

## 寄稿論文

## Australia in the Asian Century: A Decolonizing and Cosmopolitan Perspective

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Over the last seventy years since the end of World War II, the Asia/Pacific has been profoundly transformed in terms of migration and movement of peoples. In relation to Pacific Rim settler countries like Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States this has been particularly evident. Henry Yu,<sup>1)</sup> for example, has described these changes as having a deep impact on the making of a Trans-Pacific Canada that, because of Asian immigration to the west coast, now looks towards Asia more than towards its traditional locus, the Atlantic. As a consequence, the Canadian national imaginary, traditionally white, is challenged by a new racial and cultural reality. Similarly, Australia as a Pacific Rim nation and a settler society like Canada has experienced major cultural shifts in its national imaginary. The transformation has been described thus:

The number of languages, religious and cultural traditions, forms of social pluralism, demographic complexity and gender relations that Australia's multiculturalism encompasses makes it one of the most interesting experiments in globalization from below that the world has yet seen. In a sense Australia can be regarded as a test case in the construction of global citizenship.<sup>2)</sup>

Like Canada, but in different ways, Australia currently faces a pivotal time in its modernity, one that involves the imperative of a substantive cultural and intellectual re-orientation towards knowing Asia in the Asian Century. This is not something entirely new or novel. Australia has been concerned with Asia as a monolithically imagined force to its north ever since European invasion and settlement. The Australian postcolonial polity contains many contradictions and ambivalences formed through its white legacies and European cartographical, intellectual and cultural mindset, which in many ways has prevented a real openness to the complexity and diversity that is Asia. The Indian scholar Ashis Nandy has described this in the following way: 'For more than two hundred years, the Enlightenment vision and the values it sanctions have provided the standard by which all cultures have

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<sup>1)</sup> Henry Yu, "The Shifting History of Migration and Citizenship in the Making of Trans-Pacific Canada, 1940-2010," *Pacific and American Studies* 12 (2012): 12, 8-19.

<sup>2)</sup> Allan Patience and Michael Jacques, "Rethinking Australian Studies in Japanese Universities: Towards a New Area Studies for a Globalising World," *Journal of Australian Studies* (2003): 77, 43-56, 53.

been judged in the civilised world.’<sup>3)</sup> In the background of Australia’s relations with Asia – historically, economically, politically and geo-strategically there are therefore profound assumptions about where its values have originated. As Catriona Elder argues about how Australia has imagined Asia,

Though the stories about Asia were never singular or coherent, there was a dominant story pervading the white Australia era. The conglomeration of negative ideas about Asia was brought together in the form of an invasion narrative.<sup>4)</sup>

This “invasion narrative” has informed successive periods of Australian modernity and is an important feature of how Australian public culture has developed its values in response to issues of immigration and multiculturalism. Strident de-humanising of refugees and boat people by the main Australian political parties has occurred with increasing intensity over the last fifteen years, for example, connected to this “invasion narrative.” And this is despite Australia essentially being a modern nation composed of ‘boat people’ who have come from Britain and Europe and across all parts of the globe to form a multicultural reality.<sup>5)</sup>

Edward Said has summed up the activity of how cultural values are constructed and imagined by nations in the following way:

Self-definition is one of the activities practised by all cultures: it has a rhetoric, a set of occasions, and authorities (national feasts, for example, times of crisis, founding fathers, basic texts and so on), and a familiarity all its own.<sup>6)</sup>

The process of Australia’s self-definition has been powerfully connected to the installation of European Enlightenment principles and values. European culture has been transplanted into the southern continent in deliberative ways, through, for example, key events such as the national commemoration of ANZAC day, celebrated each year on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, of a battle

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<sup>3)</sup> Ashis Nandy, “Is Australia a Victim of the Ethical Limits of the Enlightenment? A Modest Foreword for an Immodest Venture,” in *Inside Australian Culture: Legacies of Enlightenment Values*, ed. Baden Offord, Erika Kerruish, Rob Garbutt, Kirsten Pavlovic and Adele Wessell (London: Anthem Press, 2014). Forthcoming.

<sup>4)</sup> Catriona Elder, *Being Australian: Narratives on National Identity* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2007), 122.

<sup>5)</sup> It should be noted too that Aboriginal peoples in Australia already formed a multicultural reality. In the construction of white settler colonial Australia, the tragic irony for Aborigines was that they were essentially displaced and de-localised. That is, they were not considered to be local. For an extensive discussion on this aspect of Australian national imaginary, see, Rob Garbutt, *The Locals: Identity, Place and Belonging in Australia and Beyond* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011).

<sup>6)</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1984), 42.

fought (but lost) in the First World War in support of the British Empire.<sup>7)</sup> Or by the continued links to Britain through being a constitutional monarchy, with Queen Elizabeth II as the official head of state.

In other ways, too, the European Enlightenment came to Australia in a multitude of different forms, installing itself through specific ways of knowing. The Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe has noted<sup>8)</sup> that in the 19th century more than 600,000 pianos were brought to Australia from across the seas, over the beaches, into harbours and ports and into cities, towns, developing suburban landscapes and onto farms, actively enculturating the Australian public sphere. This installation of European music into the emerging nation provides a powerful example of how values and ways of knowing become domesticated. Tony Hughes-d'Aeth in his essay, 'A prospect of future regularity: Spatial technologies in colonial Australia,' gives an indication of how the British mind would install its worldview from the very early days of European arrival. He quotes from Phillip's settlement journal:

There are few things more pleasing than the contemplation of order and useful arrangement... this satisfaction cannot anywhere be more fully enjoyed than where a settlement of civilised people is fixing itself on a savage coast.<sup>9)</sup>

In other words, Enlightenment principles and values were the tools brought to bear on the formation of the Australian polity, forming a set of core institutions (including law, medicine, education, the military, the church) that became the repository of civilization (order) and the means for constructing (ordering) self-knowledge.<sup>10)</sup> These values have become the dominant fabric of the Australian imaginary.

Following these considerations, this paper argues that knowing Asia will mean Australia

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<sup>7)</sup> Historically, ANZAC is identified with the phrase 'Lest We Forget,' perpetuating not just the commemoration of war, but what are regarded as foundational and dominant values in Australia. This tradition had become a key site of Australia's civilising *modus operandi*. Every statue and memorial across Australia dedicated to ANZAC is a site of national self-definition, a cultural, political and social marker that has mythologised a specific narrative of memory. For an intelligent critique of ANZAC, see, Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds with Mark McKenna and Joy Damousi, *What's Wrong With ANZAC: The Militarisation of Australian History* (Kensington, NSW: University of New South Press, 2010). This important scholarship, which continues to remain in the margins of mainstream thinking about ANZAC, demonstrates the incapacity of Australia's public culture to adequately reflect on itself.

<sup>8)</sup> Interviewed in *The Beach*, [Documentary], Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2001.

<sup>9)</sup> Quoted in Tony Hughes-d'Aeth, "A Prospect of Future Regularity: Spatial Technologies in Colonial Australia," in *Imagining Australian Space: Cultural Studies and Spatial Inquiry*, ed. Ruth Barcan and Ian Buchanan (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1999), 47-58, 47.

<sup>10)</sup> In the regional city in which my university is located in Australia – Lismore – the local Courthouse, built in 1888, embodies Enlightenment values in its architecture as well as through symbols, pictures of the Queen and the use of Latin. It has only been in the last few years that Aboriginal art with reference to Aboriginal ways of knowing has been also included in the court.

has to know itself and become a reflective culture. This requires a robust cosmopolitan and decolonising commitment to an inter-epistemic dialogue. That is, where there is not just an acknowledgement of Australia's indigenous, Asia/Pacific and multi-culture context but where its values are transformed by such self-knowledge, through a process of self-education. How this dialogue will be nurtured and sustained will be the challenge. It will demand new ways of conceiving what is required for Australia to go beyond its historical ambivalence towards Asia and its refusal to fully recognise Aboriginal ontological belonging.<sup>11)</sup> Essential to the nurturing of a cosmopolitan and decolonising perspective will be the need to develop intellectual strategies for getting inside Australian culture, understanding the dominant Enlightenment template and acknowledging its limitations. The basic premise is that Australia has not been decolonised. And as Ghassan Hage has commented:

This is what constitutes the objective difficulty of the Australian situation. For a long time to come, Australia is destined to become an unfinished Western colonial project as well as a land in a permanent state of decolonisation. A nation inhabited by both the will of the coloniser and the will of the colonised, each with their identity based on their specific take on, and memory of, the colonial encounter: what was before it and what is after it.<sup>12)</sup>

### ***Australia in the Asian Century***

Political scientist Dennis Altman has argued that modern Australia remains uneasy about its geography in the Asia/Pacific. This is because, as stated earlier, the dominant view in Australia is that it is unambiguously a western nation, one that has been constructed out of the order that European Enlightenment thinking brought to the great southern continent. Altman also refers to the fact that the 'centrality of the American alliance,' with Australia, 'is far more than an ingredient in foreign policy – rather an expression of a deep attachment to a world in which the values and the institutions of the Anglosphere are taken for granted as superior and beyond question'.<sup>13)</sup> Australia's intellectual, cultural, political as well as geo-strategic gravity remains fixed to the British colonial mindset that produced it as a modern state.

As fate would have it, Australia does now find itself squarely negotiating what has

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<sup>11)</sup> I have argued elsewhere in support of Aboriginal scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson's challenge to Australian society that there needs to be honest recognition and acceptance of Aboriginal ontological belonging. This is not to deny non-Indigenous belonging in Australia, which has its own story, but it is an important and necessary step in Australia's reconciliation process. See, Baden Offord, "Landscapes of Exile (and narratives on the trauma of belonging)," in *Landscapes of Exile: Once Perilous, Now Safe*, eds. Anna Haebich and Baden Offord (London: Peter Lang, 2008), 1-9.

<sup>12)</sup> Ghassan Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism* (Annandale: Pluto Press, 2003), 94.

<sup>13)</sup> Dennis Altman, "Paradox of Identity," *Griffith Review, What is Australia For?* no. 36 (2012): 80-89, 88-89.

been called the Asian Century.<sup>14)</sup> Enormous global shifts in economic activity and growth in countries such as India, China and Indonesia – not to forget Japan – has moved the world inexorably to a post western modernist model. In the transition from the last two centuries of European and American industrial, economic and technological triumph into a new set of international dynamics, the international community is undeniably now in the process of new forms of globalism. Interdependence has become the ubiquitous condition of the modern nationstate within an international, networked society; an interdependence moreover that is characterised by material (and therefore militarised, environmental, corporate and political) enmeshment and new national forms, behaviours and narratives of self knowledge based on the effects of the endless traffic of goods and communications that cross borders. Within this changing global system cultural conflict has become a key feature. But not in the sense that Samuel Huntington described in his ‘Clash of Civilizations,’ where civilizational and cultural essentialisms come together to form the basis of global conflict. Rather, cultural conflict in this globally interdependent system is more complicated, uneven and asymmetrical, likely to occur within a culture, and therefore within civilizations, nations and communities, observed in tensions, clashes and contests between the traditional and the new, between the status quo and reflection.<sup>15)</sup>

In relation to contemporary Australia, the idea of the Asian Century has become hugely important over the last two decades to its cultural, political, educational and foreign policy futures. So much so, that the Australian Government released a major White Paper in 2012 titled *Australia in the Asian Century*.<sup>16)</sup> But, such an interest in the Asian Century is not simply because of its relevance to the present pulse of globalisation and Australia’s role in that,<sup>17)</sup> but because Australia is a nation that demonstrates a range of complex tensions, challenges and possibilities that are evident in its increasing enmeshment and engagement with the Asian region. China, Japan, the United States and the Republic of Korea are Australia’s main four trading partners. It is noteworthy that most of Australia’s trade focuses on the Asia-Pacific region, with more than 70 per cent taking place with member economies of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group.<sup>18)</sup>

Paul Keating, former Prime Minister of Australia from 1991-1996, observed in 2000:

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<sup>14)</sup> For the purposes of this essay, Asia is assumed to refer in a general way to the geographical, socio-cultural and politically identified area that stretches from Turkey to Japan. The monolithic nature of the term ‘Asia’ has been extensively contested.

<sup>15)</sup> In these opening comments I draw on the following: Dieter Senghaas, *The Clash within Civilizations: Coming to Terms with Cultural Conflicts* (London: Routledge, 2002); and John Ralston Saul, *The Collapse of Globalism and the Reinvention of the World* (London: Viking, 2005).

<sup>16)</sup> Since the election of the Coalition Government in September 2013, this White Paper has been given less status.

<sup>17)</sup> This is self-evident through the economic and moral imperatives of Australia’s enmeshment with its geographic region.

<sup>18)</sup> <http://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/trade/trade-at-a-glance-2012.html> (accessed November 1, 2013).

Here we sit, nineteen million of us, drawn from more than 120 different countries, on the edge of Asia, and with all the resources of a continent to draw on. What an astonishing bequest that is. We cannot turn away and we cannot turn back. It is the most exhilarating and promising prospect.<sup>19)</sup>

Thirteen years after that statement, Australia now has a population of 23 and a half million, which is expected to double by 2075. What Keating and many other Australian leaders, thinkers, scholars and commentators have been saying for some time is that Australia's future is intrinsically tied to Asia. Both as a Pacific Rim nation and one that straddles the Pacific and Indian Oceans, contemporary Australia's cultural and national identity has been formed through complex historical and spatial events, narratives and imaginings. As a nation state with a European cartographic, emotional and intellectual memory, Australia is defined by its legacies of White settlement, colonialism, and British Enlightenment values. As the historian David Walker has noted, Australia's identity has been largely imagined and forged in relation to Asia. He makes the point that "'Asia" became fundamental to Australian self-definition from the late nineteenth century and remains so today'.<sup>20)</sup>

Such a focus of self-definition, however, cannot be sundered from the realities of what Australia is now recognised to be: a nation that has the longest living indigenous culture in the world together with what many argue is set to be the most diverse and multicultural population in the world. Cultural commentator Julianne Schultz has made the point that Australia has been utterly transformed from what it was seventy years ago when it was in the throes of the Pacific war, prior to the enormous waves of migration of the second half of the twentieth century. As a result of this, she describes Australia today as being 'rich, cosmopolitan, competitive and globally engaged'.<sup>21)</sup> Dennis Altman has remarked too that 'Australia is transforming into a successful multiracial, multi-ethnic and multilingual society,' but, 'whose greatest failure is inequality for its Indigenous peoples'.<sup>22)</sup> This continues to be a recurring theme over and over in Australian modernity.

Canadian political critic John Ralston Saul supports this in his analysis of how globalisation has exposed the fragility of nations and civilizations. He argues that Australia 'remains confused by the tension between its European cultural origins, its Aboriginal reality, and its Asian geography'.<sup>23)</sup> Concern for Australia's role in the Asian Century is thus part of an ongoing debate about self-definition, one that goes back to Federation in 1901, and earlier

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<sup>19)</sup> Paul Keating, *Engagement: Australia Faces the Asia-Pacific* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), 300.

<sup>20)</sup> David Walker, *Experiencing Turbulence: Asia in the Australian Imaginary* (New Delhi: Readworthy Publications, 2013), ix.

<sup>21)</sup> Julianne Schultz, "A Question with many answers," *Griffith Review, What is Australia For?* no. 36 (2012): 7-10, 9.

<sup>22)</sup> Altman, "Paradox of Identity," 81.

<sup>23)</sup> Saul, *The Collapse of Globalism and the Reinvention of the World*, 32.

anxieties that were imagined in the nascent colony. Australian historians David Walker and Agnieszka Sobocinska write:

Asia appears throughout Australian history as a source of both anxiety and hope. Generic Asia has been much imagined, visited and invoked, as have the individual nations that make up the Asian continent. It has been a presence both within and outside the nation, shaping who we are as well as our ties to the wider world.<sup>24)</sup>

Asia, as an idea and geographical reality has therefore had a long-term impact on the development of Australia. The historian Stephen Fitzgerald's prescient observation that the 'Asian challenge for Australia is not economic or commercial. It is intellectual, and the issues are political and cultural', continues to reverberate.<sup>25)</sup>

If the twenty-first century is now explicitly a time for Australia *knowing* Asia, that its society needs to become more than 'Asia literate' and to become a full constituent of the Asian Century, which the *Australia in the Asian Century* white paper supported, then there are a range of challenges to this engagement, particularly intellectual and cultural in nature. If it is true too, as the Australian political commentator George Megalogenus has stated, Australia's 'future in Asia is as the world's best immigration nation',<sup>26)</sup> then the framework of Australia's self-definition has to radically change given the unresolved confusion that Saul refers to above. This essay contributes to a discussion of some of the dynamics behind the cultural and intellectual challenge that the Asian Century poses to Australia. But, rather than providing an analysis based on the kinds of cultural differences – whether ontological or epistemological – that diverse Asian cultures pose in relation to Australia, the aim of this essay is to unpack some of the intellectual considerations that are required if Australia is to meet the challenge of the Asian Century, if it is to alter its cultural gravity.

The essay provides a framework of engagement that is based on understanding what lies beneath Australia's self-definition. What is required by Australia to move beyond its long-term anxieties about Asia? How can Australia know Asia without resolving its own confusion? How does a decolonising and cosmopolitan perspective help to resolve that confusion? Answers to these questions are needed in order for Australia to respond to pressing issues such as the politically volatile problem of human rights for asylum seekers and refugees arriving in Australia by boat from countries such as Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Iran. What are the values that are now required in Australia's cultural and intellectual enmeshment with Asia? In other

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<sup>24)</sup> David Walker and Agnieszka Sobocinska, "Introduction: Australia's Asia," in *Australia's Asia: From Yellow Peril to Asian Century*, ed. David Walker and Agnieszka Sobocinska (Crawley, Western Australia: University of Western Australia Press, 2012), 1-23, 20.

<sup>25)</sup> Stephen Fitzgerald, *Is Australia an Asian Country?* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1997), 4.

<sup>26)</sup> George Megalogenus, "Our Future is as Asia's nation of immigration," *The Weekend Australian*, September 15-16, 2012, 21.

words, in the transformation of the Asia/Pacific, what is Australia for? <sup>27)</sup>

### ***Considerations of a cosmopolitan form of decolonisation in Australia***

Deborah Bird Rose has stated that,

The process of decolonising modern settler societies is a new phenomenon; we have no models from the past to guide us. It is equally a dialogical project; we cannot theorise in advance just how it will happen and still be committed to openness. We have to work it out step by step dialogically with and among each other.<sup>28)</sup>

In order to assist the process of decolonising a modern settler society like Australia, the argument made is that diverse intellectual tools are required to adequately get inside Australian public culture to reveal its limitations and initiate reflection. An example of such effort can be seen in the recent book *As Others See Us: the Values Debate in Australia*.<sup>29)</sup> This volume brings together a number of Australian scholars to investigate Australian cultural, social and political values through the theoretical lens of Indian scholar Ashis Nandy. The work demonstrates that there are other voices and intellectual positions to be listened to and learnt from, outside Australia, located in Asia, who can shed light on how decolonisation can be hastened, or at the very least discussed in mutually beneficial transformative conversations across and within diverse cultures. These voices are noticed at the crossroads of Australian identity and belonging, in exchanges that occur between, across and within cultures. Such culturally diverse conversations are awakening new sensibilities about what needs to occur to sustain an intellectual and psychological decolonisation of the Australian consciousness.<sup>30)</sup>

As Ashis Nandy has pointed out, it is important and vital that traditions are able to reflect

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<sup>27)</sup> This was the theme of an issue of the *Griffith Review*, No. 36, 2012.

<sup>28)</sup> Deborah Bird Rose, *Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonisation* (Kensington, NSW: UNSW Press, 2004), 24.

<sup>29)</sup> J. V. D'Cruz, Bernie Neville, Devika Goonewardene and Phillip Darby, eds. *As Others See Us: Postcolonial Perspectives on Australia Culture – the Values Debate* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Press, 2008).

<sup>30)</sup> There are a number of recent works that are important in assisting a cosmopolitan form of decolonization in Australia in relation to the Asian Century. Apart from those already cited above, see, for example, Alison Broinowski, *About Face: Asian Accounts of Australia* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2003); J. V. D'Cruz and William Steele, *Australia's Ambivalence Towards Asia* (Clayton, Victoria: Monash Asia Institute, 2003); Suvendrini Perera, *Australia and the Insular Imagination: Beaches, Borders, Boats, and Bodies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Raewyn Connell, *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2007); Gloria Davies, J. V. D'Cruz and Nathan Hollier eds., *Profiles in Courage — Political Actors and Ideas in Contemporary Asia* (North Melbourne, Victoria: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008); Erika Kerruish, Baden Offord and J. V. D'Cruz, "Teaching Shared Values and Social Cohesion: the Necessary Other," in *As Others See Us*, eds. D'Cruz et al., 103–7.



on themselves and to understand, learn from, and take responsibility for their actions if they are to renew themselves and flourish into the future. British culture, unified and hardened through the experience of colonialism, needs to be decolonised, unpacked and diversified into its numerous traditions. Within Australia, as Henry Reynolds has noted, there have been European humanist traditions advocating for better treatment of Aboriginal Australians, despite the prevailing climate working against this.<sup>31)</sup> And the Australian Enlightenment historian John Gascoigne has demonstrated that there have been a variety of British cultural traditions, religious, social, political and otherwise, present in colonial Australia that were sidelined in the formation of its public culture.<sup>32)</sup> Alternative views on political, social and cultural issues of the environment, Asia, and migration, for example, were present in the formation of the Australian public sphere alongside the dominant perspectives. Space for the continuation of these and the diverse traditions of a highly multicultural and multi-ethnic society has become an increasingly important imperative as Australia matures. This re-imagining of the present engagement with Asia, and revisiting past events in order to recover what has been suppressed and marginalised, and re-introduce it into past, present and future considerations, has become a concern for Australian scholars and cultural producers. The need for alternative futures does not only apply to non-Anglo traditions attempting to avoid the prescriptions of a universal modernity, it also applies to the traditions arising from Anglo-British cultures.<sup>33)</sup> In the wash of Asian engagement, which has the possibility of creating inter-epistemic dialogue, Australia's national imaginary and identity, principles and values are being tested and reviewed with the prospect of transformation.

J. V. D'Cruz argued strenuously throughout his fifty years as an Asian-Australian scholar that Australia would be successful in working out a satisfying and coherent identity in its multi-cultural regional neighbourhood only after it had found a way to live with ease within its own multi-cultured Australia, which of course begins with Indigenous Australians, and includes Asian-Australians, Oceanic-Australians, and the like. Thus, when Australia has learned to live amicably with the *other* within, it will have also learnt to live with the *other* outside. This mutual recognition of the other was for D'Cruz an imperative that was urgent, compelling and choice-less.

In an autobiographical account of his life as an Asian-Australian scholar, D'Cruz lamented:

I've lived in Australia for over half a century and though an individual person's life experiences may not be the last word on the subject, in the marrow of my bones I feel that Asia, or any essential part of it, was ever the object of genuine puzzlement on the

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<sup>31)</sup> Henry Reynolds, *This Whispering in Our Hearts* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1998), 3.

<sup>32)</sup> John Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>33)</sup> An extended discussion of this can be found in Offord et al. *Inside Australian Culture*.

part of literary or any other Australia. Australia had cut itself off from Asia...<sup>34)</sup>

For D’Cruz, to understand the perpetuation of Enlightenment values was critical to a process of active intellectual decolonisation of the Australian polity. He observed that Australian culture was framed through a defensive, often aggressive, frequently anxious concern and maintenance of borders. These were not just physical but psychological, political, social and cultural – framed through specific values. These so-called “Australian values” were derived from the Anglo-Celtic tradition. This could be seen in former Prime Minister John Howard’s view about Australia’s character, that:

In Australia’s case, that dominant pattern comprises Judeo-Christian ethics, the progressive spirit of the Enlightenment and the institutions and values of British political culture. Its democratic and egalitarian temper also bears the imprint of distinct Irish and non-conformist traditions.<sup>35)</sup>

By stating so factually that the dominant cultural patterns, and thus core values, of Australia are Judeo-Christian, Enlightenment-based and Anglo-Celtic, Australian values are presented as something that are unchanging and naturally pre-determined by the past. The presentation of abstract, common national values, values that are necessarily artificial, as self-evident, immediately denies that such values are the result of a process of deliberation and negotiation between groups.

Reflecting on the construction of national values is not merely an historical process, but rather a way of thinking about how contemporary Australian public culture has been informed by an ongoing set of values and principles that come from its European Enlightenment legacy. Within a national context, values are never free floating. They are institutionalised, legitimated and expressed through the core institutions of a society, which include such important ‘truth’ makers such as the media, church, law and education as noted earlier. Values are normalised through ritual, story, politics and tradition. A nation comes to know itself through its values, and provides a template for how those values should be considered and perpetuated through time and space. Schooling and education, for example, though often very different projects are both crucial domains in which values become respectively embedded and reproduced or examined and redefined. In Australia, the values which have become ubiquitous to its national story, and which underpin its institutions, have been formulated through efforts that

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<sup>34)</sup> J. V. D’Cruz, “Little Cultures, Local Histories and National Literatures,” in *Reading Down Under: Australian Literary Studies Reader*, ed. Amit Sarwal and Reema Sarwal (New Delhi: SSS Publications, 2009), xxii.

<sup>35)</sup> John Howard, “A Sense of Balance: The Australian Achievement in 2006,” Address to the National Press Club, January 25, 2006, [www.pm.gov.au/News/Speeches/speech1754.html](http://www.pm.gov.au/News/Speeches/speech1754.html), (accessed December 20, 2008).

are distinctive to a settler society, specifically to an Anglo-Celtic settler society with a British heritage. The values that have come to provide the dominant template of society in Australia are linked to a chain of belonging and intellectual effort that has been inculcated and sustained through the British Enlightenment.

Colonisation, which characterises Australian modernity, is itself ubiquitous to the human condition. It occurs as the basis of any form of power relation in which the distribution of that power is not negotiated with respect to and recognition of mutual (inter)dependence. In Nandy's 1983 account of *The Intimate Enemy* he persuasively outlines how colonialism is not just the conquest of space (*terra firma* or marine), but that it forms the content of cultures and societies, becoming indeed, a mindset. This process of colonialism is an ongoing project in Australian public culture, one that has not yet been fully exposed or resolved partly due to the very limits of possible critique that can come from within the Enlightenment legacy itself. The crucial question is: how can the very same colonised mind (and its institutional nodes) decolonise itself? Nandy comments: 'This colonialism colonises the mind in addition to bodies and it releases forces within colonised societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all'.<sup>36)</sup>

Three examples are useful here that illustrate the effects of how cultural priorities become fixed. First, the culture of whiteness in Australia has continued despite the demise of the White Australia Policy over forty-five years ago. The cultural commentator Ien Ang writes: 'what seems to be the object of anxiety today is the maintenance of the *culture* of white Australia.'<sup>37)</sup> Second, a rejection of multicultural Australia as a reality, and the downgrading of the policy of multiculturalism over the early part of the century systematically sustained the production of a *culture* of border security and protection, fashioned around the motif "we decide who comes here", which has become welded to the present dominant national imaginary. The "we" in this motif appears to be non-negotiable. Third, when the Howard Government changed the *Commonwealth Marriage Act* in 2004, to federally legislate that marriage could only be between a man and a woman, it entrenched an anxiety about the maintenance of the *culture* of heterosexual and patriarchal Australia. For Howard, marriage is a bedrock institution of Australian society and must be preserved. These three examples have formed a specific axis of border control over the nation in different ways and are evident in current tensions in the polity.

There are as well positive intellectual responses happening in Australia. Ien Ang in an article in entitled: 'Re-imagining Australia' makes the argument for an approach in Australia to its internal diversity that is based on a cosmopolitan multiculturalism. She concludes that notions of shared values are always problematic, and that new ways are needed to negotiate the complexity of cultural contexts in which we now find ourselves within. Ang's suggestion is to

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<sup>36)</sup> Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 11.

<sup>37)</sup> Ien Ang, "Passengers on Train Australia," *Griffith Review*, (Autumn 2008): 229-39.

foster a culture of reaching out and making conversation. She describes this as conversational cosmopolitan multiculturalism. This is where inter-epistemic dialogue occurs in open, respectful, but not necessarily easy or unchallenging ways within the public culture. An example of this can be seen in contemporary responses to the highly emotive issue of asylum seekers in Australia. *Go Back To Where You Came From* was an Australian TV documentary series with two seasons in 2011 and 2012, broadcast on the national multicultural network, Special Broadcasting Service.<sup>38)</sup> Inverting the refugee experience, several Australians from all walks of life and with very different perspectives on the refugee issue, make the journey back to the countries from which refugees have fled.

SBS sent six ordinary Australians on a gruelling and confronting 25-day journey to experience the reality of refugee life. Broadcast over three nights, *Go Back to Where You Came From* got the nation talking about refugee and asylum seeker issues and how Australia responds to this complex global issue by sparking national debate about a topic so often hijacked by political campaigning and media headlines.<sup>39)</sup>

The series provided a powerful form of national reflection about one of the most defining issues of border anxiety in Australia through the personal experience of its own citizens.

Similarly, the recent book *Don't Go Back to Where You Came* by the Asian Australian scholar and media commentator, Tim Soutphommasane,<sup>40)</sup> makes an unambiguous and strong defence of the relevance and importance of multiculturalism based on liberal political philosophy. His analysis of Australia's multicultural reality is robustly situated within the framework of Enlightenment values. But Soutphommasane is also a first-generation Australian born in France to Chinese-Lao refugees, and he offers a very contemporary intellectual and cultural critique of the value of cultural diversity in Australia from the point of view of an Australian migrant. Both of these examples are cosmopolitan multicultural approaches to Australia's engagement with Asia and are potentially decolonising examples at the core of change and transformation in Australia's articulation of its values, to itself and to the world.

### ***Australia and Its Cosmopolitan Futures?***

Australia presents itself as a liberal democratic nation whose values are derived from Judeo-Christian and European intellectual traditions. It sees itself as part of western

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<sup>38)</sup> *Go Back to Where You Came From*, Television Documentaries, SBS One, 2011, 2012.

<sup>39)</sup> *Go Back to Where You Came From*, Education Pack, <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/doc/2013-GoBack-SchlPack.pdf> (accessed December 1, 2013).

<sup>40)</sup> Tim Soutphommasane, *Don't Go Back to Where You Came* (Kensington, NSW: University of New South Wales Press, 2012).

civilization, and as such has defined its past, present and future based on this key assumption through the shaping of its modernity. Australia's self-definition and imagination has been constructed through a process of *othering* that has been systemic and pervasive in its core institutions. This is the Australia that 'sends the boats back', demonises refugees and reduces them to 'illegals'. Australia sees itself as a humanitarian, tolerant and hospitable society in the western tradition, but at the same time, it is an anxious nation<sup>41)</sup> through its reaction to its geographical context, the reality of indigenous presence and multicultural everyday life. The Australian story through modernity has been framed largely through heated debates about immigration, multiculturalism, refugees and asylum seekers. And the interpenetration of cultures and peoples in everyday life in Australia, as it has become a truly multicultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic reality, is that its public culture is increasingly defined by intense conversations and dialogue that are cosmopolitan and potentially decolonising. Australia as an insular<sup>42)</sup> and contradictory nation, ideologically still meta-racially imagined as white, but experienced through colour and cultural diversity, is being radically re-oriented through the effects of its own self-understanding public culture, assisted by those from other traditions and ways of knowing.<sup>43)</sup>

In his first speech to the Australian parliament on 21 March 2012, former Australian Foreign Minister Senator Bob Carr made the argument that a primary goal of Australian foreign policy was for Australia to be 'an exemplary global citizen.' This included protecting human rights and promoting and 'defending cultural diversity.' He argued for 'the idea of a planet of seven billion that celebrates and does not deny its contradictions.' In his speech he invoked the vision of King Abdullah of Jordan who stated at the Davos conference in 2004: 'Let us avert the clash of civilisations, and help the overlap of cultures.' Bob Carr's speech was framed around the central tenet of a world that valued overlapping cultures. He made particular reference to a period in Spain's history where in Andalusia, southern Medieval Spain, for several hundred years Moslems, Christians and Jews lived and worked together in a marvellous culture of tolerance. To illustrate his argument, Carr drew on Maria

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<sup>41)</sup> David Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia, 1850-1939*, (St Lucia: Queensland University Press, 1999).

<sup>42)</sup> I draw here on a brilliant critique and survey of Australia's cultural and political imaginary. See, Perera, *Australia and the Insular Imagination*.

<sup>43)</sup> See, for example, the website of Asian Australian Cinema which exhibits 539 films and 400 directors: (<http://asianaustraliancinema.org/>); and the following books: Olivia Khoo, Belinda Smaill, and Audrey Yue, *Transnational Australian Cinema: Ethics in the Asian Diasporas* (Lexington, USA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013); Alice Pung, *Growing Up Asian in Australia* (Melbourne: Black Inc. 2008); Regina Ganter, *Mixed Relations: Asian-Aboriginal Contact in North Australia* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 2006); Tseen Khoo ed., *Locating Asian Australian Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2008); Peta Stephenson, *The Outsider's Within: Telling Australia's Indigenous-Asian Story* (Kensington: UNSW Press, 2007); Laksiri Jayasuriya, *Transforming a 'White Australia': Issues of Racism and Immigration* (New Delhi: SSS Publications, 2012).

Rosa Menocal's book *Ornament of the World*,<sup>44)</sup> which offers a history of this period in Spain, to underscore the need for a society that has the courage to 'live with its own flagrant contradictions.'<sup>45)</sup> Carr's speech can be read as one response to the question of Australia in the Asian Century, coming to terms successfully – culturally and intellectually – with its own 'flagrant contradictions.'

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<sup>44)</sup> Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (New York: Little, Brown, 2009).

<sup>45)</sup> Bob Carr, *First Speech*, [http://foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/2012/bc\\_sp\\_120321.html](http://foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/2012/bc_sp_120321.html), March 21, 2012, (accessed December 1, 2013).