that his father was not fighting overseas in armed service.26

It is quite probable at this age that Bolton had not yet developed a true appreciation of Australia's placement within the British Empire. That is to say, that although he was aware of the concept of the British Empire, and also aware of the national identity or entity of Australia, he had not yet developed a working understanding of Australia's place within the empire, nor of its context within the greater international environment. It was only at the fall of Singapore that Bolton believes the 'beginning of my consciousness of my 'Australian time' occurred.27 Even then it took more time for this consciousness to develop further, and, as we shall see, Bolton's awareness of Australia and empire did not advance in sophistication until he later engaged in studies at Oxford University.

The history of Great Britain and the Commonwealth, modern European history and an overview of European settlement in Australia since 1850, were all subjects available on the high school history curriculum in Bolton's final year at school.28 Demonstrating an early aptitude for the study of history while in his final months at Wesley College, it was at this time that the headmaster reminded Geoffrey Bolton that he could pursue his interest in history as an academic career.29 Soon after, the young scholar began tertiary studies at the University of Western Australia, completing an Honours Degree in history in 1952 and his Masters Degree in 1953. There were a number of important influences in Bolton's budding career while he was pursuing his undergraduate and postgraduate studies. J.D. Legge and Frank Crowley were both at the University of Western Australia in these years, and impressed Bolton with their

approaches to historical research while supervising his Honours and Masters theses.\textsuperscript{30} There was, too, the enormous presence and guidance of Fred Alexander, who was then head of the Department of History at the university. The impressive scholastic example of Sir Keith Hancock was also foremost in Bolton’s mind while a postgraduate student of history. Hancock was introduced first \textit{in absentia} to Bolton through the teachings of Alexander, and from the testimony of their mutual friend, Dr Bruce Hunt. Bolton later met Hancock after journeying to Britain to begin his PhD research.\textsuperscript{31} There, while studying at Balliol College, Bolton was further influenced by the scholars at Oxford. His lessons there brought him under the tutorship of some of the greatest historical scholars ever, including E.H. Carr, Richard Southern and Christopher Hill. Yet Bolton believes it was the leading historian of the British Empire, Vincent Harlow, who had the greatest impact on him while at Oxford.\textsuperscript{32}

If Bolton had only a limited consciousness of empire as a child, it was something which was to develop more definitely during his time spent under the direction particularly of Alexander, Hancock and Harlow. The impact of these three scholars on Bolton’s growing consciousness of Australia and empire was of a mixed nature. Hancock had been held up at the University of Western Australia as a role model on how history was to be done, and, before leaving for London, Bolton had already come to regard Hancock as a kind of ‘father figure’ in his historical practice.\textsuperscript{33} Keith Hancock was undeniably an empire man, but being Australian-born and with interests in Australian history, he would arguably have provided the greatest example to Geoffrey Bolton of placing Australia within the context of empire. Vincent Harlow, too, was an empire historian. He, however, offered a different perspective from that of Hancock. Although Harlow’s work towards \textit{The Founding of the Second British Empire} did include an account of Australian settlement, Harlow attempted a more universal analysis of the British Empire, including the less popular African experience.\textsuperscript{34} Harlow, Bolton mused,

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{30} Geoffrey Bolton, Correspondence with Author, April 2000.
\item\textsuperscript{31} Geoffrey Bolton, Interview with Author, Edith Cowan University, 17 January 1997.
\item\textsuperscript{32} \textit{ibid.}
\item\textsuperscript{33} \textit{ibid.}
\end{itemize}
Deborah Gare

heard the voices which were not then fashionable to hear, and provided a ‘major
formative influence’ on him while at Balliol.35 A good example of this influence in action
can be found in Bolton’s own Britain’s Legacy Overseas, where he attempted what could
be called an unfashionable history for his time. In that study, Bolton paid particular
attention to all parts of the British Empire, however small or seemingly insignificant. At
the same time, his book also reflected a peculiarly ‘Hancockian’ vision of ‘span’,
demonstrated by the time frame and geographic breadth which it covered.

Fred Alexander, on the other hand, cannot be so easily classified an ‘empire man’
or as an empire historian. Admittedly Alexander did occasionally write on such matters;
he was a contributor to the Cambridge History of the British Empire in 1933 and also
wrote the school book, From Empire to Commonwealth.36 Yet despite his interest in
Commonwealth studies, and despite being a contemporary of Hancock, Alexander never
spent time teaching in any of the hallowed educational institutions of Great Britain.
Furthermore, although he was keenly interested in the international events of the 1930s, it
was mostly as a champion of the League of Nations and not of the British Empire.37 In
the 1940s, while on sabbatical leave, Alexander was able to visit North America on
several occasions, and in 1941 he assisted R.G. Casey in the establishment of the
Australian embassy in Washington.38

Alexander was considerably more of an ‘internationalist’ than Hancock or Harlow
ever were, and this is reflected in the different subjects which he chose to write and teach
upon.39 There was, of course, some common ground between Alexander, Hancock and
Harlow. Each, for example, used the Balliol method of historical training, expecting
excellence in their students’ approach to the historical discipline, and encouraging a

35 ibid.
36 F. Alexander, ‘Australia Since the War’, in The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Volume VII,
Part I, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1933; F. Alexander and H.B. Feilman, From Empire to
Commonwealth, Carroll’s Ltd. Perth, 1934.
Australian History, vol.6, June 1988, pp.41-43.
38 ibid., p.46.
39 See, for example, Fred Alexander, Australia and the United States, World Peace Foundation, Boston,
1941; Fred Alexander, Australia Since Federation : A Narrative and Critical Analysis, 4th edition,
Nelson, Melbourne, 1980; Fred Alexander, Canadians and Foreign Policy: The Record of an Independent
Investigation, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1960.
commitment to community service. But where Hancock and Harlow pointed Bolton’s mind towards empire, Alexander equally tempered this by teaching the young student that there was more to Australian history than the Anglo-Australian nexus. Where Bolton was attracted to Hancock’s empiricism and his understanding of the British Commonwealth as a type of multiculturalism, Bolton was also encouraged by Alexander to leave those themes alone on occasion, and to explore other avenues of interest as well.

Bolton’s practice in Australian history has been a long journey. It started in the 1950s by exploring Australia’s past while it was in the British Empire, and has climaxed in the 1990s by exploring how it stands out of empire. Bolton has considered Australia both as a colonial frontier and an independent power in the post-colonial world. Accordingly, we have a starting and an end point in the writings of Bolton on Australia’s imperial experience. What came in between has tended to follow a roughly chronological progression through three approximate time periods which Bolton has studied. These are the nineteenth century; the years 1901 to 1939; and, lastly, that period which Bolton calls his ‘own times’, from 1939 to the present. The challenge now stands to ascertain when Australia’s transition from empire to separation took place in Bolton’s mind, and to determine how the empire of his consciousness came to an end.

Geoffrey Bolton's walk down the middle way has undoubtedly affected his perception of the Anglo-Australian relationship over time. There is no radicalism in the rest of Bolton's histories, so there was no real likelihood that he would have taken an extremist approach in such a momentous matter as Australia's decolonisation and independence. Rather, Bolton has accounted for the Australian transition to separation from Great Britain as slow and mostly undramatic. He has inferred that this process was protracted over a period of time, and that it was characterised by some internal struggle on the part of Australia to dispense with 'Mother England's' apron strings. Involved in the process was the reorientation of its relationship with the United States, and the exploration in the 1940s of a new, independent foreign policy of Australia's own.

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41 ibid.
Moreover, rather than providing a radical account of social transition in this time, Bolton accepts the development of emerging social trends such as multiculturalism, feminism and republicanism, acknowledges their challenges, and advocates a future of social tolerance. In exploring Australia’s changing identity, as in all things, Bolton has continued to take a balanced position.

Interestingly, the three main periods in Bolton’s historical investigations appear to have been pursued in their chronological order over the course of his career. As such, Bolton began his journey through the relationship of Australia and empire as it was in the nineteenth century by what he has since described as ‘frontier society history’. His Honours and Masters theses on Western Australian settlement, exploration and development were, he later claimed, an examination of a frontier society on the outskirts of empire. It is true, of course, that the Swan River Colony was founded under the auspices of British expansionism. In that sense, living in nineteenth century Western Australia was certainly living on the precipice or frontier of the British Empire. The economic, social and political development of the colony was of inherent value to the prosperity of the Crown and its territories, and any analysis of this period in Australian regional history could, by default, be classed as a study in empire expansion. Bolton has also since alleged that the stories in the Western Australian theses often echoed many which he knew of in Great Britain’s past. For example, he later recalled that the march outside the Governor Broome Hotel and the burning of the Governor’s effigy had reminded him of England’s ‘Pope burning processions’ in the seventeenth century. In Bolton’s mind, then, his awareness of the empire’s connection in Australia was apparent from the outset of his historical practice.

On further analysis, though, it must be concluded that Geoffrey Bolton expressed very little consciousness of empire at the beginning of his historical career, despite the colonial period and society he chose to investigate, and despite his later testimony to the contrary. In reality, Bolton did not make the imperial relationship between colonial

44 ibid.
45 Geoffrey Bolton, Interview with Author, Perth, 11 April 2000.
Western Australia and the United Kingdom either explicit or apparent in *Alexander Forrest: His Life and Times*, or in *A Survey of the Kimberley Pastoral Industry*. Nor did he actually identify the supposed parallel between Australian and British historical events in these two theses. Certainly there was some contextualisation offered of the colonial relationship to the United Kingdom. Mention was occasionally made, for instance, of the British origins of the pioneering settlers. Bolton recorded part of Alexander Forrest’s welcoming speech as Lord Mayor of Perth to the Earl of Kinmore in 1895, where Forrest announced that Western Australian colonists:

“regard ourselves as a good example of the ability of a few Englishmen gathered together to manage their own affairs”.

The need for British capital and investment to support the struggling colonial economy and to assist regional development was also made note of in both texts. Nonetheless, Western Australian communication with Great Britain attracted only very modest attention in these early works of Bolton. Rather, the much greater part of his theses was dedicated to the day-to-day business of surviving in a developing and isolated community. A common theme in *Kimberley*, for example, is that settlement in the colony’s north was facilitated mostly by migration within the colony. The families who moved to the north, and especially to the West Kimberley, were already part of Western Australia’s expanding pastoral industry. In this sense, Bolton appeared to account for settlement in the north as an effort of colonial survival, and not as a part of any British expansionist philosophy or empire loyalty.

This lack of empire consciousness in Bolton’s early theses is an indication of where Bolton stood in his journey of empire at the time. His undergraduate and early postgraduate studies at the University of Western Australia, if only demonstrated by *Forrest* and *Kimberley*, seem characterised by a decided lack of appreciation of the functional, imperial connection which existed between colonial Western Australia and

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46 G.C. Bolton, *Alexander Forrest: His Life and Times*, Melbourne University Press in association with the University of Western Australia Press, Melbourne, 1958, p.128. See also, pp.1&121 for further mention of British origins of settlers.
imperial Britain. This was reasonably confirmed by his own testimony in 1997.49 Even Bolton's study of 'Australian history since 1850' at school50 had probably done little to raise his awareness of the imperial context of Australia's development – most of the Australian colonies by the 1850s were largely self-sufficient and thriving under the benefits of the gold discoveries. It is more likely, in fact, that Bolton's empire consciousness began to be seriously aroused during his time spent in Balliol College, and when questioned recently he admitted that his awareness of empire, as well as the ability to put this into writing, was certainly 'materially strengthened by the Oxford Years'.51 This is a reasonable hypothesis, for while residing in England in the 1950s, Bolton had the opportunity to live in the metropolis of empire and would have been exposed to all the dying embers of Britain's former glory for the first time. Furthermore, while at Oxford, Bolton was absorbed into the academic environment which had been the intellectual life-force of the British Empire for much of the previous century. So, with the combined impetus of Vincent Harlow's tutorship at Oxford, as well as the vast research material available to him on United Kingdom subject matter, it is little wonder that Bolton attempted his first concerted imperial analysis as a PhD thesis.

It was apparently largely due to Vincent Harlow's encouragement that Geoffrey Bolton chose to study the Irish Act of Union for his Doctoral research. In its publication which soon followed, Bolton explored the difficulties of Britain's quasi-colonial rule in Ireland. He claimed then that the thesis was an attempt to explain the origins of the union between Britain and Ireland, from an authentic perspective of the Irish at the time. Many historians, and much of the Irish population, had since condemned the Act of Union as a 'by-word for corruption'.52 Bolton suggested, though, that the Act was probably largely representative of popular opinion at the time, and that it was the economic difficulties of the Irish, and the poor administration by the British, which later encouraged a nationalist resentment against the Union and which then 'tended to colour historical

50 Collins, Teaching History, p.56.
51 Bolton, Interview, 18 June 1997.
interpretations'. Rob Pascoe was correct to point out that *The Irish Act of Union* was written mostly from an Oxford, and not an Irish, perspective. Nonetheless, the work remains valued by Irish historians today.

Bolton's account of Ireland's fall to English aspirations and the country's subsequent colonial experience, demonstrated for the first time a mature awareness of empire in his writings. Some parallels exist, of course, between the Irish and Australian experiences of empire. Firstly, the native inhabitants of both the Irish and Australian colonies were dominated by an imported elite. In Australia, the aborigines were subjected to the imposed authority of British settlers; while in Ireland, the 'Protestant Ascendancy' was drawn mostly from English and Scottish migrants who swayed authority over the Irish. The only difference in Ireland, Bolton noted, was that 'religion, not race, determined who were the upper class'. Secondly, he suggested, both the Irish and Australian societies gradually evolved their own form of primitive multiculturalism. Where the British Australians were forced to compromise their inherited culture with the necessities of their new surroundings, the Irish also soon formed 'a distinctive outlook and culture, neither English nor Gaelic'.

Nonetheless, if parallels existed between the Irish and Australian experiences of empire, their many differences prevent us from drawing any closer connection. The Irish Union, for example, was realised through legislation carried in both Ireland and England, effectively granting the Irish a form of 'treaty'. The governing classes, though, never achieved unquestioned sovereignty in Ireland, and the fight to remove British authority characterised much of the country's turbulent history from then on. By contrast, Australia was colonised by a war on the native population, the settlers had no treaty or legislation with the Aborigines, and sufficient authority was reached by the colonial elite to ensure a comfortable alliance with Great Britain to this day. The real significance to our discussion, then, of Bolton's *Irish Act of Union*, is not for its direct relevance to Australia's experience of empire. Rather, it lies in the indication it provided of Bolton's

53 *ibid.*, p.221.
54 Rob Pascoe, Interview with Author, Victorian University of Technology, Melbourne, 23 July 1997.
increasing consciousness of Britain’s colonial exercise and its ramifications overseas. Forrest and Kimberley focused mostly on the domestic dynamics of a colonial society. The Irish Act of Union, on the other hand, promised a more apparent sensitivity to Australia's direct imperial relationship in the historian's future scholarship.

Bolton’s writings in the decade after his return to Australia were determined largely by regional and frontier themes. In these, he reverted back to the Australian and regional nature of his early postgraduate works, but with a new and developing awareness of the context of empire. At the recommendation of Keith Hancock, Bolton arrived in Canberra to begin work on a project initiated by the North Queensland Local Government Association. His first work in Queensland history, A Thousand Miles Away, was soon published in 1963.58 The book was partly, he later claimed, an assessment of the three cultural groups of the region, and how they survived in the tropics together. Mostly, though, it discussed the frontier settlement as an exercise of empire. In writing about north Queensland, he noted,

‘I was primarily interested in its claim to be the first successful instance in the British Empire of white settlement in the tropics; and I was and am also interested in the transplantation of British institutions – the perceptions of class, the social attitudes, the concepts of politics, education, religion – to a new and very different environment.’59

In this instance, he concluded, European settlements could well survive in the tropics ‘without degeneration’.60

The 1960s can be called Bolton’s ‘regional’ or ‘frontier’ decade. A brief survey of his major publications of the time shows a list dominated heavily by regional histories, including a combined effort with Ann Mozley on the Western Australian legislature from 1870 to 1930,61 the public launch of The Irish Act of Union in 1966, and up to four

60 Bolton, Seminar, 11 June 1997.
works on northern Queensland, including *A Thousand Miles Away*. It reflects, perhaps, a growing struggle in Bolton's consciousness between a desire to forge a separate, nationalist perspective of Australian history, and his increasing interest in recording national history as it stood within the shadows of Great Britain. This, to a degree, is further confused by the subtle differences between the words 'region' and 'frontier'. A 'region', for instance, suggests an area within part of a country or nation. Bolton's internal, domestic or civil histories, where he focused on Australian history from the inside only and provided little or no placement of Australia within an outside context such as the British Empire, are therefore regional. *Forrest* and *Kimberley* are his two most representative works of this nature. 'Frontier', on the other hand, implies that a region is at least a latent outpost of an empire and, at most, actively involved in the expansion of that empire. From the 1960s and onwards, Bolton's Australian histories were increasingly contextualised within the web of the British Empire, and, whether on a regional or national scale, were therefore more likely to be of a 'frontier' nature.

One of the most important frontier studies of that decade which Geoffrey Bolton produced and which provides an insight into his developing consciousness of Australia and empire, was a 1968 article in *Historical Studies*. 'The Idea of a Colonial Gentry' was an exploration of the transplantation of the British class system into nineteenth century colonial Australia. It was, in fact, one of the first occasions where Bolton began to explicitly place Australian history in the context of empire. It was also something of a unique piece of work for Geoffrey Bolton in the 1960s. For although this was the decade in which he started to consciously and deliberately place Australian history against the background of the Anglo-Australian connection, he tended mostly to do this in regional studies. 'Colonial Gentry', on the other hand, was not a regional history. Rather, it was a study of the colonial societies across the whole of Australia and, as such, a national study.

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63 Bolton admitted a dominance of his 1960s material by regional histories, and also admitted to the difference between regional and frontier history in his Interview, 18 June 1997.
history. It was also a 'frontier' history, for it identified colonial Australian social dynamics as being the activities of an outpost of empire.

Bolton, as already noted, has a keen interest in the survival and adaptation of a colonising power's institutions within a new environment. He discussed this in *A Thousand Miles Away*, and it is true also of *Britain's Legacy Overseas*. In 'Colonial Gentry', Bolton recognised the expectation that the Australian colonial elite 'would model its standards and its institutions on the British ideals of upper-class behaviour'. Yet the dynamics of the British class system in the Australian colonial environment had to function differently because it was, he argued, missing a vital element which did not make it as far as the colonies:

>'for although the aristocracy and gentry wielded a dominant share of social and political power in Great Britain at least until the early years of the 20th century, its younger sons have not often emigrated in sufficient numbers to have a direct influence on the structure and development of any colonial society.'

Therefore, he continued, where there were attempts to perpetuate the standards and way of life of the British aristocracy or gentry in the Australian colonies,

>'Most of these attempts in the self-governing parts of the British Empire have been made by a colonial elite which is not itself of gentry origins, and which in rejecting the specifically hereditary bias of the British pattern, has retained some degree of British political institutions, social prejudices, and hierarchical attitudes'.

He then further explored the extent to which colonial elites 'patterned themselves on the British original', and how this was contrived.

The immigration of the British gentry in the nineteenth century did, we are told, increase significantly after 1815. Geoffrey Bolton argued that this was in part encouraged by the end of the Napoleonic wars, the waning influence of the Crown in England (and therefore the decreasing likelihood of social promotion through that means), increasing birth rates and agricultural recession. Despite this increase, though, Bolton questioned the number of immigrants claiming elitist status on arrival in Australia who would actually have been considered gentry when in Great Britain. While there were the

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65 *ibid.*, p.307.
67 *ibid.*, p.308.
occasional few who came from the great aristocratic families of the United Kingdom, he believed most would have been of more marginal social status and hoping to improve their social and economic conditions in the Australian colonies. Bolton gave the example of the Hentys of Sussex, who were encouraged by the correspondence of the their brother James that:

'At the expiration of 10 years in New South Wales I shall be much disappointed if we individually are not worth double that sum [£400 or £500 a year] ... and immediately we get there we shall be placed in the First Rank of Society, a circumstance which must not be overlooked as it will tend most materially to our comfort and future advantage.'

The ‘Colonial Gentry’ article proposes that although Australian society came from the ‘lesser’ British social stock in general, the burgeoning colonial elite nonetheless deliberately acquired the manner and characteristics of the ‘original’ British upper classes. The events in Australia, Bolton wrote, were:

'largely an extension of the British process, just as the Australian economy was largely an extension of the British. The overseas British who made good in Australia were mostly of the lower middle-class and yeoman origins, when they were not from the proletariat, the poor and the criminal classes. Yet as they achieved political and social dominance in Australia they took on the outward and visible signs of the British ruling elite: the titles, the veneration of landed estates, the hierarchical attitudes, the myth of gracious living. These ‘British’ acquired characteristics excited the derision of radicals, but they did not imply the necessary subservience by the conservatives to British leadership in politics.... They were simply the evidence of the tendency of a newly dominant social group to attempt to express and symbolise its dominance through the same forms and media that were used by the ruling elite in the most powerful source from which Australia drew its patterns of behaviour.'

Bolton further alleged that while the Australian elite may have employed the British archetype in this manner, there was never any intention or ‘serious interest’ in transferring such British institutions to colonial Australian society as an effort in imperial ideology. Instead, the social model of the United Kingdom was adopted as an expedient solution to their own self interests. In colonial society, Bolton suggested, it provided an ‘acceptable’ form by which the upper classes could protect and express their sense of superiority, as long as the lower classes were also willing to live by the same

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68 ibid., p.318.
69 ibid., pp.318-319.
70 ibid., pp.326-327.
71 ibid., p.328.
British social caste system which they had endured in the United Kingdom. In the national interest, too, the replication of Britain's class system provided the Australian elite with the chance to persuade their British counterparts of their 'like-mindedness', particularly on occasions when the colonials were in dispute with the Home Government. In conclusion, Bolton conceded that 'colonial elites very early develop a sense of their own self-interest which transcends any nostalgic emotions of loyalty to the mother-country', and that 'where a colonial elite has borrowed the customs of its British prototype, it is no more than the symbol of an immaturity which has not yet developed its own distinctive status symbols.'

The 'Colonial Gentry' article provides valuable insight into Geoffrey Bolton's consciousness and perception in the 1960s of Australia and empire. By then, of course, the former glory of the Anglo-Australian relationship was largely in decline; Australia had been embarrassed by its stand with Britain during the Suez Crisis, and Britain had announced its intention to return its focus to Europe. Bolton recognised these changes, noting that Australia's loyalties altered in the mid-twentieth century when Britain could no longer fulfil its traditional, imperial role. The connection between the Australian people and their British cousins in the nineteenth century, though, was far stronger. 'Colonial Gentry' identified very clearly, where Forrest and Kimberley did not, the close relationship which existed between the frontier and home societies. These links were forged by the social and cultural make up of the Australian colonies, which was mostly derived from its United Kingdom origins, the transfer of British social, political and judicial institutions to the Antipodes, and the political connection between the colonial elite and the ruling classes at 'home'.

Not that Bolton considered imperial loyalty in Australia to have been held above the emerging national interest of the time. The colonial elite, he argued, was happy on the one hand to emulate the British social system to protect their self interests in the new environment, but was also, on the other, prepared to use this same social system to lobby against the Home Government in defence of the perceived Australian national interest.

72 ibid., p.328.
73 ibid., p.327.
So, Bolton concluded, well before the twentieth century ‘there was an Australian culture before there was a Commonwealth of Australia’. Moreover, the historian reasoned that the self-interest of the Australian elite was still very apparent in the post-war decades. The nature of the Anglo-Australian relationship in the mid-twentieth century may have changed irrevocably, but:

‘this did not mean that the Australian elite were ready to abandon the tribal distinctions of the British upper class: the titles, the special schooling, the morning suits at the Melbourne Cup, the invitations to Government House. But these status symbols had no influence on their political behaviour.’

The Empire was coming to an end, but to Bolton’s mind, some things were yet to change.

Little national history in the years between Federation and World War Two appears to have caught the attention of Geoffrey Bolton. His most prominent book which dealt with any of that period, *A Fine Country to Starve In*, was a study of Western Australia's encounter with the Great Depression. Furthermore, while he contributed a number of entries to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* for the years between 1891 and 1939, a quick scan of these shows that they are mostly of Western Australian personalities. His attention to the wider Australian experience in those decades may be augmented by the impending publication of his biography of Sir Edmund Barton, but in the mean time we are left to consider his 1973 book, *Britain's Legacy Overseas*, as the primary source for Bolton's interpretation of Australia's history in the years between 1901 and 1939.

Bolton claimed in an interview recently that the last years of the nineteenth century were characterised by a calm and general expectation that Australia would become a republic – a premise which can be corroborated by such testimonies as that of Mark McKenna. Bolton used the example of a Queensland magistrate hearing the

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74 *ibid.*, p.327.
75 Bolton, Interview, 18 June 1997; Bolton, Seminar 11 June 1997.
76 Bolton, ‘Colonial Gentry’, p.327.
case of F.B.C. Vosper, then editor of the *Australian Republican*, to demonstrate the republican-mindedness of Australians at the time. Bolton mused then:

‘I am constantly astonished in the 1880s not only with Henry Lawson and the ‘Bulletin boys’, but with the number of respectable judges and conservative politicians who calmly take it for granted that Australia will become a republic, who are not too fussed about when it happens, but hope and expect it will take place peaceably…. The quotation I keep coming back to is from north Queensland. It was when Vosper was being charged with sedition and the judge, who was certainly no radical, said in summing up ‘Oh now, he’s not on trial for advocating a republic. As every thinking man knows, sooner or later Australia will be…. The question is, is he inciting violence?’\(^{78}\)

Australia obviously did not become a republic either before or after the birth of the new Commonwealth of Australia. W.J. Hudson alleged that the distraction of Federation was enough to quell speculation and discussion of a republic in Australia, writing that the federal union did not bring about independence in Australia but that it provided instead the potential for the future ‘independence of an Australian nation state’. In the meantime, Hudson proposed that many Australians remained reassured that their security and defence would be guaranteed by the British navy.\(^{79}\) This was discussed in part by Bolton, who hypothesised that Australians by the 1890s were becoming increasingly fearful of Japan, particularly after the Sino-Japanese War of 1895. A decade earlier there may have been a lot of republican talk, he added, but with the international climate of the 1890s on their mind, Australians became more convinced of the need for protection from external threats by the might of the Royal Navy. So, although leaders like Edmund Barton chose to play down talk of a republic in case it diverted attention from Federation, Bolton surmised that Australians were already becoming rapidly more conscious of the benefits of empire membership before 1901, without being confused by the preparations for Federation.\(^{80}\)

Presumably, then, Geoffrey Bolton’s relative silence on the Anglo-Australian relationship from then until the 1940s indicates that he considered the situation in Australia stayed much the same after the popular swing back to British protection in the late nineteenth century. One assumes that he would have explored events in those

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78 Bolton, Interview, 18 June 1997.

decades further if there had been any progress he considered of particular significance. In other words, Bolton seems to infer that Australia maintained the connection with the United Kingdom as best it could for fear of external threats, particularly from Japan, well into the twentieth century. That was, of course, until Japan looked convincingly crushed by war, and before a Communist China had realistically become a threat to regional security.

*Britain’s Legacy Overseas* is a significant text of Geoffrey Bolton’s which serves in part to bridge his histories of nineteenth century Australia to the three or four major histories he wrote of ‘his own times’. It is, in a way, a transitional piece because it discusses the dynamics of Britain's imperial activities from the rise of Elizabeth I to the 1970s, and so links his three eras of Australian history in its scope. Although *Britain’s Legacy Overseas* looks far beyond Australia’s history, it still captures Australia’s unique experience of empire from its very beginnings in the 1780s, until the decade in which Bolton was then writing. As such, the text supplies a small amount of comment on the early twentieth century, and it confirms the preceding argument that Bolton considered little had changed in the Anglo-Australian relationship of those years.

*Britain’s Legacy Overseas* was the culmination of a year’s work in Kent while on study leave in 1972 from the University of Western Australia. Although only a small book (*Britain’s Legacy Overseas* comes to just 156 pages), it offers valuable criticism of the varied impacts which Britain had on its colonies, and vice-versa. Bolton commenced his discussion by identifying what he called ‘motives for empire’. Interestingly, he proposed that the expansion of the British Empire was not motivated by any quest for imperial glory, but out of perceived strategic and economic benefits. In the decades following Waterloo, Bolton claimed that strategic concerns were those most likely to encourage the British annexation of new territory. In those years, he wrote, ‘Empire building became an extension of European foreign policy’. Under the Tudors, on the other hand, imperial expansion had been motivated by commercial incentive. Ireland, particularly, was first colonised by the British because of anticipated financial benefits. It

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80 Bolton, Interview, 18 June 1997.
was England's first attempt at empire, and what Bolton called 'England's colonial laboratory'. In Ireland, he claimed, there was a mandatory expectation in the minds of the British that the Irish territories would produce raw materials which would directly benefit the Home economy.

Later, the North American colonies were also, Bolton alleged, primarily of economic interest to the British, and 'paradoxically developed into that elastic market for English goods sought by the merchants of London ... for over two centuries just when it was on the verge of successful revolt'. And although India has, since the reign of Victoria, been seen emotively as the jewel in the empire's crown, Bolton argued that it, too, was acquired originally out of strategic and economic interests:

'In an immediate sense Britain moved into India not because Downing Street cherished imperialist designs, but in order to bail out the East India Company when the problems of defending and governing a frontier of colonial enterprise grew out of hand.'

It was, he continued, another example of the British Parliament's readiness to 'extend its territorial commitments as a consequence of City of London activities'. Yet, as he also recognised, these commercial pressures should not be exaggerated. After all, 'Aristocrats, not merchants, governed Britain. Commercial lobbying was of little avail unless reinforced by strategic and diplomatic arguments.' In the same way, Britain decided in 1763 to retain the Canadian colonies, rather than Guadeloupe, as much as for strategic considerations as a response to the clamour of sugar and fur trading interest groups.

By World War Two, of course, Britain could no longer support the necessary costs in maintaining its empire, nor could it resist the nationalist movements from its colonies. In the end, Bolton concluded, the empire's greatest legacy lay not in the benefits it had produced over the centuries for the United Kingdom, but in the diffusion of Western ideas and technology into such a vast area of the world. From this basis

82 *ibid.*, p.18.
83 *ibid.*, p.9.
84 *ibid.*, p.11.
85 *ibid.*, p.13.
86 *ibid.*, p.15.
87 *ibid.*, p.15.
88 *ibid.*, p.30.
Bolton moved in *Britain's Legacy Overseas* to identify the means by which the British legacy was transported overseas, and by which its rule was consolidated in practice. Most importantly, he wrote, communication through migration and the transplantation of British institutions overseas was what produced the international legacies of the British Empire. This included such elements as 'spirituality' (or the spread of Christianity and the Church), artistic and literary culture, education, polity and judicial practice. His interest in *A Thousand Miles Away* of the transportation of a culture to a new environment had not diffused by 1972. To the contrary, Bolton further developed his analysis of 'cultural relocation':

'British settlers in the new countries overseas, while usually more intent on improving their personal fortunes than on the conscious foundation of a new society, kept referring back to what they knew of British institutions as a basis from which to fashion their polity and culture.... In response to the needs of the new environment, imported institutions were often adapted with significant changes; but the colonies usually tried to cite British precedent or else presented their innovations as a conscious reaction against past British influence. In either case the dialogue with the mother-country persisted, and at times influenced events in Britain itself.'

The importance of *Britain's Legacy Overseas*, then, to our discussion is two-fold. Firstly, and quite simply, the book demonstrated the advancement made by Geoffrey Bolton in his imperial consciousness; when compared to his study of Alexander Forrest, and the void there of reference to empire, *Britain's Legacy Overseas* stands in stark contrast. Bolton's progression from *Forrest* to *Britain's Legacy Overseas* would almost certainly have been encouraged by *The Irish Act of Union*, 'Colonial Gentry' and *A Thousand Miles Away*. These texts, while not as blatantly an empire study as *Britain's Legacy Overseas*, were certainly its precursors by their exercise in frontier analysis. In looking back from 1973, it is clear that Bolton's treatment of localised imperial societies in those texts gave the necessary introduction for the author to the persevere in the study of the legacy of the imperial experience in Australia.

In the same way, *Britain's Legacy Overseas* assists in identifying Bolton's personal sentiments on empire in the early 1970s. Through his own testimony we have gleamed some idea of his childhood impressions of Australia and empire, and *Forrest* and *Kimberley* demonstrated that whatever he was feeling about the British Empire in the
1950s, he was not yet able to explore its legacies explicitly in his Western Australian
studies of the time. *The Irish Act of Union*, ‘Colonial Gentry’ and *A Thousand Miles
Away*, of course, indicated the advancement of his ability to do so by the 1960s. But in
*Britain's Legacy Overseas* Bolton wrote revealingly of his personal impressions or
feelings about the empire. In fact, there was an actively sympathetic response in *Britain's
Legacy Overseas* from Bolton to some results of British imperialism (if not the
motivations) which bordered occasionally on positive campaigning. For instance, Bolton
applauded the legacies of empire which brought better conditions to colonial
communities, and concluded that

‘In the long run the influence of Britain would be traced through its efficacy
as one of the agents bringing Western Culture into contact with a large
number of different cultures throughout the world. Not only that the British
often acted as conscious agents of cultural cross-fertilisation. The
Christianity, the education, the literature and arts which they took overseas
with them, were often radically transformed in new environments, and
assumed forms which no longer commanded easy acceptance in Britain
herself.... The important point was that contact with Britain gave the
former colonials a wider vocabulary of language and forms through which
they could interpret their own experience of the world.’90

These sympathies may well have been influenced by the frequent travel to Great
Britain which Bolton was undertaking in those years. After the completion of his Oxford
studies, Bolton returned to the United Kingdom in 1966, 1969, and 1972 – all occasions
which may have enhanced his affinity with the British way of life and standards of living.
But for whatever reason, Bolton certainly remained true to the ‘middle way’ in his
interpretation of Britain's imperial activities, avoiding condemnation of its results and
manifestations overseas. Instead, he wrote acceptingly that in troubled India and in the
African colonies, the imperial administrators fostered British institutions and culture to
enable the new territories to ‘survive more effectively in a modern world’.91 Later, and
still sensitive to empire, he wrote:

‘If they neglected to foster education and social services or to promote the
improvement and diversification of the colonial economies, this was not
from any systematic intention to exploit the colonies, but simply because an
imperial task which had seemed feasible in the late nineteenth century was
no longer within Britain's financial resources after the First World War. At
the same time the colonial peoples benefited from a relatively generous

90 ibid., p.55-156.
91 ibid., p.64.

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concept of civil liberties and an absence of effective censorship. If they were exposed to British patterns of education, religion and authority, it was not in a form so overwhelming as to preclude any possibility of grafting them onto indigenous cultures and modifying them in accordance with local needs and traditions."

When he discussed the mid-twentieth century decline of the empire he also conceded that the diversification of trading markets within the post-war Commonwealth and Empire, and the rise of nationalist groups in the former colonies, meant that the British could hardly be blamed when they decided to ‘cut their gains and losses, and allowed the Commonwealth and Empire to wither while they sought once more to graft themselves on to the main trunk of Europe’. Britain's Legacy Overseas, then, was not only the forum which Geoffrey Bolton chose as his first detailed study of empire; it was also an explicit manifesto by the historian demonstrating his personal sympathies with the effect of imperialism and its initiators.

The second important aspect of Britain's Legacy Overseas is the presentation particularly of Australia's own experience of empire. ‘Colonial Gentry’ was Bolton's first attempt at this, and Britain's Legacy Overseas is a continuation of that exercise. Obviously the book was not a specific study of the Anglo-Australian relationship, canvassing instead the wider international experience, but it still provides substantial material to assist our discussion. Here Bolton first identified particular categories of the Anglo-Australian relationship which defined his perception of the imperial relationship and, consequently, provide the basis for all future explorations of the progress of that relationship as described by the historian.

In his introduction to Britain's Legacy Overseas, Bolton wrote that the annexation of new colonies to the British Empire was usually done for economic or strategic purposes. He wrote that after 1782 the empire changed from being reliant on ‘landholding and colonial staples to an empire based on trade and sea-power’. Accordingly, colonial acquisitions were most prized as trading and strategic bases. On the other hand, we are told, colonies developed to house ‘Britain's cast-offs’ were few.

92 ibid., pp.71-72.
93 ibid., p.30.
Deborah Gare

and far between and were never a serious 'motive behind Britain's quest for empire'.94 Australia, in this context, was an exception. In fact, the case could be put from Bolton's testimony that Australia was the exception in many cases. Contrary to Blainey's argument in The Tyranny of Distance, Bolton accepted that there were no immediate or obvious trading advantages in settling the colonies in the Antipodes, and that Australia remained a great financial burden on Britain for many years. Furthermore, he continued, nineteenth century Australia was characterised by an exceptional predominance of British-born or descended people:

'Australia has been notoriously one of the most homogenous communities in the British Empire. Its largely British antecedents are the exception, not the rule in the British Empire.'95

Migration appears to be a recurring interest of Geoffrey Bolton. It is discussed in many of his Australian histories, and Britain's Legacy Overseas is no exception. He wrote that in the nineteenth century, emigration from the United Kingdom was seen as a good solution to abate the rising proportion of the pauper population. Then, after a twenty year agricultural recession which had started in 1815, there was also increased incentive for farmers and the minor gentry to move overseas in an attempt to maintain their standards of living. (The Hentys of 'Colonial Gentry' are a good example of this). However, despite rapid improvements in transportation technology over the nineteenth century, Bolton argued that to many of those aspiring to quit the United Kingdom, the Australian colonies still appeared too far away and at the end of too hazardous a voyage.96 In fact, it was not until the close of World War Two that this trend began to reverse. By that time, the Australian government had long since introduced the basic wage and the welfare state, and in the late 1940s began to take 'energetic steps' to attract increased immigration – mindful as they were of their near miss from Japanese invasion. Until 1955, ex-servicemen and their families were offered free passage to Australia, and many others had their fares subsidised to £10 each. By the 1950s, as a result, Australia had become the most popular destination for United Kingdom expatriates. Some, according to Bolton, were escaping the British climate; others were attracted by the

94 ibid., p.17.
95 ibid., p.32.
increasing urbanisation of its cities, and probably the greater likelihood of finding employment on arrival. Either way, the Britishness of Australia's society at the end of the empire years had probably not declined, and the rise in British immigration after the war was certainly a contributing factor.

From a social, cultural and political perspective, then, Bolton tried to account for some of this residual influence of Britain in Australia. The high level of British immigration was, of course, one significant factor, as was the ongoing presence of institutions with British origins. The Anglican Church, for example, remained the strongest church denomination in Australia in the nineteenth century and for much of the twentieth. Over time, he argued, the church developed an 'amalgam of local initiative and of conservatism reaching back to British precedent'. But local initiative did not stretch far enough for either the Anglican Church, or its Catholic counterpart, to appoint Australian born men to its bishoprics until the 1960s. On the whole, Bolton argued, 'where religious attitudes were imported from Britain to the colonies, they tended to become cruder in the process'. Moreover, he added, they were also accompanied by a serious 'doctrinal unadventurousness'.

Not all of Australia's experience of empire which was explored in *Britain's Legacy Overseas* has been chronicled here; instead, the broader discussion by Bolton of empire seemed more pertinent. But it remains the case that Australian relations with Britain were treated fairly by Bolton in the book, and that some of the themes from 'Colonial Gentry' were further explored in its pages. Moreover, Bolton raised Australia's political, defence, judicial and commercial ties to the United Kingdom in *Britain's Legacy Overseas* for the first time. Of most importance, though, is the fact that the 1973 publication bridges the gap between the nineteenth century and the Second World War. As was suspected, Bolton considered that there was no radical upheaval in the Anglo-Australian relations of those decades, and that the strong connection between the two countries persisted.

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97 *ibid.*, p.42.
98 Exception is Cardinal Gillroy, Sydney, 1940. See *ibid.*, p.79.
99 *ibid.*, pp.79-80.
It was also in *Britain's Legacy Overseas* that Bolton first explored the events leading to the end of the British Empire. By the closing months of World War Two, Bolton reasoned, time was against the Empire as ‘nationalist movements declared themselves in every corner of the old British Empire,’ and as ‘the pace of decolonisation quickened far beyond the politicians’ expectations’. In the 1950s, he argued, the Commonwealth was most definitely disintegrating while its members were ‘steadily diversifying their trading partners’. More particularly, he added:

‘By the last quarter of the twentieth century it was at any rate clear that, for good or ill, Britain's imperial role was over. After a long period of absorption in her overseas tasks it was now time for Britain to return to her own European roots.’

By the time Bolton was writing in the 1970s, then, he clearly believed that Britain’s imperial activities were at an end. From an international perspective, the empire was finished and its less tangible legacies were all that actively continued in its place. In Australia there were many reasons to believe that the separation process from Britain and empire had begun decades earlier – trade, defence and foreign policies no longer reflected an exclusive alliance between Australia and her once great protector. But, in a social and cultural context, changes were only just beginning to take place. Gough Whitlam’s nationalist revival and his controversial dismissal were shaking the country out of its dependent lethargy on the United Kingdom and, to a degree, on the United States. Post-war migration policies were beginning to markedly change the composition of Australian society. The unquestionable bond with Britain earlier in the century, which was like a cultural institution of its own, was slowly being displaced. *Britain's Legacy Overseas* set the stage for exploration of this separation in Australia, and it was played out in his following histories.

This history of Britain and Australia in the years from the Second World War is captured in three particularly significant publications by Geoffrey Bolton: the chapter ‘1939-51’ in Frank Crowley’s *A New History of Australia*; Bolton’s volume of the

100 *ibid.*, p.28.
101 *ibid.*, p.30.
102 *ibid.*, p.156.
Geoffrey Bolton: The Middle Way

*Oxford History of Australia*; and his Boyer Lectures, *A View from the Edge*. Equally, Bolton’s articles ‘Who Are the Australians?’ and ‘Legends of Australian Identity’ are also important to this discussion.\(^{103}\) All of these publications, to our benefit, provide substantial insight to Bolton’s perception of Australian identity in its post-colonial experience, as well as of his vision for Australia’s future.

W.J. Hudson, as will be discussed in the following chapter, considered Australia’s dependence on the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century to be based on the areas of its foreign policy, executive, legislative and judicial practice. Therefore, full autonomy had to be exercised in each of these areas by Australia in order for Hudson to accept that Australians had won their independence. Similarly, Bolton established criteria of his own which needed to be addressed in order to recognise complete Australian separation from Britain. In ‘Colonial Gentry’ and *Britain’s Legacy Overseas*, he had indicated the various ties which originally facilitated the strong Anglo-Australian connection in the nineteenth century. These were the social, cultural and political aspects, defence relations, foreign policy and the commercial relationship. Therefore, to trace Bolton’s treatment of Australia and the end of empire, it must be assessed how the historian has accounted for these conditions in his history of Australia since the Second World War.

Many would agree with Geoffrey Bolton’s suggestion that World War Two saw the turning point in Australia’s relationship with the United Kingdom. Although, as he was to qualify, links between the two countries lingered for several more decades, the events of the war were enough to render irreparable damage in some aspects of the relationship. He foreshadowed this change when writing of the late 1930s in the *Oxford History*, suggesting that:

‘the days were numbered when Australia could survive as a far-flung outpost of British imperialism. Australia’s dependency on Britain would be followed by dependency, perhaps less formal but no less pervasive, on either the United States or Japan. How far this dependency would be tempered by a mature sense of national identity and nationally determined social and economic self-interest remained one of the great questions for the future.’\(^{104}\)

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Bolton proposed that at the beginning of the war, as augured in the preceding passage, Australia was already vulnerable in many respects to Britain's primary competitors in the region. It was not only the rising menace of Japan's military aggression or their economic competition which was alarming for Australia; the 'cultural imperialism' of the United States in the region was also appearing increasingly disturbing.\footnote{ibid., p.3.} These concerns, though, were forgotten momentarily when in September 1939 Britain declared war on Germany and its allies. To begin with, Bolton wrote, it appeared that the new hostilities would be a mere re-run of the Great War, and certainly official thinking in Australia did not appear to have progressed far past 1918. Instead, Australia relied heavily on precedent and past experience in conducting its early war campaign, and Bolton noted that Prime Minister Menzies quite happily conceded that Australia was at war simply because Britain was at war.\footnote{Bolton, 'Australia, 1939-51', p.459.}

According to Bolton's chapter in the \textit{New History of Australia}, it was assumed early in the conflict that Australia's role would again be that of an 'auxiliary, providing troops and warships to fight battles for her allies on fronts far removed from her own shores'. Moreover, it was expected that the main theatre of war would again be Europe, and that it was in Australia's best interests to 'prove herself a staunch ally, deserving of Britain's shield, by taking part whole-heartedly even when her own shores were not in immediate danger'.\footnote{ibid., p.461.} There was, as we know, a high response rate to the first call for enlistments; many of the young men who were eager to join the Australian Imperial Force's sixth and seventh divisions had grown up under the Anzac tradition of their fathers and were keen to fulfil their own patriotic dreams. Over the next two years the Australian troops were to see service in the Mediterranean, Africa, and the Middle East.\footnote{ibid., p.462.}

By the end of 1941, though, Bolton wrote that tension in the relations between Australia's government and that in London was beginning to be increasingly obvious. John Curtin's Labor government had not long seized office from the conservative
coalition when the *HMAS Sydney* was sunk, apparently by the German vessel *Kormoran* off the coast of Carnarvon. In December, Japan bombed Pearl Harbour, invaded Malaya and sank two of Britain's best warships in Malayan waters.\(^{109}\) In February, the naval base at Singapore was defeated, and over 15 000 Australian servicemen and women were interned in the Japanese prisoner of war camps. 'Few Australians were prepared for a disaster of such magnitude,' wrote Bolton, and 'suddenly, a very old Australian nightmare came to life'.\(^ {110}\) Despite the growing urgency in Australia, the historian noted that Churchill refused to allow the sixth and seventh Australian divisions to return home to defend Australia and New Guinea. At the same time, the British Prime Minister orchestrated R.G. Casey's move from Washington, as Australia's Minister there, to Cairo, as the British Minister of State. Already stung by Churchill's recalcitrance in returning Australian troops to defend their own shores, the Australian government protested publicly against Britain for poaching a 'man who could usefully serve Australia's interests'.

'These episodes, following Fadden's earlier brush over the Tobruk garrison, showed a growing independent-mindedness in Australia. It was not surprising ... that later in 1942 the Australian parliament decided to adopt the Statute of Westminster of 1931, thus spelling out Australia's autonomy in a way which previous governments had not chosen to stress.'\(^ {111}\)

Having relied almost exclusively on the might of the British Navy for its protection since the late eighteenth century, Australia at the end of 1941 was becoming reluctantly, but increasingly aware that Britain was no longer capable of guaranteeing them against the imminent advances of their enemies. Bolton wrote that Curtin's well known speech of December 1941 indicated the lengths to which Australia had then to resort to safeguard its protection, and that the plea to America was necessary because Britain could no longer defend Australia. He agreed that Curtin's dramatic change of policy 'displeased many traditionalists', but argued that it's necessity was 'irrefutable considering the numbers at Australia's disposal'.\(^ {112}\) There was mutual advantage in the new American alliance which was being forged with Australia, he noted; Australia

\(^{109}\) ibid., p.464.


\(^{111}\) ibid., p.467.

\(^{112}\) ibid., p.466.
obviously required the protection of a substitute 'great' power, and the Americans were pleased to have access to a new base in the region when the Philippines looked set to fall to Japan's relentless advance. Assisted by the 'friendly invasion' of United States troops, the Australian government and society were forced to accept the new wartime friendship they were to have with the Americans. One thing was for certain, according to Bolton: Australia could no longer rely on the United Kingdom for its protection, and the actions taken in the wake of this realisation meant that the bond between them would be changed irrevocably.

An important note to make about Bolton's discussion of Australia's wartime experience and its relationship with the United States, is that he identified several outcomes of the proceedings which he considered to be to Australia's benefit. Australia, for instance, began to deploy ambassadors overseas, and took much more notice of their neighbours in Southeast Asia as a result of the conflict. Furthermore, American contributions in Australia were not limited to the cultural icons of Coca-Cola and Reader's Digest, he informed his readers. Instead, the American introduction of equipment such as four wheel drives, bulldozers and light aircraft, assisted greatly in Australia's post-war redevelopment. The development of northern Australia was revived, he also noted, by the large American presence there in 1942. Most significantly, though, was the fact that Bolton inferred Australia's wartime separation from Britain was a positive action, with the advantageous promise of increased trade and investment opportunities with the United States at the war's end.113

Bolton conceded that at the conclusion of the war it was not all at once obvious to Australians, or to other observers, that the decline of British power in the region and the United States' place in its vacuum was a permanent change.114 Hence, in his story, Australia's immediate post-war years were characterised by a struggle in choosing between a protector from either Great Britain or the United States. In this struggle, Australia's foreign policy was the first of the conditions of the former imperial relationship which was to be loosed from its bonds with Great Britain. For a brief

113 ibid., pp.469-470.
114 Bolton, View From the Edge, p.51.
period of time, Bolton argued, the Australian government flirted with the idea of an independent foreign policy, assisted by its recent success at the new United Nations. The combination of Chifley’s economic policies and Evatt’s foreign policy produced a team which played at self-determination in its country’s own management. So Bolton wrote:

‘This marked an unusual departure from Australia's customary reliance on close ties with a great and powerful ally, such as Britain or the United States. It was only possible because for a few years Australia was relatively free from menace, real or imaginary, from the Near North.’115

Evatt had his greatest success in the early deliberations over the nature and constitution of the United Nations. At its April 1945 conference, for example, the Foreign Minister led the way in representing the interests of the ‘middle powers’. He did an effective job, Bolton wrote, in convincing Australians that ‘they could play a distinctive and independent part in international relations instead of tamely echoing more powerful allies’.116 In its own region, Australia even went so far to enhance its anti-colonialist reputation at the expense of other British Commonwealth members. In 1948 Chifley and Evatt refused a British request for assistance in the Malayan Emergency, despite the fact that the main anti-colonial movement there was communist. In a similar manner, Australia supported the Indonesian revolt against Dutch rule, taking the case to the United Nations and lobbying on behalf of the Indonesian nationalists in 1949.117

This display of independence in Australian foreign policy did not signify the end of Australia's own empire experience, though. Bolton conceded that Australia’s independence in the new Cold War environment could not last for long – certainly not after the rise of communist China or the Korean War. So, although Australia had been cut free of Britain's apron strings in World War Two, Bolton argued that for various reasons it was soon compelled to seek protection again from a greater ally. The initial choice was perhaps surprising, given the recently demonstrated inability of Great Britain to provide sufficient regional defence for Australia and its allied neighbours. But, nervous and suspicious of American ambitions in the region, Bolton testified that

117 ibid., p.50.
Australia chose to support Great Britain if a conflict of loyalties between the United Kingdom and the United States arose:

'Profoundly grateful for American help in repelling the Japanese, the Australian government was yet rather suspicious of 'dollar imperialism', and showed considerable wariness about encouraging a continued American presence in the South-West Pacific after the war. There was even a tendency, particularly after the victory of a Labour government in Britain in 1945, to draw closer once more to the British Commonwealth in any issue which raised a potential clash of interests with the United States.'

So, Chifley's economic policies may not have been popular at home, but Bolton tells us they were designed to protect Australia and the sterling bloc from the 'aggressive American economy', and that Labor gave 'first priority' to a post-war economic policy which would prevent a recurrence of the 1930s Depression. Purchases such as clothing, petrol and food from 'dollar-currency sources' were suppressed as much as possible, we are told, and the last rations on butter and tea were not lifted in Australia until 1950. According to Bolton, Chifley's protection of British trade was not only influenced by lingering sympathies for the 'mother country'. Practically speaking, Britain was still the major source of trade and investment in Australia, and this warranted some special support.

Nonetheless, Bolton recognised that a definite swing in Australia's foreign policy towards the United States was occurring by the 1950s. This was assisted primarily by international events such as the Korean War and the signing of the Anzus Treaty. Fear of communism, of course, influenced much of the political debate in the 1940s and 1950s, as Bolton discussed in the *Oxford History*. He wrote there that the decision to commit Australian troops to Korea by the newly returned conservative coalition was made by Percy Spender and Arthur Fadden in Menzies' absence from the country. They were both, he alleged, 'keen to promote a defence pact in the Pacific with the United States as the senior partner'. As if in answer to their prayers, the Anzus Treaty was signed in

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120 Bolton, 'Australia, 1939-51', p.474.
122 ibid., p.59.
123 ibid., p.79.
July 1951 and was soon entrenched as the ‘cornerstone of Australian foreign policy’.

The Anzus Treaty may not have guaranteed Australia from invasion, but Bolton assured his readers that it did signify Australia's final swing in foreign policy from the United Kingdom to the United States. The British, he wrote, ‘were chagrined at their exclusion from Anzus, which could be signalling Australia's permanent shift from a London-centred diplomacy to dependence on Washington.’

He added, too, that:

‘The most notable feature of the treaty was the exclusion of Britain, despite the Menzies government’s reputation for pro-British feelings, and despite the known wish of the United Kingdom government to be included in the pact. The old ties were gradually loosening.’

The cultural and social ties to the imperial relationship were next to be dealt a blow in Bolton’s story of post-war Australia. Immigration patterns to that point had prolonged the Britishness of Australians, facilitated by the White Australia Policy which had dominated Australia's immigration and defence policies since Federation. ‘As much as anything,’ Bolton proposed, ‘it was the racism ... which kept Australia British.’

Although the war heightened the urgent necessity for Australia to increase its population, it did not go so far as to lessen the country’s racial intolerance. A survey of Melbourne in 1948, for example, found that Germans were still twice as popular as Jewish immigrants, and that almost fifty per cent of people surveyed disapproved of Italian immigration to Australia. Furthermore, well over half those surveyed did not want Jewish or Negro migrants at all.

It was a brave Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, who had then introduced non-British migrants to Australia. When the Labor Government created the Department of Immigration in 1945 it announced its intention to provide a home for European refugees in Australia. Bolton wrote that this move ‘required political courage in an Australia which prided itself on being 98 per cent British in origin’, and argued that it was

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124 ibid., p.79.
125 ibid., p.79.
127 Bolton, View From the Edge, p.9.
128 In the Oxford History of Australia (p.53) Bolton recorded the 1947 census results that Australia's population had risen by only 1%.
the Labor Government's 'most significant contribution to Australia's future'. Britain still remained Australia's primary source of immigration, as he had indicated in *Britain's Legacy Overseas*, and British migrants were apparently easy to entice to Australia given Britain's post-war economic conditions and the assistance which the Australian government gave towards their passage. There was also a popular backlash at the prospect of non-British immigration, particularly against Jewish candidates, Bolton tells us. Nonetheless, in 1947 Calwell agreed to take 4000 displaced people from European camps, many of whom were refugees from communist Europe.

The impact of these new immigrants and their successors on Australia's culture and society was not, of course, to be fully realised for some decades. But the process had started, Bolton argued, which was to witness a radical upheaval in the Australian social identity. In fact, if the foreign policy cooperation between Australia and the United Kingdom was the first casualty in the post-war years, Bolton argued that the social and cultural connections between Australians and their British cousins were just as surely challenged by the migration policies started under the Chifley administration government. Of the pioneers in that Labor government Bolton wrote:

'They had drawn Australia out of its British leading-strings by an immigration policy which would permanently enrich and diversify the texture of Australian society, and by foreign policies which brought the nation closer to South-East Asia and the United States, its natural partners in the Pacific World.'

If the 1940s were the period in which the first fundamental changes occurred in the foreign policy and cultural aspects of the Anglo-Australian relationship, then it was a move cemented in the 1950s and 1960s. That, at any rate, is the general premise of Bolton's story. Many would identify the years from 1951 to 1972 as being dominated by Menzies and conservatism – Manning Clark, of course, often referred to these as the years of 'unleavened bread'. During this time, Bolton argued that popular belief in the British connection was 'still officially fostered, although American culture and American

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130 ibid., p.482.
foreign policy were gaining influence’. Bolton had already proposed that Australian immigration and foreign policy had ceased to function merely as an extension of British policies by the 1940s and 1950s. In the years soon to follow, it was the turn of Australia's defence and trade policies.

Many have accused Robert Menzies of over-zealous loyalty to Great Britain, using harsher language than Geoffrey Bolton was ever to employ. Yet Menzies was not to escape criticism from Bolton either. In fact, the historian was very critical of Menzies for policies which he believed perpetuated an immature dependency on Great Britain. To his ABC audience in 1992, Bolton announced:

‘For Menzies, and those who thought like him, Australia was too new and our roots in the Australian soil were too shallow for us to do without the accumulated wisdom of the British institutions which we had brought out with our cultural baggage.’

There was disapproval, too, for the unfortunate attempts by Menzies to champion the cause of Great Britain. In 1960, for instance, pressure was mounting from small powers on the United States and the Soviet Union to reconvene arms limitations negotiations. Menzies, at this time, proposed that Britain and France be included in the discussions – a motion which was ‘ignominiously defeated’, and which brought embarrassment to Australia. Nor was Menzies comfortable with Asian participation in the British Commonwealth. ‘There was something curiously undeveloped about Menzies’s concept of the British Commonwealth,’ Bolton recorded, ‘which at times seemed to go little further than an intense personal loyalty to Queen Elizabeth II as head of the Commonwealth.’

Perhaps the most significant instance in which Australia supported the United Kingdom, to its detriment, was the Suez Crisis of 1956. Those events were explored thoroughly by Hudson also, and need little attention here. When America withdrew aid from the development of a dam on the Nile, Egypt’s President Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal in July 1956. Britain and France, who were the canal’s principal users and

135 Bolton, View From the Edge, p.43.
shareholders, were outraged and immediately proposed military intervention to reverse the action. Bolton tells us that Australia, despite America's opposition to such measures, 'loyally echoed' the calls of both Britain and France, and in so doing earned the displeasure of their important new American ally. The Australian reaction to the crisis, he added, 'smacked of colonial immaturity'. At home, while Casey as Foreign Minister urged his government to heed Washington's warnings, he was unable to persuade Menzies or the rest of the Cabinet to share his view. Instead, Menzies managed to stifle other Cabinet ministers' 'doubts in the belief that British judgement must be trusted'.

Until this point, Australia had naively believed it could 'enjoy the patronage of both Britain and the United States'. But these loyalties clashed over Suez. The incident, of course, ended abysmally for the British and Australians. So, Bolton concluded, it was Australia's last stance with British foreign policy against the interests of the United States. Menzies had been blinded in his judgement by a strong nostalgic attachment to Great Britain and its former greatness, and as such had been foolish in his allegiances.

The ties between Australia and Britain depended on much more than Menzies' sentimentality about the royal family, as Bolton knew well. Trade with Britain in the post-war period was still a vital component in the Australian economy. In fact, evidence was offered in the Oxford History to suggest that Britain remained Australia's largest trading partner and primary source of foreign investment until the 1960-61 financial year. Over the next few years though, the United States began to draw level with Britain's trade levels in Australia. By the mid-1960s, both countries held a 40 per cent stake in Australia's export markets, and by 1966, Bolton wrote, Britain ceased to be Australia's major source of overseas investment. The future of Britain's economic relationship with Australia was augured at the same time by its attempts to join the European Economic Community:

'The shape of the future was sketched in 1961-62 when Britain sought unsuccessfully to enter the European Economic community, for although

137 ibid., p.152.  
138 ibid., p.151.  
139 ibid., p.149.  
140 ibid., p.91.  
141 ibid., p.90.  
142 Bolton, Britain's Legacy Overseas, p.30.
few foresaw how far European farm subsidies would eventually oust Australia from traditional markets it must have been evident that Britain would increasingly look for trading partners among its near neighbours.¹⁴³

Ultimately, Bolton noted, Britain's declining trade with Australia proved less spectacular than gradual, and the United Kingdom remained an important trading partner with Australia until 1970. But when Britain was finally accepted into the EEC in 1971, Australians were unimpressed that few concessions had been made to ease the transition for Australia's industry. By the end of the following year, the enormity of Britain's move to the EEC was beginning to hit home. The West Australian, Bolton noted, argued in November that Britain's "EEC entry is driving a wedge between Britain and the Commonwealth, and the split must widen inevitably as Westminster focuses its sights more firmly on Europe". Likewise, the Australian Financial Review noted caustically that Australia's relations with Great Britain had 'been eroded by time and events', and that those changes were now influencing Australia's overseas relations.¹⁴⁴ When Australia withdrew preferential tariffs from British imports in 1972 and announced the termination of the United Kingdom-Australia Trade Agreement, Bolton conceded that the former economic relationship between the two nations had been irrevocably changed. Japan, in its place, became Australia's primary trading partner.¹⁴⁵

Likewise, the nature of Australia's defence relationship with the United Kingdom altered drastically in the decades after the Second World War. In the conflict of the 1940s, Australia's defence force was equipped to operate as an auxiliary, if not an extension, to the British navy and army. Bolton argued, though, that after the Korean War and the signing of the Anzus Treaty, Australia's defence practice fell quickly into line with the Americans, and its defence policies began to be slotted in to the overall strategic plan of the United States.¹⁴⁶ In equipping the Australian defence forces, he suggested also that the new resources and planning began to 'benefit American suppliers rather than stimulating Australian secondary industry or reviving trade with Britain'.¹⁴⁷ And where

¹⁴³ Bolton, Oxford History of Australia, p.91.
¹⁴⁴ Bolton, 'The United Kingdom', p.214.
¹⁴⁵ ibid., p.215.
¹⁴⁶ ibid., p.155.
¹⁴⁷ ibid., p.155.
Australian military attention had started to wander to the direction of Washington in the 1950s, it was to be cemented in the following decade by the crisis in Vietnam.

Fearful of communist expansion in its region, Australia watched nervously as tension began to escalate in Vietnam. Soon Australians were encouraging American military intervention in the troubled nation. When it happened, the Australian government willingly committed its own troops to assist its new ‘friend’, despite the fact that Britain was never to participate in the conflict. Menzies and his Liberal successors firmly believed in the threat of communist expansion from Southeast Asia to Australia if left unchecked. Consequently, there were few questions raised within the government or in the army about the ‘value of the [American] alliance or the necessity of their presence in Vietnam’.148 Encouraged by its electoral victory in 1966, the Government took the opportunity to reinforce its defence alliance with the United States by the installation of tracking and communications stations for American nuclear weapons technology. By the following year, Australia had become the largest centre for American missile and space operations outside the United States itself.149

The defence ties to Britain, as argued, then, by Bolton, were well and truly severed by the time Australia entered the Vietnam War. Previously, of course, it had been unthinkable that Australia would have entered a war without Britain. But by the 1970s the defence and commercial policies which had once been a cornerstone of the Anglo-Australian relationship had come to an abrupt end. As we have seen, these links were some of Bolton’s main criteria in identifying Australia’s separation from Britain. All that remained by the time Whitlam’s nationalist government took office in 1972, was the social or cultural bonds which may have persisted. But with new immigration policies beginning to drastically change the social and cultural make up of Australian society, Bolton was soon able to write that by the 1970s, ‘Nor was there much to the British connection except nostalgia’.150

148 ibid., p.166.
149 ibid., p.169.
150 ibid., p.212.
Bolton concluded *Britain's Legacy Overseas* with the declaration that the last quarter of the twentieth century saw the end of Britain's international imperial activities. It was not clear, though, whether he considered that Australians has accepted the end of their time in empire, whether they had recognised it when separation did occur, or even whether Australian independence had actually occurred much earlier than Britain's imperial activities had ended elsewhere. The quandary can be settled by assessing his histories of this later period. As we have seen, Bolton presented the case that Australian separation from Britain occurred over several decades, and that it was measured by the different conditions in the foreign policy, defence, trade, social and cultural connections within the relationship. According to some of his writings, the last vestiges of the social and cultural ties lingered some decades after the war, and were, in fact, the last major connection existing between Australia and Great Britain.

In 1972 Gough Whitlam and the Labor Party were elected to government. According to Geoffrey Bolton, it was in the 1970s, initiated by Whitlam's short-lived administration, that the final 'mopping up' of Australian separation from the United Kingdom took place. He informed readers of the *Courier* that this radical Prime Minister was the 'standard-bearer of a new concept of Australian nationalism'. Whitlam's nationalism was a multicultural one in which Australian society would no longer stress 'the continuities with British institutions', but would begin to identify more readily with the cultural traditions of its various migrant communities. Bolton, *View From the Edge*, p.11. The contribution of British candidates to Australia's immigration pool, by this time, was beginning to dwindle. On the other hand, new Australians were increasingly being welcomed from South or Southeast Asia. Tolerance, according to Geoffrey Bolton, of these new varieties of immigrants was also growing, although many migrants still found it difficult to 'secure acceptance' on arrival. Nevertheless, he applauded, Australia had succeeded to a large degree in 'making the difficult change from an ethnically monochrome society to a pluralist society'. With the growing number of people from non-British origins, and even the declining proportion of those of immediate British descent by the mid-1970s, it

152 Bolton, *View From the Edge*, p.11.
was difficult to argue that there was even any substantial sentimental attachment to Great Britain from Australia.

Nor did Britain provide encouragement for Australians to maintain those sentimental links. Earlier that decade British forces had been withdrawn from the region altogether. In 1973, despite the protests of Australia and New Zealand, Britain joined the European Economic Community and restricted the free movement of Australians to the United Kingdom. As if in accordance with this social transformation and the apparent indication from Britain that they were no longer interested in maintaining the old-style Commonwealth relations, official policies in Australia also dispensed with the remaining vestiges of the Anglo-Australia colonial relationship. From 1975, if only in response to the British action, British passengers arriving in Australia were required to obtain a visa to permit their entry.¹⁵⁴ Australians now formally recognised their ‘separateness’ as a nation, and Britons could no longer come and go as they pleased. At the same time, the Whitlam government took steps to end some of the last ‘continuing relics of colonialism’, such as the appeals to the Privy Council.¹⁵⁵ Several years later, Malcolm Fraser’s government presided over a referendum which replaced ‘God Save the Queen’ with ‘Advance Australia Fair’ as the national anthem.¹⁵⁶

Even as the last remnants of the colonial relationship between Australia and Britain were being cleaned away, there were concerns that Australia may have been developing an over compensatory swing away from the United Kingdom into an equally dependent relationship on the United States. Certainly in the bi-polar world of the Cold War era, Australia was as susceptible as any country to conformity with superpower defence and foreign policies in order to secure their own protection. Nor was there any doubt that an American influence was slowly but surely seeping into the Australian cultural experience. Youth, of course, were the most vulnerable to the invasion of American film, sport, fashion and leisure activities. Observers such as Geoffrey Serle claimed that Australia had only moved from being a ‘British colony’ to an ‘American

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.11.
¹⁵⁶ For Bolton’s full discussion on the Whitlam government’s attempts to end Australian appeals to the Privy Council, see Bolton, ‘The United Kingdom’, pp.220-224.
province’ - a fear echoed by many of his generation. Whitlam, though, acted quickly to assure Australians and the rest of the world of his country’s independence of the Pacific giant. So Bolton noted that on a visit to the United States in July 1973, Whitlam firmly announced to President Nixon that ‘We are not a satellite of any country. We are a friend and partner of the United States, but with independent interests of our own.’ In any event, when America announced its withdrawal from Vietnam and its intention to ‘mend the fences’ with China, Bolton considered that ‘Australia’s confident reliance for protection on great and powerful allies’ had come to a crushing end, whether they were British or American. Combined with the terms of the ‘Nixon Doctrine’, that America’s allies would have to increasingly fend for themselves, any overdeveloped Australian sense of reliance on the United States was corrected by America itself.

Arguably, then, Geoffrey Bolton’s empire came to an end in the 1970s. There was no great moment of independence which he considered was won for Australia. Rather, he described in his histories a gradual process of separation from Britain which lasted roughly from the 1940s to the 1970s. Bolton established more criteria than Hudson did for a ‘complete’ termination of the colonial relationship. Where Hudson was concerned primarily with constitutional forms of sovereignty, Bolton chose a broader perspective of the relationship’s elements, comprising of social, political and economic factors. One by one, Bolton accounted for the removal of these areas from Britain’s jurisdiction and for the increased autonomy which Australia won at each stage. At the same time, he described a corresponding relationship with the United States, which actually developed as the British connection withered.

The changes, then, in Australia’s imperial relationship, began during World War Two, when Britain was unable to continue in its role as ‘mother-protector’. Australia, it seemed, was only saved from invasion by the heroic intervention of the United States. Following that, the immediate post-war years saw a struggle in Australia between its traditional attachment to Great Britain and the new alliance with America. After a brief

157 cited in Bolton, *View From the Edge*, p.53.
159 *ibid.*, p.212.
flirtation with 'independence', Australia finally sold its foreign policy allegiance to the United States, while beginning a new immigration policy which would one day see the end of any significant social attachment to the United Kingdom. Colonial defence and trade relations with Britain were the next to fall during the 1950s and 1960s, only to be followed in the succeeding decade by a great number of symbolic and social remnants of the imperial legacy. Also in the 1970s – perhaps encouraged by the 'shining aberration' of Whitlam's new nationalism\textsuperscript{160} – Australia curbed its dependent leanings towards the United States. The stage in Bolton's story was set, then, for an exciting new Australian future.

If Bolton's story of Australia's experience of empire concluded at this point, we have left only to discover how he now perceives Australia's identity in the light of its history and his vision for an Australian future. Like Manning Clark had done towards the end of this career, Bolton has been asking the questions 'who are the Australians', and 'where do we go from here'? He had the opportunity to explore those questions a little when in London between 1982 and 1985. There Bolton was charged with the responsibility of heading the newly formed Australian Studies Centre at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies. The fledgling centre was created partly to raise the profile of Australian Studies in the United Kingdom, in both school and university environments. Moreover, Bolton was particularly keen to see the popular image of Australians as being a 'warm-hearted but uncouth race of larrikins' challenged. 'Without cultural cringe and without unseemly strut,' he recalled later, 'we were presenting Australian scholarship and culture to an increasing audience in the British universities and beyond.'\textsuperscript{161} On his return to Australia, though, Bolton announced that Australians were facing an identity crisis. 'Is there a mainstream Anglo-Australian culture,' he asked, 'with which immigrants and Aborigines should be expected to identify? Or is Australia's cultural identity still in a state of flux?'\textsuperscript{162} Again, like Clark, Bolton believed that Australians were still to answer that

\textsuperscript{160} ibid., p.244.
\textsuperscript{162} Bolton, 'Who Are the Australians?', p.11.
question as the twentieth century drew to a close. Even now he acts as if Australia's identity is still in flux. The visions Bolton contributes to the Australian social debate would, on their own, indicate that he perceives that there is an ongoing process in which he can have a part. As always, though, Bolton's vision for Australia was a moderate one; at the conclusion of the *Oxford History* he suggested that a nation of 'European origins in an Asian neighbourhood could do worse than pursue the Middle Way'.

Among other things, Bolton believes that Australians are (or can be) resourceful and ingenious people. There is an unshakeable faith in the Australian people which emerges from Bolton's historical discourse. In 1992 he took the opportunity in the prestigious Boyer Lectures to encourage the nation to do an 'Australian Stocktaking'. Disappointed by an apparently widespread air of pessimism and doubt, he reminded the country of its strong historical precedent in human capacity and ability. He declared, 'The more one digs into the past, the more one is struck by the ingenuity and resourcefulness of Australians in the face of crisis.' Elsewhere he wrote, 'Australia was a test of the capacity of human material to respond to improved environment and economic opportunity'. Interestingly, Bolton takes heart at the experience of the very ordinary Australians, for he noted that many of the 'heroes' of Australia's history were just ordinary people. The Anzacs, he added, were ordinary miners, barbers, dairymen and the like 'before their moment of glory', and actually 'reverted to domestic ordinariness' at the end of the war. The capacity of 'ordinary Australians' to rise to the challenges facing themselves and their country is indelibly linked to Bolton's understanding of Australian identity. It is something from which he sees great promise for the future, and declared:

'I believe that a considered stocktaking into Australia's past and present would give us grounds, not for thoughtless optimism or strident nationalism, but for a decadent self-confidence in ourselves and in other Australians who don't necessarily share our own religion, politics, ethnic background or gender.'

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165 ibid., p.14.
166 Bolton, 'Who Are the Australians?', p.4.
167 Bolton, 'Legends of Australian Identity', p.49.
168 Bolton, *View from the Edge*, p.2.
Bolton comments little on contemporary Australian identity, but looks instead to its ingredients as they have been added over the centuries. Where he does not advocate a current, ‘quintessential’ Australia, he certainly provides readers with identification of what Australia is not. Above all, Bolton argues, Australia is not a ‘new Britannia’. For whatever reasons the British chose to settle in the Antipodes at the twilight of the eighteenth century, Bolton argues that Australia could never have been a clone of the United Kingdom. He wrote, for example, that the colonies as they were developing in the mid-1850s had a

‘substantial Irish-Catholic element, perhaps 25 per cent of the population, whose Catholicism and strong sense of national identity ensured that Australia could never grow into a second England. The largely working-class Irish-Australians would always push for a separate Australian identity.’¹⁶⁹

Nor would the opportunity for equality with Britain have been available, even if the Australians had wanted it. For although it was settled and administrated by ‘those of their own’, Bolton contended that Australia could ‘never meet the Mother Country on equal terms because its culture was essentially derivative and provincial in the eyes of the British upper classes’.¹⁷⁰

Over time there were additional reasons for Australia’s divergence from the British model. The two primary reasons, in Bolton’s mind, were the reality of Australia’s rapidly developing multiculturalism and its geographical situation on the edge of Southeast Asia. The first factor meant, as has been discussed, that there were increasing proportions of Australia’s society who came from non-British backgrounds. As they gradually became accepted in Australia, their own cultural practices evolved into a legitimate element of Australia’s social and cultural experience. Multiculturalism, then, means that the Britishness in Australia’s identity has been tempered by the contributions from other sources of immigration. In a geographical sense, too, Australia has had to learn to identify itself more readily with its neighbouring regions. Assisted by post-war trade developments, and especially by Britain’s withdrawal from its Commonwealth to enter the EEC, Australia has learnt the value of maintaining effective relationships with

¹⁶⁹ Bolton, ‘Who Are the Australians?’, p.5.
¹⁷⁰ Bolton, View from the Edge, p.37.
the countries of the Pacific and Southeast Asia. Related to that exercise is the necessity to continue in a functional, cooperative manner with the other major regional player – the United States. Australia, according to Geoffrey Bolton, never really had a chance to be a second England of the ‘south seas’, and given the contemporary nature of the country’s social and regional make up, he argues that it ought not ever be:

'It is impossible that Australia should remain the ‘new Britannia’ envisaged by its founders 200 years ago, or even the old Australia of outback tradition. Starting with the Aborigines, the Australian people have become a mixture of British, Irish, European, and Asian origins living in an environment different from any other. Within the last 200 years, and especially in the last fifty, they have begun to create a new culture with enormous potential for combining European background with awareness of Asian neighbours.'  

If Bolton’s Australia is post-colonial, no ‘second England’, and of a genuinely unique identity, what then does he expect of its future? Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, Bolton sees Australia’s future as multicultural. He assures readers that this is not about removing British influences from Australian culture, or about abandoning ‘Australian English’ as the national language. In an interview a short time ago he remarked that Australia's British heritage and influence is ‘entitled’ to be acknowledged in Australian multiculturalism – as are all other ethnic backgrounds which are present now in society. Multiculturalism, he affirms, is not a matter of denying the British background, but of acknowledging the other parts of Australia's make up as well. Tolerance, too, is another key to Bolton’s vision for Australia’s future – tolerance, that is, of ethnic and racial diversity in Australian society. Where some commentators 'such as Blainey and the Chamber of Commerce seemed to think that the national character had been decisively moulded in the nineteenth century, or at least by Gallipoli’, Bolton argues that a change in the conservative perception of Australia’s identity has had to be made. He wrote,

‘Australia's geography, remote from Europe, neighbourly to East and South Asia, left no long-term alternative. Change might be painful but, as the example of South Africa suggested, staying still would be worse.'

171 Bolton, ‘Who Are the Australians?’, p.11.
172 Bolton, View From the Edge, p.45.
Foremost in Bolton's vision for the coming Australia is Aboriginal reconciliation. After two hundred years of white settlement the conflict between European and indigenous Australians, he warns, has never been resolved. By 1981, Bolton's heightened interest in the cause of Aboriginal land rights had been made particularly evident in his chapter in *A New of History Western Australia*;¹⁷⁵ Ten years later, he was to add that because of this 'great unsettled issue', Australia was yet to 'make peace with itself'.¹⁷⁶ Even at the Boyer Lectures he declared that 'Our first priority has to be making satisfactory reparation to the Aboriginal Australians for deprivations they have suffered',¹⁷⁷ and in the same address he listed other pivotal concerns which he believes need to be strong components in Australia's future. Social justice and social welfare are just two of these. A third is the need to advance environmental protection and management. All of these activities, he argues, should be used to set an example for neighbouring countries.¹⁷⁸ Australia's future, Bolton clearly believes, is that of a regional leader.

Foreign relations are obviously of great interest to Bolton in his examination of Australia's progress over the next few decades. While no longer dependent on British advice and instruction, nor does he propose that Australia has to be considered an 'American province'. 'The activities of multinational corporations,' he wrote, 'have increased in Australia during the last twenty-five years, but this is not incompatible with political independence'. Rather, Bolton suggests that of greater concern is that we can exercise so little influence on the American markets.¹⁷⁹ Also of keen interest to him is that Australia should continue to develop stronger links with Southeast Asia. But of all traditional associations, Bolton indicates that relations with our closest neighbours may be the most difficult to readily sustain. While trade with countries such as Japan, China and Indonesia has been steadily on the increase, Bolton reminds readers that Australia must still show a concern for environmental and human rights abuse in the region. He writes, for example,

¹⁷⁷ Bolton, *View from the Edge*, p.58.
¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p.58.
¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*, pp.53-54.
'It has clearly been desirable to remain on good terms with Indonesia, but has this meant that Australia should always be an uncritical neighbour, particularly in the face of Indonesian territorial expansion?'

Despite the difficulties, Bolton argues that it is important to gain the confidence of its regional neighbours and allies.

A republic, too, is arguably on Bolton's agenda for Australia. He recognises that the prospect is not yet without its problems – least of all being the battle over what guise the new constitution would take.

'It's still at present an issue capable of exciting divisions in the Australian community, especially perhaps between a largely loyalist country population and a more indifferent urban majority.'

In his pursuit of the middle way and in a continued effort at reaching consensus, division is the last vice Bolton would wish on the nation. The contentions, he argues, 'must be resolved' in the lifetime of Prince Charles. One way or the other, Bolton accepts that an Australian republic is an inevitable occurrence which will result either from social acceptance at home or from events in Britain which would make a continuation of the monarchy in Australia impossible. As many intellectuals have also argued, Geoffrey Bolton proposes that the Head of State be elected by a majority of the Parliament, perhaps 75 per cent, which would ensure that the candidate would enter the office with the 'respect and prestige of a citizen whose distinction was acknowledged by both major political groupings'. He suggests that a change of flag would be appropriate, especially if it assists in the Aboriginal reconciliation process. But rather than adopting an alien creation as the new national standard, he proposes only to remove the Union Jack and retain the Southern Cross as it is illustrated presently. As he says, the remaining portion of the flag has served Australia well for 90 years, and 'has far more claim on our sentiments than any of the ingenious alternatives recently devised by amateur heralds'.

Post-colonial Australia, according to Geoffrey Bolton, is unique. Having, to all intents and purposes, ended the imperial relationship with Great Britain in the 1970s,
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Australia has moved steadily towards its own future as a multicultural nation with European origins resting on the outskirts of Asia. It continues to maintain friendly relations with the United Kingdom and has concurrently developed a positive alliance with the United States over the last fifty years. At the same time, the importance of Australia's relations with its regional neighbours has been recognised, and the coming decades will see the development and maturity of those associations. As Australia moves towards a republic, he believes that the country must seize the opportunity to formulate and communicate a "distinct and authentic image of itself", to its neighbours and to itself.186

Bolton's scholarship has been a journey encountering issues such as Aboriginality, gender, the environment and national identity. Each of these issues had a starting point in Bolton's consciousness - some as early as in his analysis of Alexander Forrest in the 1950s. Arguably he is concluding these journeys in a very different position to where he began them. And with all these issues, Geoffrey Bolton chose to walk the middle way.

Bolton's journey in Australian history has been one which searched from Australia's origins in empire to its post-colonial decades of republican potential. Australia's experience of empire in his story started in 1788 and finished in the 1970s, although the scope this left for his comment on the post-colonial period, and the potential of the future, was vast. Bolton is not known as a great empire historian - not in the same manner, say, as Nicholas Mansergh and Keith Hancock. But he is a great Australian historian. Geoffrey Bolton recognises the negative and positive truths of Australia's past and accepts it for what it is. He also has a keen appreciation for Australia's contemporary reality, and the elements which exist as part of its national identity. Perhaps more importantly, though, is that Bolton has a vision for Australia's destiny, and that he clearly believes in the capacity of Australians. His scholastic integrity, his search for historical truth, his quiet but certain acceptance of the Australian people, and his anticipation of their future, warrants his recognition as one of the nation's foremost writers and visionaries.

186 ibid., p.57.
Chapter Three

W.J. Hudson

Empire to Independence

W.J. Hudson remains today among the foremost historians of Australia's foreign policy. Formerly a journalist, an aspirant for the Catholic priesthood and lecturer in history at the University of New South Wales, Hudson crowned his career as the long standing Editor of Historical Documents at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade between 1975 and 1996. Hudson had already demonstrated a marked interest in the history of Australia's diplomacy well before his appointment to the federal department responsible for its implementation. In 1967, for example, he launched the book *Towards a Foreign Policy* while teaching at the University of New South Wales.1 Similar discussions came later with the publications of *Billy Hughes in Paris* in 1976, *Australia and the League of Nations* four years later, and the absorbing biography of Richard Gardiner Casey in 1986.2 After his appointment to the public service, though, Hudson's career also involved a number of other duties, including the overseeing and editing of the *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy* series and the collating of the 1920s correspondence records between Stanley Melbourne Bruce and his agents in London, Richard Casey and Frank McDougall.3

Despite the frequency of Hudson's publications since 1967, his historiography has remained surprisingly consistent. There are some historians who have explored a substantial variety of historical genres, subjects and themes in their life times. Geoffrey Bolton, as we discussed in the previous chapter, published an eclectic collection of work, traversing biographies of Alexander Forrest and Edmund Barton, Imperial and

Commonwealth history, general Australian history and a ‘micro-analysis’ of Daphne Street in North Perth. Hudson, on the other hand, has maintained a prevailing interest in the history of Australian diplomacy in all of his Departmental and other publications, with a particular interest in the relations between Australia and Great Britain in the years from Federation in 1901 to the Suez Crisis in 1956. We will not separate his work as a ‘government’ or ‘private’ historian, which was a distinction he made himself while speaking to conference delegates in Canberra in 1986. Instead, our assessment of Hudson's perception of Australia's experience under empire will canvas the broad range of the material he has produced in his career as one of Australia's most prolific historians.

Where Geoffrey Blainey's assessment of Australia and empire centred around such issues as the material development of white Australia and the impact of colonialism on the indigenous people, and Geoffrey Bolton's story focused on the broader issues in the Anglo-Australian relationship such as shared cultural, social, political, commercial and defence interests, W.J. Hudson has mostly concentrated on the imperial association between Australia and Britain at a political and constitutional level. This, of course, has been largely influenced by the nature of diplomacy and international relations. Likewise, Hudson’s history has been particularly masculine; few women have made it into the pages of his stories, and it appears that Hudson has not even questioned such an oversight. Instead, his perception of Australia's identity and its independence has been defined almost exclusively by its position in the Anglo-Australian relationship. So while Hudson has not only a very acute awareness of Australia's experience under empire, he has also characterised much of its history and identity by that very encounter. Much of the discussion which follows will aim to determine precisely how he has interpreted the story of Australia and Britain in the twentieth century, and how he has defined Australia's identity in that process. Unlike our other historians, Hudson has also specifically

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5 Hudson is not alone in his lack of attention to women in Australia's history, although his oversight is obscured some what by the masculinist nature of international relations. Nonetheless, Hudson has been particularly remiss on occasions such as his biography of Lord Casey, where far more 'agency' could have been given to Casey's wife, Maie. For more information on Maie Casey, and on her role in her
explored the issue of Australian sovereignty, which he discussed at length with his colleague, Michael Sharp, in their 1988 book *Australian Independence: Colony to Reluctant Kingdom*. Accordingly, this will become a significant theme in this discussion as Hudson's story of Australia's experience under the British Empire is examined.

Significantly, Hudson recognised that Australia's experience of empire stretched further than its relations with Great Britain. Between 1971 and 1975, the historian published three books on Australia's colonial enterprise in Papua New Guinea. In each of these books Hudson suggested that Australians rarely saw themselves as imperialists or colonialists. 'Imperialism', he reasoned, conjured up images of the British Raj in India or the French Foreign Legion in Africa. In fact, Hudson added, a notable feature of Australia's experience of imperialism was the disinclination of Australians to 'accept a part in it except in respect to a period when they themselves were the dependents'. Nonetheless, the colonial atmosphere in Papua New Guinea was still apparent during Australia's administration of the territory. Hudson's work on Australia's relations with Papua New Guinea was important, given the relative scarcity of academic attention which the relationship had received previously and, particularly, because of the country's impending independence from Australia's administration and foreign policy. It will not, though, form a major component of the discussion in this chapter. Instead, given the themes established in previous chapters and because of restrictions in space, our focus will remain predominantly on Hudson's discussion of Australia's imperial relations with Great Britain.

Some clarification is required of the time period which Hudson has addressed in his historiography, and therefore the period of Anglo-Australian relations which will be

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under review in this chapter. It would be misleading to suggest that Hudson has covered the whole of Australia's twentieth century foreign policy history, for the more recent decades of our time have mostly escaped his attention. The 1960s were discussed to a certain degree in his biography of Lord Casey, but this was mainly in the context of Casey's time as the Australian Governor-General. The social confusion in Australia in that period over the changing role and nature of the British Commonwealth was also explored a little in the same biography, but, again, was limited and was not further addressed elsewhere. The 1970s did claim some of Hudson's attention. This, though, was either in relation to Australia and Papua New Guinea or as editor of the fifth volume of the Australian Institute of International Affairs' series, *Australia in World Affairs*.\(^{10}\) Later Hudson was to make some comment on the prospect of an Australian republic at the end of the twentieth century, but, again, he made little or no comment on the history of the recent decades to that point.

Hudson's primary period of analysis in the twentieth century is, therefore, that between Australian Federation and the Suez Crisis in 1956. Like Bolton, Hudson has progressed mostly chronologically through those decades over the course of his professional research. Hudson's first publication, *Towards a Foreign Policy, 1914 - 1941*, collected a series of papers and documents on the development of Australian foreign policy from World War One to the onset of World War Two. Shortly thereafter he began writing on Australia's participation in the fledgling League of Nations, the story of Billy Hughes and his efforts in international relations, and Australia's early claims for administration in New Guinea. *Australia and the League of Nations* was based on research conducted in Geneva while on a post-doctoral travelling fellowship granted by the Australian National University in the late 1960s.\(^{11}\) When in 1986 he published the biography of Casey he had moved further on in time, examining Anglo-Australian relations and politics between the 1920s and 1960s. Only his publication with Sharp escaped this pattern, jumping back to Federation and examining Australia's constitutional relations with Great Britain until the 1940s. Finally, his pivotal book *Blind Loyalty:*

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\(^{10}\) W.J. Hudson (ed.), *Australia in World Affairs, 1971-75*, George Allen & Unwin in association with the AIIA, North Sydney, 1980.
Australia and the Suez Crisis, ended Hudson's historical examination of Australian diplomacy with his discussion of Australia's misjudged allegiances to the United Kingdom during the dramatic events in the Middle East.

The major theme in Hudson's historiography is the struggle Australia faced in defining its identity and interests in the context of its dynamic and turbulent relationship with the United Kingdom. As we have already noted, his analysis of this relationship concentrated mostly on the official and political levels, although some attention was given to the underlying infrastructure of cultural, social and economic ties between the two countries. Several important issues were then explored in the discussion of this theme, including matters of Australian Britishness and the conflicting process of Australia's independence from the United Kingdom. The practical ramifications of these two issues resulted in the third, which was the conflicting loyalties of Australians as their association with Great Britain changed and fragmented over time. 'Conflicting loyalties', it could be said, was the real story of the Anglo-Australian relationship in Hudson's histories.

It was a tumultuous and emotional challenge to Australia's identity until the 1960s as the conflict rose in the clash between nationalism and residual imperial loyalties in Australia. Such conflict, of course, was inevitable as the polarised loyalties were played off each other. Hudson argued that Australian Britishness initially co-existed quite comfortably with Australian nationalism. As growing separatist forces emerged in Australia, though, and as its leaders were becoming increasingly aware of their diverging national interests to those of the United Kingdom, this marriage between the two interests became more and more destabilised. When British leaders began to forcefully abdicate their traditional ties and responsibilities to Australia and the rest of the Commonwealth, Australian nationalism and imperial fealty were rendered fundamentally incompatible.

The concept of identity is certainly particularly complex. If one's identity can be distinguished by one's comparison or status against an 'other', then Australia's identity in Hudson's story was defined almost completely by its status and relationship to the United Kingdom. Arguably, though, where identity is defined by relationship to another it will rarely remain a static interpretation. Instead, it must always evolve in accordance with the

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changing nature of that naturally dynamic relationship. Nor would the concept of this identity necessarily be the same for every observer, for each person is likely to interpret issues of relationship, identity and belonging with different perspectives. In Hudson's case, Australia's pivotal relationship with the United Kingdom over the twentieth century was so characterised by a traumatic conflict of loyalties that it made Australia's identity difficult to define at any time by Australian or international observers. Hudson's work, then, is largely about achieving some understanding of the actual state of the Anglo-Australian relationship as it progressed in the twentieth century, and by that means achieving some understanding of Australia's identity as it also evolved in that time.

To explore Hudson's themes of identity, Australian Britishness, Australian independence and conflicting Australian loyalties in the Anglo-Australian relationship, analysis of his work will be conducted on a roughly chronological basis over the historical period which he investigated. As with our other historians, we will find that his story of Australia has a beginning and end point. It started in the 1920s, as Australia remained tied to the imperial apron strings of Great Britain, particularly in its efforts in diplomacy and international relations. Little changed in the loyalty of Australia to Britain in Hudson's story as the decades passed, and the historian clearly demonstrated the abiding loyalty to and dependence on Britain which persisted in Australia in the years before and after the passing of the Statute of Westminster. Despite the persevering ties to Great Britain, though, Hudson argued that Britain itself relinquished many of the imperial ties at that time, so that Australia was left by 1931 with an unwanted independence. So unwelcome was this, in fact, that the Australian government declined to ratify the Statute of Westminster in federal parliament until over a decade later. Moreover, its enduring emotional ties to the United Kingdom continued well into the 1950s, and were demonstrated clearly when Australia sided with Britain and France over Suez.

Australia's journey through empire was then, according to Hudson, one of conflicting loyalties while on a reluctant road towards independence. If anything changed in Australia's relationship with Britain in that time, Hudson reasoned that it was rarely of Australia's choice. Hudson's journey, on the other hand, was a more conscious effort. Raised in the Catholic community of Tasmania, he had been educated in a religious
school which was understandably sensitive to the effects and motivations of British imperialism. In assessing the Anglo-Australian association in his early historical research, Hudson looked to the impact of that relationship on Australia's identity and self-confidence in foreign affairs, writing a little critically of both the Australians and British in this context. Much later, after completing the biography of Casey, Hudson grew to accept the Britishness of his society and of his family background. When exploring Australia's agonising road to independence and its conflicting loyalties in the ashes of empire, Hudson was remarkably sympathetic to the characters involved and to the time frame in which it was worked. Perhaps a little to his own surprise, the historian mused in 1997 that by the end of his career he had in fact become more sympathetic to the empire and its values than he had been in his earlier years.

It was the battle in surrendering Australia's Britishness and loyalty to the empire which made Hudson's story of Australia's independence such a volatile and tumultuous journey. Again, his hypotheses were based on mostly constitutional issues, and his suggested date of Australian independence was arrived at by a process of elimination. Initially identifying the four levels of executive, legislative, diplomatic and judicial dependency which Australia maintained on the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century, Hudson argued that independence was won when all of these conditions had been passed into the control of the Australian government. Firstly, he established his premise for his discussion of national independence:

'States may enjoy varying degrees of self-government but their freedom to separately form and implement foreign policies, to pursue national interests in competition or harmony with other nation states, to make war or peace, to enter into alliances or to remain aloof, to sign treaties or to join organizations of states, are distinguishing marks of independent states - as independent, anyway, as the realities of power distribution permit. Some states achieve this status in a very clear way and at a proclaimed time, whether by constitutional acts of departing colonial powers or by international conference decisions. Australia, on the other hand, developed politically within the context of membership of the British Empire and the Commonwealth, institutions which themselves evolved in curiously irregular and imprecise ways.'

Hudson's thesis, as we shall see, was that diplomatic independence was won first in

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12 W.J. Hudson, Interview with Author, Canberra, 17 July 1997.
13 ibid.
1923, followed by executive independence in 1926 and legislative autonomy in 1931. His case is not sufficiently convincing that judicial sovereignty had also been won by this time, but he concludes nevertheless that Australian independence was achieved with the passing of the Statute of Westminster in 1931. The issue of Australia’s emotional dependence or ties to Great Britain is also raised, and is explored particularly in *Blind Loyalty* and *Casey*. But these, he considered, were superficial conditions which bore no practical ramifications on the constitutional matter of national sovereignty. In the discussion which follows, we will therefore explore Hudson’s thesis on Australia’s independence, as well as his perception of Australia’s Britishness, identity and loyalties as it participated in the changing fortunes of the British Empire in the twentieth century.

Until now, the life and work of W.J. Hudson has largely evaded the scrutiny of the historical profession. This, perhaps, is partly because of the uniquely ‘specialist’ work in which he was involved for most of his professional life. Blainey, Bolton and Clark have all participated in a much broader genre of Australian history, which has arguably increased their profile among their peers and in the eyes of the Australian public. The subject of diplomatic and political history, though, has not had the universal attention given to broader, cultural and social analyses of Australia’s past. Even the more particular studies of gender and race in Australia’s history have received far more interest than that of its international relations, particularly since the increased Australian social introspection of the Bicentennial decade. In many ways this is disappointing, for it has almost certainly diminished the popular awareness of the work of historians such as W.J. Hudson, Peter Edwards, Greg Pemberton and David Lee.

William James Hudson was born in Hobart in 1932 and continued to live in Tasmania until he was fourteen. His Protestant father was from a Yorkshire family, a fact which apparently troubled his son who was raised within the Catholic community in accordance with his mother’s religion. In an interview in 1997, Hudson recalled that Tasmania shared a smaller Irish Catholic population than other Australian states, and that he was particularly aware at the time that he and his family were part of a minority interest group. Despite the Catholicism of his background, though, Hudson never claimed to
share Geoffrey Blainey's peculiarly Australian consciousness in childhood. Rather, in his younger years, Hudson remembered being very aware that there 'was still a lot of red on the map', which in turn meant that there were many places in the world 'where one could feel at home if need be'. Certainly the young historian was already conscious of the effects of migration within the empire; his family had long been miners in England before settling in Tasmania, which in all meant that the Hudsons didn't consider themselves as 'just Australians'. Likewise, he argued, many people in the 1930s and 1940s were also 'unselfconsciously Australian'. In many instances, the local identity was often stronger than the Australian identity, and he reasoned that 'One's Britishness and one's Australianness was taken for granted'.

Nonetheless, Hudson's affinity with Great Britain or his Britishness was not perhaps as marked as either Clark's or Bolton's in their adolescence. One of the virtues, he mused, of a Catholic upbringing in his time was that it was not as entirely British as would have been fostered in the anglocentric Australian grammar schools. In the Catholic education system, children were made more conscious than their Protestant counterparts of Catholic countries outside of the empire. Not that British history was totally ignored in the Catholic syllabus. Rather, Hudson argued, Catholic educators retained a strong interest in British history, and particularly in the events of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. In the Catholic's mind, he added, the medieval era was the best part of Britain's history.

In the early 1950s Hudson enrolled as an undergraduate student at the University of Queensland. The general orthodoxy of the academic environment at this time, he considered, accepted that Australians were co-participants in British culture. The educated person, then, was expected to study British art, history and literature, although it was agreed that there was an Australian 'offshoot' or component to that story. Australians, he added, 'were Britons by definition, and therefore their history was our history. We were merely subjects of the king living overseas.' Consequently, when Hudson completed his history degree in Queensland, there had been only one half unit of

16 ibid.
Australian history available to students, and only Hancock's *Australia* available for reference or, at best, the relevant volume of the *Cambridge History of the British Empire*. In Victoria, he thought, history at university by this time was more readily Australian, although his school matriculation studies were dominated by European and British history still. But then, as he conceded, British history was 'not regarded as foreign or overseas history', and an Australian component to the course could have always been added.\(^{18}\)

Hudson's road to an academic career in history was not perhaps as straightforward as may have been expected. After completing his Honours degree in history in December 1955, Hudson took up a position with the Brisbane *Courier Mail*. Disappointed with life as a journalist, he returned to Victoria in 1960. There his interest in becoming a monk lasted barely six months, and within two years he had enrolled in a Masters course in the Department of History at the University of Melbourne. Initially, Hudson had hoped to write a biography of Keith Murdoch. Max Crawford, though, was then head of the Department and directed him instead to the Department of Political Science, not being convinced that Murdoch's death had occurred long enough ago to make his life's story 'history'. Perhaps a little surprised, Hudson instead completed a sociological study of journalism under the guidance of William MacMahon Ball. Moving to the Australian National University in 1963, he began a PhD thesis in International Relations and soon after began lecturing in history at the University of New South Wales.\(^{19}\) There, as noted, he began his first work in the history of Australia's diplomacy and his story of Australia and empire had begun.

Federation in 1901 was not designed to bring and did not achieve sovereignty for the new Commonwealth of Australia. Instead, Hudson explained, the main achievement of Federation was the new potential for the whole Australian continent to be united as an independent, republican nation at a later date. Most historians would happily agree that Australia's relationship with Great Britain remained mostly unchanged when the Commonwealth of Australia's constitution was passed by the Imperial Parliament.

\(^{17}\) *ibid.*

\(^{18}\) *ibid.*
Geoffrey Blainey came close to suggesting Australia had won independence at Federation, as we noted earlier, but he provided no persuasive evidence or discussion to support those claims. Mark McKenna, of course, has since discussed the prospects of Australia's independence after 1901 fairly exhaustively in *The Captive Republic*, but prior to that Hudson probably offered the most comprehensive discussion of the events in Australia at that time, as well as of their impact on the Anglo-Australian relationship.

Australia's federalist pioneers moved quickly to quash suggestions of increased Australian independence in the proposed federal constitution, Hudson noted. So when concerns were raised across the colonies that unification may endanger the stability of the imperial relationship, Alfred Deakin was one who rushed to assure anxious observers otherwise. Speaking to delegates at one of the constitutional conventions, he noted that there was 'no pretence of claiming the power of peace or war, or exercising power outside our own territories' in the proposed constitution. Those powers of 'external affairs' which were mentioned in the legislation were dismissed as merely the right which the federation would have over the states to communication with London regarding matters of national interest. When Queen Victoria was surprised at the choice of the title 'Commonwealth', she, in turn, was assured that it was certainly not meant to carry separatist or independent overtones, but that it was rather designed to reflect the spirit of cooperation between the new Australian states. John Forrest, too, had already objected to the term 'Commonwealth', saying that 'if we were founding an independent nation ... it might be a very appropriate term.... That, however, is not the case.'

Hudson conceded, though, that the federation fathers were far from opposed to increased or full Australian independence in the future. Rather, he suggested, a great many of them were fully expectant that Australia would inevitably seek its independence from the United Kingdom. Writing with Sharp in 1988 he noted that:

'most of them seem to have anticipated eventual independence for a federated Australia and to have seen federation as beneficial precisely

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19 *ibid.* 
20 Hudson, *Casey*, p.56. 
21 Hudson and Sharp, *Australian Independence*, p.27. 
22 *ibid.*, p.27.
because it would allow the future emergence of a single Australian, or even Australasian, nation state rather than half a dozen small nation states.\textsuperscript{123}

It appears, also, that British leaders of the late nineteenth century were expecting Australian independence to come sooner or later, and were prepared to let the antipodean colonies go down that path if they so chose.\textsuperscript{24} The leaders of the new federation, nonetheless, were not in a hurry to anticipate Australia’s separation from Britain, and were prepared to maintain the association in order to safeguard the greater benefits afforded by Empire membership. ‘Men like Deakin, Clark and Griffith,’ Hudson wrote, ‘were nationalists but not of the exclusive kind, and their most extreme aspirations were never divorced from assumptions of continuing colonial status.’\textsuperscript{25}

It was in this spirit, Hudson argued, that the new Australian constitution maintained the same dependency on the United Kingdom which the colonies in the nineteenth century had endured.\textsuperscript{26} There were a number of manifestations of this dependency which he identified, the first being of a legislative nature. Although the Australian colonies had each been granted their respective self-government in the previous decades, Hudson argued that such self-rule was at best ‘shared’ with the Imperial Parliament.\textsuperscript{27} Certainly he considered that the colonial governments were merely ‘creatures of the parliament at Westminster, and [that] there were substantial restrictions on their freedom’. \textsuperscript{28} And where the British Parliament may have had substantial authority within the Australian colonies, the colonists certainly had no means of representation in that institution. Hudson reminded his readers of the conditions passed in Britain’s 1865 Colonial Laws Validity Act. Under this legislation, he noted, the power of Australian parliaments to enact their own laws was restricted by the requirement for some legislation to be reserved for the express consent or approval of the British Parliament. Moreover, Australian parliaments were forbidden in the first place to make legislation which was ‘repugnant’ to any existing British legislation in effect within the colonies. Britain, too, had the power under the same Act to annul any Australian

\textsuperscript{23} ibid., p.26.
\textsuperscript{24} ibid., p.22.
\textsuperscript{25} ibid., p.21.
\textsuperscript{26} ibid., p.27.
\textsuperscript{27} ibid., p.28.
\textsuperscript{28} ibid., p.23.

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legislation it considered contrary to British or imperial interests.

When the colonies federated and adopted a national parliament this, too, remained directed by the Colonial Laws Validity Act. Of course, it was a rare occasion when the British government repealed or annulled any Australian legislation after its federation. But the fact remained, Hudson argued, that the United Kingdom's powers in Australia's legislative process were not diminished merely because they were infrequently applied. Instead, he added, well into the twentieth century, 'Westminster had a power which the colonial parliaments did not have, and they did not have it because Westminster did not choose to give it to them'. Furthermore, one of the direct ramifications of the legislative restrictions on the Australian parliament was the prohibition of its government to practice its own foreign policy. So in both its power to legislate for its constituents and in its diplomacy, the Australian government remained restricted in its first decades by the legacy of colonial conditions from the nineteenth century imperial relationship.

Judicial subservience, the next level of Australian dependence on the United Kingdom, remained after federation very clearly in the guise of Privy Council appeals. Hudson argued that Britain's insistence to retain Australian appeals to the Privy Council was one method by which its government endeavoured to prevent growing Australian autonomy, as well as to protect the interests of its government and other United Kingdom investors. The appeals, he argued, were a very public demonstration of Australia's dependence on a 'superior' British judiciary, reflecting unfairly on the 'calibre of colonial benches, especially as Anglophiles in the colonies saw Privy Council decisions as less likely than colonial court decisions to be affected by local controversy'. The fact that London was able to involve itself at all in the internal affairs between Australia's state and federal bodies meant by any definition that Australia was not a fully sovereign nation.

Executive subservience to the United Kingdom was the third tier of dependence which Hudson particularly recognised. This was perpetuated by the restrictions on the governor-general, who then operated in Australia as the agent of the British government

28 ibid., p.12.
29 ibid., pp.13, 14.
30 ibid., pp.30, 14.
31 ibid., p.14.
as well as its monarch. Under the colonial system in the nineteenth century, wrote Hudson, governors were not permitted direct access to either the Imperial government or to the sovereign. They were, instead, only allowed communication to Britain through the Colonial Office. Furthermore, governors could be removed from their position only by London and not at the instigation of the colonial governments. In 1901, these restrictions were also applied to the new governor-general, meaning that the officer was denied direct access to the British government and the sovereign, and that he or she was still to act only as the agent of British interests in Australia. Furthermore, the Australian government was allowed no direct communication with its British counterpart, being restricted to communicating through the already restricted governor-general. So, Hudson concluded, at federation Australia most certainly retained three very definite levels of dependence on Britain, as well as the restriction on its foreign policy practice:

‘In executive, legislative, judicial and external affairs terms, then, the federation came into existence on 1 January 1901 with the forms of dependency which had marked the colonies before federation..... if they had wanted independence they would have been disappointed. They did not want independence. They wanted a colonial federation under a United Kingdom crown advised by United Kingdom ministers and given force by a United Kingdom act of parliament, and they could have that only at the price of some continuing United Kingdom control in the United Kingdom interest.’

There were many and varied reasons for the continuing Australian dependence on the United Kingdom, wrote Hudson, but they resulted largely from the continuing sense of Britishness within the Australian population. Even Australians who had never stepped foot on the ‘hallowed’ shores of Great Britain, he wrote, considered themselves British, carried British passports, had the same national anthem and shared a common social and political structure with their British cousins. Certainly those migrants from the United Kingdom arriving in Australia after Federation continued to believe that they were merely moving from one British territory to another, while local Australian institutions such as churches and universities maintained their custom of recruiting staff directly from Great Britain. In fact, Hudson added, Australian loyalties to local districts, states and the empire were merely augmented at Federation by another layer — loyalty to the

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32 *ibid.*, p.11.
33 *ibid.*, p.33.
Commonwealth. So, he thought:

‘Just as a man now can be fervently loyal to Carlton, Melbourne, Victoria and Australia, so his grandfathers found no necessary conflict in being aggressively Australian and boastfully British, even if often convinced that Australian Britons were rather superior to English Britons.’34

Australians’ identity at Federation was subsumed in their Britishness, just as their Britishness was sufficiently subsumed in their Australianness to allow some degree of an individual Australian identity.35 Moreover, this sense of Britishness was further encouraged by the ‘familial’ ties between all (white) members of the British Empire; relations between Great Britain and all its dominions were, Hudson considered, as though between members of one family.36

‘There might be arguments, over trade or not, but from the Australian viewpoint these were family arguments: Britain was not just another overseas country; Britain was not just Australia’s best customer and main supplier; Britain was not just Australia’s security guarantor. Britain was not a foreign country.’37

If ever it had been suggested that Australia’s independence was won with Federation, Hudson argued that this was clearly not so. Instead, he wrote forcefully that:

‘The propagandists of federation at the time, and its celebrators since, revelled in the word nation.... In fact, of course, there was in 1901 no such thing as an Australian nation. Even when ... an independent Australian nation came into existence in 1931, it remained largely a British nation, and only towards the end of the twentieth century is an Australian nation perhaps in a foetal stage as more diverse sources of immigration and separation from the United Kingdom have an effect. In 1901 there was, if anything, a British nation spread across the United Kingdom, parts of North America and southern Africa and in the antipodes.’38

Federation, according to Hudson, achieved only a seventh government in Australia and served to facilitate easier administration of the dominion by London.39 Most importantly, however, federation removed the possibility of the development of multiple nation states in the antipodean continent in, say, Latin American fashion.40 Instead, it created the potential for a future independent Australian nation-state.41

35 ibid., p.12.
37 Hudson, Casey, p.103.
38 Hudson and Sharp, Australian Independence, p.25.
40 ibid., p.10.
By the time Australia had entered the battlefields of the Great War, the Australian sense of Britishness was, if anything, on the increase as imperialist loyalties were fanned by the propaganda of Australian and Imperial policy makers. Ironically, Australian nationalism was also being nurtured in the war time environment after Australia had emerged as an international actor in its own right. In this light, Hudson identified the war years and those following in the Versailles negotiations as the occasion when Australia first became conscious of its changing relationship with the United Kingdom and, particularly, of its diverging national interests and the need to protect them. So it was at this point, we are told, that Australia's nationalist pride and its imperial loyalties began to polarise. In fact, Hudson argued, as social and political confusion increased when the recognition of Australia's changing interests became more apparent, its relations with the United Kingdom were increasingly characterised by swings between abrasive and subservient behaviour. Hence tense moments were witnessed between Billy Hughes and the British War Cabinet on his visits to London in 1915 and 1917. The Australian government was torn between the benefits of empire membership and the dawning realisation that London was largely indifferent to the needs of the dominions, and this tension year only increased as Australia's contribution to the war effort mounted year by year.

In the years preceding the war, Hudson wrote, some conflicting attitudes to the dynamics of the empire within the Australian government had already surfaced:

'If there were to be an Empire, and Australia herself saw no viable alternative in security terms, then it must be an empire with military and diplomatic unity centred on London. Fearful that their central interests were, for London, distant and marginal interests, and that Australian fear of Japan was not accorded the same priority as British fear of Germany, Australian governments in the pre-1914 period leaned at times towards separatism (seen, for example, in their desire for an Australian navy) but in the main sought to convert London to a less Anglo-centric view of empire.'

But when Australian entered the war he noted it was in an atmosphere of high imperial rhetoric, espousing the equality of the white dominions. In 1905, Hudson recalled,

41 Hudson and Sharp, Australian Independence, p.36.
43 ibid., p.9.
44 Hudson, Billy Hughes in Paris, p.xii.
Joseph Chamberlain had called them all 'sister states', inferring that there was 'some sort of parity between them'. Similarly, Australia's Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, had referred to the British 'family of nations' at the 1911 Imperial Conference, and his British counterpart, Henry Asquith, had announced that Britain and the dominions were each 'masters in our own house'. Once at war, South Africa's President Smuts referred to a 'system of states' which Hughes termed a 'League of Free Nations'. The Canadian Prime Minister went further, calling them an 'Imperial Commonwealth of United Nations', while New Zealand's Prime Minister, W.F. Massey, also believed the nations of the empire were on 'equal terms'. Hudson, though, disagreed with the empire leaders who so unanimously identified equality among the white dominions. Their enthusiasm, he added, was merely 'flatulent rhetoric', for 'of course, these were not states on equal terms: law, custom and power gave one of them, the United Kingdom, pre-eminence'. The United Kingdom, after all, still exercised complete control over empire foreign policy during the Great War, still forcefully resisted the dominions' inclusion in policy making and still had legislative, executive and judicial authority in the internal administration of the dominions.

Hudson considered, then, that Fisher's Labor government sent Australia's troops to war in 1914 for a number of reasons. Imperial nationalism was a very strong factor, given that Australians were still subsumed sufficiently in Britishness to feel compelled to run to the aid of 'family' who were in grave peril. J.D.B. Miller, he recalled, had suggested that the war effort 'was intensely personal because the Australian soldiers ... were widely regarded as providing, not protection for British interests, but the special Australian contribution to the British family effort'. Yet national interests were also an important motivation for Australia's participation in World War One. Australia's leaders recognised that the security of their country rested entirely on the capability of Britain's defence of the region, and that Australia would be left prey to ambitious European powers in the Pacific if the United Kingdom fell to Germany in the northern hemisphere. So, Hudson summarised with Sharp, all Australian governments before 1914 had:

45 Hudson, Towards a Foreign Policy, p.1.
46 Hudson, Blind Loyalty, p.8; Hudson, Towards a Foreign Policy, p.1.
Deborah Gare

allowed no doubt that, if the empire went to war, Australia would go to war. Moreover, while the patriotic and imperialist rhetoric of 1914 might grate on a 1980s ear, and while, undoubtedly, there was a quid pro quo element in the Australian official thinking (Australian support for the United Kingdom, it was hoped, made more likely United Kingdom support for Australia in time of need), it was accepted that Australia had her own reasons for joining in this particular war. 48

No-one in this period personified the concurrent extremes of intense imperial patriotism and the aggressive Australian nationalism of the day as did Billy Hughes. Of Welsh birth, he was the prime minister of Australia as leader of the Australian Labor Party from 1915 to 1916 and then as leader of the breakaway Nationalist Party from 1916 to 1923. Hudson described in his account of the prime minister's diplomacy during the war and at Versailles the paradoxical loyalties engulfing Hughes; they happened also to be the same as those characterising the wider Australian society of the day. So, Hudson wrote, his 'left-wing' sympathies meant that Hughes was more sentimentally imperialist than most, but when edging to the 'right' he was also a 'nationalist as impatient of British as of foreign opposition'. 49 It was Hughes' turbulent relationship with Britain's leaders, his aggressive and brash manner in the defence of Australia's interests before the international community, and his simultaneous defence of empire which Hudson used to demonstrate the condition of the Anglo-Australian relationship at this time.

Billy Hughes spent a great proportion of the war years in London in a bid to represent Australia on the Imperial War Cabinet, and later in the post-war international negotiations. At Versailles he was a proud supporter of empire in the face of the international community, and despite his many difficulties with Britain's Prime Minister, David Lloyd-George, Hudson considered that Hughes helped foster a remarkably united front to the British Empire delegation. 50 Hughes, he added, never questioned the value of the empire to Australia, appreciating the importance of its military and defence agreements, the expectation of its commercial and trade benefits as well as the anticipation of increased consultation with the dominions on the formulation of empire foreign

47 Hudson, Towards a Foreign Policy, p.8.
48 Hudson and Sharp, Australian Independence, p.49.
49 ibid., p.2.
50 Hudson, Towards a Foreign Policy, p.68.
policy. In the negotiations surrounding the establishment of the League of Nations, Hudson noted that Hughes sought only to ensure that 'the British Empire occupied a place corresponding to its sacrifices in the war and its position in the world'. At home, the volatile Prime Minister encouraged imperialist sentiment during the conscription debates of 1916 and 1917, attempting at this time to associate Australian patriotism inextricably with loyalty to empire and making 'pro-British sentiment a litmus test for orthodoxy'.

It was in this period that Hudson considered changes in the imperial system had been made and that the first real steps towards Australia's independence were taken. While Australians still felt a keen sense of loyalty to the British Empire, he argued, there were increasingly frequent confrontations between Australian and British leaders over the appreciation of Australia's interests. Hughes was in London with two platforms in mind, we are told: one to promote the benefit of the empire and the other to ensure that the interests of Australia in the plans for war and peace were represented. In effect, Hudson testified, Hughes was operating both as an imperialist and as an Australian nationalist at the same time.

Other indicators were identified by Hudson which also alluded to a growing sense of Australia's national identity in this period. Speculation of an imperial federation, he wrote, had Hughes and his colleagues rebuking the United Kingdom and the other dominions for fear that the little autonomy Australia had gained may be sacrificed. More importantly, Hudson added, Australia had gained sufficient cognition of its own identity to make submergence into a greater imperial entity 'unattractive'. The biggest issue, though, for Australia and the other dominions at this time, was their demand for greater consultation in the empire's defence and foreign policy by the United Kingdom. These calls had grown as differences in the interests of the dominions from Britain were recognised and as national identities grew in strength. Hughes, for example, was

51 ibid., p.69.
52 Hudson, Australia and the League of Nations, p.22.
53 Hudson and Sharp, Australian Independence, p.56.
54 Hudson, Billy Hughes in Paris, p.5.
55 Hudson and Sharp, Australian Independence, p.54.
56 Hudson, Australia and the League of Nations, p.11.
formidable in his campaign to receive the greatest return possible from the peace negotiations in return for Australia's 'blood price' in World War One. All dominions, though, argued that their participation in the war warranted a more "active and independent part in the foreign relations of the Empire, political as well as commercial".

The British government, on the other hand, was extremely reluctant to increase participation in the foreign policy process. Fred Alexander, Hudson noted, had already claimed that "it seems clear that, from pre-war years to the present day, the Foreign Office has been fighting a steady rearguard action against admission of the Dominions to the inner citadel of British foreign policy". Certainly numerous guarantees had been delivered by the British authorities during the war and after to ensure greater consultation with the dominions on foreign policy, but time and again the Imperial government had implemented policy or completed international agreements without prior discussion with Australia or the other empire members. Hughes and his dominion counterparts were enraged on these occasions. In fact, the prime minister's fury was 'immense', Hudson alleged, when it was revealed in August 1918 that Lloyd-George had agreed to an armistice based on President Woodrow Wilson's 'fourteen point plan', and his peers in London were equally 'appalled by the British Government's 'inexcusable and damnable behaviour}'. A little earlier Hughes had announced to the War Cabinet in London that:

'we came into this war because we were part of the Empire ... but of course you may get us into a war tomorrow which we may not heartily approve, and therefore it is vital that we shall have some opportunity of moulding the foreign policy of this country before it is made.'

When news of the armistice agreement broke, Hughes immediately complained to Lloyd-George of his "painful and serious breach of faith", while to The Times he also decried that the terms of peace had been decided without consultation with the dominions. Robert Garran, Hughes' assistant in London, was dismayed, too, at the 'British government's 'extraordinary blunder' in not consulting the dominions which had earned the right to

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57 ibid., p.11.
58 Sir Kenneth Bailey, cited in Hudson, Towards a Foreign Policy, p.15.
59 ibid., p.30.
60 Hudson, Australia and the League of Nations, p.22.
61 Hudson, Billy Hughes in Paris, p.5.
consultation and had anyway been promised it’. 62

The issue of consultation persisted well into the 1920s. Hughes’ successors, S.M. Bruce and J.A. Lyons, were both committed to the necessity of Australia’s involvement in the empire’s foreign policy, ‘to the extent that she would be consulted about major decisions and not be presented with a fait accompli in the shape of a British declaration of war’. 63 This resolution, of course, had been challenged already in the Chanak crisis of 1922. On that occasion, Lloyd-George had suddenly requested dominion governments supply Britain with troops to launch a demonstration against Kemal Ataturk in Turkey. In his last year as Prime Minister, Hughes felt compelled to publicly offer Britain Australia’s continued support, but cabled his British counterpart in private an ‘abusive cable mourning this reversion to 1914 practice’. 64 In time, the crisis passed without the need to deploy Australian troops, but in learning from this lesson and that of the Great War, Prime Minister S.M. Bruce announced in the following year that:

“We have to try to ensure that there shall be an Empire foreign policy which, if we are to be responsible for it, must be one to which we agree and have assented.... If we are to take any responsibility for the Empire’s foreign policy, there must be a better system, so that we may be consulted and have a better opportunity to express the views of the people of this country.... We cannot blindly submit to any policy which may involve us in war.” 65

The dominions had already fought aggressively for imperial and international recognition of their interests in the struggle to ensure independent representation at the Versailles negotiations and in the new League of Nations. Hudson argued that Australia’s attendance at the conference was warranted by her military contribution in the Great War and secured by Hughes’ political effort in 1918. 66 Lloyd-George had earlier proposed that only one dominion leader would be present in the small British delegation to the peace conference. But having been overlooked in establishing the armistice terms, Hughes was particularly aware of the importance in securing adequate representation at the peace conference itself. He was also convinced that Australia’s interests would not be

62 ibid., p.5.
63 Hudson, Towards a Foreign Policy, p.9.
64 Hudson, Casey, p.56.
65 S.M. Bruce, cited in Towards a Foreign Policy, p.9.
66 Hudson, Billy Hughes in Paris, p.xiii.
suitably defended by a British delegation without his direct participation. It was actually the French government who had requested that dominion representation at the conference be kept to a minimum, wrote Hudson. Hughes, though, insisted that 'no country would allow its interests to be decided by anyone but itself' and, after persistent persuasion, managed to achieve Australia's own seat at the peace talks.

Membership of the League was a significant tool by which Hughes realised his nationalist dreams. Faced initially with the prospect of either prohibited or restricted participation in the League by British and other international participants, Hughes campaigned militantly at Versailles for the right to represent Australia as a founding member in the organisation. When this was achieved, the increasingly isolationist United States requested that Britain apply restrictions to the voting rights of its dominion members in issues related to any part of the empire and a foreign state. Hughes, on the other hand, maintained Australia's demands for membership in the League to be of full equality with other small powers who were represented in the organisation. Where Britain had doubted the wisdom of allowing direct communication between the League and the dominions, fearing that a variety of opinions presented would 'damage the empire in the eyes of foreign nations and have unfortunate reactions on the internal relations of the Commonwealth', Hughes reacted adversely by requesting the League's Secretary-General, Sir Eric Drummond, to send all future communication directly to him in Melbourne rather than through the British Cabinet. After a Genevan clerk mistakenly sent some Australian material through London, Hughes reproached Drummond by writing "Australia is one of the original members of the League of Nations ... not under the control, or the direction, of any other member".

So, Hudson concluded, the Australian consciousness of its own national identity and interests certainly advanced in the years of the Great War and its subsequent peace negotiations. He did, though, moderate his proposal with a word of caution. Australia's sense of Britishness was still sufficiently strong to render all of Australia's demands for greater flexibility firmly on the condition of their ongoing empire membership and

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loyalty. Australians, he added, remained very conscious of belonging to the greater British ‘family’. Hughes probably best represented these dual loyalties in his own personality, for he remained devoted both to Australia and to the empire. Hudson, in fact, described Hughes as a veteran campaigner on all levels:

‘for his trade union against other unions, for his party against other parties, for his New South Wales against other states, for his Australia against other British states, for his empire against the rest’.70

It seems, anyway, that Australia’s achievements during the war years in defending its independent interests may have been mostly a shallow victory. Hughes, for example, may have gained Australia’s independent representation at Versailles, and may have even convinced the United Kingdom to allow Australia’s separate ratification of the peace treaty in 1919, but the achievement was marred by the fact that the assenting Australian signatures on the treaty were made redundant because the representatives of the United Kingdom had already signed on behalf of Great Britain and the empire. So, Hudson argued, the mark of Australia’s delegates on the peace treaty was rendered superfluous.

Hudson also reasoned that it was possible to exaggerate the importance of Australia’s membership in the new League of Nations. The League, he noted, was particularly designed to incorporate ‘such oddities’ as the dominions, in allowing by its Charter the membership of any ‘fully self-governing State, Dominion or Colony’. Membership of the League, therefore, was not an indication of national autonomy. Nor did the Australian government consider that the organisation offered any security against invasion. Instead, Australians already recognised the limitations of the League of Nations and preferred to remain dependent on the strength of the United Kingdom for their ongoing protection. Accordingly, Hudson concluded, Australia’s independence was not won by its participation in the empire’s war efforts, or by its independent representation at Versailles, or even by its membership of the League. In fact, Australia had progressed no further down the path of independence in 1919 than they had in 1901 in any actual or legal sense.

The most significant benefit won by Australia in its participation in the war and by

its peace time activities was, then, only the significant advancement in its prestige and that of the other dominions in the eyes of the United Kingdom and the rest of the world. Britain, Hudson argued, was now forced to take the interests of the dominions and their requirements far more seriously, and to promise greater communication between them all in the course of its future policy making. Most importantly, though, was that the dominions themselves, including Australia, were beginning to recognise the state of their own interests and were prepared to fight to have them recognised. As Hudson concluded, 'Too many had died, and for such a blood price there had to be for the dominions some kind of result'. By the end of the war little may have practically changed, but it was obvious that there could be no going back to the expectations of 1914.\(^{71}\)

The decade before the passing of the Statute of Westminster proved to be a time in which Australian leaders had to assess how far they could push for Australian autonomy without damaging the 'economic, emotional and military benefits' of empire membership. J. R. Poynter had likened Australia's behaviour in the inter-war years to that of a yo-yo, suggesting in a 1970 article that Australia chose occasionally to move 'towards or away from a superior being [while] remaining always on a string'.\(^{72}\) Hudson agreed, but added that many questioned in both Britain and Australia 'who did or should hold the yo-yo string'. So, he reasoned, if Australia appeared in the 1920s and 1930s to have occasionally 'muted her independent voice',

'there were many in Britain and Australia to doubt that she had an independent voice to raise, and there were many outside the British Commonwealth genuinely puzzled by contemporary changes in its structure or inclined for political reasons to minimize their significance and so, for whichever reason, disposed to treat Australia as something less than an utterly independent actor on the world stage.'\(^{73}\)

Billy Hughes, of course, was less ambivalent in his demands for Australian autonomy, although Hudson conceded that even the fiery Prime Minister had mixed

\(^{71}\) ibid., p.58.
motives at times:

'If one can ignore as far as possible the customary venom of his expression on almost any subject, it would seem that his attitudes towards the imperial connection were these: he wanted no interference by the United Kingdom in Australia's internal affairs; he wanted freedom for Australia to operate in the international community but not to the point of sundering the existence of the empire as a unit, on which he saw Australia's security resting.'  

Australian governments valued the safeguards of security and defence which was a part of their empire membership, and so resisted the rapidly increasing calls for greater independence by other white members of the new Commonwealth. Nonetheless, Hudson argued, Australia was inevitably dragged along in the wake of those dominions who thought differently. So when independence was awarded to the dominions in 1931, the Australian government and society were unwilling to accept the transformation in their relationship with Great Britain. Instead, Hudson suggested, Australia's leaders assured their electorates that no change had occurred in imperial relations as they tried to ignore the ramifications of Britain's abdication from responsibility in Australia's affairs.

Australia's independence, in Hudson's story, came slowly over the decade to 1931 by concessions granted in Imperial and Commonwealth conferences which were ultimately consolidated and secured in the Statute of Westminster. Nonetheless, he argued, Australia resisted the move towards independence and ignored it when it happened. The implications, then, for Australia's identity in this period was that it remained determined by its relationship with the United Kingdom, which was in itself partly challenged by the conflicting loyalties of Australia's separatist nationalism and imperial loyalty. Ultimately, Hudson concluded, Australia's Britishness and its imperial loyalties prevailed in the struggle.

Australian security in the 1920s was still very reliant on the provisions of the United Kingdom's defence capacity in the region. Dr Hudson recognised this reality in 1986 when he wrote:

'Most of the major elements in Australian life remained convinced that empire membership offered more in terms of capital, markets and defence

74 ibid., p.67.
75 ibid., p.58.
76 ibid., p.118.
security than lonely independence, and the only change sought by Australia was consultation by London on important international questions'.

This was true for the war years and true also in the proceeding decade. It was for the preservation of this security that the Australian government actively opposed the requests of other dominions for greater autonomy in the 1920s, believing that a united empire was essential to effective defence capability. Promoting, instead, better facilities for inter-imperial communication, Prime Minister Bruce took matters into his own hands when he despatched Casey to London in 1924 to gather information from the British government and public service which might assist him in Melbourne. For the other dominions, this kind of information raising activity was not sufficient for their own interests, and nor did it satisfy their preference for conducting their own diplomatic relations. At the Imperial Conference of 1923, Canada, South Africa and the Irish Free State insisted that "self-government means the right of each part of the Empire to control its own affairs whether those affairs are domestic or foreign, or both". Persuaded by the sincerity of their argument, the British delegates agreed that the dominions were to be allowed the right to exercise powers of treaty making on the proviso that other 'British states were kept informed'. Diplomatic independence had been won.

Three years later, prime ministers of the white dominions met again in an Imperial Conference. Bruce was already nervously anticipating that sensitive constitutional issues would be raised by a number of his counterparts. Canada's prime minister, Mackenzie King, in fact, soon argued that the governors-general ought to be seen only as the representatives of the crown and not of the British government in the dominions — a suggestion speedily accepted by the United Kingdom and other dominion representatives. Accordingly, Hudson wrote, the British government informed the governors-general of the reduction in their role to that only of 'crown representatives who would no longer deal with Whitehall nor serve as a channel of communication between the dominions and the United Kingdom governments'. Bruce apparently accepted the

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77 Hudson, Casey, p.55.
78 ibid., p.57.
79 W.L. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada, cited in Hudson and Sharp, Australian Independence, p.73.
80 Hudson, Towards a Foreign Policy, p.3.
changed conditions, although admitted that he would have preferred the changes to have occurred more quietly and less formally. Nonetheless, Hudson added, the change in the role of the governor-general was a 'remarkable abdication of United Kingdom authority'. Where the dominions had been granted diplomatic freedom in 1923, he wrote, they were now given their executive independence:

'If the governor-general represented only the crown, he would act only on the advice of his dominion ministry, and dominion governments with sole access to the crown in matters affecting the government of their dominions really would be masters of their own executive houses.'

The achievements adopted by convention in the 1920s were coupled, then, with the reforms of the Statute of Westminster to achieve Australia's independence, Hudson wrote. Bruce and his government were alarmed after 1926 to note that the conference had not settled the disquiet in other dominions, and that calls for greater independence in those countries had increased. When delegates from the empire met again in 1929, the radical dominions ensured agreement that the Colonial Laws Validity Act would no longer apply to the dominions and that their parliaments would be free to amend or repeal United Kingdom legislation which applied to themselves. A year later leaders from the same countries agreed that their newly won legislative independence should be solemnised in a United Kingdom statute, to be called the Statute of Westminster and to take effect on 1 December 1931. The independence of Australia and its sister dominions, Hudson then noted, was remarkable in that it was 'achieved without violence in four major conferences'. Whether Australia was yet independent of the United Kingdom crown, he added, was debatable. But of a certainty 'the dominions now were independent of the United Kingdom, of the United Kingdom governments and parliaments'. It was all achieved, though, 'against Australia's wishes'.

Hudson is hardly unaware of the controversy which surrounds the dating of Australia's independence, and he conceded in 1980 that the issue continued to 'provide

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82 *ibid.*, p.90.
83 *ibid.*, p.102.
84 *ibid.*, p.109.
85 *ibid.*, pp.116-117.
recreational debate for constitutional historians’ and to ‘tease undergraduates’. But he is unequivocal in his premise that independence from the United Kingdom was achieved in December 1931 and that it proceeded, too, to operate from that point. Hudson arrived at his conclusion through a process of elimination, discounting other possible dates of independence by testing them against the criteria he had already established for independence and assessing the extent to which Australia had relinquished its three conditions of colonial subjection. As we have seen, the historian discounted the occasions of Federation, the Great War, and the Versailles peace negotiations in the consideration of Australia’s date of independence. He also ruled out 1923 for the obvious reason that while autonomy in diplomacy had been awarded to the dominions, sovereignty in Australia’s domestic affairs remained curtailed. Similarly, we were reminded, executive freedom may have been won in 1926, but legislative restrictions still persisted.

The ratification of the Statute of Westminster, as we know, did not occur until over a decade after it had been passed by the British parliament. However, Hudson argued, the date of its ratification in 1942 could not be accepted as the date of Australia’s independence because Australia had already declared war on the Japanese empire, Hungary, Finland and Romania only ten months earlier, which, he argued, is universally ‘recognised as a mark of a sovereign state, a mark of sovereign independence’. Likewise, Australia’s autonomy had to have been achieved prior to September 1939, the date to which the ratification of the Statute was backdated, because Australia as a sovereign nation had also declared war against Germany by that time. Of course, none of these measures affected Australia’s judicial sovereignty, the last important condition which Hudson had marked in the colonial, imperial relationship, and it was not until the Australia Acts were passed in 1986 that all appeals to the Privy Council were completely abolished. But even this occasion, Hudson argued, could not have been the date of Australia’s independence, for the preamble to the Australia Acts declared Australia to be

already ‘a sovereign, independent ... nation’. Finally, Hudson reasoned, 1931 must have been the date for both the granted and operative independence of Australia, arguing that even though Australia had not accepted the Statute of Westminster’s provisions when it was passed, independence given is no less than independence taken. He wrote accordingly:

‘Independence is independence, whether it is achieved peacefully or by bloody rebellion, whether it takes the form bequeathed by an abdicating controller or proclaimed from scratch by the new state. To date Australia has preferred a secular and constitutional version of the apostolic succession, but the quality of her independence is not affected by that preference.... The Statute of 1931 was an instrument of solemn abdication by the United Kingdom of control over her dominions, including Australia. It was enacted with Australian consent and on Australian advice. That most Australian governments of the 1920s and 1930s, for sentimental and material reasons, did not want its public solemnisation, and that for various reasons the impact of the Statute on Australia was muddled, is beside the point. In 1931 the United Kingdom ... gave the dominions the final instalment of their independence.’

The eloquence of Hudson’s argument is certainly very persuasive, but it must be subjected to some scrutiny. The historian rightly argued that diplomatic, executive and legislative independence were awarded to Australia in the 1920s and early 1930s, but he nevertheless failed to address that level of judicial sovereignty which had been identified in the early pages of *Australian Independence*. After all, appeals to the Privy Council remained in place under the ‘sufferance’ of the dominions well after 1931, until all forms of appeals from Australia’s courts were finally abolished in 1986. And arguably, if the judicial decisions of one nation might be overturned by the judiciary of another, the sovereignty of that first nation must surely be compromised. On this basis alone, Hudson’s hypothesis regarding 1931 must be questioned. The preamble to the Australia Acts may have declared Australia to be a sovereign nation, but if its judicial process remained subject to the authority of a foreign court, Australian appeals to the Privy Council most certainly compromised its independence. The declaration in the Australia

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88 *ibid.*, p.133.
89 *ibid.*, p.137.
90 *ibid.*, pp.134-135, 137.
Acts, therefore, is wrong, and Hudson's premise remains flawed.92

Australia's experience of empire in Hudson's story has been mostly of a constitutional or legal nature. It is therefore not surprising that he identified a date such as 1931 as being the formal occasion at which Australia achieved its independence. Nonetheless, Hudson also recognised that there were enduring emotional and cultural ties between Australia and Great Britain which persisted far beyond the passing of the Statute of Westminster. These, he argued, lasted until the Suez Crisis in 1956, when Australia's loyalties to the United Kingdom resulted in its misjudged participation in the international scandal brewing over events in the Middle East. The 1989 book, Blind Loyalty, is the forum in which Hudson particularly explored these remaining emotional ties between Australia and Britain, arguing that it was the sentimentality of Prime Minister Menzies and his Cabinet which led Australia blindly into the Suez Crisis contrary to their better interests. This was not the first occasion which Hudson recognised was influenced by a level of emotional dependency on Great Britain, but it was certainly the first in which he placed such singular attention. Interestingly, his account of Australia and the Suez Crisis also produced further inconsistencies in the historian's hypothesis that Australia became independent in December 1931.

Hudson's exploration of the Anglo-Australian relationship in the 1950s suggests that Australia's identity and interests were in a particularly pivotal position. In fact, as the conflicting loyalties in Australia became increasingly volatile, Australians may well have reached a crisis point in defining their identity, their interests and their changing place in the world. While most of the constitutional levels of Australia's colonial status had been replaced in previous decades, strong connections to Britain were maintained at many levels of society, politics and commerce. Many older Australians of this period continued to see themselves as being British, according to Hudson. Anglo-Australians such as Lord Casey certainly identified both with Australia and with England – so much so that

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92 For further discussion on the issue of judicial independence and other aspects of Hudson's thesis on independence, see Deborah Gare, 'Dating Australia's Independence: National Sovereignty and the 1986 Australia Acts', Australian Historical Studies, vol.30(113), October 1999, pp.251-266.
they were never completely comfortable in either place, being almost 'stateless'. In fact, Hudson argued that many Australians maintained a very personal and emotive identification with Great Britain, writing that:

‘To have asked them to choose between the United Kingdom and Australia would have been to distress and baffle them. Like a proud Yorkshire man in his English patriotism, these were not half-hearted Australians, but their Australianness was subsumed in their Britishness. United Kingdom history and culture was their history and culture, even if with an additional Australian ingredient.’

By the 1950s, though, there was serious division brewing in Australian society over the sense of Britishness, causing the impending crisis in Australia’s identity. By this time, Casey, now Australia’s Foreign Minister, had begun to favour and encourage greater political and cultural separation from the United Kingdom. So by 1964, he was able to write to the British Prime Minister that ‘I am becoming more and more convinced that we are growing apart and becoming two different peoples’. In fact, Hudson noted:

‘Further, and inevitably, his sense of Australian patriotism was buttressed. His undoubted Australian patriotism had to a degree remained subsumed in a wider sense of Britishness, but now he was more inclined to follow his younger countrymen towards a more exclusive Australianness.’

Certainly younger Australians were more conscious of the growing divide from Britain at this time. But Australians like Menzies and much of his generation found the prospect of an emotional divorce from the United Kingdom too great a burden and too impossible a notion to easily comprehend. In 1956 Menzies warned Anthony Eden that ‘you must never entertain any doubts about the British quality of this country’. Even the progressive Anglo-Australian Lord Casey, in the 1950s, continued to see Australia as a ‘British country’ and resisted military action in Suez partly on the grounds that ‘it was inevitable that Britain would lose face’ and ‘My main concern was that she should lose as little ... as possible’.

The conflict over the Suez Canal started on 26 July 1956 when Egypt’s President Nasser announced the nationalisation of the Compagnie Universelle du Canal Maritime de

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93 Hudson, Casey, p.65.  
94 Hudson and Sharp, Australian Independence, p.111.  
95 Hudson, Casey, p.293.  
96 Hudson, Blind Loyalty, p.xii.  
97 Hudson, Casey, p.247.  
98 ibid., p.276.
Suez in response to the Anglo-American decision to end aid for the Aswam Dam project. The President hastened to declare his continuing commitment to the 1888 international convention on rights of passage through the canal, and reassured all shareholders in the Compagnie that they would be reimbursed in full for the value of their shares. Yet many western countries were understandably irritated at the announcement, and were also concerned for the continued upkeep and maintenance of the Canal in the hands of Egyptian engineers. In the main, though, Hudson argued that there was a visible appeasement between many of the western parties and Egypt when it became apparent that Nasser was prepared to negotiate those conditions. The United Kingdom, on the other hand, whose government happened to be the largest shareholder in the Compagnie, took Nasser’s nationalisation order as a direct challenge to the interests of the Western alliance in the Middle East ‘and to British attempts to retain influence in the region in particular’.99 Partnered by France and assisted by Israel, Britain orchestrated the means in November by which it could intervene with military force in the Suez region, and thereby attempt to regain control of the canal’s operations and to overthrow Nasser from power.

Hudson suggested that the British Government had intended to use military action in Egypt almost from the point of Nasser’s initial announcement in July. However, the United States had made it very clear from the outset that it was opposed to any use of military force in the region and had sponsored the need for diplomatic negotiations instead. In the eyes of many, the military action of Britain and France would ‘put back the imperial clock with such a vengeance’ as to wreak irrevocable damage to the post-colonial international environment. Within six months of its presence in Egypt, the British occupying force was compelled to withdraw under immense international pressure. Nasser maintained control of the canal and remained in power. The invaders, on the other hand, gained nothing and the United Kingdom lost much: the Anglo-American relationship became ‘severely strained’ for some time, Hudson told his readers, the ‘rare moral standing’ of the United Kingdom in the international community was severely ‘compromised’, the British Commonwealth was ‘split’ over the issue and the

British people were deeply embarrassed and humiliated by the incident.\textsuperscript{100}

Hudson argued that the nature of Australia’s participation in the Suez debacle was of significant interest. At times, he wrote, Australia took a ‘leading part’ in the crisis, most notably when Menzies was commissioned to perform negotiations with Nasser on behalf of the British. He reasoned, though, that the issue of greatest importance in Australia’s actions was that they maintained their support for Britain and France although international sympathy for that alliance had faded instantly at the mention of military retaliation\textsuperscript{101} He added that:

‘Throughout and even after the Suez crisis, the Australian Government repeatedly instructed its diplomatic representatives that, whatever London’s course, and whether or not Australia understood or agreed, the United Kingdom must never be opposed. ‘This was the more remarkable in that no evident Australian material or diplomatic interest was served by this extraordinary loyalty to the British cause.’\textsuperscript{102}

Hudson explained that this ‘extraordinary loyalty’ was governed by the continued sentimental attachment of the Menzies Government to the United Kingdom. Their action was inconsistent with other government policy in several respects, making Australia’s decision to stand with Great Britain on the issue surprisingly irrational. In the first place, and perhaps most importantly, Menzies’ coalition government had made it clear that Australia’s security was now dependent on the United States, yet they continued to support Britain in Egypt despite America’s very obvious disapproval of their actions. The Australian government also valued the strength of the ‘old white Commonwealth’, yet sided in this instance against Canada. Additional importance had been placed in the post-war years on a harmonious ‘new Commonwealth’, yet Australians also came to blows with Ceylon and India over Suez, and very nearly alienated Pakistan. Furthermore, the Prime Minister and most of his Cabinet continued their pro-British stance even in the face of hostility from a few government departments and the dissent of some of their most qualified colleagues. Casey, who was Foreign Minister at the time, was very eloquent in his displeasure at the line of action chosen by the British government, as was Defence Minister Philip McBride, Trade Minister John McEwen and

\textsuperscript{100} ibid., p.5.
\textsuperscript{101} ibid., pp.5-6.
Deborah Gare

Primary Industry Minister William McMahon. Their concerns, though, were dismissed in Australia's haste to support the British position.¹⁰³

Others have argued that Australia's participation in the military campaign against Nasser arose from Australia's and Britain's shared contempt for Egyptians and doubt of their capacity to maintain such an important piece of civil engineering as the Canal. Others suggested that Australians were more concerned about their own economic and defence vulnerability if their access to the waterway through Egypt was disrupted. These theories, of course, are debatable. Casey, for example, believed instead that greater likelihood of restrictions to Australian passage through the canal existed if Australia supported the military action against Nasser.¹⁰⁴ Hudson, though, proposed that the real motivation for Australia to support Great Britain over Suez was the traditional and sentimental Anglo-Australian attachment which had lasted well into the 1950s. He argued that:

'comprehension of what did move [Australians] depends on comprehension of a British Australia which older Australians remember with nostalgia or irritation but which for Australians under the age of about thirty-five, and especially for children of post-war non-British immigrants, is not remembered and is not comprehended.'¹⁰⁵

In fact, Hudson suggested, despite the fact that Australia in the 1950s had now to operate independently in a bi-polar international community, sentiments of nostalgia and loyalty to the Anglo-Australian connection among the men and women of Menzies' generation was actually at its peak. It had to be remembered, of course, that the Menzian generation of Australians had been born late in Victoria's reign and educated under Edward at a time when the British Empire was at the pinnacle of its strength and when it had 'seemed supreme'. All of Menzies and his Cabinet colleagues, noted Hudson, were '1890s men', who had grown up in the context of a powerful empire which really did appear to dominate the world.

'In their boyhoods and youth the United Kingdom and her Empire proudly but benignly dominated the world, and the Australian colonies, and then federated Australia, happily was part of that Empire. Indeed, Australians were more than merely part of the Empire: Australians were Britons just as

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p.6.
¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p.6.
¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p.7.
¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p.7.
their cousins at home were Britons. All the lofty, self-congratulatory
British attitudes of the day were also theirs .... One might go to the
Germans for music, otherwise all that was best was British.\textsuperscript{108}

In this context, then, Australia loyally stood its ground with Great Britain against
the rest of the world. It was not for any rational or material benefit, Hudson conceded,
but out of a habitual tendency to submit to British wisdom, which they perceived as being
superior to their own, and from a continued belief of themselves as being British too.
Emotional attachment to Britain was still very real in the Australia of the 1950s, and was
fostered by the enduring good relations between the two countries. Certainly the British
government had never provoked Australia into a separatist, nationalist fervour, ensuring
that all grievances between the two countries were dealt with speedily: ‘resentments were
not left to develop into rebellion’, while ‘manifestos of what Australia separately and
independently might stand for had never had a chance to be drawn up’. Despite the
growing realisation in Australia by the 1950s that the United Kingdom could no longer be
relied upon for defence, trade and immigration, the traditional identification with Britain
remained in the minds of many Australians, and Menzies’ promise to Eden represented
wider Australian sentiment. Cricketers, Hudson noted, still cherished playing at Lords
and the Oval, journalists still aspired to Fleet Street, Oxford and Cambridge remained the
nirvana of Australian academics, Australian barristers still revelled in the respect of the
Privy Council and Imperial Honours were still sought after and prized.\textsuperscript{107}

Australian Britishness was still a strong force within the national consciousness.
So much so, Hudson wrote, that:

‘in the United Kingdom and in Australia people stood for the same national
anthem, bowed to the same young queen, and were honoured with the same
decorations and order. Inhabitants of both were British subjects, and a
foreigner naturalised in the one ceased to be an alien in the other. To
conceive of oneself as being Australian but not British was for most of
Menzies’ generation on a par with trying to conceive of oneself as, say a
Victorian but not an Australian.... Of course, there was rivalry and mutual
criticism, but it was within a family, and not very different from the
attitudes of Yorkshiremen and suburban Londoners towards each
other.\textsuperscript{108}

Although some separatist elements in society did exist, the ‘prevailing ethos of the 1950s’

\textsuperscript{106} ibid., pp.8-9.
\textsuperscript{107} ibid., p.9-11.
\textsuperscript{108} ibid., p.11.
remained pro-British in nature. When the crisis developed in Suez, then, Australians came down firmly on the side of Great Britain as if siding with fellow countrymen in an international dispute:

‘when a British interest was threatened – not a United Kingdom interest or an Australian interest but a British interest – the Australia of 1956 needed a good reason to stand with the United Kingdom but an almost unimaginably strong case not to.... Significant damage to the United Kingdom’s status and prestige lessened British status and prestige, and in that, it was felt, Australia must share.’

These sentiments were, of course, emotive and irrational. There was, as has been noted, sufficient awareness in Cabinet and the Public Service to suggest that Australia’s support of the Anglo-French military campaign in Egypt was detrimental to her own national interests. But, Hudson concluded, the sentimental attachment to the United Kingdom and the ‘practiced deference to London’ on issues relating to British prestige and status drew Australia inevitably to their side.109

A number of significant issues were raised by Hudson’s assessment of the Suez Crisis. If the sentimental attachment of Australia’s leaders and society to Britain was sufficient enough to warrant their siding with the United Kingdom on such an issue and in a manner which was directly contrary to their own interests, there must surely have been a powerful residual dependency on Britain at some level, despite the fact that much of their constitutional independence had been won twenty five years previously. That this dependency was of an emotive nature did not diminish the fact that the dependency existed, and it certainly adds another dimension to the nature of Australia’s relationship with Great Britain and its independence in Hudson’s story. For Australia very clearly remained dependent on Britain to some degree, well after Hudson had argued it had achieved its actual and operative independence. Therefore, further inconsistencies are raised in Hudson’s argument that total Australian independence was achieved by December 1931.

The second matter of interest which develops from Hudson’s study of Suez is the insight it produces on his perception of Australian identity at this time. If we continue to see Australia’s identity by its comparison to Britain, Australia appears to have been

tormented by its conflicting loyalties in the 1950s as it had been for much of the twentieth century. On this occasion, though, Hudson inferred that pro-British sentiment in Australia may have been stronger than it had been previously in the struggle between imperialist and nationalist loyalties, perhaps influenced by the values of the Menzian generation which by that time had risen to the fore in the political and social world. We must conclude, then, that Hudson considered Australia's Britishness to have been at perhaps its strongest point in its history, at least within some sectors of society, and that it was primarily responsible for motivating Australia's involvement in the battle for the Suez Canal.

Where it left Australia at the end of 1956 is a different matter. Arguably Hudson considered Australia's attachment to Britain over Suez to have suffered mortal damage in the embarrassment which ensued and in its final realisation in the coming months that its defence and military security now rested fully in the hands of the United States. Suez, in Hudson's mind, was the pivotal point at which Australia was forced to decide between its old and new alliances, and to finally abandon its emotional attachment to the United Kingdom in at least a large measure. Blind Loyalty was Hudson's last major publication on the history of the Anglo-Australian connection and the dependence issue. It probably serves, then, as silent testimony to his belief that it was at this time that the traditional relationship between Australia and Britain was changed irrevocably and that Suez represents the end of Australia's experience of empire. This hypothesis could be easily tested by any future publication in which Hudson explores the succeeding Anglo-Australian relations in the twentieth century, but all the evidence suggests now that he believes Australia cut its emotional, imperialist ties after Suez, and that it was then forced to forge its identity in the wider international community of the Cold War. So, he concluded, a confrontation between Australia's loyalties as occurred over Suez would never happen again; the United Kingdom, to Australia's 'chagrin', would withdraw from the region to pursue its own interests in Europe and the inconceivable would come to pass: 'Australian troops would go to Vietnam without United Kingdom company'. Yet even then, Australians 'would not be making decisions, or choices':

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‘That was the tragedy marked by the Suez crisis of 1956: never having opted for independence, never having struck out on her own separate path with her own ideals and purposes, Australia was at a loss in coping with an independence forced on her. She knew what it was to be British; no framers of a declaration of independence had given her a vision of what it was to be Australian.’

If identity is defined by the status of one in comparison to an other, then the identity of Australia in Hudson's story was measured by its relationship with the United Kingdom. Not that this identity remained static for very long, for as the relationship between the two countries evolved in the turbulent years of the twentieth century, so, too, did Australia's concept of itself and its interests. This, in turn, also determined its own journey to sovereignty. Hudson has reflected the changing nature of Australia's identity and independence as they evolved in all the decades under examination in his scholarship. Australia, he concluded, could have secured its independence at any time during its colonial or federal history. In 1980 he suggested that:

‘Had the Australian colonies, separately or together, opted for independence, they would not have surprised a London grown fatalistic about such things; they would not have been allowed to enjoy a war of independence. But such an option was scarcely ever considered.’

Instead, he argued, Australia continued in its dependence and deference towards the United Kingdom in the belief that Britain would ensure Australia's material, economic and international security while under its protection. Hudson outlined in the early years of his scholarship certain levels of Australian dependence on the United Kingdom, being of a diplomatic, executive, legislative and judicial nature. He later discussed, too, that other level of dependence, which was of an emotive kind. In *Australian Independence*, Hudson sought to identify the date when Australia won its autonomy, and concluded after a process of elimination that the proclamation of the Statute of Westminster in December 1931 was the real date of its granted and operative independence. His argument, as we have seen, remains flawed, for the conditions of Australia's judicial autonomy were not met until 1986 and Australia's emotional dependency on Great Britain lasted well past World War Two. Australia's identity during most of this time was subsumed in its

10 *ibid.*, p.15.
concurrent sense of Britishness, but was confused by its sometimes separatist nationalist sentiments. It was not until the late 1950s, then, that Australia was finally cast asunder to forge its own identity and to do so without the supporting crutch of the United Kingdom.

Hudson is definitely a great supporter of Australia's independence. His support for Australia's autonomy is indicated by the support and sympathy he has offered to those characters in his story who led the push for greater Australian independence, either within or outside the confines of empire membership. Time and again readers have been presented with sympathetic reports of those nationalist figures campaigning for the protection and recognition of Australian interests. So, Richard Casey won Hudson's constant sympathy for his growing nationalism and in his realistic assessment of Australia's interests, while his rival, Robert Menzies, earned that same sympathy from the historian far less frequently. Moreover, the characters who received Hudson's particular attention in biographical studies remain especially indicative of his personal interests: Casey, Hughes and H.V. Evatt were all singled out for his attention, and were arguably the three leading champions of Australia's autonomy in the international community of the twentieth century.112

Despite his support for Australian independence and, possibly, for an Australian republic, Hudson empathised with the prolonged gestation of Australia's independence and its move towards a republic. Although this process since Federation was often delayed and frustrated, Hudson rarely criticised those characters or conditions which may have further complicated the process. Instead, he has accepted the painful experience of Australia's separation from the empire for what it was, assuaging the angst of the nationalists and radicals who have remained uncomfortable with the 'slow and easy evolution' towards independence. It was a simple fact, he added, that:

'as each decade's British migrants settled down, they tended to develop local territorial loyalties, but not usually of an exclusive kind.... Australians continued to see themselves as part of a British world, even if a new and, in some ways, better part.'113

Hudson, then, is not 'uncomfortable' with the long evolution of Australian independence,

112 For analysis of Evatt's efforts at Australian nationalism abroad see W.J. Hudson, 'Dr H.V. Evatt at San Francisco', *Australian Foreign Affairs and Trade*, vol.62(4), April 1991, pp.162-171.
but accepts the time it took as reality and perhaps as a necessity. It was, at the very least, unavoidable. Nor does he castigate past generations of Australians who appropriated a British consciousness into their own national identity. Instead, he excused those Anglo-Australians of their Britishness and defended them from suggestions that their Australian patriotism may have been any less because of it. It was not, he noted that:

‘they were ambivalent about Australia, but because with continuing and almost exclusively British immigration and with only limited self-government, there remained a consciousness of Britain as the home society. In one sense they went home to Britain from Australia; in another they went home to Australia from Britain.’

Australia's Britishness was a large part of its history and identity and is a fact which Hudson can personally identify with, being of a generation which had been a part of that British Australia. In fact, he recognised that much of the motivation for writing the biography of Casey was to impart to future generations that Britishness which had previously been a part of his life and of his country. When speaking of Casey at his own dinner table, he wrote,

‘I found that the Anglo-Irish-Australian culture in which I had grown up in Tasmania and Victoria was an enigma to my own children. They could not conceive easily of Anglo-Australians. Casey was one of the last of the great Anglo-Australians, one who became less ‘Anglo’ and more Australian as his life progressed. It seemed to me that to write about him might usefully remind Australian readers of their society’s origins and evolution.’

Hudson's acceptance, though, of the long journey to Australia's independence does not preclude him from advocating a future Australian republic. In 1992 he was still arguing in favour of his hypothesis regarding independence in 1931, but also began to call for the establishment of an Australian republic. With or without it, he claimed, Australia would still exist as a sovereign nation, reasoning that the retention of the monarchy would not negate its independence:

‘That the same person is Queen of the United Kingdom and of Australia does not reduce Australian independence of the United Kingdom any more than the fact that having the same person as Queen of Canada and of the Solomon Islands in some way reduces the Solomon Islands’ independence of Canada.’

But while Hudson believes an Australian republic would not change the nature or reality

114 ibid., p.20.
115 ibid., p.vii.
of Australian independence, he does concede that the cause of its national identity would benefit greatly were Australians to reach for a republican status of their own accord:

'it would seem to me best that, if at some time in the future there is to be an Australian republic, it should spring from an Australian initiative.... It would be a pity if an Australian republic fell into our laps not because for good reasons of our own we wanted it but because London newspapers or dynastic foibles left us no option.'

Australians, he concluded, had come a long way since Federation, and had long been living in the ashes of empire. It was time, then, to recognise Australia's own national ‘selfhood’. Australia's experience of empire had, in Hudson's mind, concluded in the wake of the Suez Crisis. Its legacy, though, remained still to be put to rest.

\[117 \textit{ibid.}, p.239.\]
Manning Clark

A Child of His Age

Few historians in Australia could claim to have had the same impact on Australian historical writing as Manning Clark. Undoubtedly a controversial figure, his practice in Australian history continues to excite debate even as the decade after his death approaches. Frequently being the subject of such analyses as the 1994 collective publication, Manning Clark: Essays on his Place in History,¹ the most memorable public storm surrounding Clark in the last decade rose in August 1996, over allegations by the Brisbane Courier Mail that the popular historian had been a secret recipient of the Order of Lenin. If nothing else, the continued public and professional scrutiny of the life and work of Manning Clark stands as testament to his enduring legacy on the Australian historical profession in particular, and demonstrates the fascination he still commands among the public at large.

Despite shooting to wide, popular recognition as a public speaker and national commentator from the mid-1970s, Clark remains best known for his formative contributions to the study of Australian history and for his mammoth six volume series, A History of Australia.² Tracing the story of Australia’s past from the European exploration of the south seas to the turbulent years of the mid-twentieth century, these controversial volumes remain perhaps the most significant attempt by any one author in exploring the great history of the Australian people. In addition, Clark frequently published articles, lectures and the occasional book, which complemented the progress he

Deborah Gare was making on his History of Australia. We are left, then, with a substantial body of work to absorb in any investigation of Clark the historian and Clark the man.

Clark’s history of Australia has long been interpreted as the story of confrontation between the three great Protestant, Catholic and Enlightenment faiths. The historian laid early foundations to the exploration of these themes in his 1950s document collections, Select Documents in Australian History and Sources of Australian History. In the latter, Clark persuaded his readers that:

‘By 1791 convict ships had brought to Australia men and women with three quite different views of the world – The Protestant, the Catholic, and the Enlightenment. The decline of the Protestant religious groups, the compromises and alliances they made with secular liberalism, the attempts of the Catholic church to protect its members from the forces which blighted the Protestant groups, the rise of a labour movement influenced by Protestant, secular, and Catholic teaching, the crisis in Protestant secular thought in the twentieth century: these are main themes in the history of [European] civilisation in Australia.’

A year later he could trace more deliberately for the Tasmanian Historical Research Association the impact of these three experiences on European civilisation in Australia. On that occasion he discussed the suffering of the Irish peasants, resulting from the backwardness of their own religion and the harsh rule of the Protestant Ascendancy; the role of Protestantism as a tool for commanding social order; and the men who ‘dreamed of harmony, of happiness here on earth to replace the false promise of happiness in some future time and place’.

When the first volume of A History of Australia was published in 1962, the exciting approach which Clark had applied to his interpretation of Australia’s past was received with interest and favour. Yet not everyone applauded. Malcolm Ellis produced what Rob Pascoe was to call ‘the most vituperative book review ever published in Australia’. Denouncing Volume One as ‘History without facts’, Ellis stormed against Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1987. Hereafter referred to by Volume number individually or by A History of Australia collectively.


4 Clark, Sources of Australian History, p.xi.


the inaccuracies and errors of Clark's historical accounts and his scanty attention to original sources, concluding that teachers of Australian history would have to wait longer yet for an authoritative textbook.\(^7\) Others, though, thought favourably of the exploration of the Protestant, Catholic and Enlightenment theme. Even a later critic, John Hirst, was to praise at least these early writings. In fact, in assessing Clark's early exploration of faith in Australian colonial development, Hirst suggested that Clark's earliest work on these themes was the best history he was to write.\(^8\)

In the wider discussion, though, of Clark's story of Protestantism, Catholicism and the Enlightenment in Australian civilisation, many deeper issues and themes which are consistently woven through the narrative of his story have been largely overlooked or undervalued. Clark himself admitted dismay in 1979 that so many believed that A History of Australia was written mostly around the theme of confrontation between these faiths. For, he added, there was so much more to his story of the Australian people. Would they, for example, remain a colonial nation indefinitely, or could Australia yet seize the dreams of the 1890s to create a more free and inspiring society?\(^9\) Carl Bridge's edited collection of essays did attempt to widen the attention of professional historians to other themes in Clark's writings. But the publication remained dominated by critical essays with political agendas of their own, countered only by the interspersed reminiscent papers by former colleagues or friends. It is important, then, to appraise Clark's historiography with a fresh approach, and as one who has until now been divorced from the mainstream debates surrounding Clark, either in his lifetime or after.

When putting aside the Protestant, Catholic and Enlightenment theme, a fascinating story of confrontation emerges in the pages of Clark's histories. He tells of the early struggle between the Asian and European powers for the discovery of the 'Great Southland'; the collision between Europeans and Aborigines after the arrival of the British; the enduring strain between the convicts and their masters, between the native born and the immigrants, and between the emancipists and the free. Other stories, too, of confrontation feature prominently in Clark's tale of the Australian experience: the rise of

\(^7\) M.H. Ellis, 'History without facts', Bulletin, 22 September 1962, p.36.
\(^8\) John Hirst, 'The Whole Game Escaped Him', in Bridge, Manning Clark, p.119.
the landed gentry and the colonial bourgeoisie, and their efforts to retain Australia's wealth and power in the hands of the 'Austral-Britons'; the fight of the native born in determining a nationalist vision for the country and for establishing a proud identity. Ultimately, there is the struggle for the ownership of Australia – between the Old World and the new, or between the 'Old Dead Tree' and the 'Young Tree Green'. So we find that it is in the depth and complexity of this story that Clark explored the experience of Australia under empire.

It was to be some years before the vision of an Australian story was to even exercise the imagination of Manning Clark. This was largely because as a child of British Australia, Clark spent most of his formative years and early academic practice in the study of the great European writers, believing that all culture resided within the geographic boundaries of Europe itself. Furthermore, as a son of the patrician Hope and Marsden families, Clark already belonged firmly to the Austral-British, Protestant ascendancy of Old Australia. His journey in the discovery of Australia was, therefore, a long and often turbulent process. Even then, as we shall see, his interpretation of Australia remained influenced for many years by his earlier British and European background and sympathies. To his death, in fact, Clark remained a 'child of his age'.

Clark’s internal struggles in the discovery of Australia, and his continued faith in the cultural supremacy of the Old World, run parallel to that struggle he studied in his histories of colonial and twentieth century Australians as they attempted to break away from the old world to make a new. Certainly his own awakening to Australia did not occur suddenly or spontaneously. In fact, it was to take many years, even after he had commenced his History of Australia, before Clark’s dual loyalties between the old world and new were to feature less prominently. The confrontation, then, which Clark explored between the Reverend Samuel Marsden and the convicts, between the native born and the free, and between the squatters and selectors, became equally an exploration of his own inner turmoil over his dual loyalties – his descent on the one hand from the Marsdens and Hopes and his rejection, on the other, of all that their Australia stood for.

As Clark lived out this struggle, and as his discovery of the Australian story increased year by year, his life and work were characterised particularly by a sense of journey. Indeed, Clark's journey in belonging, identity and historical consciousness was perhaps more marked than even those of Blainey, Bolton and Hudson. Through telling the story of Australia, Clark revealed his own experience of Australia under empire – his own values, perceptions, beliefs and torments. He revealed that he was a child of his age, living in the two Australias of the old and new. He lived, in fact, between the world of his ancestry, and the world he hoped Australia was coming to be. As with Geoffrey Blainey, these dual loyalties then influenced how Clark dealt with important issues in Australia's history, including Aboriginality, transportation and the convict legacy, the native born and Australian nationalism, religion, ownership of land, literature, war and civilisation.

Others, of course, have not always been impressed with Clark's story of Britain in Australia. John Hirst wrote in 1994 that Clark's argument had become oversimplified, 'attenuated and debased'.10 Hirst was not alone in his unease. Miriam Dixson also suggested that the increasing tension in *A History of Australia* over the British connection in Australia operated, at times, 'as a towering and distorting presence'.11 To set aside in this discussion the criticisms and interpretations of such notable historians is not to discount their legitimacy or pertinence. It is merely that in seeking to appreciate Clark's interpretation of the Australian story, and particularly of Australia's experience with empire, means that whether he is widely applauded or condemned by his colleagues is less important.

It is very tempting to engage with the many long running debates which continue to surround Clark's work to this day. However, such an exercise would not serve the interests of this thesis, which deliberately seeks to avoid camping within the extremes of existing debates. It is quite a new approach to explore the changing nature of Clark's identity, Australianness and the extent of his 'imperialist' values. To do so, the discussion within this chapter will rely as much as possible on Clark's own publications and the recent testimony, in his absence, of his family. The deep complexities of Clark's personality and histories have caused much of the ongoing

10 Hirst, 'Whole Game Escaped Him', p.120.
controversy which the historian continues to attract. Those same complexities, as well as the large volume of written material which Clark produced, have meant that the examination of Clark’s experience of empire requires a rather lengthier discussion than was attempted in the previous chapters. Nonetheless, by doing so, it is hoped that new insight to Clark’s historiography can be achieved. He suggested shortly before his death that it is the duty of historians to be story tellers.\(^\text{12}\) This, then, is the story of Manning Clark’s historical journey.

If Geoffrey Blainey was to have passed a happy childhood within an Australian family, relatively unconscious of British allegiances, and W.J. Hudson in the bosom of an Irish-Australian Catholic community, Clark was to share with Geoffrey Bolton an upbringing rich in the consciousness and sentiments of British Australia. Clark’s, though, was perhaps particularly marked. Born barely a month before Australian soldiers were to make their fateful landing on the shores of Gallipoli, Clark was born to a family already torn between Old Australia and the new. His mother, Catherine, was a descendant of the patrician Hope family, a status from which the humble working class origins of his immigrant father fell far short. For the most part of his childhood, though, it was the Old Australia of his mother’s family which most clearly made its mark on his already troubled soul.

Clark recalled later that his mother was a ‘fine flower of patrician and genteel Sydney’, being the great-great-granddaughter of the Reverend Samuel Marsden.\(^\text{13}\) Destined later to come under bitter attack and scrutiny from Clark in his histories, Marsden was one of the earliest and cruellest chaplains to the young colony in New South Wales. Chaplains in early New South Wales played a vital role in the governance of the colony, and were seen often as ‘God’s moral policemen’.\(^\text{14}\) According to Clark, Marsden mixed civic and church duties while ordained as a magistrate under Governors


\(^{14}\) *ibid.*, p.21.
Manning Clark: A Child of His Age

Hunter, King, Bligh, and Macquarie. During this time, the stern Reverend earned the unfortunate title of the ‘flogging parson’, an appropriate epithet given that he religiously sentenced the guilty in his court room to the maximum lashes afforded for their offence. In his defence, though, Clark conceded that his forefather remained motivated by a sincere, if misplaced, faith; branded by historians for ever as the flogging parson, Marsden would remain entrenched in that role regardless of any act of goodness, compassion or forgiveness he may have performed to demonstrate an otherwise good nature.\(^\text{15}\)

Other ‘great names’ of Australia’s colonial history fill the lists of Manning Clark’s antecedents. James, George and Robert Culbertson Hope arrived from Scotland in New South Wales during the early years of Queen Victoria’s reign. Soon operating successful properties in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, George Hope became a respected member of the Presbyterian Church and married Marsden’s granddaughter, Marianne Hassall. His brother James remained unmarried, while Robert married Marianne’s sister, Catherine, practiced medicine, held rural properties and was a member of Victoria’s parliament between 1856 and 1874. Robert Culbertson Hope was to father eleven children, his eldest son also being Robert, who continued in the Hopes’ pastoralist activities in Queensland and New South Wales. His brother Charles, later to be Clark’s formidable grandfather, likewise maintained the family’s landed traditions as a prominent figure of Sydney’s booming wool industry.\(^\text{16}\) The members of these families were to spread widely across eastern Australia and to engage in a multitude of prominent activities and positions in the gentry classes of colonial Australia.

A whirlwind of names and family connections such as these may understandably awe or confuse the unwary. Yet Clark’s patrician heritage was never far from his young

\(^{15}\) ibid., p.22. Clark’s sympathies, in his later years, may have been influenced by the interpretation of A.T. Yarwood in his biography of Samuel Marsden. Yarwood appears to have taken a more conciliatory approach to the deeds of Marsden, recognising a sharp dichotomy in the popular historical perception of his life. Like Clark, Yarwood conceded the harshness of Marsden’s activities as a magistrate, but regretted also that ‘Australian historians have ensured that [his] good deeds were interred with his bones’. For more discussion on the historiographical debate surrounding the Reverend, see A.T. Yarwood, *Samuel Marsden: The Great Survivor*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1977, pp.xi-xii.

consciousness. Hence in 1989 he recalled the ‘never-ending litany’ from his mother about their family tree:

"Your great-great-grandfather, Thomas Hassall, was vicar of the largest parish in Australia." "Your great-grandfather, Mann dear, was President of the Legislative Council of Victoria." "Your grandfather, Mann dear, is the general manager of Goldsborough Mort."  

He recognised sadly, though, in his aging years that:

‘In her own oral history of the heroes of her family, as told to me during the twenty-five years when we all too infrequently opened our hearts to each other, she was very selective. She spoke of the Marsdens, the Hassalls, the Oxleys, the Hopes, the Gormans, The Maberley-Smiths and the Hope-Marshalls, with the fervour of a neophyte speaking about salvation.’

Clark’s father, on the other hand, bore the recitation of these litanies with admirable endurance. Charles Clark had been born into the London working classes in 1881, fathered by a blacksmith and belonging to the ‘respectable working class, the class which feared God and honoured the King, the class which accepted the world as it was and did not entertain any hopes of anything better’. Raised in Australia, having been brought to the new world as an infant, Charles was to become a man divided in spirit:

‘He was attracted to all those who were enlargers of life.... He was never at ease with the self-appointed improvers of humanity. Yet paradoxically he was to join a profession, and be a minister of the Church of England, in a diocese which was evangelical in doctrine and puritanical in morals.’

Not surprisingly, the differences in class and sensitivity were to cause some friction in the union between Charles Clark and Catherine Hope. While Charles, for example, kept his political opinions to himself for fear of prejudicing or dividing his congregation, Catherine openly voted for conservative politicians because ‘she believed they were gentlemen’. Charles’ freedom at mixing with all kinds and levels of people – a characteristic, no doubt, due to his background but helpful in his profession – grated against Catherine’s determination to maintain the dignity of her eminent ancestry.

Charles told humorous tales to his family of childhood trips to the dentist, where the waiting room would be full of inebriated patients (being prior to the days of anaesthetic).

17 Clark, Puzzles of Childhood, p.25.
18 ibid., p.22.
20 Clark, Puzzles of Childhood, p.6.
Catherine, though, replied caustically that they were not all like that. ‘Where she had grown up as a child the men in dentists’ waiting rooms behaved like gentleman.’ ‘There it was again,’ noted Clark, remembering the confrontations, ‘My father and mother came from different classes.’

In those days of British Australia the conflicts within the Clark family were to mark Manning’s soul as a son of two worlds and two Australias. Shortly before he died, Clark could identify the source of his dual sympathies:

‘My childhood began at a time when the discerning were beginning to talk of two Australias – the Australia of the comfortable classes, to which my mother’s family belonged, and the Australia of the working class, to which my father belonged.’

He had later identified one as Old Australia, or British Australia, of the Old Dead Tree, while the other was the new Australia of the Young Tree Green. But as a child, that discernment would escape him; in the mean time, Old Australia did its best to claim his affections. There was, for example, the impact of the strong Hope personalities with whom he spent much time. He recorded with some awe the majesty of his great-grandmother, Catherine Hope, whom he met prior to her death in 1922. Then there were the months spent living with his aunt, Izabel Hope, in her manor home near Geelong, or the Anglicanism of his family and of his father’s profession. ‘The church,’ he later recalled, ‘advertised God’s blessings on the Empire’. The small parish in Kempsey believed fervently in a God of power and might, the God who was ‘guiding and protecting the fortunes of the British Empire’. Even his father, dressed in his robes bearing the symbol of the British crown, would call his flock to the service of the empire; they were children of mother Britain, he told them, the empire was the ‘only protection they had against an invader’.

Clark did not always chafe against this heritage of gentrification and Britishness. In later life he remembered that while living on Phillip Island in the 1920s, he had came across his neighbour, Guy Boughton, who, with some friends, was dressed in the

22 Clark, Puzzles of Childhood, p.6.
23 ibid., pp.46-47.
24 ibid., p.68.
25 ibid., p.81.
uniform of Geelong Grammar School. The pageantry of such a display left Clark in delighted awe of the older boys:

'I saw three or four young men dressed in Geelong Grammar School light-blue blazers, with gold braid trimmings, and a huge monogram on the breast pocket.... I gaped in awe and wonder at these godlings. It just seemed that it would be wonderful to be as graceful, as elegant and beautiful as Guy Boughton.'

When a few years later the Clark family were driving across New South Wales on holiday, their very Britishness was to blind them to the unique beauty of the Australian landscape. Travelling near Gundagai, Clark recalled:

'We were in the country of the 'vision splendid', but that did not touch either my father or my mother. They were, in their different ways, both 'spiritual exiles', Australian versions of 'Englishmanism'. My father never commented on the fragile beauty of the ancient continent, and it was to take me time to notice such things, before I accepted the 'haggard continent', and stopped yearning for another country 'far, far away'.

As if to preserve Clark's place within British Australia, he was to substitute his 'nest of gentlefolk' for the Eton-styled Melbourne Grammar School in 1928. Offered a share of the Charles Hebden Scholarship, Clark went with his brother Russell as a boarder to live in dormitories shared with the more affluent students of Melbourne's upper classes. By all accounts, the years at Melbourne Grammar were traumatic for the sensitive boy Clark had become. Stephen Holt has argued that the practice of removing young boys from their families, and herding them together in the spartan conditions of a public school, was to leave many sensitive children with traumatic memories. Clark admitted as much in his memoirs, and certainly much occurred during his stay in Melbourne Grammar to scar the soul of the young Manning Clark. Of particular interest, though, is the Britishness of the experience, and the legacy which Clark's schooling may have had on his discovery of Australia.

Melbourne Grammar had been deliberately moulded on the English public school system at its foundation in 1858, providing an alternative source of refined education to Eton and Harrow for Melbourne's aspiring young men. A.G.L. Shaw, a contemporary

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26 ibid., p.96.
27 ibid., p.165.
28 Holt, Manning Clark, p.1.
29 ibid., p.27.
of Clark who was also a student at Melbourne Grammar in these years, recalled the Britishness of the school in the inter-war period. The awareness of Empire was perhaps not so apparent at Melbourne Grammar, mused Shaw, for little was taught about India or the other Dominions. But attention to Great Britain was still very strong. ‘We were taught British history a lot, European history a little, and Australian history not at all,’ added Shaw:

‘So that in a sense the emphasis was that we were Britons.... We were told what a good place England was – it was an emancipated place, democratic and you didn’t have revolutions in England.’31

Evidently the ties to empire and the Britishness of the institution were also as apparent to Clark and his brother Russell as they entered the school gates in 1928. Recalling Sunday mornings spent in chapel, Clark wrote of the blessings called down by the priest before them on the royal family and the empire. Being British, they were urged to believe, was of principal importance:

‘I had the impression that God had some special relationship with the British, that they were His chosen people, charged with responsibility for rescuing the heathen.... I heard about the British, the King, the Governor-General and all who were placed in authority under him.... ‘Now here I was, on the edge of manhood, joining with a hundred boys each Sunday in thanks to Almighty God for being British. I had the impression that, when we sang the words, ‘The Lord Hosts is with us’, it meant that God was on our side and all was well.’32

Certainly the experience at Melbourne Grammar was not all bad. From 1931 several articles by Clark appeared in the school’s newspaper – indicating that he was most definitely being encouraged to exercise his analytical and creative writing skills.33 Clark was also to develop a strong rapport with the Principal, Richard Penrose Franklin, who was to first plant the idea of writing history into Clark’s mind.34 But the Britishness of the environment and the legacy it was to have on the young historian was undeniable:

‘The whole atmosphere of Melbourne Grammar, the Church of England world, the ethos of the times, was all to direct our hearts and minds towards

30 For a more detailed account of Clark’s experiences at Melbourne Grammar School, see Clark, Puzzles of Childhood, pp.177-210.
32 Clark, Puzzles of Childhood, p.181.
34 Clark, Puzzles of Childhood, p.192.
the 'good news'. We were British, we had a King who cared about us, we had a Prime Minister, Stanley Bruce, who was looking after us.'35

The three articles by Clark recoverable from archived copies of the *Melburnian* offer a fascinating insight to his state of mind in the 1930s and his early allegiances. It is now almost ironic that his first publication was called 'The Australian Aborigine', given the grave silence on Australia's indigenous people which was to characterise much of his writing in the 1940s and 1950s. At 16, the article proves that Clark's attention had already been drawn to the Aboriginal people and the Australian story. Yet while the article seems to be genuinely exploring the significance of Aboriginal culture and practices, it remains heavily laced with imperialist language and inferences. For instance, Clark commenced the short discussion by calling 'the Australian Aborigine' (as if there was such a generic being), a most 'interesting race'. He then proceeded to conduct a study of 'this race', as if conducting scientific observations of, say, ants in a glass chamber. Aborigines were 'interesting' because of their cunning hunting techniques. His readers were told that while one Aboriginal man would distract a group of ducks from the shores of a swamp, his disguised partner would silently swim to the flock and attack them from underneath the water. In his story, though, the behaviour of the hunted ducks is given almost as much attention as the Aborigines! In a later paragraph, Clark was to credit the knowledge of the Aborigine in such activities as extracting honey from a flower, or in treating disease. Some Australians believed that Aborigines had no medicinal knowledge, he suggested. But this was clearly untrue:

'When one of their tribe has appendicitis they lay him down on the ground and cut a small hole in his stomach. Then the skilled man squeezes out his appendix.'

Having captured his readers' attention with this extraordinary image, Clark added innocently, 'After a few days' rest the ill man is perfectly all right again and can take part in the usual tribal games'.36

The language and tenor of this short article displays the first signs of tension in Clark's mind between Australianness and Britishness. He appears genuinely interested in the skilful activities of the Aborigines, in their hunting, gathering and treatment of

35 *ibid.*, p.207.
disease. Setting aside the childish language of the discussion, one is fascinated by his story of the duck hunt and the rudimentary appendicitis operation. But the effect is marred by the prevailing influences of Old Australia on the discussion; the cunning of the Aborigine, for example, is discussed as if it were on a par with that of masterful predators within the animal kingdom. Then there is the dismissive remark that the ill man would soon return to the ‘usual tribal games’ – words which immediately negate the risk of infection and the undoubtedly perilous recovery the patient must have endured, and reducing the skill so far portrayed of his hunting and gathering to the status of some ‘game’. Finally, there is the very clear presence of Old Australians within the article by the representation of their opinions. If the Aborigine is skilled in medical treatment, ‘some Australians’ were certainly of a different opinion. In fact, the prevailing attitude towards Aborigines at the time is slipped into Clark’s artless conclusion, ‘Therefore we can see that the Australian aborigine is not the idiot and brainless man that some historians have made him out to be.’

Clark’s articles two years later display less evidence of such tension in loyalties. As if in complete contrast, ‘A Retrospect’ and ‘The World Crisis of 1932-33’ are discussions firmly entrenched in the traditions of the Old World. Appearing almost side by side in May 1933, both discussions focused predominantly on past and present events in Europe. ‘The World Crisis’ was a study of the history of Poland and the contemporary tensions in Europe simmering under the Versailles Treaty and exacerbated by the rise of Hitler in Germany. Clark predicted a coming continental war, fuelled by rivalling nationalisms in the artificially created states in central Europe. It is startling now to realise how many of Clark’s predictions were realised in the coming conflict. War would start, he suggested, with German attempts to regain neighbouring territory. France would side with Poland against their common enemy, Italy against France with Germany, Japan would wait until Europe was embroiled in its own war before renewing its aggressive policies in the Pacific, and the United States was likely to wait at the outbreak of the war before committing to any intervention. In fact, the only inaccuracy in

37 ibid., p.121.
Clark's vision was that England actually sided with its World War One allies - not with Germany as he predicted.\(^{38}\) A fascinating study in international politics of the 1930s, 'The World Crisis' was most definitely an exercise which demonstrated the importance Clark then placed on Europe in the world of his time.

The article 'A Retrospect' is perhaps the most intriguing of the two. In its short discussion the young Clark demonstrated a remarkable capacity to understand social orders, some Marxist theory and the application of historical lessons to the present. He also attempted to explain the tensions of inter-war Europe by referring to the experiences of ancient Rome and Greece. The experiments with democracy in the ancient world, Clark suggested, held a valuable lesson in democracy for contemporary Britain and Europe. Rome had collapsed only as democracy was fully realised. England - now the 'perfection of democracy' - had evolved under the 'same circumstances as Rome'. So, Clark argued, the British aristocracy must regenerate their strength in order to be rid of the 'disease' of democracy before it spread too far.\(^{39}\) This had already caused problems in Australia, where democratic traditions had ensured that there were no social barriers within society, and that Australians, as a result, lacked all respect for the 'gentility'. In Australia, Clark criticised, 'no man has a right to expect respect from another'.\(^{40}\) Finally, he considered some of the international problems of the modern world. Just as the Congress of Europe had failed in the time of Henry IV, the democratic spirit of the League of Nations would doom it to failure on such issues as the Sino-Japanese conflict and the Polish corridor question.\(^{41}\)

Assessing this short article of May 1933 is a vexatious exercise in the study of Manning Clark's historiography. Holt considered that the discussion was an attempt to warn the author's school-yard fellows 'that the society they were being educated to rule and govern had passed beyond the control of English or anglicised gentlemen'.\(^{42}\) If this were the case, it remains unclear whether the 18 year old Clark was in agreement or not with such an outcome. Clark's students in more recent years would agree that he was

\(^{38}\) Clark, 'The World Crisis, 1932-33', p.36.  
\(^{39}\) ibid., p.33.  
\(^{40}\) ibid., p.34.  
\(^{41}\) ibid., p.34.

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later a champion of the lesser classes in their struggle against the ruling elite, and
certainly he was also to testify to his interest in Marxist philosophy. But in 1933
Clark seemed to write in contrast to these later ideals, concluding that although he was
bereft of any real answer to the world’s problems, he did suspect that ‘if Christian ethics
had been added to the monarchy of Caesar’, a Utopia may have been realised. It
appears, then, that the Old World values of the Hopes, the Australian gentry and the
Australian bourgeoisie were firmly represented in the argument of his ‘Retrospect’. If
nothing else, his class consciousness was undoubtedly reflected in the remark that the
‘tale of Athens and Rome is the tale of all civilisations unless they find something to
regenerate their aristocracy’.

The year in which these articles were published was also the last of Clark’s
schooling at Melbourne Grammar. It hardly foreshadowed his departure from British
Australia, though. In the following year Clark exchanged his life as a scholarship boy
at Melbourne’s primary Anglican school, for life as a scholarship boy at the premier
Anglican college of Melbourne University, Trinity College. There, in 1934 he enrolled
in a Bachelor of Arts course in the school of History and Political Science. The
Britishness of his new institution was made almost immediately apparent. Common to
all Australian history departments at the time was the study of British and European
history, while only limited Australian material was made available for study. Even at
Melbourne, where Ernest Scott was an early pioneer in the teaching of Australian
history, Clark and his fellow students were forced to spend their first year studying only
British history from William the Conqueror to 1660:
‘This was intended to teach us about the origins of British political
institutions, the rule of law, the birth of British liberty, the British genius
for compromise, and the virtue of British pragmatism.’

Other subjects offered in Clark’s course included ancient Greek and Roman history,
from which students were encouraged to appreciate the value of social law and order.
Jessie Webb taught both these units in Clark’s first year, as well as an honours course in

42 Holt, Manning Clark, p.25.
43 Clark, Quest for Grace, pp.15-17.
44 Clark, ‘A Retrospect’, p.34.
45 ibid., p.33.
46 Clark, Quest for Grace, p.1.
British colonial history from 1607-1660, which explored the beginnings of British colonialism in North America.

If Manning Clark’s story of Australia was to develop from his own journey in its discovery, there is a good chance that the pilgrimage began at this point of his life. Grounded already in British Australia, the silences within the courses on offer first gave him the cause to question the fallibility of their presentation. He and his colleagues had been told that history was a ‘bible of wisdom’, and that the beginning of wisdom was to ‘learn the benefits humanity had gained from the spread of British institutions over large parts of the world’. But these platitudes soon left the scholar dissatisfied: ‘I do no know now how soon I realised there was something lacking. I remember thinking at times there must be some other subject in which the lecturer discussed things that mattered…. My lecturers were all people of distinction and achievement. But alas, I could not respond: it was though they were training me for a race in which I did not wish to run.’

Jessie Webb was unable to assist Clark in his new search for wisdom and understanding in his first year, he remembered. Even the renowned Ernest Scott, having returned for Clark’s second year, was apparently entertaining as a lecturer but no more spiritually enlightening. As the celebrated professor gave his sparkling addresses to the students, Clark realised that he ‘wanted something more than these witty exercises in alliteration, something more than a recitation of the follies of the whole world outside the history classroom’. Scott’s history, Clark added, was a ‘British exile’s version’ of the past as a series of human follies, without the temperance of pity used by such great historians as Gibbon. Perhaps he was expecting too much, he later accepted. But where Clark was later to dream of the ‘starry moments of humanity’ in Australia’s story, the University of Melbourne was to illuminate no such moments to the young historian.

Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton noted in 1994 that historians were increasingly turning to memory ‘for some of the answers to their questions’, and warned

47 ibid., p.1.
48 ibid., p.2.
49 ibid., p.2.
50 ibid., pp.3-4. While Clark lacked pity in his recollection of Ernest Scott, Stuart Macintyre noted that others were not so ungracious. Kathleen Fitzpatrick, he recalled, was more balanced in her approach to her former professor. While she identified many of the elder historian’s shortcomings, Fitzpatrick at least showed ‘the academic pioneer laying the foundations for mature historical scholarship’, where Clark, instead, denied his ‘creativity’. See Stuart Macintyre, A History of a Nation: Ernest Scott and the Making of Australian History, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1994, p.8.
of the associated dangers.51 How much of Clark’s story of his time at Melbourne University and since has fallen prey to the weaknesses of memory is uncertain. Nonetheless, in his later years, he claimed that his time as a student was characterised by the romantic search for ‘something more’. So the early beginnings of tension in Clark’s consciousness become apparent as his story in the second autobiographical volume, *Quest for Grace*, unfolds. It is an aptly named volume, for it is the story of Clark’s early steps in his journey – being not just a quest for grace but also for wisdom, understanding and eventually a discovery of Australia. That discovery was to come many years after his sojourn at Melbourne University had ended, and many other interests were to grab Clark’s attention in the meantime. Nor did the legacy of British-Australia ever fall completely from his shoulders. So, when his friend Hyrrell Ross spoke to him of Marxist philosophy, when the Communist Party acted as the ‘conscience of Australia’, Clark found he could not share their faith. ‘I was still wearing the heavy blinkers of all members of the Protestant ascendancy,’ he wrote.52 He still believed that the preservation of British institutions was necessary to achieve the highest standard of material well-being and social harmony. Even when Melbourne rapturously welcomed the Duke of Gloucester in 1934, Clark was not displeased; he could not yet claim to be disgusted by the social grovelling and ‘sycophancy’ of Melbourne’s upper classes:

> ‘The monarchy and the Empire, the British connection, and the local cult of Englishmanism, were for me at that time rather like the mountains, the sea and the sky: they were from eternity and would not change.’53

Not that Clark did not want to believe in something other than British Australia, and certainly he had the ‘thirst to believe’. But in the quest for a replacement vision, Clark turned not to Australia and its wisdom, but to the great storeroom of culture and knowledge of Europe and the United Kingdom. A number of great European writers and creative artists were to capture the imagination and spirit of Manning Clark, and the passion which they often generated in his histories gave rise to one of the deepest complexities in his character. Any reader familiar with Clark’s work will appreciate the

52 Clark, *Quest for Grace*, p.8.
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profound attraction he had to the works of Dostoevsky, Tocqueville and other European writers. A separation, then, could occasionally be traced in Clark's mind between the cultures or literary traditions of continental Europe and Great Britain. More often, though, the distinctions between them were blurred. European culture and heritage, in Clark's mind, frequently included that of the United Kingdom. For example, the 'Old World values' which he spoke of usually referred equally to Europe and to Great Britain; both had been imperialist societies; both had experienced grave inequalities within their own populations. Moreover, when Clark referred to the coming of European civilization to Australia, he believed it encompassed the heritage of Shakespeare, the Book of Common Prayer and Milton, just as it included that of Bach and Mozart. Britain and Europe, while sometimes separate in Clark's consciousness, were often far more indelibly linked.

For a time at university, Clark wallowed in the beauty of the prose of the King James Bible. The melancholy spirit of Ecclesiastes appeared to offer some relief to his enquiring soul before he sought inspiration from the words of Dostoevsky. An instant attraction to the message of the Russian writer fuelled the spirit of the tormented Clark. In the story of the Brothers Karamazov he heard expressed the questions he had been longing to ask. Dostoevsky's characters posed the 'big questions' of life, appealing to the inquiring nature of the young historian. It was as though Dostoevsky drew a curtain from Clark's eyes and revealed to him another side to the human heart. 'He discussed what I had noticed about the human condition,' wrote Clark, 'but had never been encouraged to mention'. And so the words of Ivan Karamazov burned in his consciousness, haunting him for the remainder of his life's quest:

"I want to be there when everyone suddenly understands what it has all been for. All the religions of the world are built on this longing, and I am a believer."56

'I wanted that,' Clark confessed, 'and will go on wanting just that through all the wild years and calm-down years.'57

53 ibid., pp.13-14.
54 See, for example, Manning Clark, A Discovery of Australia, Boyer Lectures, Australian Broadcasting Commission, Sydney, 1976, p.22.
55 Clark, Puzzles of Childhood, p.190.
Manning Clark: A Child of His Age

It may have been Dostoevsky who claimed his attention in particular, but it was the broad faith in the mastery of the Old World philosophers which continued to direct Clark’s thinking in general. The wisdom of Australian writers never once enticed the young historian. ‘It never occurred to me then,’ he wrote, ‘that any words by an Australian writer would answer my desire to be there when everyone understood what it had all been for.’\(^{61}\) From his lectures under Ernest Scott, Clark gained the impression that Australian history was about counting sheep and mapping the routes of the early explorers. Australian historians, he believed, fell far short of asking the ‘big questions’ and offered little by way of the advancement of understanding. So, he wrote:

‘I was a child of my time. I accepted the silly inference of those days that we Australians were paupers in things of the spirit, that we could invent the stump-jump plough, or a wheat harvester, but we could never write a *Brothers Karamazov* or a *Mayor of Casterbridge*. We lived in Australia, but our minds were elsewhere. We were exiles, isolated by thousands of miles from those centres where men and women explored the passions of the human heart. Our feet stood on foreign soil, not the soil out of which the sources of wisdom had ever sprung.... We were borrowers, we were parasites feeding on food produced abroad.’\(^{62}\)

Later, of course, Clark would believe differently. But in 1935:

‘My eyes were always turned towards England, Ireland, Scotland and Europe. I did not realise then that what I was looking for could be found in Australia.... We did not know our past: I did not know then that a knowledge of our past would help liberate us Australians from being spiritual exiles, and second-rate Europeans in a strange land. Like most of my contemporaries I was then an Austral-Briton.’\(^{63}\)

In 1937 two curious encounters occurred in Manning Clark’s journey to an Australian discovery. It had been recommended that he read John Henry Newman’s *A History of My Religious Opinions*. While much of what Newman had to say made little appeal to Clark, a few lines within the discussion arrested his attention. Newman predicted a coming encounter between ‘Catholic Truth and Rationalism’ – a collision which was to direct the future history of the world. Clark was yet to be captured by a vision of Australia’s story, but this prophecy would haunt his consciousness until he did so. A second incident occurred that year which was to prove instrumental in Clark’s

\(^{61}\) *ibid*, p.20.
\(^{62}\) *ibid*, p.20.
\(^{63}\) *ibid*, p.21.
journey of discovery. In the winter of 1936 Clark had fallen in love with Dymphna Lodewyckx, the daughter of the Associate-Professor of Germanic languages at Melbourne University. A Belgian exile, her father had taught and married in South Africa, spoke eleven languages, and had finally moved to Melbourne the day that Germany invaded Belgium in August 1914. Living in Mont Albert after 1921, the Lodewyckx family had built a ‘little Europe’ on their family property. Here a European garden was planted, with an ornamental oak tree in pride of place, complementing the cypress hedge which served as a ‘frontier between their family and Australia’. They spoke in Dutch to each other, and celebrated festive occasions in the European manner.

For Clark, his relationship with Dymphna’s family was to prove something of a revelation. He enjoyed sharing the European company and atmosphere of the Lodewyckx family – but knew instinctively that he did not belong in their world. Something, he wrote, held him back from real affinity with Professor Lodewyckx: ‘I did not want to be an honourary citizen of Europe in Australia. I could not be a European. I was an Australian.’ Being confronted with another way of life – an opposite – gave Clark the opportunity to begin to define his own identity. He was an Australian; he did not want to speak another language other than Australian English, or to betray who he was. The exposure to this other culture in 1937 and 1938 provided a rare occasion for a discovery of belonging. Certainly it was only a preliminary step on Clark’s larger journey, for full recognition of belonging or consciousness of identity was to come much later. So in 1937, despite his awakening consciousness of belonging in Australia, Clark remained unable to define or defend his Australianness. At Professor Lodewyckx’s accusations of the indifference of Australians to things of the mind, Clark was unable to reply:

‘At that time I lacked the intellectual culture with which to give substance to my sense of being an Australian. My brain was full of the literature and history of the ancient world, of Russia, France, Germany, England, Scotland and Ireland’.  

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64 ibid., p.36.  
65 ibid., p.37.  
66 ibid., p.37.  
67 ibid., p.37.  
68 ibid., p.38.
Despite Clark’s growing uneasiness with the place of Europe in Australia, he had no resources or experience with which to explore it further, and no alternative to Dymphna’s father’s ‘Europe in Australia’. ‘At that time Europe in Australia was not a dead tree: it was a tree kept alive by feeding off the giants in the forest of European culture,’ wrote Clark. He was yet to read a line from Henry Lawson’s prose or poetry, and yet to hear of the ‘Young Tree Green’. To Clark, culture remained ‘over there’.

But the tension, nevertheless, was beginning to mount and his dual loyalties were now slowly on the rise. His eyes may have been set on Europe’s shores, but another side of him was already chafing at the idea that Australians must only be ‘second-rate Europeans’. Still, at the time, Clark knew of no other possibility. ‘There was only the dimmest intimation that this Europe in Australia was not for me.’

The following year Clark and Dymphna were both awarded free passages to Europe by the University of Melbourne. It is quite possible that Clark may have later exaggerated the extent of his ‘Britishness’ on that voyage and in the months which followed while they were in the United Kingdom and Europe. Caution, then, would be wise before accepting Clark’s accounts of that period at face value. Nonetheless, his research while there certainly appeared well grounded in an Australian-British tradition, and this influenced Clark’s sense of identity during his time spent overseas. Clark recalled the powerful attraction which Europe held for him as he and Dymphna made their way to London. Europe, he thought, was the source of all wisdom, a ‘Land of Holy Wonders’:

‘Culture, I believed at the time, was over there, not here. Over there they knew something we did not know here. I believed I was about to receive something we did not know here.’

Despite, then, the faint stirrings of identity which had evolved recently, Clark set off for his pilgrimage to ‘holy Europe’. It was undoubtedly a pilgrimage of the Austral-Briton to the land of his belonging, a quest to the source of all wisdom to seek the ‘understanding for what it had all been for’. Clark the Briton and Old Australian was ‘returning’ home. To Stephen Holt it was the completion of a cycle:

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66 ibid., p.39.
67 ibid., p.39.
68 ibid., p.48.
In 1838, James and Robert Culbertson Hope had left the British Isles for Australia. In 1939, Manning Clark, a member of the family they established there, left Australia for the British Isles.

A whole century had passed, wrote Holt, but Clark’s voyage to England proved that the Hope family had only regressed from their fine ideals a hundred years earlier. The Hope brothers had left Scotland which had routed the House of Stuarts, but Clark was returning from an Anglican and Imperial Australia to the centre of Anglicised and Tory sentiments.

Clark’s pilgrimage to Oxford in 1938 has frequently attracted the attention of many observers since. Peter Ryan cited Clark’s experience in Oxford as the beginning of Anglophobia on the part of the historian; Miriam Dixson similarly argued that Clark’s experience in Britain from 1938 to 1939 led to his ‘giant of British philistinism’ rejection of his British heritage. A number have discussed the arrogance of the British, which Clark found so disarming on arrival. But Ryan and John Molony both used one incident in particular to demonstrate Clark’s disillusionment with Britishness. It is a familiar story now; playing his first game of cricket for the ‘Authentics’ at Oxford, Clark innocently wore pads belonging to another player. On his return to the dressing room, the young Englishman to whom the gear belonged threatened to give Clark a “good thrashing”. In his own recollection of the event, Clark wrote: ‘I was a usurper: I was again an outsider’. In Ryan and Molony’s minds this incident, as well as others, turned Clark from the British in disgust. Others who were closer to him, though, argued differently. In January 1999, Dymphna Clark recalled the same incident, but confessed it was not a grudge against the English which Clark held for ever. His son, Axel, similarly played down any suggestions that Clark turned Anglophobic on the trip, or that he retained any ‘chip on the shoulder’ over his experience with the British. Peter Ryan had misinterpreted Clark’s attitude towards Britain, Axel reasoned, which was actually quite

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69 Holt, Manning Clark, p.44.
72 See Ryan, ‘Manning Clark’; John Molony, in a seminar at Manning Clark House, quoted by Dymphna Clark, Interview with Author, Manning Clark House, Canberra, 28 January 1999; Clark, Quest for Grace, p.91.
73 Dymphna Clark, Interview, 28 January 1999.
ambivalent. Certainly Clark, Dymphna and their Australian colleagues at Oxford were treated to large doses of English ‘superiority’ at times. But this was not enough to put Clark off the British entirely. In another recent interview, Axel noted: ‘A ‘chip on the shoulder’ is a bit like nursing a grudge. And in his ideas about England, his feelings about England and empire, that was not the case.’

In 1982 Holt wrote in his quasi-biography of Clark that the young historian was not venturing to Britain as an Anglophile, but rather for the expediency of postgraduate education in a renowned institution such as Oxford. Clark has since, though, testified to the excitement of that journey and, contrary to Holt’s suggestion, of his pride in being British. So adamant, in fact, was Clark of his Britishness, that readers must question whether many of his stories may have been overstated. By the time he was writing his memoirs, Clark could well have valued the dramatic effect which they produced, particularly in the sharp contrast they presented to his later popular image as a leading Australian nationalist. Nonetheless, it is an engaging narrative. From the moment the Orama left port in August, the young scholar proposed to enjoy all that the voyage had to offer. While Dymphna enjoyed the European delicacies from the dining room, Clark demonstrated his Anglo-Australian tastes for roast beef and mutton, baked vegetables and apple pie with cream. ‘I had a British passport in my cabin,’ wrote Clark, ‘I was an Austral-Briton, a man born in Australia and educated as though he were British.’ Other experiences throughout the voyage seemed to confirm Clark’s Britishness at the time. The backwardness and poverty of Colombo and Egypt heightened his own sense of British superiority, while that same identity blinded him to the wisdom and culture of those ancient peoples. He did not seek to understand the theology of countries which they passed through, just as he was still unable to seek it in his own Australia. ‘I was British,’ wrote Clark, ‘I was on my way to ‘England’s green and pleasant land’’. The first inkling that all was not necessarily well with his vision of the green and pleasant land came after the Orama had docked at Gibraltar. The English passengers who

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74 Axel Clark, Interview with Author, Australian National University, Canberra, 28 January 1999.
75 Axel Clark, Interview with Author, Sydney, 1 February 1999.
76 Holt, Manning Clark, p.49.
77 Clark, Quest for Grace, p.56.
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joined the ship in port barely spoke a word to the 'colonial' fellow-travellers on board.\textsuperscript{79} Their rudeness was a practised art of disdain which they levelled at the Australian passengers. Holt suggested that the English assumption that all Australians were inferior colonials came as no shock to Manning Clark, and that it 'could not shock him because it was in line with his own way of thinking'.\textsuperscript{80} His utopian visions of England's shores received a further jolt as they arrived. Dover's cliffs reminded him of smudged chalk; the dank air as they passed through immigration at Tilbury was laden with sodden clouds; London itself was 'quite unmanageable'. Moreover, Clark was immediately struck by the ineffectual response of the English to Germany's mounting aggression in Europe.\textsuperscript{81}

Oxford itself was far more welcoming to the young 'colonial'. The dons at Balliol College, Clark recalled, were 'warm and eccentric', and he forged some strong friendships with a number of the staff. The speedy invitation to the Balliol cricket team must have further warmed his travel-weary soul, for it was a sport in which he both revelled and excelled. Clark was to spend a little over twelve months studying at Oxford, before war and financial responsibilities forced him to seek other employment in England and, later, his return to Australia. His time in Britain is written about extensively in his autobiography, and it is not intended to recover the fullness of that experience in this discussion. Not discounting other interpretations of that period by such commentators as Ryan, Molony, Holt and Dixson, particular insight will be sought from that experience of how it impacted Clark's own sense of Britishness, his sense of identity or belonging, and his discovery of Australia.

Clearly Clark's loyalty to the British-Australian vision of the 'motherland' could not have been questioned on his arrival. In his own mind, the virtues of Australia paled well into insignificance compared to the majesty of England:

'Australia was the 'haggard continent': England was the 'green and pleasant land'. Australia was dead: England was the 'land of hope and glory', the 'mother of the free'. God had made England mighty. In His manifest

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{78} ibid., p.57.
\item \textsuperscript{79} ibid., p.59.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Holt, Manning Clark, pp.50-51.
\item \textsuperscript{81} Clark, Quest for Grace, p.59-60.
\end{itemize}

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bountiful goodness to all those who were British, God might make England 'mightier yet'.

Yet despite his loyalty to the ideals of Old Australia, and despite his conviction that colonials remained inferior to their English cousins, it did not take long for the shine to wear off the vision. England, he later wrote, 'soon became one of my many lost illusions'. The superciliousness and arrogance of the English he met, and the manner in which they snubbed him and his Australian friends, was perhaps the biggest contributing factor to his growing disillusionment. On a personal level, the English arrogance was perhaps easier to take; Axel Clark spoke of how his parents had joked in Oxford with friends such as Alan Shaw at the conceit and 'stupidity' of the English. But the combined hurt caused by the continued snubs, by the dismissiveness of his landlady, and such incidents as the cricket fiasco discussed earlier, was a heavy burden to be overcome by humour alone. Clark began to realise that he did not belong in England – that he would remain forever outside a gate which did not open.

The blindness of the English at the brewing storm in Germany was an even more challenging obstacle to surmount. Clark appeared as a member of a student delegation before the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, Sir Thomas Inskip, in October 1938. He left the meeting shocked at the 'elegantly dressed, stripe-trousered, flower-in-the-buttonhole nonentity' who so blithely responded to the sombre questions of the students. Then in November, Clark made a fateful journey to see Dymphna in Bonn. It was the morning after Kristallnacht. Upon leaving the railway station, he was surrounded by the evidence of mounting aggression and militarism. Clark and his contemporaries had so far believed that Germany would be a military pushover because, he reasoned, the imagination in the hearts of the Nazis was 'evil'. Now, confronted with the images before him, Clark knew better. Clark, the Austral-Briton, had far from disappeared. But the foundations of his world and of Old Australia were becoming tremulous. On his return to Britain, Clark came to a crushing conclusion. If the English

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82 ibid., p.65.
83 ibid., p.64.
84 Axel Clark, Interview, 1 February 1999.
85 Clark, Quest for Grace, p.66.
86 ibid., p.67.
‘assumption of effortless superiority’ had frustrated him before he had left for Germany, he now condemned their deliberate complaisance as ‘criminally reprehensible’.\(^{88}\) Even prior to the outbreak of World War Two, Clark’s disillusionment with Britishness and with Old Australian assumptions had begun.

There was as yet no replacement vision in Clark’s mind as he began then to question his identity. Evidently Australia was still far from his intellectual consciousness and his mind was yet to be captured by what it would be like to ‘tell the story of human beings in Australia’.\(^{89}\) So in 1939, when he began employment at Blundell’s School for boys, Clark encouraged his pupils with discussions on great writers, philosophy and God, but ‘made no attempt to interest them in the history of Australia, or its literature’. To Clark at that time, ‘they did not exist’; he remained an ‘exile who had returned to the source of wisdom and understanding’.\(^{90}\) Ironically it was to be his Oxford supervisor, Humphrey Sumner, who was to point Clark on the road to his discovery of Australia, and the unlikely tool was the work of Alexis de Tocqueville. In 1836 Tocqueville had prophesied in *De la Démocratie en Amérique* that the two future world powers would be America and Russia. A hundred years earlier, Clark recognised, someone had already pointed to the declining power of Great Britain. To Clark, using Tocqueville as the subject for his Bachelor of Letters thesis, it was as though a window had opened to his soul. ‘The English had already lost their material supremacy,’ he wrote, and now ‘they were gradually losing their moral authority’.\(^{91}\) This provoked the question that if the English were on their way down, what then of Australia? It was a question Clark was unable to answer. But watching the blindness of the English as their ship went down, his mind inevitably turned ‘more and more to Australia’. ‘To search for a river of life in England early in 1939,’ he concluded, ‘was like following a mirage in the desert’. So it was that ‘Tocqueville turned my mind towards Australia’.\(^{92}\)

\(^{87}\) *ibid.*, p.72. 
\(^{88}\) *ibid.*, p.80. 
\(^{89}\) *ibid.*, p.97. 
\(^{90}\) ibid., p.110. 
\(^{91}\) *ibid.*, p.84. Clark’s contemporary, Patrick White, had also begun to questioned the superiority of the English and their aristocracy, tracing their decline during the interwar years in his book, *The Living and the Dead* (1941), Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1962. 
\(^{92}\) Clark, *Quest for Grace*, p.85.
Manning Clark: A Child of His Age

In July 1940 Manning, Dymphna and their son Sebastian boarded the Orcades for their return to Australia. Armed with their experiences in Britain and Europe, the learning at Oxford, the disillusionment with Britishness and an awakening sensitivity to the land of their birth, they prepared to return to the Australia they had left behind. Some critics, as we have seen, have argued that Clark’s time in Britain on this occasion encouraged him to turn ‘Anglophobic’. Holt, in fact, suggested that Anglophobia was a ‘hallmark’ common to all the inter-war Audenesque intellectuals; Bridge reasoned that Clark ‘protested too much on the anti-English side’; and Ryan that Clark soon ‘loathed the English’. Arguably, though, these commentators have misread Clark’s experiences while he was in the metropolis of empire. Clark was returning to Australia to begin a new journey of discovery, but the experiences in Europe (good and bad) had far from made him Anglophobic. In 1997 his son spoke seriously on the issue. Clark, Axel said, was living in two worlds. Even as his sympathy and affinity with Australian culture, history and literature increased, this never meant that he became ‘anti-British’. Clark and his colleagues may have been proud of the differences between Australians and Britons while at Oxford, but this did not mean that he was an Anglophobe. Instead, Axel reasoned, Clark ‘felt both the need and the naturalness of maintaining and continuing to be British or European’.

There was much to demonstrate Clark’s enduring ties to Britain on his return to Australia. He later recognised that his return home in 1940 was necessary for his discovery of Australia, but admitted it was a very difficult journey and hampered by the fact that ‘Part of me was still ‘over there’’. Within a few months Clark had taken a position as a teacher at Geelong Grammar School. Only recently, Weston Bate wrote in his history of the school that the headmaster had appointed Clark at Geelong in the hope that ‘he would present challenging ideas to the school’. Clark certainly did so, and

93 Holt, Manning Clark, p.48.
94 Carl Bridge, ‘Introduction’ in Bridge, Manning Clark, p.8.
95 Ryan, ‘Manning Clark’, p.12.
96 Axel Clark, Interview, 28 January 1999.
97 Axel Clark, Interview, 1 February 1999.
98 Clark, Quest for Grace, p.113.
apparently became an immediate success with the students.\footnote{100} He was not, however welcomed so warmly by his fellow masters or parents who seemed challenged by Clark's enthusiasm and philosophy.\footnote{101} Nonetheless, his return to the institutions of Old Australia, such as Geelong Grammar, indicated that Clark had maintained at least a partial affinity with the remnants of British Australia. Holt, too, recognised this precise point:

> 'Another member of the school's staff has described Geelong Grammar as the 'Eton of Australia'. By joining its staff, Manning Clark maintained his record of external conformity to the ways of preferment offered by British Australia.'\footnote{102}

His continued scholastic and academic pursuits demonstrated further that Clark's interests still resided firmly in European matters. Clark's pursuit of Tocqueville in Oxford was put to good use in the guise of a Masters thesis at Melbourne University. As well as 'Tokkers', he turned to other great European writers such as Michelet, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche and Freud.\footnote{103} Then, in 1940, Manning Clark was able to air his thoughts on European philosophy for the first time in a reply to Professor A.R. Chisholm's discussion on the German invasion of France.\footnote{104} In Clark's response, 'The Dilemma of the French Intelligentsia', he wrote that the French intelligentsia were yet to recover from the shock of the Terror, and that they remained powerless to institute reform because of their enduring fear of the masses. The masses, they believed, were 'stupid, insensitive brutes', and to rouse them meant risking 'a second Terror'.\footnote{105} Nonetheless, Clark warned, the intelligentsia would need to put aside this paralytic fear: the masses would need to be used in order to bring about reform to Vichy France and to win a French victory from Germany.

A preoccupation with European matters and the 'masses' continued a few months later when Clark published a review of J.P. Mayer's *Study of Alexis de Tocqueville*. Mayer had apparently set out to assess Tocqueville's discussion on the mass state and its

\footnote{100} Holt, *Manning Clark*, p.65.  
\footnote{101} Clark, *Quest for Grace*, p.119; Bate also suggests that despite the headmaster's original aspirations for Clark at Geelong Grammar, it was a relief to the school when Clark resigned his position for that which he then took at the University of Melbourne. See Bate, *Light Blue Down Under*, p.213.  
\footnote{102} Holt, *Manning Clark*, p.62.  
\footnote{103} Clark, *Quest for Grace*, pp.132 & 128.  
\footnote{105} C.M.H. Clark, 'The Dilemma of the French Intelligentsia: A Reply to Professor Chisholm', *Australian Quarterly*, vol.12(4), December 1940, pp.51-52.
inherent problems. It was, he argued, prone to exploitation by the ‘will of a despot who has seized power’.\textsuperscript{106} The conclusion to Clark’s review is perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the article. Admitting that Mayer’s book may prove valuable if it stimulated the ‘Anglo-Saxon intelligentsia to re-examine the whole problem of liberalism in the light of the new conditions’, Clark also called on the British (Australians apparently included) to maintain their quest for victory in the European war. Tocqueville had called the British “the grand jury of mankind in the cause of freedom”, Clark noted. If that were so, he reasoned, ‘we shall prove unworthy of our stewardship if we preserve an ostrich-like indifference to the factors which have shipwrecked the quests for liberty on the continent’.\textsuperscript{107} Again, Clark had demonstrated a continuing interest in European matters and an enduring affinity with the British people.

Clark did not apparently participate in any war service, probably because of his epilepsy. Instead, Clark’s war years were spent teaching and completing his postgraduate studies. Having finished his thesis in 1943, Clark still cherished the hope that Tocqueville would offer some peace to his inner turmoil. Nonetheless, a sense that something else might do so was also stirring in his mind. ‘A great change was coming over me,’ Clark later wrote. ‘My eyes were ceasing to gaze with longing towards Europe and old civilisation’.\textsuperscript{108} Manning Clark’s work on European literature was to culminate with the submission of his Tocqueville thesis. Then his discovery of Australia began in earnest. Changes in Australian politics around the time that Clark had returned to Australia may have helped this process somewhat. It already appeared that Prime Minister Menzies may have been under threat after he had been forced to accept a coalition government with two independent members of parliament. Then, when John Curtin won office in 1941, ‘tears of hope’ stung the cheeks of Geelong Grammar’s controversial teacher. Maybe, he thought, the Australian people were about to become something beautiful; maybe ‘they were about to discover something about themselves’.\textsuperscript{109}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[107] \textit{ibid.}, p.211.
\item[108] Clark, \textit{Quest for Grace}, p.133.
\item[109] \textit{ibid.}, p.135.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Australian literature and philosophy were to influence Clark's awakening far more than any movement within federal politics ever could. So far he had only read a limited amount of Australian literature: Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms* and Marcus Clarke's *For the Term of His Natural Life* were those he could remember later. In the later years of the war, Curtin's Labor government was keen to promote the circulation of Australian literature and so devised the Australian Pocket Library Series. From those volumes Clark purchased the seminal book, *Australia*, by the renowned British-Australian, Keith Hancock. Hancock's work undoubtedly taught the younger historian much about himself, for the experience of living in two worlds with two loyalties was evident in the story of Hancock's own life. One minute, Clark recalled, Hancock would be speaking as an All Souls fellow, and in the next telling stories of 'fishing for yabbies in the Mitchell River'.

From the same Australian Pocket Library Series, Clark also bought a copy of prose and poetry by Henry Lawson. This was perhaps the most significant event in his awakening to Australia. Clark's attraction to Lawson's work was immediate; 'I became a Lawson man for life,' he agreed. From the words of Lawson's poetry, Clark was told for perhaps the first time that Australians need not be 'second rate Europeans' forever, but that Australians had a destiny of their own. Here he found that his own disquiet with Old Australia's attachment to Britain - its 'cultural cringe' - had been echoed by Lawson decades before. His poem, 'Song of the Republic', particularly caught Clark's attention and his heart stirred as he read the lines:

'Sons of the South make choice between
(Sons of the South, choose true)
The Land of Morn and the Land of E'en,
The Old Dead Tree and the Young Tree Green,
The Land that belongs to the lord and Queen,

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10 It is perhaps surprising that Clark first read Keith Hancock's *Australia* as late as the 1940s. This, however, is the case which he presented in *Quest for Grace*, p.136. Moreover, in his article on Hancock's *Australia*, Clark made special note of the edition printed as part of the Australian Pocket Library Series, suggesting, at least, that it held particular and ongoing significance for him. See, Manning Clark, 'Hancock's *Australia* and Australian Historiography: A note', *Historical Studies*, vol.13(51), October 1968, pp.329-332.


12 *ibid.*, p.136.

13 *ibid.*, p.137.
And the Land that belongs to you."\(^{114}\)

For the first time in his quest for wisdom, an Australian writer would challenge the words of Dostoevsky's Ivan Karamazov for significance in Clark's pilgrimage, and he was awakened at last to Australia as the young tree green. Later he would recognise that the Australia of Lawson and his colleagues was not that which he wished to share — it was all-white, all-male and mostly mythical.\(^ {115}\) In the mean time, though, the nationalism of Lawson and the other patriots of the late nineteenth century had begun to warm Clark's heart.

Clark's discovery of Australia was still a gradual process, having started with his return to Australia and culminating in his lectureship at the University of Melbourne in 1946. Years later, he was asked of the factors determining his discovery of Australia and Stephen Holt printed Clark's response:

**Discovering Australia**

The influences were probably the following:-

- The decision to return to Australia in August, 1940.
- The response to English influences at Geelong Grammar School, 1940-3.
- Reading Lawson and Furphy in 1943.
- Talks with James McAuley at Corio in 1943.
- Death of my mother, 31 March 1943.
- The return to Phillip Island, January 1944, and the rediscovery of the appearance of Australia.
- Lecturing on Australian politics at the University of Melbourne in second half of 1944. This meant reading a lot of Australian history and literature, especially Hancock, Fitzpatrick, Martin Boyd and Henry Handel Richardson.
- Seeing a performance of "Ned Kelly" by Douglas Stewart at Union Theatre, University of Melbourne, 1946.
- Lecturing in Australian History, 1946.\(^ {116}\)

The list is self-explanatory, and certainly each of the issues were important in the whole process of discovery. His appointment as lecturer in Australian history by Max Crawford was probably the most significant in the long run, for it both ensured and

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\(^ {115}\) Clark, *Quest for Grace*, p.138.

perpetuated Clark’s life-time career in the discipline. But, as Holt recognised, exposure to Australian literature and encounters with novelists, poets and playwrights formed a ‘clear majority’ in Clark’s response. Clearly, ‘Manning Clark’s discovery of Australia was a literary event’.117

Not that Clark’s developing nationalism stilled his interest in the traditions and literature of Britain and Europe. Clark was therefore delighted to read Martin Boyd’s *The Montforts*, for in the story he discerned a common bond with the author and recognised that:

‘Here is a man who knows all about the pull in two different directions – the pull to Australia for human warmth, the pull to Europe for ‘older civilisation’. I begin to believe it is possible to be magnificently alive in Australia.’118

Henry Handel Richardson also described similar dual loyalties with which Clark felt some affinity in her stories, *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*.119 Joseph Furphy, on the other hand, proved more of a challenge for Clark to accept. Manning Clark had turned to the works of Furphy (Tom Collins) after digesting those of Henry Lawson. Furphy, he recognised, presented the Australian bushman as an ‘innocent’, while he portrayed the Englishman as the ‘corrupter’. Given his affinity with British Australia – even given his mixed experiences while in England – Clark found this image particularly unsettling:

‘Furphy was unmistakably Australian.... Furphy believed in Australia. He had a simple motto, a motto I was not ready for at that time: *Aut Australia, aut nihil*. (Australia or nothing). There was the rub – I was not prepared, nor never will be prepared, to discard Europe.’120

This tension between the Australia of Lawson and Furphy and the Old Australia of the Hopes, was echoed in Clark’s first article on Australian issues since his school-boy study of Aborigines in 1931. His haunting ‘Letter to Tom Collins’ suggested that Clark had certainly awoken to the Australian story, and that he had also begun to realise there was more to it than the jingoistic nationalism of the earlier *Bulletin* writers. Taking Collins’ treatment of ‘mateship’ as the subject for the letter, Clark questioned the authenticity of this key Australian ideal. Collins and Lawson had practically ‘canonised the word ‘mate’”, suggested Clark. But, to his anguish, ‘mateyness’ and the ‘Dad and

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117 *ibid.*, p.97.
118 Clark, *Quest for Grace*, p.141.
119 Axel Clark, Interview, 1 February 1999.
Dave' image had now become all that was vulgar in Australian culture. Furthermore, the rankling over such vulgarity was offending British or Old Australia, while reinforcing the cultural cringe of ordinary Australians:

'You see there is a rift in our society – the elites flee to the garret, to the polite drawing-room, to Europe, while the people ape the mate ideal, being bonzer sorts!'  

Significantly, Clark had recognised the two Australias and written as though he stood between them. Hinting at the journey in the Australian story that he was about to undertake, Clark confessed that the mateyness of the Bulletin writers was not enough: 'we want, curse us, the something more'. His own indecision, finally, was revealed in his closing remarks to Collins:

'When we see Dad and Dave we feel angry with you and Lawson. When we contemplate the alternative we are thankful for you and your ideal. I wonder what we will do.'

By 1949 Clark had received greater exposure to nationalist Australian literature, having by then taught Australian politics and history for several years. The dissatisfaction with the Lawson and Furphy vision of Australia which had been present in his letter to Tom Collins was continued in his second Meanjin article, 'Tradition in Australian Literature'. In that discussion, Clark assessed recurring themes in Australian literature before concluding that Australians ought to turn to European literature to seek answers to the bigger questions, or to recover 'the something more' which was apparently missing in the work of his compatriots. Britain, of course, stood by that time on the edge of losing its empire and grasping at its past glory. Clark, though, seemed unaware of the monumental changes which were already precipitating Britain's obvious decline, and demonstrated again his ongoing struggle between Australianness and Britishness.

The best works of Australian literature, Clark reasoned, were produced between 1880 and 1910, and were dominated by writers such as Furphy, Lawson, Miles Franklin and Victor Daley. Their literature was essentially Australian, nationalist, rural and

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120 Clark, Quest for Grace, p.139.
122 ibid., p.41.
123 ibid., p.41.
implicitly anti-imperial. Their nationalism, too, was exclusive – as the *Bulletin*’s slogan ‘Australia for the Australians’ suggested.\(^{124}\) In seeking answers to the ‘big questions’ in his life, Clark hoped that the work of Lawson and his colleagues may have helped uncover some answers. He was, apparently, disappointed. But in the quest for that understanding, his own experiences influenced his interpretation of the Australian writers – they were Australians, they captured the Australian experience, but were unable to seek a deeper meaning. So, he found, ‘the man interested in the ‘deeper’ problems of life and death still turns, in many instances, to European writers for instruction’. Australian writers, he argued, still lacked the finesse, polish and sensitivity of their European counterparts. Perhaps, Clark conceded, it was the penalty of ‘belonging to an older civilisation, while living in a young and vigorous society’.\(^{125}\) The ‘something more’ he was seeking still eluded his grasp. We may gather from his own confession, and infer from his discussions on Australian literature, that Clark’s discovery of Australia had taken place. But the journey in identity was still to follow. In fact, the rest of his life would be occupied with an exploration of what it meant to be Australian. In the mean time, Britishness remained part of his identity and part of his loyalties. He was still a child of his age – an Austral-Briton with loyalties to the Old Dead Tree, as well as to the Young Tree Green.

In September 1949 Manning Clark packed his family into the car and set out along the Hume Highway from Melbourne to Canberra. ‘At that time I had no idea it was to be such a long journey, or where it would take me,’ wrote Clark years later.\(^{126}\) But a vision of the history of Australia had begun to take root in his mind:

‘Teaching Australian history had borne a great dream about Australia. There were many components in that dream. There was some of Ned Kelly’s mad dream of Australia as the big country were only eagles fly in the sky…. There was some of ‘The Banjo’ in it, some of the ‘vision splendid on the sunlit plains extended’…. There was a vision of an Australia that was coming to be, a vision of an Australia which had made the choice between ‘The Old Dead Tree and the Young Tree Green’…. ‘


\(^{125}\) ibid., p. 22.

‘There was a dream that we Australians were about to make a contribution to the conversation of humanity.’

The academic environment of Melbourne had stifled the creative force of that emerging dream. Canberra, on the other hand, ‘held out the promise of a place where no intellectual tradition weighed on the brain of the living’. Manning Clark was going to the developing Canberra University College as their foundation professor of history. He was also going there to write the story of Australia.

Since the mid-1940s Clark had slowly been gathering documents and sifting through other primary sources from which he planned to prepare his history, and from which Australian history could be taught. Then in 1950 and in 1955, he released a collection of historical documents from which all students of Australian history could consult. By this time, Clark’s consciousness of Australia's past had undergone a significant revolution and in response, his essay ‘Re-writing Australian History’ captured some of his emerging ideas. It was, in fact, a paper fanfaring Clark’s intentions to start the story of Australia, and in which he declared his intentions to drop the ‘comforters of the past’, the British Philistine expectations of Australia, and the Bulletin myth of Australian identity and nationalism. Instead, Clark wrote, he wanted to ‘put forward new ideas for this generation’.

Firstly, the historian exhorted his readers, Australians had to forgo the idea that ‘our past has irrevocably condemned us to the role of cultural barbarians’ and to remain forever unable to be ‘cultivated, graceful Europeans’. Australians had for generations been scorned because of this presumption, Clark thought, but he now argued that historians must abandon the image of Australia as a ‘Cultural Desert’. The previous assumption that common goals and standards of living in Australia had meant that there were ‘no differences in the past’, was utterly wrong. For one thing, Australians remained divided over the two great faiths of Christianity and the Enlightenment. Then, he added, there were the differences within the church over issues such as conscription.

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and education. Australians may not have endured a revolution or civil war, but clearly, Clark argued, the history of Australia was a vibrant one of diversity and conflict.\textsuperscript{132} Secondly, the myth of Australia's convict origins needed to be challenged -- an issue Clark soon elaborated in another article. George Arnold Wood had previously presented Australia's convicts as small-time thieves, who were victims of economic change and social injustice in Great Britain. Clark protested that this perspective was 'just not true'. Australia's convicts were far worse than humanitarian interpretations had allowed, he argued, and Australians ought to embrace the convicts for their real nature so to uncover their actual impact on the development of Australian identity.\textsuperscript{133}

Clark also suggested that historians had to drop the ideas of the past which had been created to support the political and cultural movements between 1880 and 1920. This period, according to the leaders of the time, was the 'golden age' in Australian cultural, political and financial development. Clark argued, though, that the exclusivist Australian image in this perspective distorted the understanding of Australia's past and stultified the growth in the present.\textsuperscript{134} So, the first move in re-writing Australia's history had to be to drop the comforting ideas of the past. A replacement vision still eluded Clark, but he was to awaken soon to the themes for his history of Australia.

Clark's introduction to his \textit{Select Documents, 1851-1900}, had hinted at just such a thing. Of particular interest to Clark then were the two great pushes for democracy in colonial Australia from 1856 to 1865, and from 1880 to 1900. Implied in the tales unravelled by the documents of democratic reform and economic prosperity was a story of conflict between the land and power holders, and the ordinary Australians. Later, in \textit{A History of Australia}, he recognised the same conflict as being between the Australian native-born and the British colonial elite. Clark also revealed in the \textit{Select Documents} his growing unease at the British connection in Australia. The 'darker side' of Australia in the nineteenth century, he criticised, was the excess of 'borrowing from and dependence on Great Britain'. Australians relied on Britain for all materials necessary in their daily

\textsuperscript{131} \textit{ibid.}, p.131.
\textsuperscript{132} \textit{ibid.}, pp.132-135.
\textsuperscript{133} \textit{ibid.}, p.135.
\textsuperscript{134} \textit{ibid.}, pp.136-139.
lives and for guidance on all matters of education, religion and popular culture. School and university books and teachers came directly from the British Isles, as did most of those holding senior civil appointments. Australian leisure time was also mostly dependent on the 'British product'. 'The habit of imitation, and the social or cultural cringe were things that time would cure,' noted Clark hopefully. Yet clearly the 'evils' weren't cured completely over time. Nevertheless, by the time Australia was treading its foolish path towards Suez, Clark had come to recognise the story of conflict in Australia's history and, significantly, expressed some displeasure with the Australian imperial connection.

An essay probably inspired by the work completed in the Select Documents and the conclusions of 'Re-writing Australian History', was Clark's two-part article in Historical Studies in 1956. 'The Origins of the Convicts Transported to Eastern Australia, 1787-1852' is another fascinating and extremely important resource in gauging Clark's interest in Australian history and personal belonging at the time. Here Clark took the opportunity to challenge the prevailing humanitarian, nationalist and socialist interpretations of the convict people in Australia. This perspective, as he had noted in 'Re-writing Australian History', portrayed the convicts as starving victims of British economic and social change of the times. So, he suggested, historians had mistakenly accepted that the convicts were 'mainly agricultural workers: that they were casual as distinct from professional criminals'. Clark, on the other hand, used such sources as the convict ships' indents, the British police and court records, and testimonies of people such as Samuel Marsden, Patrick Colquhoun and Edward Gibbon Wakefield to argue that Australia's convicts were morally bankrupt, repeat offenders and that they belonged to a professional criminal 'class'. So, he concluded, a reinterpretation of the convicts' origins was overdue and necessary in assessing their real role in forming Australian society. By denying their innocence, Clark believed that he was restoring their agency within history.

135 ibid., pp.xiv-xv.
There are many questions raised by Clark’s argument which lend valuable insight into his perspectives at the time, and of prime consideration is the source of his evidence. For instance, Clark used the testimonies of imperial and colonial leaders to vouch for the alleged wickedness of the convicts. The diary of the naval officer, Surgeon Haslam, recorded the bawdy behaviour of the convicts as his sermons on the “beauties and conveniences” of “the light of truth” were met by the prisoners with “a roar of blasphemy”.\(^{138}\) The evidence of Patrick Colquhoun, whom Clark called a ‘sharp and sympathetic observer of conditions in London at the turn of the century’, is accepted without question. Colquhoun reported the existence of a class of thieves in London, consisting of “profligate and dissolute characters”, daily “seducing others to intemperance, lewdness, debauchery, gambling and excess”. The Reverend Richard Johnson wrote with disgust and despair at the “profane” behaviour of the convicts on the eve of their departure for New South Wales; speakers within the House of Commons further testified to a professional class of criminals, which Edward Gibbon Wakefield confirmed in his 1830s thesis, *Facts Relating to the Punishment of Death in the Metropolis*. The ‘social investigator’, Henry Mayhew, also maintained that the convicts emanated from a professional criminal class after citing the ‘opinions’ of the Constabulary Commissioners.\(^{139}\) Clark accepted these reports and opinions unconditionally.

The case which Clark presented in ‘Origins of the Convicts’ cannot rest unchallenged. In arguing that the Australian convicts originated from a professional criminal class which consistently demonstrated unreformable behaviour, he had to rely unquestioningly on the observations of the aristocratic and bourgeois classes of Great Britain and the colonies at the time. Colquhoun, who has since been described as, at best, ‘a very prejudiced witness who allowed his Gaelic imagination, or middle-class prejudices, to run away with him’, was accepted without suspicion of bias.\(^{140}\) So were the opinions of the police who had the vested interest of prosecution of those they


\(^{139}\) ibid., pp.133-134.

charged and arrested. Wakefield, writing from prison himself, and surely with an interest in divorcing himself from the ‘common criminal’, was accepted equally unconditionally. So to persuade his readers to his perspective, Clark reverted to the evidence of men of the same class and social standing as his own Marsden and Hope forebears. Furthermore, it suggests that Clark was writing as an ‘imperialist’ historian – by using the evidence of men of the Old World he perpetuated the power of the gentry and British power-holders, and increased their voice in the pages of our history.

Even the reliability of Clark’s empirical research remains questionable. The historian’s main documentary source was the indents of the ships which transported the convicts to Australia. From these he concluded that the transportees were mostly urban dwellers, convicted of theft and other crimes against property.\textsuperscript{141} A more recent study by Deborah Oxley of the same documents indicated that a large proportion of the convicts – particularly the women – were transported for their first convicted offence. According to Oxley’s assessment, nearly seventy percent of women from England were sent to the colonies with no prior convictions.\textsuperscript{142} While less than three percent of transported English women had been convicted of violent crimes, nearly eighty percent had been punished for the more minor matters of stealing or robbery.\textsuperscript{143} Furthermore, Oxley found that items of clothing or money were more usually the favoured targets of the women’s theft,\textsuperscript{144} items which would mostly be used either to feed or clothe themselves in their poverty. Such statistics hardly foster an image of the hardened criminal ‘type’ which Clark believed arrived in Australia. Oxley’s assessment of the same records cannot support Clark’s thesis on the socio-economic origins of the convicts. So we are left questioning his objectivity in research, while suspecting that he was both a child of his age and of his heritage. Despite all his progress in the study of Australian history and identity, Clark’s dual loyalties to the Old World and new, and between the Hopes and the ‘native born’ were still very apparent.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{141} Clark, ‘Origins of the Convicts’, Part I, pp.128-130.
  \item \textsuperscript{142} Deborah Oxley, \textit{Convict Maids: The Forced Migration of Women to Australia}, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1996, p.71.
  \item \textsuperscript{143} \textit{ibid.}, p.68.
  \item \textsuperscript{144} \textit{ibid.}, p.69.
\end{itemize}
The coming years did much to nurture this divided spirit of the historian. While Clark flourished in the supportive academic environment of Canberra, he was also gravely troubled by the growing ascendancy of the conservative Robert Menzies and his Liberal Party. Although rankled by the growing conservatism of Australia under Menzies and by the strength of British Australia, Clark was still without the words necessary to write his great history of Australia. Stephen Holt suggested that Clark's discovery of Australia remained slow because his 'deep roots in British Australia' distanced him from much of the environment and people he wanted to write about.\(^{145}\) Holt also recognised the torn spirit of the historian as he faced his Australia of the 1950s:

'Manning Clark's roots in British Australia were strong and he did not drift unselfconsciously or in a naïve way in the direction of the legendary Australia. He was aware of the great divide between the two worlds, a divide that he felt in his own psyche. In the 1950s, he was as ever a man divided - torn between two worlds.'\(^{146}\)

In fact, Clark's own consciousness of the 'divide in his psyche' meant that he had to be particularly deliberate in his difficult separation from British Australia. Yet even as Clark rejected it as a dying anachronism, the conservative British Australia represented by Menzies rose again to the fore. So, increasingly uncomfortable at the surviving imperialism in Australia under Menzies' reign, Clark accepted a Rockefeller Foundation grant after receiving a year of sabbatical leave from the Australian National University in 1956, and 'sought refuge in faraway countries, where he gathered the materials and resources that would enable him to survive the years of unleavened bread' when he returned again to Australia.\(^{147}\)

At the end of 1955 Clark travelled to southeast Asia with Dymphna, spending three months sifting through the archives of countries which might have captured a part of the history of Australia. In Jakarta, he set about collecting Dutch material on the naval explorers such as Abel Tasman and Dirk Hartog. He was also interested, according to his son Axel, in discovering what the Asian people had known about Australia.\(^{148}\) From there the Clarks gradually made their way again to Great Britain. 'England', Clark

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\(^{146}\) ibid., p.146.

\(^{147}\) ibid., p.144.
remembered later, 'had riches for anyone aspiring to tell the story of humanity in Australia'. The British Museum held vast quantities of documentary material from which he consulted, while the visual and artistic treasures of the National Gallery held further 'moments of illumination'. Clark already believed that there were confrontations in Australia's rich history – a theory he had tried to explore in his articles such as 'Rewriting Australian History'. When he travelled to Dublin in April he was confronted with 'the ancient wrong of the British rule in Ireland'. There, he wrote:

‘Out in the nippy air of a Dublin afternoon in April there was a moment of excitement when I knew what should be one of the confrontations in the story of Australia: between the upright men and women of the Protestant Ascendancy, the ones who feared God and eschewed evil, and the men and women who knew exaltation after partaking of the Body of Christ’. Clark had found part of his vision of the story of Australia. Absorbing the stories of human folly in the artistic treasures of the Netherlands, and then in reflecting on the life of Dostoevsky, he had found his other theme: 'how in the beginning of white man's history in Australia there were three faiths, Catholic Christendom, Protestant Christianity and the Enlightenment'.

Manning Clark had finally captured a vision of a history of Australia. So being, he retired to his Oxford desk on 1 October 1956 to pen his immortal words, 'Civilisation did not begin in Australia until the last quarter of the eighteenth century'. It was ironic in many ways: there sat the historian who was troubled by British Australia, ensconced in the heart of empire to write the story of the Australian people. His inspiration for the story had not come from his native land, but from the archives of Asia, from the manuscripts of England, from the Cathedrals of Ireland and from the art history of Europe. Many years later, Clark confessed to the irony, writing that as a child of his age 'I was still collecting my spiritual food from a foreign harvest'. But it was also, in other ways, something of a tragedy:

'I was a child of my age, and paid a great penalty for that, because I missed out on one of the great tragedies in the history of Australia. I saw it as the

148 Axel Clark, Interview, 1 February 1999.
151 ibid., p.18.
152 ibid., p.19.
153 ibid., p.28.
coming of ‘civilisation’ to the ancient and barbarous continent: I failed to
see it through the eyes of the original occupants of Australia – the
aborigines.”

In this way, Clark’s first attempt at the story of Australia remained tainted with the brush
of Old Australia. He may have believed in his last years of life that in 1956 he had
wanted to tell the story of the ‘Young Tree Green’, but in reality there was little
evidence in the early volumes of *A History of Australia* to suggest that his loyalties lay
other than in the camp of British Australia. This is not to deny that the total *History of
Australia* saw a greater journey in Clark’s consciousness, identity and allegiances. It is
merely to suggest, as we shall see, that a sincere change in his mindset is not to be
detected until well into the pages of the saga’s third volume, released some seventeen
years later.

To air his emerging vision and themes of *A History of Australia*, Clark presented
a paper to the Tasmanian Historical Research Association in 1958, based on the work he
was undertaking for the first volume. Published later by the Association, the paper
continued on in much the same manner from the ‘Origins of the Convicts’. Instead of
assessing the impact of convict and other social groups on the formation of Australian
society, though, Clark discussed the impact of the three great faiths of Protestantism,
Catholicism and the Enlightenment on the developing Australian colonies. Conditions in
Ireland under the Protestant Ascendancy had created habits of subjection, poverty and
rebellion against authority among the Irish who freely or forcibly arrived in Australia, he
wrote. The three most important characteristics of the Catholic faith in the Antipodes,
then, were that it was ‘anti-English’, ‘radical’ and tainted with ‘bigotry and
sectarianism’. It was also egalitarian in its leanings. Protestantism, wrote Clark on the
other hand, brought faith in the Bible and belief that the Protestant religion created a
‘higher civilisation’ and increased social order. Its legacy in Australia was the
preservation of a moral code and social order. It was a doomed faith, concluded Clark,
for as John Henry Newman had noted a hundred years earlier, Protestantism would

155 Clark, *Historian’s Apprenticeship*, p.29.
157 *ibid.*, p.22.
eventually “melt away like a snow-drift”, and in the mean time exist only as a middle ground between Catholicism and Rationalism.\textsuperscript{158} Finally, the ‘enemies of God’, those followers of the Enlightenment, were responsible for the belief in Australia of happiness for mankind on earth instead of in some ‘false promise of happiness’ in eternity.\textsuperscript{159}

These themes were continued in Volume One of \textit{A History of Australia}, which dealt largely with the coming of these faiths to Australia’s shores. The first instalment of Clark’s massive saga encompassed the near and actual discoveries of Australia, the settlement of Britain’s penal colony on the eastern shores, the rise of free immigration under Macquarie’s administration, and the heightened English consciousness of the value of the new Australian colonies. It is, above all, a study of what Clark regarded as the coming of sophisticated civilisation to Australia and the struggles and conflicts in ensuring its growth and survival. Many observers have since levelled severe criticism at the factual accuracy of the first volume of Clark’s history, and noted their discomfort with his prose and narrative style. Malcolm Ellis’ review was cited earlier in this discussion, and remains probably the best known criticism of the publication. Nonetheless, it is not intended to use this forum to engage in the debate surrounding the discrepancies, flaws and other shortcomings of Manning Clark’s \textit{A History of Australia} (whichever volume). Rather, we shall review the first and succeeding volumes to measure the influence of Clark’s Britishness and Old World heritage on his interpretation of Australia’s history, and to determine his changing appreciation of his own identity.

Clark began his history of Australia with the story of the many attempts to discover, explore and conquer the formidable coastline of the Great Southland by Asian and European powers. Interestingly, in the fifty six pages he had set aside for the discovery of Australia, two were allocated at the outset to discuss Aboriginal history prior to white settlement in 1788. Civilisation, he wrote, did not come to Australia until the late eighteenth century. The first Australians may have developed their own cultures and way of life, but it was by no means so sophisticated that Clark could regard it as a

\textsuperscript{158} \textit{ibid.}, p.23.  
\textsuperscript{159} \textit{ibid.}, p.23.
'civilisation'. Clark wrote that the first immigration of Aboriginal people to Australia came when the Negritos were forced to leave their nearby lands to the north after their hunting grounds had been invaded by people of a 'higher material culture'. Not only, then, are we led to believe that the Aboriginal people were significantly inferior to western civilisation when it arrived, but we are also informed that it was their very 'inferiority' to other races which had led to their migration to Australia in the first place. While Aboriginal history laboured under this kind of presumption, it is little wonder that their story received little attention in Clark's history of the Australian people. After all, he argued, 'Of the way of life of these peoples before the coming of European civilisation, little need, or indeed can, be said'.

The experience of Aborigines under white Australia is one means by which Clark's interpretation of Australia under empire can be assessed. Certainly Volume One leaves the impression that Clark regarded British civilisation in Australia as the arrival of a blessing to the wretchedness of the indigenous existence. He noted the previous concessions from other historians that the early Australians were 'intelligent' enough to adapt to their environment, and that this in turn reduced their 'failure to advance from barbarism'. Nonetheless, Clark reasoned that the entrenched 'barbarism' of the Aborigines 'deprived them of the material resources' necessary to repel invasion. In an argument vaguely similar to that of Geoffrey Blainey, Clark inferred that the destruction of the Aboriginal culture was almost their own fault and caused by their own 'inability to detect meaning in any way of life' other than their own.

The image which Clark established in the early pages of his first volume improved little with the cameo appearances Aborigines made in the rest of the story. When the 'exceedingly savage black barbarian inhabitants' came face to face with William Dampier's exploratory party in 1688, Clark made sure to capture the horror with which they were described by the Englishman:

160 Clark, Volume I, p.3.
161 ibid., p.4.
162 ibid., p.4.
163 ibid., p.5.
164 ibid., p.37.
"The Hodmadods of Monomatapa, though a nasty People, yet for Wealth are Gentlemen to these; who have no Houses and Skin Garments, Sheep, Poultry, and Fruits of the Earth ... and setting aside their humane shape they differ but little from Brutes."  

Dampier, of course, went on to describe in painstaking detail how far short the Aborigines appeared to fall from civilisation, and Clark made no effort to contradict him. Rather, when James Cook made his fateful journey to Australia's east coast, Clark repeated Cook's similar sentiments on the state of the Aborigines, to which he paid almost less interest than Cook's description of the Australian landscape. On this occasion, Clark wrote with the polished dismissiveness of a superior race: Cook found the character of the Aborigines 'timorous and inoffensive', their cultural achievements lamentable and, again, far short of civilised standards. The sophistication of Clark's language may have increased beyond measure, but the tone of his enquiry differed little from his analysis of 'The Australian Aborigine' in 1931. In fact, the very manipulation of his own language and his silent response to the words of others, increased the imperialist overtones of his treatment of Australia's indigenous people. Rob Pascoe observed as much in what he called a 'lack of direct authorial comment' in A History of Australia, and the 'studied selectivity and arrangements of the 'facts'. Although the words belonged to others, Clark still shamed the indigenous Australians by repeating the reports of Dampier and Cook, and by not challenging the beliefs of those such as Sir Joseph Banks, that the 'natives' were 'naked' and 'treacherous', but 'cowardly' nonetheless. On the suffering of the first Australians under the white invasion, Clark said almost nothing.

Nor did other cultures or civilisations other than the British fare much better in Clark's story. Fresh from his reconnaissance in southeast Asia, Clark wrote that it was surprising the Aborigines had not been invaded by other people before the late eighteenth century. There was certainly no geographical barrier to migration from southeast Asia, given that even primitive crafts could make the crossing to northern Australia from New Guinea or Indonesia with little trouble. The two Malay migrations into the Indonesian

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165 William Dampier cited in ibid., p.39.
166 ibid., p.51.
167 Pascoe, op.cit., p.80.
area in 3000 BC and 200 BC, wrote Clark, did not see fit to pass further east of Timor, partly because they were unfamiliar with the territory beyond. Yet even the more advanced colonising movements in the region – the Chinese, Hindus and Muslims – made little attempt to reach the coast of Australia.169

The strength of European civilisation and technology, on the other hand, was far superior and therefore capable of doing that very thing. Like their Asian predecessors, European merchants and sailors in the region were in search of spices, perfumes and wealth. Sustained by the geographical hypotheses of the Greeks and assisted by their superior nautical technology, the Portuguese and Spanish were the first European sailors who attempted to conquer the spice trade and discover the mythical islands of gold believed to be in the south. By the seventeenth century, the Dutch were also making inroads to the region, and were rising to predominance. But to the Dutch, and English sailors who followed, the Australian shores appeared barren, savage and far from hospitable. New Holland could not possibly have been their islands of gold, and so the Dutch passed up the opportunity for their rich, if unlikely, prize. The English, as history knows, persevered. So, Clark concluded, the Dutch missed the opportunity to conquer the land, and it was left instead to the strength of the British to claim the rich inheritance of the new world, and to swell the power of their growing empire.170

The imperial context of the young Australian colonies is made very clear in the first volume of A History of Australia. If Geoffrey Bolton had overlooked much of the imperial connection in the developing Western Australian settlement in his early work, Clark instead made the British connection to New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land very clear. To begin, Clark assessed the social and economic reasons behind the decision to establish a penal settlement on the isolated Pacific shores. But where Blainey later devised a creative thesis on the defence and trade advantages in the settlement, Clark mostly discussed the urgencies of Britain’s exploding gaols in the motivations for the colonisation of New South Wales. ‘One factor alone’, wrote Clark, convinced the Home

168 Clark, Volume I, p.62.
169 See ibid., pp.5-9, for Clark’s full account of the Hindu, Malay, Muslim and Chinese movements in the region, prior to the seventeenth century.
Government of the merits of a settlement in New South Wales: ‘the several gaols and places for confinement of felons were so overcrowded’ that the greatest danger existed of their escape or disease.\(^{171}\) Then, as the colony developed over time, Clark demonstrated the reliance of the Australian colonies on British supplies and regular imports for their survival, the important trade connections which increased after the rise of the sheep and wheat industries, the increasing immigration of free British settlers to the colony, and the establishment of British Protestantism as the dominant religion in the colony and as the defender of the moral and civic order.

It is interesting to note that the implications of Clark’s treatment of the convicts in Volume One differs little from those of his earlier article, ‘Origins of the Convicts’. Again, Clark argued that the transportees belonged to a violent and professional criminal class, typified by profane behaviour and immorality. The scene of the departure by the First Fleet from Portsmouth attracted special attention and was used by Clark to support his image of the convicts. So, he wrote, the town descended into chaos as the marines and officers joined the convicts to prepare for their voyage:

‘The shop-keepers, in terror, lowered their shutters; the householders barred their doors; the convicts overcrowded the transports; the women convicts lolled around on the decks in indescribable filth and their all too scanty clothing.’\(^{172}\)

That the women, noted here particularly, may have been ‘filthy’ because of the environment they had been gaoled in for some time prior to the fleet’s departure, is not conceded. Rather, Clark implied that their dirty and scanty dress complemented their alleged immorality, as they ‘lolled’ on deck, instead of reflecting the privations they had endured so far in captivity. In fact, Clark noted, ‘all the evidence suggests’ that most of the transportees were professional criminals.\(^{173}\) That they had all been punished with the most severe sentence available, save death, inferred that their crimes were of the highest magnitude.\(^{174}\) Nor did their image improve with his telling.\(^{175}\)

\(^{170}\) See *ibid.*, pp.9-56 for Clark’s full account of European exploration of the south seas and of the Australian coastline.

\(^{171}\) *ibid.* , p.69.

\(^{172}\) *ibid.*, p.77.

\(^{173}\) *ibid.*, p.94.

\(^{174}\) *ibid.*, p.91.

\(^{175}\) See Clark’s descriptions of the convicts and their behaviour, *ibid.*, p.95.
Clark continued to support his argument with similar sources to those used in his earlier article. Court records were cited without questioning the accuracy of the findings, or the biases of the law, magistrates or jurists. Other members of the gentry and upper classes were also consulted: the captains, surgeons, chaplains and charity workers who all recorded their experiences with the convicts and ‘testified to their degradation and spiritual wretchedness’. But it is again difficult to accept Clark’s image of the convicts. While we accept today that some true reprobates found their way into the penal system, certainly not all would have been of ‘evil’ character merely because they had stolen the occasional item of food or clothing. Others, quite probably, may have been completely innocent of their alleged crimes. It is tempting, then, to believe that Clark’s convict image is largely fabrication.

If Malcolm Ellis is correct, Clark had at least created the scene of the First Fleet’s departure, for the fleet had apparently left not from Portsmouth, but from the Isle of Wight. So if the chaotic atmosphere we read of earlier, where the shopkeepers and home owners armed their establishments in fear of the convicts was merely a figment of Clark’s imagination, then perhaps, too, the questionable morality and character of the convicts which was pictured in *A History of Australia* was also a creation of Clark’s prejudices. Certainly if he is not entirely wrong in the presumptions on their character, then their image which he created from some factual evidence must have been at least heavily influenced by his own opinions and allegiances. For example, Deborah Oxley wrote exhaustively in *Convict Maids* of the valuable skills and occupational experiences which convict women brought to and used in the colonies. Clark, on the other hand, admitted that the transportees came from a wide range of occupations and trades, but argued that the variety of experiences disguised the ‘aversion to labour’ which had driven all convicts to crime. ‘As a descendant of Samuel Marsden, he could be expected to view with some scepticism claims made on behalf of the moral worth of convicts’, wrote

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176 *ibid.*, pp.95-97.
177 *Oxley, op.cit.* See particularly, pp.98-127 and on.
178 Clark, *Volume I*, p.94.
Stephen Holt. Marsden had chafed at the rehabilitation of convicts and emancipists into society, and his descendant offered them little more grace.

Towards the end of the volume, there are hints that the role of the convicts in Clark’s story would eventually change. On one occasion, Clark admitted that the convicts hoped that for their crimes in the Old World, redemption would be secured by good behaviour in the new. They dreamed, too, of being a part of a greater empire than the one they were leaving. ‘So the germ of the idea that the colony belonged to the convicts and their posterity began to form’, he wrote. Moreover, Clark foreshadowed the rise of the colonial gentry and bourgeoisie against which the convicts and their families would clash in coming volumes. Both the gentry and bourgeoisie would become the embodiment of British Australia against which the children of convicts, the native born, would rally in their emerging nationalism. From then on, Clark’s story would be one of confrontation between these forces, between British Australia and the nationalist ideal. In the meantime, though, Clark ended the first instalment of his History of Australia on the ‘high point’ of increased, free British migration to the colony, and the promise that its future seemed secure as the ‘new Britannia in another world’.

The history of the young Australian colonies continued in Clark’s A Short History of Australia, released in 1963, and in his second volume of A History of Australia in 1968. The same strong imperial context to the Australian colonial story persisted in both of these texts, as did much of the imperialist overtones of Clark’s narrative. In the second instalment of Clark’s History of Australia, the story is told of European civilisation in New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land until 1838. Here, the rise of the bourgeois and gentryed classes of British Australia, and the inevitable clash for power between them and the ‘native born’, became the focus of Clark’s narrative, and the vehicle in which his consciousness of Australia’s empire experience was expressed. At the same time, his continued treatment of the convicts and his story of the end of

179 Holt, Manning Clark, p.139.
180 Clark, Volume I, p.205.
181 ibid., p.85.
182 ibid., p.160.
183 ibid., p.380.
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transportation were means by which his own imperialist values can be determined at the
time of writing the *Short History* and the second volume of the *History of Australia*.

With the findings of the Bigge Report and the departure of Governor Macquarie
from Australia, Clark wrote that the nature of the colonies gradually changed until
economic and social power was concentrated in the hands of a small group of people. At
the appointment of Governor Brisbane, radical changes took place in the convict system.
Convicts were assigned to the keep and employment of free settlers in remote districts,
rather than for the use of government in public works. At the same time, inducements to
convict reformation and rehabilitation were removed, such as the opportunity for land
grants and appointments to public office. Because of these severe restrictions, tensions
mounted steadily between the free ‘immigrants’ and the convicts and their children.184
During this period, the numbers of free settlers also increased substantially at the
encouragement of the British government and with the new sympathy of the London
press for the colonies. Suddenly the Australian colonies were seen as the lands of
opportunity for the struggling British gentry and the genteel poor. The Henty family
which Bolton had discussed, appeared in Clark’s story also. Like many landed Britons
they recognised that they would not only increase their wealth in New South Wales, but
also be ‘placed in the first rank of society’ – a privilege unobtainable in the mother
country.185 So, to the upper levels of the existing colonial society were added new
migrants, such as retired defence officers, gentlemen farmers and some needy
adventurers.186

In Clark’s mind, the bourgeoisie and landed gentry of the young colonies
personified British Australia, and maintained the link between Australia and empire.
Called ‘exclusives’ or ‘immigrants’ in his history, the free settlers received large tracts of
land and the use of convict labour as a reward for their investment in the colony. In
return, they planned to ‘transplant the way of life of the gentry’ from Britain to Australia
by building gracious manors astride rolling parklands, and by maintaining ‘loyalty to altar

and throne’. In Sydney and Hobart, where bourgeois residents were mostly confined indoors or on the city streets, effective urban and interior design was all that was needed to ‘forget they were not in the midst of the gaieties of London’. Certainly parties and civic celebrations in Sydney were said to be held as lavishly and opulently as if they were in London itself.

But while the gentry so skilfully recreated the fashions and frivolities of London in Australia’s salons, Clark wrote that the world of the native born was being formed on the streets. Of the 36,500 Europeans in New South Wales in 1828, over half were free and over a quarter were born in the colony. It was little wonder, then, that there was a large generation of native born ‘currency lads and lasses’ increasingly angered by attempts to label them as ‘addicts of profligacy and vice’ and who were impatient with favours bestowed on the free, such as the granting of land. The post-Bigge system of allocating land to wealthy settlers on arrival in the colony meant that there was less productive land available for the Australians born in the colony. As factional fighting increased between the native born and the immigrants, the emancipists believed that the British government was ‘handing over to the immigrants the land that belonged to the native-born and their descendants’.

To repudiate the insults and hurt, Clark argued that the native born began to ‘brag about their powers’ and their superior physical qualities. They were happy to remind other Australians that the wealthiest man in the colony, Samuel Terry, was a former convict. Then, in response to some disparaging remarks by ‘Fanny Flirt’ on Australians which appeared in the Sydney Gazette, ‘Betsy Bandicoot’ was stirred to reply indignantly. Fanny Flirt, she wrote:

“might prefer the soft-singing notes of her Italian in his gondola (all the same as a boat, the dictionary says) to the loud coo-hee of a currency lad riding over the blue mountains. But our Bill can play the flute, hunt the wild cattle, and shoot and swim with the best in the Colony.

“It would do your heart good, Mister Editor, to see how Bill tucks in, when I’ve fried him a pan-ful of pork, swimming in fat, and a smoking hot cake from the ashes.... But ma’aps this wouldn’t be to the liking of Miss

188 ibid., p.149.
189 ibid., pp.153, 155.
190 ibid., p.155.
Deborah Gare

Flirt; as she is so dainty as not to be fond of riding through rows of gumtrees; but, la! She should see me galloping without a saddle, a'ter Bill, when he has a mind for a bit of a frisk; and as for shoes, I never thinks of putting them on, only when I goes a shopping to Sydney, at Mother Marr's or Joe Inch's for a bonnet... and I bet a wager, I could swim further and faster than Miss Fanny, and carry my clothes on my head into the bargain, without wetting so much as my comb, which cousin Bill paid for in 'tatoes at Josephson's last Christmas holidays.”

Inevitably, then, Clark recognised the increasing reality of two Australias: the British Australia of the bourgeoisie and gentry, and the nationalist Australia of the native born. For the rest of Volumes Two and Three, the native born or emancipist cause would equate to ‘Australianness’, while that of the gentry or bourgeoisie would represent ‘Britishness’:

‘While the native-born tended to be silent on their heritage from the British Isles, the apologists for the Protestant ascendancy tended to take inordinate pride and pleasure in being British.... While the native-born were beginning to take pride in their natural environment and to look on it with the eye of a lover rather than the eye of an alien, the apologists for the Protestant ascendancy tended to write of Australia in the early Dutch-English tradition as an exceedingly barren land.’

Where W.J. Hudson had proffered a precise date of Australian independence from Britain, and Geoffrey Bolton a more gradual, but equally definite, separation, Manning Clark told a story of perpetual conflict between ‘British philistinism’ and nationalism in Australia, inferring that the British connection was never actually extinguished. In Volume Two of A History of Australia, that conflict occurred between British Australia and the native born over rights to land, economic power and trial by jury. In the case of the latter, the emancipist cause seemed vindicated when Governor Burke agreed to the extension of trial by jury rights in New South Wales to include jurors from all men, save convicts yet pardoned. They were not, however, to have the same success in all aspects of their struggle.

Despite the recognition of this division in Australia between the two groups, Clark still did not come on side whole heartedly with the native born or nationalist cause, until the third volume of his history. In fact, several indicators feature in the second volume which imply that his own Britishness or loyalty to Old Australia was still a strong

192 ibid., pp.157-158.
194 Clark, Volume II, pp.188-189.
influence on his story of Australia. His treatment of the convicts is, again, a good indication of the state of his 'imperialist' values at the time, and he creates an even stronger image of their depravity than in his previous publications.

The first chapter of the second volume sets a very imperial context to the Australian story within by describing the state of British society and criminal activity which influenced the characters of those freely and forcibly arriving in the new colonies. Significantly, the chapter is entitled 'Darkness', and so Clark's readers are left with the graphic image of life in Britain as being an overcast, perhaps evil, existence. Certainly the picture he painted of Britain in the 1820s emphasised the vileness of the conditions there:

'From the East End of the great city of London right to the outskirts of Westminster, unwashed, unshaven, squalid and dirty men constantly raced to and from ankle deep in the filth and mire. In that mass of dirt, gloom and misery drunken tramps jostled with the rich and the titled. Men and women craving for booty, their bellies filled with beer and gin, committed crimes for which they were hanged by the neck until they were dead after which their bodies were cut down and given to their friends.'

If the story begins in 'darkness' and presumably ends in 'light', then readers must also assume that the Australian existence to which the darkness of Britain is being compared is that opposite experience of freedom, pleasure, hope and vitality. It is almost as though Clark may have been introducing a republican spirit to his story, where Australia as the Young Tree Green was the hope of mankind in comparison to the 'evil' Britain. In fact, nothing could have been further from reality. A close assessment of the first and last chapters of the volume indicate, instead, that Clark's 'darkness' was the state of human society in Britain, and the transportation of the worst elements of that humanity to Australia's shores.

The attention which human behaviour in Britain received in Clark's tale is perhaps the most reasonable evidence that the darkness he alluded to was that of mankind in Britain itself. If the filth and mire of the city streets was mentioned, it was only as a context to the 'orgies of lust and drunkenness' taking place, or the public whippings at the Old Bailey, or even the image of women giving birth to children in public places.
Industrial society, Clark concluded, 'was ushering in a new age of barbarism, in which some men, like bats or owls, had better eyes for the darkness than for the light'.\footnote{ibid., pp.3,5.} From these conditions, offenders were being transported by the thousands to the colonists' new world – thirty thousand of them, in fact, to eastern Australia between 1821 and 1830.\footnote{ibid., p.7.} These, according to Clark, were dark days indeed.

By the 1830s, on the other hand, it appeared as though conditions in Australia may have been on the mend. Clark concluded his volume with the chapter 'Towards the Light'. Again, if he had been talking of social or legislative reform in the colonies, or increased civil and political rights from the Home Government, it may have been possible that the chapter's title inferred republican or nationalist hope on the part of the author. However, the pages explored instead the movement towards the abolition of transportation to New South Wales, and produced a very different image. Instead of moving 'towards the light' by increased separation from Great Britain, Clark's hope for the future of the colony rested on the fact that the Molesworth Committee had recommended to the House of Commons that transportation to New South Wales be terminated, and that, in turn, increased free migration of 'wholesome' British citizens would swell the population of the developing colony.\footnote{ibid., p.7.} The advancement, then, of Australia's conditions was by the increased Britishness of the population from the mother country's more honest citizens. Again, Clark was writing in a manner which supported the interests of the British and Australian upper classes, and which denigrated the image of its convict stock.

When the third volume of A History of Australia was published in 1973, Clark's approach to Britain's role in Australia's colonial history had changed considerably. The imperial context of Australia's nineteenth century development was still clear, but the author's sympathy for the cause of British imperialism in Australia was not nearly as evident. Covering the years between 1824 and 1851, and paying special attention to the establishment of the Western Australian and South Australian settlements, Volume Three tells of the increased conflict between the native born and the British bourgeoisie and
gentry. It is a story of the rise of two Australias. But while the strength of the nationalism of native born Australia may have been increasing, Clark concluded in the volume that the power of British Australia tightened so that it retained true political and social power:

'in the struggle over free institutions and the use of convicts, the bourgeoisie won a victory not only over squatterdom, but a victory for British philistines over bush barbarians, and a victory for the survival of the British connection and influence against those who wanted a republic for the people of Australia.'

In fact, it was British Australia which attracted most of Clark's attention in the third volume of his history, and he spent much of the text establishing for his readers the nature and strength of Britishness in Australia through such means as migration, legislative reform, education and social values.

The second chapter of the volume discussed the establishment of the Swan River colony in the 1830s under James Stirling, a society which Clark called 'Another Province for Britain's Gentry'. According to Clark, Thomas Peel had proposed to transplant four hundred of Britain's gentry, with their descendants, households and livestock, to the area near the Swan River which Stirling had nominated for settlement. Unlike New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, Western Australia was to be a free settlement without the aid of convict labour. The gentrification of the colony was ensured from the beginning, given that migrants had to pay their own fares to the new territory, and were awarded grants of land proportionally for every person they brought in their retinue. The 'Englishness' of the settlement was also predictable; Stirling himself dreamed of planting 'English villages of squires, parsons, tenant farmers and agricultural labourers', while his residents tried to recreate the settings of home in their colonial drawing rooms. Not that this encouraged great prosperity in the colony. In fact their very Englishness, argued Clark, meant that the new colonists were reluctant to adapt their farming practices to suit the new conditions of Western Australia, thus inhibiting the growth of their agriculture.

199 ibid., p.345.
200 Clark, Volume III, p.vii.
201 ibid., pp.19-20.
202 ibid., p.38,36.
Similarly, the settlement of South Australia was recognised for its Britishness, although this time it was honoured by the title, ‘A British Province with a Laudable Purpose’.

The Port Phillip settlement was equally as British as those of Western and South Australia. By 1839 a steady stream of gentrified colonial families were making their way to Port Phillip from overland or from across Bass Strait. According to Clark, the people of the new settlement were united in their desire to make the district “English for thousands of years”. So when the *Melbourne Advertiser* was first printed in January 1838, it urged adventurous men in the colony to advance the cause of civilisation as “Sons of Britain”. Yet not all Australians were as keen to accept the ongoing ties to empire. In New South Wales a more bitter debate was developing over the future of the colony. While some residents were happy to accept Wentworth’s vision of the ‘new Britannia in another world’, others argued that just as America had outgrown ‘the trammels of national juvenility’, so too would Australia ‘become too wealthy, too powerful and too enlightened to need the leading strings which now held her’. John Dunmore Lang was already looking forward to the day when Australia became a republic. But not all could share his enthusiasm. Recent migrants still complained at the lack of ivied ruins and the cathedrals of England’s shores, while even the native born still nurtured divided hearts when they toasted the royal family, the mother country and the British saints at their anniversary dinners.

It was, perhaps, the divided loyalties of the native born which ensured their defeat to British philistinism at the end of Volume Three. Like other nationalist movements which were to follow in Clark’s story, the native born patriotism of the 1830s was defeated by the power of British Australia. In this instance, it was probably due to their smaller numbers and their own dual loyalties. After all, the native born still aspired to find favour in the eyes of the British. So when news arrived that Australia had been labelled as a ‘cess-pool’ in London, the native born merely tried harder to win the approval of the mother country. Insults such as these, Clark noted, did not ‘fan the flames of any independence movement,’ but ‘encouraged their protestations of

203 ibid., pp.102,103.
204 ibid., p.135.
loyalty’. In a lecture to the University of Sydney in 1972, Clark spoke of the mixed
loyalties of the native born:

'It was as though they were not certain whether even the native-born, the
patriots – let alone the immigrants and all the miseries who howled their
'b'aint like home' – were Australians or Britons or Australian-Britons. One
thing they seemed to be certain about was their loyalty to the throne.'

In the end, the native born in the mid-nineteenth century were not to win any increased
recognition from the United Kingdom. When the colonial bourgeoisie in New South
Wales campaigned in 1849 against the reintroduction of transportation to their colony, it
was as a rejection of the character and immorality of the convicts themselves. The native
born – those descendants of earlier convicts to Australia – did not speak on the day of
protest. They had an understandable reluctance, Clark noted, in 'branding their fathers,
their mothers, their grandfathers, their grandmothers, or even their greatgrandparents as
'moral filth' and 'rubbish'. When the British government agreed to end transportation
to New South Wales again, it was therefore in recognition of the rights of Australians as
British citizens, and a victory of Britishness in Australia.

In 1974 Manning Clark had the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Whitlam
Labor Government in favour of their re-election. Their victory two years earlier, Clark
reasoned, had ended Australia's time of 'unleavened bread'. When Whitlam had taken
government twenty three years after Chifley's party had lost power, Clark was delighted
to witness the major reforms which were introduced in Australia's domestic and foreign
policy. To a packed audience at the Sydney Opera House, Clark proudly admitted that
Whitlam's government had so far been 'showing us the way forward, giving us vision,
giving us hope'. Later, he praised the Labor Party for its advancement of cultural
nationalism in such issues as the national anthem and Aboriginal land rights. In the 1981
edition of his Short History, Clark wrote:

'Unlike the conservatives they did not stress their loyalty to the British
monarchy or to any imperial ties or sentiment. In general they were
committed to such slogans as Australia for the Australians and to the

205 ibid., pp.135-139.
206 ibid., p.141.
207 Manning Clark, 'The Beginning of an Australian Intelligentsia', in Manning Clark, Speaking Out of
208 ibid., p.419.
defence of Australia on Australian soil. By contrast their opponents saw themselves as both Australian and British, as Australian Britons; as such they believed the first line of defence for Australia was on the battlefields of Europe or in the jungles of South-East Asia.\(^\text{210}\)

It was not surprising, then, that Clark was among the many intellectuals in the country who were enraged by the dismissal of the second Whitlam administration, barely a year later. On the day of the dismissal, Clark stood within the crowd of protesters at Parliament House, and continued to publicly condemn the dismissal until the year of his death.\(^\text{211}\) His bitterness was evident when he addressed a Melbourne audience on the first anniversary of the dismissal,\(^\text{212}\) and his anger soon transcended to a raging dislike of the legacy of British imperialism in Australia. Implied in the above quote from the Short History, Clark increasingly gave voice to his growing anti-Britishness. At the Australian National University in 1978, he told graduating students that the anthem ‘Land of Hope and Glory’ now belonged in ‘the dustbin of history’, and elsewhere he argued that one of the greatest achievements of the Whitlam government was the removal of the last ‘vestiges of British colonialism in Australia’.\(^\text{213}\)

Given the increased public denunciation by Clark of Britishness in Australia, the expectation could be warranted that his 1978 volume of A History of Australia would feature a stronger, perhaps more angry, nationalism. In some ways, such as the attention given to the rising nationalist movement of the late nineteenth century, this is true. But it is interesting to note that in such areas as Clark’s treatment of the Aboriginal experience within Australia’s history, it is not so much the case. The image of the first Australians which was created in Volume One, was hardly tempered in the succeeding two volumes of Clark’s history. Very little comment was made about their experience under white expansion, and the little sympathy afforded the Aborigines in the wake of white expansion in the colonies was no where near as substantial or as documented as was offered, say, by Geoffrey Blainey. Certainly there is little improvement in Clark’s fourth volume of A History of Australia. In fact, more often than not, Clark’s treatment of the


Aborigines in the 1978 volume continued to shame their culture, behaviour and their existence under white 'civilisation'.

For instance, when Clark called the Aboriginal people 'savage black barbarians' in 1962, it differed little from the phrases he adopted sixteen years later. Early in Volume Four, Clark wrote of the powerful effect of nature on the white population by the 1850s. He added:

'The environment had also influenced those evil-natured beings, the aborigines of New Holland, the 'miserables People in the world', who 'setting aside their humane shape' differed 'but little from Brutes'.214

So, too, did his representation of the Aborigines' language and behaviour continue to shame them. When an Aboriginal man was left some money from a deceased estate, Clark wrote that he drank away the profits and rejected attempts of white men to 'civilise him':

"Missionary man tell us say", he said with an angry sneer, "Our Fader which art in heaven, and gib us to-day our daily bread; but no gib it daily bread. Gib siften [ie: siftings] flour, damaged tobacco, and three fellow potato."215

Admittedly Clark gave more attention in Volume Four to the practical ramifications of white expansion in Australia on the Aboriginal people, allowing that the well-being of the white man may well have cost the Aborigines their way of life, and possibly their very existence.216 Moreover, he linked white expansion in Australia directly to the imperial activities of Great Britain. A nineteenth century article from the Melbourne Argus, which wrote sardonically to the Aborigines, demonstrated this particularly well:

'There comes Christian England, who, if you were strong enough to demand a price for your land, would buy it from you; but who, as you are few and weak, and timorous, generously condescends to steal it! There comes Christian England, to absorb your hunting-grounds, destroy your game, inoculate you with her vices, and shew her Christian spirit by doomed you to 'extirpation'!"217

Nevertheless, Clark continued to shame the indigenous Australians for their apparent 'backwardness', and condemned them when they were made the butt of white humour or

213 Manning Clark, 'The 'Cleansing Fire' Speech', in Clark, Speaking Out of Turn, p.31; Clark, Short History, 1981, p.241.
214 Clark, Volume IV, p.2.
215 ibid., p.23.
216 ibid., p.25.
217 ibid., p.24.
sport. While white men continued to advance in prosperity, he wrote, the Aborigines continued to reject civilisation out of their apparent indolence and 'sank lower and lower into the mire'. Later, he wrote as though they had prostituted their spiritual inheritance while entertaining white men with a corroboree:

'Two or three times during the performance one of the aborigines carried round a hat, stating that the smallest contribution would be gratefully received. After that corroboree that takings in the hat or the palm of the hand provided the alcohol for another sort of corroboree, in which black men, after copious swigs at the black bottle quickly degenerated from entertainers into objects of disgust and contempt, so providing evidence for the white man's contention that for some inexplicable reason these people were condemned permanently to remain the little children of the Australian bush.'

Despite the fact that Clark's treatment of the Aboriginal experience in Volume Four compromised other improvements in his developing 'Australianness', the rest of the text does display a marked increase in his sympathy with Australian nationalism, and a concurrent rise of unease at Britishness in Australia. The conflict between the native born and the colonial bourgeoisie and gentry, remained the dominant theme of the fourth volume of *A History of Australia*. The battles between those groups over legislative reform in the 1850s, new colonial constitutions in eastern Australia, and the Free Selection Acts of 1861, attracted Clark's particular attention. Significantly, while some concessions were made to the nationalist cause in these controversies, Clark suggested that it was British Australia which won each major contest. In 1856, for example, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia were allowed new constitutions which provided for the popular election of members to a Legislative Assembly. In New South Wales, W.C. Wentworth had been arguing for the representation of interest groups rather than of the whole electorate - still promoting, Clark argued, the retention of government in the hands of the gentry. The results there, and in the other colonies, were the same: plural voting based on property qualifications ensured that the gentry maintained a small majority in all of the Legislative Assemblies, and a large majority in the Legislative Councils. Even when greater access to the land was realised through the 1861 Free Selection Acts, the lands of the 'selectors' were more often than not

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218 ibid., p.28.
219 ibid., p.212.
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absorbed in time by the squatters because the new farmers lacked the resources to maintain their farms which were mostly of poor quality. Hence the landed members of British Australia retained power despite legislative reform and the Selection Acts.

By the 1870s, though, renewed hope for the nationalist future of Australia grew out of a new and developing cultural movement. 'So far no one had succeeded in portraying a white Australia either with the brush or with the pen,' wrote Clark. But in the late nineteenth century, a school of landscape artists who had been encouraged by the earlier attempts in Australian literature by Charles Harpur, Henry Kendall and Marcus Clarke, 'began to see the country and its mantle no longer through the eyes of men for whom the oak, the elm, the poplar and the birch were the ideal of a tree,' but in harmony with the natural Australian environment. By the following decade, a similar movement was gathering in the world of literature. Centring particularly around the Bulletin magazine and a few other nationalist publications, writers such as Lawson, Furphy and Paterson rose in prominence as they strove to recreate the Australian experience on paper. 'The time was at hand,' wrote Clark, for artists and writers to turn their attention to the life of the European in the new world: 'The time was at hand for the portrait of an Australian.' Clark concluded his volume on a note of hope. Australia was still undeniably dominated by Britishness – the Australian gentry and bourgeoisie still modelled their speech, clothes and homes on the English model and clung to the illusions of their security within the empire. But nationalist voices such as the Bulletin were giving new hope to the native born:

'The Bulletin encouraged Australians to believe in themselves, to be proud.... The Bulletin taught Australians to like the way they talked, to like the way they walked, to like everything about their country, to believe that Australian English, both in its spoken and in its written form, was a magnificent medium for the communication of what it was like to be a human being in Australia.'

This high note of promise of the nationalist movement in Australia was quenched, though, in a Bulletin article of his own. Clearly, he argued, the aspirations of the late

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220 *ibid.*, pp.104-106.
221 *ibid.*, p.317.
222 *ibid.*, p.318.
223 *ibid.*, p.187; on dual loyalties of Australians see pp.248-249; on Britishness of Australian architecture see pp.224-225; on Englishness of Sir Henry Parkes see p.258.
nineteenth century had failed within the first few years of Federation. Again, Clark’s story of Australia was one of a constant battle between Australianness and Britishness, with the victory seemingly going to Old Australia. Again, despite the hope of a burgeoning patriotic movement, the victory of nationalism over ‘philistinism’ was not complete. In ‘Shaking off the Philistines’, Clark suggested that the nationalist movement of the late nineteenth century failed because its proponents were either grounded in latent Britishness themselves, or because they were unable to formulate a replacement vision for a new Australia. In what had become a recurring pattern, Clark argued that the nationalists of the 1880s had offered no effective leadership or solutions to Britishness in Australia, and were unable to answer the ‘big picture’ questions of humanity. So, in anticipation of the story in the fifth volume of *A History of Australia*, Clark contended that the outlook for an Australian nationalist future ‘seemed bleak well before the great disaster began in August 1914’.225

In the opening paragraphs of his article, Clark wrote that while the nationalism of the late nineteenth century in Australia was on the rise, ‘two cultures, or two visions of the world’ still existed in Australia. The first Australia, of course, was Wentworth’s vision of a ‘new Britannia in another world’, where Australia was regarded as ‘just an outpost of British civilisation in the South Seas’. This interpretation was at least partly accurate, for even after Federation in 1901, Australian political, social and cultural life remained mostly British by nature.226 The second vision was that of Lawson and his colleagues, who believed that ‘the mighty Australian Bush, the home, as he put it, of eccentrics and much that was different from other lands, could be the subject of great literature’.227 Nonetheless, Clark recognised that this new nationalism, which had since been so romanticised, was fundamentally flawed. As he had suggested earlier in ‘Tradition in Australian Literature’, the *Bulletin* writers limited their Australia to a rural setting, and to Australia for white men only. Even the Heidelberg artists ‘were never quite certain of who they were’. Tom Roberts, Clark noted, ‘at times wore a bushman’s

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224 *ibid.*, p.364.
226 *ibid.*, p.114.
227 *ibid.*, p.115.
hat complete with corks,' and at other times ‘dressed like an English gentleman’. The dichotomy in Roberts’ identity was duly expressed in his paintings. His bush settings may have captured the spirit of the Australian landscape, Clark reasoned, but his portraits of men and women captured their Britishness. In fact, ‘the British tradition still had a stranglehold on Australian values and behaviour’, even among the leaders of its nationalist movement.228

The truth, conceded Clark, was that Australians could not relinquish their ties with Great Britain because they were unable to defend their country without the aid of the British Empire. It was not a case of being too cowardly to face up to their English cousins, but that ‘dependence was the price of survival’. ‘Colonials,’ he added, ‘did not make their own history. Australians were tied by their past to the dreary fate of being second-rate Europeans.’229 Nonetheless, this reality was not assisted by the fact that ‘the believers in the cultivation of an Australian national sentiment were not quite sure of what they stood for’. Lawson, for example, had written stirring republican poems in earlier days, but was writing in favour of despatching troops from New South Wales to the Boer War and as an apologist for the monarchy in his later years. So in the absence of any coherent ideology to cultivate an ‘Australian national sentiment’, it was little wonder that the strength of British philistinism continued to grow, aided by the advancements in technology which brought Australians even closer in communication with the mother country.230

His conclusions on the death of the Bulletin nationalist movement were explored also in the fifth volume of A History of Australia. Clark repeated his argument that the nationalists of the late nineteenth century were at least partly at fault for their decline, because they had lacked a replacement vision for their country. The Bulletin, he wrote, had few opinions on ‘what Australian society would be like after the native born had killed the giant of British philistinism’.231 Roberts, he repeated, was torn between an idyllic vision of Australia and the bourgeois culture of Europe, and Lawson had once

228 ibid., pp.115-116.
229 ibid., p.116.
230 ibid., p.117.
231 Clark, Volume V, p.5.
favoured an Australian republic but died an apologist of imperialism. Mostly, though, Clark emphasised the extreme Britishness of Australia in Volume Five, particularly on such occasions as Federation, the Boer War and World War One. The strength of this Britishness, we are left to believe, was equally responsible for the defeat of the nationalist movement at the turn of the century. British Australia was just too strong a contestant for the native born.

Certainly the 'Federation Fathers' had no intention of relinquishing their ties with Great Britain after the unification of their country, as W.J. Hudson had also pointed out. Clark referred to the Constitutional Conferences of the 1890s for his evidence of the Britishness of the colonial politicians. In 1890 the banquet hall of the conference was decorated with two large emblems depicting, he argued, what they all stood for: 'God Save the Queen', and 'A United Australasia'. At the same conference, Henry Parkes was asked to plant an English oak tree in the grounds of Melbourne's Parliament House. 'The believer in Englishmanism,' added Clark, 'was to plant an English tree to commemorate the forthcoming creation of an Australian federation'. So too, did he use the official ceremonies of Federation in 1901 to demonstrate the Britishness of the union. The celebrations in Sydney were met with classically draped ladies, 'wearing helmets and in all other ways suitably costumed to represent what the day was all about – Britannia and Australia'. The principal participants in the inauguration ceremony were an English nobleman, Lord Hopetoun, 'the outward and visible personification of loyalty, of being British', and an English clergyman. They, in turn, were joined by 10 000 imperial troops and members of Australia's highest society. So, Clark criticised,

'It was meant to be a people's festival, but the people who made Australia were not on the dais. Australia now belonged to the firm of 'John Bull and Family'.... Australians now shared the national life and thought of an Empire whose peer had yet to make itself known. Australia was entering a new year and a new century as a united nation destined for prosperity and greatness. The poets joined the prose writers in hymns of praise to Mother England, of expressions of loyalty and gratitude to Queen Victoria. She was the lady in whose sovereign name the crowning word of union came.

232 ibid., pp.9,426.
233 ibid., pp.32,37.
234 ibid., p.177.
235 Clark, 'Shaking off the Philistines', p.116.
Australians might live under different stars, but their hearts were the hearts of yore. England had loyal sons beneath the Southern Cross.  

Australians further demonstrated their loyalty to empire by their commitment to the Boer War. While the colonies were debating the merits of federation, the Australian press were regularly publishing reports from South Africa on the attacks by the Boers on British subjects there. In May 1899 the Mayor of Melbourne called a public meeting to discuss means of assistance to the British in South Africa, at which the ‘brotherhood of British subjects everywhere’ was assured. When Britain declared war in October, each of the Australian colonies immediately volunteered to send troops in her aid. Few questioned the rights and tribulations of the Boers: ‘Loyalty transcended such knowledge or rendered it irrelevant. The Australian colonies were about to show the world their racial solidarity with the British Empire’.  

Equally, according to Clark, the speedy commitment of troops to the imperial cause at the beginning of the Great War demonstrated the Australian commitment to Britain and the empire. This time, though, World War One ‘stripped the illusions’ of Australians and ‘destroyed the glamour and the romance of the conservative view of Australia as an outpost of British civilisation in the south seas’.  

Clark noted that when the government announced in August 1914 that ‘as the British had declared war, Australia was therefore also at war’, Australian protestations of loyalty to Great Britain were immediate and fulsome. When the first troops had assembled in Albany to prepare for their voyage to the war, Clark added, ‘They were about to embark on a journey to defend the interests of the mother country from which they or their ancestors had crossed the oceans to settle in Australia’. General Monash noted the way in which his troops sang both ‘Tipperary’ and ‘Australia will be There’ in preparation for battle; his men were ‘true Australian-Britons’ and ‘true sons of the Empire’. At home, Nellie Melba performed at fund raising concerts to aid the war effort. She, too, represented the victory of Britishness in Australia. ‘Australia's great

236 Clark, Volume V, pp.182-183.
237 ibid., p.169.
238 ibid., ‘Shaking off the Philistines’, p.118.
239 ibid., Volume V, p.386.
240 ibid., p.404.
native daughter sang not one word about her own country. She sang excerpts from grand opera and songs from the British Isles.\textsuperscript{241} When troops first returned from Gallipoli, they were met at Circular Quay by a weeping Henry Lawson. So, Clark concluded, while the heroism of their story would be told for generations, ‘Australia’s day of glory had made her a prisoner of her past…. The ideals of Australia had been ‘cast to the winds’.\textsuperscript{242}

The rise and fall in the fortunes of subsequent nationalist movements was pursued in the article, ‘Shaking off the Philistines’, and in the last volume of \textit{A History of Australia}. In each case, a similar conclusion was reached by Clark: while other nationalist causes over the following decades may have promised more success, inevitably flaws within the movements and the residual stronghold of British philistinism quenched their growing strength. However, the coming of a new Australia was augured in the closing pages of Volume Five, when Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson presided over the opening of the Newcastle steel works. This English nobleman, wrote Clark, represented the trappings of imperialism in Australia, yet witnessed the beginning of an industry which would eventually see the end of Australia’s economic dependence on Great Britain. It promised, he added, the end of Australia’s inferiority to western Europe, the grovelling to the English and of the Australian cultural cringe.\textsuperscript{243} Australians in the war years, though, were far from able to envisage such a dramatic change in their way of life and in their identity. Their Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, had once been a man of the people, but had since become an empire man.\textsuperscript{244} Few others recognised as Clark then did, that ‘The ‘Cultured Philistine’ was ‘The Old Dead Tree’, and that Australians ‘needed a living culture’ which would foster the vitality and creativeness of the Australian experience.\textsuperscript{245}

As the enormity of the tragedy of the war was gradually brought home to Australians, Clark conceded that divisions within Australian society mounted. Moreover, the fierce debates surrounding the conscription referenda served to exacerbate those social

\textsuperscript{241} \textit{ibid.}, p.397.
\textsuperscript{242} \textit{ibid.}, p.426.
\textsuperscript{243} \textit{ibid.}, pp.415-416.
\textsuperscript{244} Clark, \textit{Volume VI}, p.5.
tensions. So, he recognised, two Australias were still in existence: the Australia of Labor’s vision which espoused no more ‘loyalty to King and Empire’, and that of loyalty to British culture. Those of the labor vision which had defeated the conscription debate in 1916, offered Clark hope for a nationalist future. But again, the stirrings of a nationalist spirit were defeated by the flaws within the movement. The war-time visionaries may have despised latent ties to empire, but they still lacked the replacement vision necessary to win the sympathies of the Australian people:

‘no one had put into words what Australia’s ‘self-evident truths’ would be, or what they would put on their flag, or what the words would be in their national anthem’.246

Therefore, in the absence of hope for a new Australia, the following years in the 1920s and 1930s, according to Clark, were ‘almost barren periods’ for Australian nationalists.247 Inter-war Australia was marked instead by its pervasive Britishness.

There were some nationalist agitators of the 1920s and 1930s who Clark considered worthy of attention. Labor, he thought, continued to look forward to a new day which would see Australia liberated from the ‘stigma of inferiority’ to Europe. Cultural leaders, too, spoke randomly in favour of renewed interest in the Australian experience. ‘Inky’ Stephensen, for example, told readers of the *Lone Hand* that his countrymen needed a “healthy encouragement of a virile sentiment of Australianism”, and Vance Palmer argued similarly. Palmer, in fact, had been a staunch critic of ‘Cultured Philistines’ for decades. He argued that Australians needed a culture of their own and that they should look to their own artists, writers and musicians to capture the unique experience of living in Australia.248 But, again, the hold of British ‘Philistinism’ was too strong to allow for the victory of this small movement. It was not that the visionaries did not recognise the need for another myth to replace that of Britishness. It was more that they were as ever unable to provide one. Even when Stephensen wrote that “A new nation, a new human type is being formed in Australia”, he could not identify what it was to be. All he could suggest with certainty was that “a gum tree is not a branch of an

245 *ibid.*, p.11.
246 *ibid.*, p.41.
247 Clark, ‘Shaking off the Philistines’, p.120.
248 Clark, *Volume VI*, pp.136-137.
The Nationalist and Country Parties, Clark added, were certainly unable to provide a new vision for Australia. Labor was still divided and ineffectual since the splits of the war years, and hence unequal to such a task. Again, a potential nationalist movement was defeated in the face of uncertainty of what it was to be Australian, and supporters of a nationalist sentiment 'had subsided from a roar of hope to a whisper of despair'.

Other historians such as Bolton, Hudson and Blainey have placed much store on the success of the Labor administration in the 1940s in the move of Australia from its imperial connections to a new alliance with the United States. Bolton even toyed with the idea of Australia's prospects outside any imperial or pseudo-imperial alliance when he discussed the foreign policy of Herbert Evatt and the post-war Labor government. To Clark, the rise and fall of Labor in the 1940s represented instead another defeat in the nationalist cause. Labor's vision was the twentieth century replacement of the native born cause in Clark's story of Australia. Pivotal to its understanding was the dichotomy he established between John Curtin and Robert Menzies, one representing Australianness, and the other Britishness. In Clark's tale, Australians in the late 1940s had to chose between one or the other. When they returned Menzies to government in 1949, Clark concluded that it was another victory for British Australia.

John Hirst also noted Clark's separation of interests between Curtin and Menzies in his critical assessment of *A History of Australia*. He contended that the demands of Clark's drama in the sixth volume required

'there be a simple opposition between those who were loyal to Britain and those loyal to Australia, and the interest in individuals leads to Menzies being cast as the representative of one position and Curtin the other. Needless to say the truth was much more complex than this. For the majority of Australians loyalty to both Britain and Australia coexisted without undue strain. But in Clark's eyes, because Menzies looked for an empire defence of Australia he was a 'groveller' to Britain'; Curtin was to find the way to escape this dependence.'

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249 Manning Clark, *The Quest for an Australian Identity*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1980, pp.3-4.

250 Clark, *Volume VI*, p.166.

251 Clark, 'Shaking off the Philistines', p.120.

252 Hirst, 'The Whole Game Escaped Him', p.120.
Traditionally Clark has been accused of harsh treatment of Menzies in his history, although there is some evidence of a rapport between the two men in the historian’s autobiography, *Quest for Grace*.253 But on a number of occasions, Clark certainly made it clear that he identified the former Prime Minister with British Australia. Menzies’ belief in British institutions, he wrote, was the very source of his greatness, and his tragedy. In fact, in Clark’s mind, Menzies had no alternative to a British world: ‘He had seen Australia as a province of Edwardian London, not as a country in its own right’.254

Clark reasoned, though, that John Curtin and other nationalist advocates of the Labor years perceived things differently. According to his story, where Menzies was the ‘Australian-Briton’, Curtin was ‘the Australian Australian’, and where Menzies was the ‘defender of the British Empire in Australia’, Curtin was the ‘cultivator of an Australian sentiment’.255 For a time, Clark wrote, the Labor government hatched schemes in line with their vision for Australia, citing the immigration reforms of Chifley and Calwell in 1947, the formation of the Australian National University in 1946, and the proposal of the Snowy River Hydro Electric scheme in 1949 as examples.256 Other cultural leaders also began to flourish under the promising Labor government of the post-war years. Russell Drysdale, Sidney Nolan and Arthur Boyd all tried to persuade Australians to stop searching ‘for a green park land’ and to accept Australia in its reality; writers such as Patrick White captured the experience of what it was like living in Australia, as did Alec Hope and Martin Boyd; even the historians, Clark added, began to liberate themselves from their chains of ‘the dead hand of the British past in Australia’.257 But as all nationalist movements had experienced previously, ‘the days of unleavened bread returned once again in Australia’.258 When the Chifley government was rebuffed at the polls in 1949, Clark connected their defeat to the failures of nationalist movements in the past and future:

‘On 10 December 1949 [Chifley’s] Labor Government was swept out of office in an electoral landslide to the conservatives. As on 5 May 1917 and

253 Clark, *Quest for Grace*, p.156.
256 Clark, *Volume VI*, p.246.
257 Clark, ‘Shaking off the Philistines’, p.122.
258 *ibid.*, p.122.
19 December 1931, a society of immigrants and their descendants, a society with a working class entranced by petty-bourgeoisie ideals of private ownership of property, and a society distinguished by the wide extent of middle-class affluence, uncovered the strength of conservatism in Australia. Electors were to do the same in December 1975 when they feared that another man of vision, Edward Gough Whitlam, was enticing Labor to liberate Australians from the dead hand of the past. Australia was still evidence for the prophecy by Alexander Herzen that petty-bourgeoisiedom is the final word of any civilisation based on the unconditional rule of property. Australia has not been liberated from its past.259

In choosing Menzies' Liberal Party over Labor, we are told, Australians also chose the conservatism of British Australia.

The complete defeat of the nationalist cause soon followed in Clark's story, and marked a time when the days of the visionaries were replaced with the days of men 'who applied the values of the book-keeper to the affairs of the human mind and the human heart'.260 The British connection, of course, was cemented by Menzies' own values. In all his years of government, Clark wrote, that faith in British institutions never wavered. When the Prime Minister had to announce to Parliament in 1952 the death of King George VI, 'he was so moved that his voice broke, and he found it difficult to continue'.261 But those years also saw a concerted and direct campaign against Labor in Menzies' battle against the rise of world communism. When Menzies launched the Royal Commission into the Petrov affair, Clark believed this was an attempt, too, to destroy Evatt:

'Manning Clark's last dregs of optimism about the future of Australia disappeared.... He discovered that conservatism was much more deeply rooted in Australia than radical nationalists were prepared to admit.'262

So Manning Clark's story of Australia remained one of constant battle between the two Australias of Britishness and nationalism. As ever, the strength of what he called British Philistinism won out, and that fight for an Australian identity and independent future continued unresolved.

It was a long way for Manning Clark to have come over the course of his life time. Having begun being wrapped in the folds of British Australia by virtue of his Hope

259 Clark, Volume VI, p.497.
260 Clark, 'Shaking off the Philistines', p.122.
261 Clark, Volume VI, p.257.
heritage, Clark had moved far away by his twilight years. For the most part, this development echoed the increasing awareness of all Australians over the twentieth century of their unique identity and their recognition that the old Anglo-Australian relationship was coming to an end. Not that Clark had ever truly forsaken his connection with European culture and heritage – to his death he remained a man tormented by divided loyalties, and much of the anguish in his search for an Australian identity in the later years can be attributed to his need to quell the remaining ties to empire within his spirit. In the late 1980s Clark wrote his autobiographies, an exercise which caused him to reflect on his past journey in identity and belonging, and which crystallised his acceptance of his complex heritage. ‘I was not prepared, nor never will be prepared, to discard Europe’, Clark had written. Even then, ‘Europe’ meant a complex of things in his mind. When separated, Britain and continental Europe both represented the Old World values of imperialist societies. When clumsily blurred together in his mind, as it most likely was in this case, European culture and civilization equally encompassed the legacies of Tocqueville, Dostoevsky, the German composers, and the great English historians.263

Despite his acute consciousness of the Australian story, and his increasing public condemnation of the residual strength of British Philistinism in society, Clark maintained an abiding respect and admiration for the heritage of European culture, for the English way of life, and for the honour of British institutions. If there were two Australias, there were also, to a degree, two Manning Clarks. Yet the Australian people, he recognised, also had to decide between the same forces within their heritage – between the Old Dead Tree and the Young Tree Green. The history of Australia he had written since the 1970s had been a story between those two forces, and it was one which Australians had never yet resolved. Clark, in the end, was unable to make that final separation in loyalties. Nevertheless, he believed that it was time for Australians to move forward where he could not. It was decision time for this new generation, he wrote. Australians had to make their own way in the world.

262 Holt, Manning Clark, p.132.
263 Clark, Discovery of Australia, p.37.
Much of the work in the rest of this thesis has been concerned with the manner in which historians have identified the experience of Australia under empire, and its separation in the twentieth century from Great Britain. Hudson, as we have seen, chose to identify the Statute of Westminster as the specific date of Australian independence from the imperial power. Independence given, he argued, was no less than independence received. Bolton preferred to explain Australian separation from Britain as a more gradual process – one which was spread out over a number of decades and which was determined by the changing economic, social, cultural, defence and foreign policy relations of the time. Blainey found it more difficult to identify the separation of Australia from Great Britain, guessed that it had happened some time in the early twentieth century, but has become more willing in his later years to champion the legacy of that connection, and even the preservation of what might be left of the imperial relationship. Clark, on the other hand, pictured the experience of Australia under empire as an ongoing one. In the nineteenth century, it was characterised by division between the native born and the colonial elite over the future of the country. In the twentieth century, it was characterised by conflict between nationalist (and often Labor) Australia and British Philistinism. In the end, there was no resolution to his story, suggesting instead that the conflict between those two forces continues.

Clark drew his *History of Australia* to a close at the ascension of Curtin to the leadership of the Labor Party. The title of his final chapter was testament to the decision Clark believed Australians would soon make: ‘The Old Dead Tree or the Young Tree Green?’ A short Epilogue outlined the fates of the volume’s chief protagonists, Curtin, Menzies, Chifley and Evatt. It is from these pages, from the conclusion of his *Short History*, and from a few short articles that we can gain some insight to Clark’s interpretation of Australian identity in the last half of the twentieth century. By the 1970s and 1980s, he argued, Australia was afloat in a new world. British imperialism was at an end, not by the choice of its people in Australia or by Great Britain, but from changing international circumstances. The increase in Australia’s economic prosperity, as well as the changing emphasis on its defence partners, lessened the cultural dependence on the
United Kingdom. In 1965, Australia sent troops with the United States to Vietnam, and by the time they returned Wentworth's vision of a new Britannia in another world had been reduced to mere suburbia. The days of unleavened bread began to draw to a close, suggested Clark, but in that time Australia's relationship with Britain had changed irrevocably by circumstances outside its own control.

Clark conceded that by the last decades of the twentieth century, Australians had gradually ceased looking to Europe as 'the land of holy wonders'. Instead, the Old World had became 'a museum of past glories,' and a graveyard of 'the origins of the Europeans and their descendants in the haggard continent of Australia'. Conservatism, though, had not been completely quelled, as Clark's judgment of the Whitlam dismissal and defeat indicated. In the end, the historian closed his life with a call to Australians to recapture the vision of their nationalist predecessors, and to define who and what it meant to be Australian. 'What is missing', he wrote in 1980, 'is an account of where we go from here.' Later he added:

'This generation has to be wiser than previous generations. They can make their own history. With the end of the domination by the straighteners, the enlargers of life now have their chance. They have the chance to lavish on each other the love the previous generations had given to God, and bestow on the here and now the hopes and dreams they had once entertained for some future human harmony.'

It was the task of the historian, he concluded, to tell the story of how we had come to be, and the task of the prophet to tell of what we might be. But the historian also presents the choice: Clark ruled that it was to be between an enduring Philistinism, or a rich future with a nationalist spirit.

In the year of the Bicentenary, Manning Clark called on Australians to make that choice. In the Bulletin he wrote that Australians still had no vision for their future, or their identity. Australia had been liberated, he wrote, from its colonial past, and Australians had no more need to be grovellers to the 'giant of British Philistinism'. But

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265 ibid., p.262.
266 Clark, Volume VI, p.499.
267 Clark, 'Shaking off the Philistines', p.124.
268 Clark, Volume VI, p.500.
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when asked who they are and what they want to be, Clark argued that 'we lapse into the great Australian silence':

'We belong to that generation which put a man on the Moon, can keep beer icy cold west of the Darling during the Australian summer, can see the world's events as they happen on a screen, can play the whole of Bach or Mozart or Jerome Kent on hi-fi and can move from Sydney to London or New York or Moscow in just over 24 hours - but has no clear idea of what it wants to be.'²⁶⁹

Only months later, Clark announced that it was 'decision time for this new generation'. The British connection in Australia was no longer relevant, he concluded. Yet the nationalist cause had still to be won. While new immigration patterns in the post-war decades had put an end to the giant of British Philistinism in Australia, its people appeared to have entered a phase when 'no one seems to have anything to say'. Again, Clark beseeched his readers, Australians now have the opportunity to make their own history and to make wise decisions about their future. 'The question,' he finished, 'is whether the life affirmers have anything to say, and whether they can persuade Australians to accept their vision'.²⁷⁰

To the great loss of Australians, Manning Clark passed away before he was able to judge whether his compatriots had taken up his challenge. We are left then to assume that in Clark's story, Australians were still to decide between old and new Australia. Perhaps they will forever prevaricate in that decision, to be left always 'comfortless on Bondi Beach'. In Clark's story, Australians appear destined, too, to remain children of ages past.

²⁶⁹ Manning Clark, 'What do we want to be and what should we believe?', Bulletin, 26 January 1988, p.10.
Conclusion

Farewell the Trumpets of Empire?

Geoffrey Blainey, Geoffrey Bolton, W.J. Hudson and Manning Clark each represent the variety of experiences within their generation of Australians, including that of Australia and empire in the twentieth century. These historians and their contemporaries have lived in a particularly unique period of world history. Born into the British Empire when it was at its most incandescent, they were then witnesses to its implosion and collapse and have since lived in its smouldering ashes.

Each has a different story to tell of their journey in belonging, identity and in the pursuit of what it means to be Australian. Of them all, Blainey was probably the most acutely conscious of his Australianness during his childhood; and this was particularly reflected in his early histories. Yet, paradoxically, he has become in the last two decades one of the most public champions of the legacies of the British Empire in Australia. Hudson's is a less complex story. Raised within Australia's Irish Catholic community, he has, if anything, developed a greater sympathy for the Australian experience of empire, recognising the benefits which also accompanied its connection to Great Britain. Nonetheless, Hudson has clearly favoured Australian separation from Britain at the end of the twentieth century, and has given his support to the prospect of an Australian republic. Bolton probably most represents the broader experience of Australians of his age, being a part of British Australia in his youth, but becoming increasingly in favour of an independent Australia as the decades passed. Clark, finally, was publicly perceived as an Australian nationalist and occasionally as an Anglophobe. Yet, in fact, he retained an affinity with the British Australia of his heritage until his death, and was never to resolve the question of identity in his story of the Australian people. Despite their differences, each historian captured part of Australia's historical experience in the same spirit that E.H. Carr wrote of the differing perspectives of the mountain. In so doing, they have left a significant legacy in the study of Australian history for those scholars who have and will continue to follow.
The 1970s witnessed the first major upsurge in the writing of Australian history since Clark led the charge for its professionalisation in the early 1950s. New historians such as Anne Summers, Tom Stannage, Henry Reynolds, Graeme Davison and Ann Curthoys were among the many who were beginning to review the traditional teaching and writing methods of Australian history.\(^1\) By the 1980s, Australian historiography had become profoundly affected by the leviathan shadow of the impending Bicentenary, with the Australian public caught up in a flurry of commemoration and assessment of cultural identity. With such sudden, mass attention on Australia’s past and on its contemporary identity, historians were given unparalleled exposure in the media and responded with a plethora of cultural, social and ‘official’ histories. In this environment, Australian history became a school of ‘people’s history’. Political and other ‘high’ histories were no longer in demand, being challenged by interest groups demanding recognition of their place in the country’s history. Women, Aborigines and ethnic minorities received special attention in the 1980s reinterpretation of Australian history. Accordingly, the mammoth cooperative history project, *Australians: A Historical Library*,\(^2\) tactfully covered all social and cultural bases. Bright, colourful pages paid special attention to the indigenous experience of Australian history, as well as that of women and migrants. The more generic topics of Australian popular culture, such as sport, leisure and family life, were also visually presented in this showcase of Australian history and historians. At the same time, an attempt was made to redress the project’s anticipated shortcomings by the quasi-marxist series, *A People’s History of Australia*,\(^3\) as well as by John Rickard’s widely read book, *Australia: A Cultural History*.\(^4\) Common to all, though, was a vigorous attention to cultural and people’s history in Australia.


\(^3\) Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (eds), *Constructing a Culture, Staining the Wattle, A Most Valuable Acquisition*, and *Making a Life*, 4 volumes, McPhee Gribble and Penguin, Fitzroy, 1988.

By contrast, public discussion in Australia during the 1990s came to be dominated by debate surrounding the 'impending' republic. At the same time, the British and Australian governments were busy repositioning the Anglo-Australian relationship at the end of the twentieth century. The then Prime Minister, Paul Keating, and his British counterpart, John Major, devised a new platform of trade agreements and cultural exchanges which were echoed in the New Images Program of the British Council. As Australians looked to ending the last constitutional ties between Australia and Britain, and as the two governments looked to the future of their ongoing relationship, Australia's historians increasingly returned their attention to its past. Historians such as Richard White and Stephen Alomes focused on the attraction of Australians to 'return' to England in their histories of Australian popular culture and travel. Others used the republican debate and the reinterpretation of national identity, which had been encouraged by the Bicentenary and by Keating, to revisit other aspects of Australia's empire experience with keen interest. Their histories focused on a varying range of issues, although Australia at war, its dedominionisation, and the republic were common themes.

Historians of recent years mostly avoided tired and romantic perceptions of the British connection to Australia. Some, such as Geoffrey Partington, continued to remind Australians of the importance of their British roots. Many, instead, challenged the previously supposed affinity between the United Kingdom and its Australian Dominion. Eric Andrews and Christopher Waters probed deeper into historical relations between Australians and the British, assessing the tension which periodically existed between them in the last century. Many have placed special attention on the process of Australia's separation from Britain. The preceding chapters have demonstrated how


many historians have considered that the relaxation of Australia's ties to the United Kingdom occurred gradually over the greater proportion of the twentieth century. Australia's withdrawal from the British Empire has therefore found a place in historical analyses covering most periods and decades of this century, albeit with varying degrees of emphasis. There has remained, too, a common interest among Australian historians in Australian Britishness. Hence many reinterpretations of Australian history in recent years have looked at issues of identity, belonging and the imperial relationship.

Australia at war is one subject which has recently attracted the notice of historians working in the field of Anglo-Australian relations, among them being Eric Andrews, Joan Beaumont and David Day. As well as providing an account of Australian military involvement in conflicts such as the First and Second World Wars, these writers have also attempted a deeper analysis of the dynamics and interplay between Australia and Britain at the time. In *The Anzac Illusion*, for example, Andrews not only questioned the traditional Anzac image, but also highlighted the strain in Anglo-Australian relations during the Great War and the loss of faith by the Australian troops in the 'superiority' of their English cousins. Similarly, Beaumont and Day discussed Australia's soured relations with Britain during the Second World War. The fall of Singapore during the crisis of 1941 and 1942 has received particular historiographical and public interest. Day is best known for his argument that Britain betrayed Australia on that occasion, in leaving the surrounding region without adequate defence measures. His thesis has since been echoed by such public figures as Paul Keating and his speech writer, historian Don Watson. Beaumont, on the other hand, attributed blame for the debacle at Singapore to both Britain and Australia, suggesting that Australia had ample warning of Britain's waning regional strength and that it should have ensured other means of self-defence prior to December 1941.

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9 See, for example, *Daily Telegraph Mirror*, 28 February 1988, p.17.

By the end of World War Two the Anglo-Australian relationship had changed irrevocably. The following decades witnessed the gradual withdrawal of Australia from the empire, and its separation from Britain. This was a cultural swing as much as it was practical, and it was manifested in such things as the different receptions received by the Queen on her visits to Australia between 1954 and 2000. But Australia's separation from Britain only mirrored the change which the United Kingdom was effecting in its relations with its old empire; by the 1960s Britain very deliberately disengaged itself from Australia's region while seeking greater integration with Europe. Christopher Waters and David Lowe have both recently focused on the relations between Australia and Britain in the immediate post-war decades and on the increasing separation of their foreign policies and national interests.\textsuperscript{11} Waters suggested in \textit{The Empire Fractures} that the ruling elites of Britain and Australia 'no longer shared a common understanding of the world', and that the following years witnessed the 'fracturing of the imperial state in Australia'.\textsuperscript{12} Both he and Lowe fundamentally reinterpreted the nature of post-war Anglo-Australian relations. Where historians such as Coral Bell, Glen Barclay and Kenneth Morgan have blamed Evatt for the friction between Australia and Britain at the time, Waters, particularly, argued that the conflict resulted from broader issues such as the defeat of the Anglo-Australian elite, the subsequent fracturing of the British state in Australia, and the declining Australian identification with British interests.\textsuperscript{13}

One of the most prominent of the historians emerging during the 1990s was Mark McKenna. Completing postgraduate research in New South Wales before obtaining a position at the Australian National University, McKenna was honoured in 1998 by the Australian Historical Association for his history of republicanism in Australia, \textit{The Captive Republic}.\textsuperscript{14} Rather than exploring tensions or conflict between Australia and Britain, McKenna discussed how Australian Britishness had often been a 'positive' or

\textsuperscript{12} Waters, \textit{Empire Fractures}, pp.3,10.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{ibid.}, pp.193-194.
active influence in the various republican movements since 1788. The contemporary
debate surrounding the republic, of course, is concerned mostly with terminating the last
vestiges of Australia's colonial ties to Britain. McKenna argued, though, that common to
most republican movements in the past was their loyalty to the British monarchy. Those
Australians proposing separation from the British government in the nineteenth century,
for example, were usually loyal monarchists, demanding their birthrights as
‘Englishmen’. Most colonial activists, therefore, ‘were loyalists first, and republicans
second’.¹⁵ By the late twentieth century this had obviously changed significantly.
McKenna reasoned that republicanism became more of a deliberate rejection of
Britishness and of the remnants of Australian colonialism, a shift in thinking which had
become more evident since the 1963 royal tour.¹⁶ In a manner similar to Bolton and
Clark, McKenna wrote that the task for Australia at the end of the twentieth century was
to define its own identity. In the 1990s, he concluded, the republic was about ‘how we
wish to be Australian’.¹⁷

There is yet to be a conclusion to the story of British Australia. The British
monarch is retained as the Australian head of state, and we remain firmly entrenched as
part of the old Commonwealth of Nations. Furthermore, in an appalling act of
symbolism, many leading Australian parliamentarians, historians, and other public figures
gathered in London in July 2000 to begin the celebrations of the centenary of Australia’s
Federation. National identity and its accompanying symbols must remain of concern to
all Australians, for they can both reflect and determine the way Australians perceive
themselves.¹⁸ Only last year the prospect of an Australian republic was heatedly debated
at all levels of Australian society, prior to the defeat of the proposed republican model at a
national referendum. Now, remnants of the Anglo-Australian elite continue to fight to
retain the old constitutional and ceremonial symbols by which they characterise Australian
identity, while many Australian-born citizens and non-British immigrants refuse to accept
the significance of such symbols at all.

¹⁵ ibid., p.58.
¹⁶ ibid., p.219.
¹⁷ ibid., p.260.
While the imperial legacy of Britain in Australia remains a matter for public concern and interest, it is pertinent that historians contribute to the debate with research on issues such as Australian Britishness and on the Australian experience of empire. Blainey, Bolton, Hudson and Clark did so in a manner which reflected the values of their generation, their experiences in the years of the British Empire's decline, and their respective personal journeys in identity and belonging. Likewise, those historians who have followed interpret Australia's imperial experience according to the values and conditions of their contemporary environment. Common to many of the histories of the late twentieth century, though, is the challenge to traditional interpretations of Australia's relationship with the United Kingdom. This is a trend which can only continue. When the trumpets of empire are finally stilled, and when the remnants of Britishness no longer press on the consciousness of Australians, it will remain only to determine what social memory will inform Australian historical writing, and to see whether 'empire' will be framed within it.

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