
Another Look at the

Cultural Cringe

L. J. Hume

occasional papers

THE CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT STUDIES

The Centre for Independent Studies in Australia and New Zealand is a non-profit independent economic and social research institute concerned with the principles underlying a free and open society. Much of the Centre's research is concerned with economics and in particular the role of the market and the price mechanism in registering individual preferences and allocating resources. Emphasis is placed on the potential role of voluntary processes in providing the services normally supplied by the compulsory methods of government.

An essential requirement for a healthy free society is that the development of ideas be unconstrained by fashion, orthodoxy or the 'politically possible' and that it takes place within society at large rather than being monopolised by the public sector or other dominant group. In encouraging competition in ideas, the Centre for Independent Studies:

- commissions and publishes research studies in a variety of formats
- sponsors conferences and seminars on topics of current and continuing public concern
- makes the results of its studies available to the general public.

The research work of the Centre is assisted by a Council of Advisers.

Membership of the Advisory Council includes:

Professor H.W. Arndt

Professor Ray Ball

Professor R.J. Blandy

Professor Geoffrey Brennan

Professor Lauchlan Chipman

Professor Kenneth Clements

Professor David Emanuel

Professor Ian Harper

Professor R.M. Hartwell

Professor Warren Hogan

Professor Wolfgang Kasper

Professor Kenneth Minogue

Professor R.R. Officer

Professor Ross Parish

Professor C.G.F. Simkin

Professor Peter Swan

Professor Geoffrey de Q. Walker

The Centre is financed by sales of publications, and by voluntary subscriptions and contributions from individuals, organisations and companies.

Executive Director

Greg Lindsay

Editorial Director

Michael James

Orders for publications and subscription enquiries should be addressed to:

The Centre for Independent Studies

PO Box 92, St Leonards, NSW 2065, AUSTRALIA

Telephone (02) 438 4377, Fax (02) 439 7310

Post Box 5776, Wellesley St, Auckland, NEW ZEALAND

Telephone (09) 307 0933, Fax (09) 307 0948

Another Look at the Cultural Cringe

Another Look at the Cultural Cringe

L.J. Hume

THE CENTRE FOR
INDEPENDENT
STUDIES
1993

Published July 1993 by

The Centre for Independent Studies Limited

All Rights reserved.

Views expressed in the publications of the Centre for Independent Studies are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Centre's staff, Advisers, Trustees, Directors or officers.

National Library of Australia

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data:

Hume, L. J. (Leonard John) 1926–93.
Another look at the cultural cringe.

Bibliography.
ISBN 0 949769 89 4.

1. Australia – Intellectual life. I. Centre for Independent Studies (Australia). II. Title.
(Series : CIS occasional papers ; 45)

994

© 1993 The Centre for Independent Studies

Printed by Australian Print Group

Contents

FOREWORD by <i>Rafe Champion</i>	<i>vi</i>
LEONARD JOHN HUME, 1926–1993 by <i>William Maley</i>	<i>viii</i>
EDITORIAL NOTE	x
I. INTRODUCTION	
II. WHAT THE CAMPAIGNERS FAILED TO NOTICE	7
THE RECEPTION OF AUSTRALIAN WRITINGS	7
THE PERFORMING ARTS AND THE AUSTRALIAN RESPONSE	9
ATTITUDES WITHIN THE UNIVERSITIES AND THE 'EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT'	13
IMPORTS AND INNOVATION IN AUSTRALIAN ECONOMIC LIFE	14
DISPERSED SOCIAL ATTITUDES	16
III. THE CAMPAIGNERS' SELECTION AND USE OF EVIDENCE	17
ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT SOCIETY AND LITERATURE	17
THE EMPLOYMENT POLICIES OF UNIVERSITIES	22
TEACHING AND RESEARCH IN UNIVERSITIES AND SCHOOLS	23
ECONOMIC POLICY AND ITS INTELLECTUAL FOUNDATIONS	32
IV. RISING ABOVE THE CULTURAL CRINGE	40
WHY THE CRUSADE?	42
CONCLUSION	48
NOTES	49
REFERENCES	51

Foreword

The publication of this occasional paper signals an ambition on the part of the Centre for Independent Studies to pay more attention to broad cultural issues. This is not to say that such issues have been entirely overlooked in the past. But because of the need to maintain priorities for the allocation of limited resources, there has been an emphasis on economic and social issues. Of course liberalism is not just an economic doctrine, and its intellectual leadership from Adam Smith to Hayek has spoken to the human condition in the round. The cultural initiative extends the exploration of the liberal principles of freedom and individual responsibility into areas such as education and the arts, which are afflicted by excessive state interference and debilitating fashions.

Those who are concerned with public policy might question a turn to cultural issues on the ground that these do not really call for any government initiatives at all. But governments at all levels are becoming increasingly involved in cultural matters. This needs to be challenged, or, at the very least, monitored and subjected to appraisal. A 'cultural agenda' might include issues like the threat to free speech posed by 'political correctness', government subsidies for the arts, intellectual property rights, and obscurantist fashions in the humanities.

Public policy apart, there are all manner of myths abroad that undermine the vigour of our social and intellectual life. One of the most pervasive of these is the subject of this essay by the late L. J. Hume. The notion of the Australian cultural cringe is one of the great clichés of our times. According to legend, the humble colonials of yesteryear were 'inert, deferential and passive' before the great overseas powers, especially Britain, but this dismal state of affairs changed for the better during the 1960s, or perhaps with the accession of the Whitlam Government in 1972. Hume's painstaking analysis of the legend is fascinating and devastating, revealing a tapestry of ignorance, selective quotation, and misreading of documents.

Hume's task would have been more difficult if the 'cringe theorists' (practically the whole galaxy of progressive historians and social commentators) had been more circumspect in their statements. The phrase was coined by A. A. Phillips in the very limited context of imaginative literature and has since been generalised to the whole Australian experience. But the theory collapses at every point where Hume prods it.

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE CULTURAL CRINGE

For example, the economic historian Edward Shann is described as one who 'untiringly defended Anglo-colonial economic dependency'. In fact, he opposed tariff protection (a genuine cringe); he deplored the accumulation of foreign debt (for the benefit of investors in London and New York, as he put it); and he felt Australians should exploit their advantages in primary industries and the proximity of growing Asian economies. Stated in 1930, this has a strongly contemporary ring, and not one of cringing subservience to the Home Country.

Hume also speculates on the purpose that is being served by such a feeble yet popular misconception. He considers that progressive intellectuals seek to draw inspiration from the myth that they have heroically escaped from a hideous spectre (the cringe). They wish to be regarded as uniquely robust, optimistic and assured, while they rekindle the fires of nationalism. But Hume points out that nationalism is a product of insecurity and self-doubt because communities that are truly sure of their place in the world do not embrace nationalistic postures or feel a need to assert their independence. The nationalists protest too much.

The debate on the republic has provided a vehicle to maintain their nationalistic rage, but in the light of Hume's critique they will need to lift their game considerably to provide enlightenment rather than mere sound and fury.

Rafe Champion

Leonard John Hume, 1926–1993

The death of Leonard John Hume in a car accident in February 1993 deprived Australia of one of its most remarkable scholars. Since he was a modest man for whom notoriety was utterly valueless, it is among his family, friends, and colleagues that his loss will most sorely and immediately be felt. Yet in an era in which the slick 'ideas man' often outshines the truly deep thinker, the cost to Australian intellectual life of his premature passing may well be even greater.

Len Hume was born in 1926, the son of Frederick Roy Hume and Alice Clare Hume, née Stapleton. His first acquaintance with the study of political thought came at the University of Sydney, from which he graduated as a Bachelor of Economics in 1947. He then took up a Teaching Fellowship at Sydney University, at the same time undertaking research for a dissertation on working-class movements in Australia, for which he was awarded the degree of Master of Economics in 1950. He spent 1952–54 in London, and returned with a PhD from the London School of Economics and Political Science. After nearly seven years' service in the Prime Minister's Department and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, he returned to academic life in February 1961 when he was appointed Senior Lecturer in Political Science at the Australian National University. In 1965 he was appointed Reader in Political Science, the position from which he retired in 1988. For many years he offered courses on Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Political Thought, but his concerns stretched much further, and he was able to offer considered, well-informed, and astrigent views on an astonishingly wide range of topics.

Hume was a renowned specialist on the thought of Jeremy Bentham, about which he published extensively. He took leave in 1967, 1975, and 1981 to work on Bentham's manuscripts at University College London, and his book *Bentham and Bureaucracy* (Cambridge University Press, 1981) is widely recognised as the classic study of Bentham's political thought. However, his pre-eminence in this sphere was not won at the expense of his long-standing interest in Australian history; and in his retirement, although continuing to work on the arduous task of editing Bentham's *Constitutional Code* for publication as part of Bentham's *Collected Works*, he increasingly found time to turn his attention, and his pen, to issues about which he had long felt strongly.

Another Look at the Cultural Cringe is a product of this period. Hume had little in common with that school of historians for whom the

election of the Whitlam Government in 1972 had inaugurated a kind of social and cultural *année zéro*. This was not because of any visceral hatred of Whitlam's agenda — to this day I have no idea what his party-political views might have been — but because he felt a distinct lack of sympathy for the insensitivity to the significance of earlier times and earlier figures that an *année zéro* view implied. He was struck by the dynamism of earlier periods, and once remarked that the Australia to which he returned in 1954 seemed to him 'another world' from the country that he had left behind in 1952: in this sense, *Another Look at the Cultural Cringe* is not simply a masterly example of historical writing, but also a *cri de coeur* from someone who lived through the times that other writers contemptuously travestied, and who knew that things had happened otherwise than their accounts suggested. It is a work in which a number of the characteristics of his scholarship are apparent. It blends theory and history in very subtle ways. It provides a splendid example of the 'exact scholarship' that he so much admired. And while on occasion pointed, or even cutting, it is also a graceful essay. Hume saw no virtue in being gratuitously offensive to his opponents. He could be a devastating critic, but he was never a self-indulgent one.

This last characteristic derived as much from his personality as from anything else. He was honest, fearless, and entirely free of affectation. To his students and colleagues he presented a somewhat serious visage, but this simply reflected the fact that he took the concept of university education seriously. His solemnity was no more than skin-deep, and those who knew him for any length of time came to realise that it was born of contentment, to which his wonderful wife Angela, and his children and wider family, were the principal contributors. He was a cherished friend to a vast number of people, and his arrival raised the tone of every function he attended.

William Maley
Department of Politics, University College
The University of New South Wales

Editorial Note

Another Look at the Cultural Cringe was originally published in *Political Theory Newsletter*, Volume 3, Number 1, April 1991. The Centre for Independent Studies thanks Angela Hume for permission to republish it, and the Editors of *Political Theory Newsletter* for their assistance.

This edition observes the author's clear intention to present the essay in four main sections. References have been amplified where necessary, and some editorial footnotes added where judged appropriate; thanks are due to Alan Barcan and Rafe Champion for assistance with this.

M.J.

Another Look at the Cultural Cringe

L. J. Hume

I. INTRODUCTION

It has become a very common practice among contemporary historians, writers of letters to newspapers, book reviewers and other commentators on Australian affairs to refer to a cultural (or a colonial or a colonial cultural) cringe when they are describing the attitudes and behaviour of earlier generations of Australians. The content of this notion was aptly summed up by H. P. Heseltine a few years ago as an assertion that Australians formerly had an 'unthinking admiration for everything foreign (especially English) which precluded respect for any excellence that might be found at home' (Introduction to Phillips, 1980: *viii*). The cringe is usually said to have flourished in that form among Australians up to the early or mid-1960s, but to have subsequently been replaced by more self-respecting and independent attitudes. Used in this way, it serves to distance the contemporary writer from the failures and inadequacies of the past. Less commonly, it is employed as a critique of elements in present-day society, in suggestions that they have not yet completely eliminated this 'colonial' style of thinking from their own mental activity.

I want to take here a critical look at this way of writing and thinking about the past, and I want to do so for three main reasons. The first is personal: the charge that one is or was in the habit of cringing is very serious, and I think that one should neither disregard it nor simply confess to it, even to oneself. One should, instead, look very carefully at the evidence on which it is said to be based. The second reason is that the notion seems to me to be inimical to precise or systematic thinking about the character of Australian life, either before or after 1966. Its inherently pejorative content is admirably adapted to the needs of publicists in a hurry, but it inhibits close reasoning and close attention to evidence. My third and most important reason is that I think it simply misrepresents the past, or at least the 30 years of it before 1966 that I feel that I can remember.

The thesis implies that Australia and Australians were then 'inert, deferential and passive' (Thomas, 1989:118), that they were incapable of making and did not in fact make judgments about the rest of the

world and its products in the light of experience, that they unquestioningly accepted rulings and advice or even instructions issued from London and other places. In its most common form it implies, too, that there is a great difference in these respects between Australia then and Australia now, that the inert have been replaced by the innovative, the deferential by those resistant to ideas and products and fashions coming from overseas, and the passive by the active and the creative. All of this seems to me to be grossly inaccurate. Australia 'then' was not inert, deferential and passive: people did judge the ideas and the products that were offered and recommended to them, they did question rulings and assurances that came from overseas, they were sometimes innovative and creative, they did on the whole feel 'confident in being [them]selves' (Head & Walter, 1988:127). And while the Australian community has undoubtedly changed in many respects since the mid-1960s, and still more since the mid-1930s, it does not seem to me to be **on balance** less receptive to overseas ideas, products and fashions, or more inclined (or better equipped) to subject them to critical analysis or to provide local alternatives to them.

It may be, however, that I am mistaken in my perceptions of the present and the past, especially the past. It may be that what I took and take for self-assurance and self-possession were really self-deception and internalised submission, and that these are failings from which most of the Australians born after the war (and the few survivors from earlier periods with whom they feel affinity) are happily free. In these circumstances, it seems to me, the proper course is to look for and look closely at the body of argument and evidence on which is based the diagnosis of a prevailing cultural cringe in pre-Whitlam Australia. And that is what I am trying to do on this occasion.

As it turned out, finding the argument and the evidence was a harder and untidier task than I expected, and I may not yet have discovered the key items. I have turned up few examples of even moderately sustained attempts to establish the diagnosis. The article by A. A. Phillips in which the notion was given its 'seminal articulation' consists of only seven, not very densely-argued, pages (Phillips, 1958:89-96). It comprises little more than an (ambiguous) anecdote and a few supporting comments. Later writers who have followed Phillips have often relied on dismissive (and sometimes self-preening) one-liners rather than on extended discussion. Places where one might expect to find a good deal about this allegedly dominant tendency in the outlook of earlier generations sometimes have very little: for example, in *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia* (Bennett

et al., 1988) the index lists only five references to a 'cringe' or 'cultural cringe', four of which are so brief and glancing as to be inconsequential, while the more substantial fifth is also quite incidental to the author's argument and might have been omitted to his advantage. The important and valuable volume *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society* (Head & Walter, 1988) contains a good many more references to the notion, but it too lacks any substantial attempt to demonstrate that there was or is a cultural cringe. It provides only brief descriptions of what are alleged to be illustrations and examples of such a stance. The same is true of other wide-ranging pictures of Australian intellectual life, such as *Australia: The Daedalus Symposium* (Graubard, 1985), Mark Thomas's (1989) *Australia in Mind*, and the volume on Australia edited by L. A. C. Dobrez in the series *Review of National Literatures* (Dobrez, 1982).

Nevertheless, a critical examination of the evidence is not altogether impossible. There is at least one more or less substantial discussion in one of the crop of bicentennial publications, Stephen Alomes's *A Nation at Last? The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism, 1880-1988* (1988). Like others operating in the field, Alomes has a liking for the dismissive one-liner, but his discussion includes other kinds of material as well. And when one puts together the one-liners and the longer passages from these several works, one can see that they express certain themes and make some reasonably identifiable claims about Australian life before the mid-1960s. There are some claims to be tested against the evidence, and some evidence offered which can itself be tested.

A striking feature of the claims is that they are very strongly worded. Their authors seem to eschew qualification. I have already quoted Heseltine's formulation of one of them, namely that there was 'an unthinking admiration for everything foreign . . . which precluded regard for any excellence that might be found at home'. Similarly Alomes has referred to the 'assumption that value and worth came from metropolitan imperial Britain', and that '**everything** colonial or Australian was inferior to the British equivalent'. He sees 'indigenous culture and self-expression' as having been 'thwarted', and in their place an 'apathetic acceptance of the metropolitan culture' (1988:56, 215, 217; emphasis added). Brian Head, too, writes about the cringe in terms of 'assumptions', such as 'the central assumption that intellectual work was thought to be necessarily derivative . . . or awkwardly provincial', and an 'assumption of local inferiority [which] permeated the cultural and educational Establish-

ment until the end of the Menzies era . . .'. And with his co-editor James Walter he suggests that Australians have meekly accepted the reminders of 'critics' that they occupy a '**subordinate**cultural place on the periphery' and that 'intellectual standards are set and **innovations occur** elsewhere' (Head & Walter, 1988:1, 2, *viii*).

It is at first sight surprising that these experienced academics, belonging to a class famed for its caution and its instinct for self-preservation, should have given so many hostages to fortune. If they are to defend claims of this kind they will need strong evidence indeed. It will not be enough for them to show that there existed in Australia a considered admiration for some or many foreign things, or considered judgments that some or many of the things produced in Australia were pretty bad or that things of value and worth (including culture and social and political ideals) had come from metropolitan Britain, or the opinions that some or much that had been done in Australia was derivative or that most of the innovations that had been adopted in this country had come from overseas. In each case what they have to demonstrate is the existence of a mere assumption or the uncritical acceptance of an imported opinion. Moreover, they have to show that these assumptions and this form of acceptance were pervasive in Australian society, and not confined to coteries and enclaves.

One might think that they would have been behaving more prudently if they had referred more vaguely to prejudices that were perhaps difficult to overcome in some cases, or to occasions on which the burden of proof seemed to be placed on the critic of British or foreign culture or the competitor with imported products. But that option was not genuinely open to them. If they had adopted it, it would have been immediately obvious that they must give up the word 'cringe' in any realistic description of the situation, and that of course was something they could not afford to do. Equally, they could not afford to confine the cringe to coteries or enclaves, because they wanted and needed to represent it as a feature of Australian society as a whole (though not necessarily of all its individual members).

Another general feature of this body of literature is uncertainty or indecision about its focus, and therefore about the scope of its hypothesis and of the evidence to which defenders or critics of that hypothesis must appeal. In the context in which its seminal articulator, Phillips, was writing, it related primarily to literary criteria and judgments, and in particular to the reluctance of EngLit departments in Australian universities (above all in Melbourne) to include courses on Australian literature in their offerings. It was taken up and made

common currency, however, because publicists and others felt either that they could detect what Phillips was complaining about in other aspects of Australian life, or that it might explain features of Australian life (notably the structure of the economy) that they heartily disliked. Accordingly, the use of the notion expanded from the discussion of literary affairs to other branches of intellectual and artistic activity, and thence to attitudes, behaviour and policy in the community at large. But in some respects interest in the position of literature in the community remains central to the discussion, and its participants tend to drift back to literature and the attitudes of literary critics when they want to produce really telling evidence.

There are several reasons for the centrality of this field. The fundamental one is the familiar fact that, long before Phillips coined his phrase, the status and value of Australian creative writing, and the standards by which it should be judged, had been widely and often acrimoniously debated. Phillips was intervening decisively on one side of the debate, but he was providing a new battle-cry, not firing the first shots in the war.' And much of the debate was already focused on the questions whether it was appropriate to accept English judgments (assumed to be mainly adverse) of Australian writings, and to adopt English standards in making one's own judgments. There is available here a relatively large and accessible body of argument and evidence from which the diagnosticians of a cultural cringe can start, and to which they can return whenever they run short elsewhere.

On the one hand, many Australian writers and their champions have felt that their work has been insufficiently respected or even noticed by English critics and — what has seemed worse — by Australians whose tastes have been moulded directly or indirectly by English literary criticism. They have felt that its distinctive Australian qualities, or even the fact that its source was Australia, has been sufficient to damn it in the eyes of such people. The importance of the issue for them has been reinforced by a sense that the writings they have been championing are not only distinctively Australian but also incorporate what is or was most distinctive of Australia and most authentically Australian. To judge the writings adversely, or to accept adverse judgments made by English critics or reviewers, has thus apparently been to judge Australia adversely. As Alomes puts it, '[the] colonial cultural cringe demeaned [Australian writers' and painters'] worth as it demeaned Australia' (1988:28). It was this sentiment in particular that facilitated the extension of the notion of a cultural cringe from literature to art and then to Australian culture in the wider sense.

On the other hand, there have been writers and critics who have felt that the partisans of the distinctively Australian were proceeding beyond a critique of English taste and its limitations, to a rejection of world literature and international standards. The promotion of Australian writers and writings through the denigration of English or other foreign literary criticism, it has been suggested, is a device for creating a protected environment for mediocrity, and would produce a narrowing of Australians' intellectual boundaries. Moreover, some of the 'internationalists' have argued, the 'nationalists' were concerned to promote, and to promote as authentically Australian, not Australian writers (or artists) as a whole, but a particular group distinguished not necessarily by literary talent but by the possession and expression of political and social views of which the promoters have approved (see Kiernan, 1971:163).

The debate, it must be said, has not yet ended in a decisive victory for one side or another in EngLit departments, and it is (fortunately) not necessary to pursue it here. There are, however, some particular claims made by or on behalf of the 'nationalists' that are crucial to the whole subject of the cringe. Is it true, for example, that English critics, reviewers and publishers neglected Australian writings and failed to see their merits, perhaps because they had no understanding of the Australian environment or Australian experiences? Is it true that cursory or prejudiced English judgments were readily accepted, in unthinking admiration, by Australians, or that Australians were accustomed to wait on English judgments before buying, reading or admitting to liking Australian works? And, if the answer to these questions is 'yes', can it be extended to local attitudes to non-literary phenomena and artefacts, including characteristically Australian habits and beliefs and material products?

I suggest that the 'nationalists' can make out a fairly strong case, though not a fully convincing one, as long as they stick to their narrow chosen ground, but that when they or others venture off it the case disintegrates. It is strongest when it refers to the response of the English literary world, and of Australians who might be regarded or who might regard themselves as an extension of that world, to Australian writings. Its supporters can produce evidence showing that English publishers were reluctant to publish Australian works and, when they agreed to do so, wanted it reshaped to meet English tastes; that English critics paid little attention to Australian writers and their works, or were often obtuse in their criticism when they did happen to notice them; that university departments of English were sometimes

reluctant to include the study of Australian literature in their courses; that their implied judgments were sometimes echoed by people outside those departments, and so on. But the evidence falls well short of showing that there was total hostility and neglect. The further the discussion has moved away from the particular group of writers for whom the 'nationalists' wanted to win respect, and from their kind of writing, the more difficult it has proved to find evidence to support the case, and the more cavalier have its supporters been in their treatment and use of evidence. They have ignored a large body of contrary evidence, and they have presented much of what they have produced in a remarkably loose and inaccurate form.

Although those two shortcomings have similarly malign effects on historical knowledge and understanding, and although they often relate to the same areas of Australian life, they need to be treated in rather different ways. I have therefore decided to deal with them separately, and to start with the material that has been neglected by the campaigners in their eagerness to paint a picture of a cringing society. In neither section, however, can the treatment be systematic or proceed according to some logical plan. Since the literature of the cringe lacks systematic exposition and flits from topic to topic as its authors' fancies take it, one can do no other than follow it in its flittings.

II. WHAT THE CAMPAIGNERS FAILED TO NOTICE

Much of the material to which I shall be referring in this section relates to the work of writers and to the performing arts in various forms, but I shall also have something to say about economic life and about broader attitudes within the community. In general I shall be setting the evidence against the generalisations about Australia before the Enlightenment of the late 1960s, in order to determine whether they can be sustained in the face of that evidence.

The Reception of Australian Writings

In the first place it can be said that the reluctance of English publishers to accept work from Australia was never absolute. In practice quite a number of Australian novelists — among them Boldrewood, Miles Franklin, Louis Stone, K. S. Prichard, Dale Collins and Eleanor Dark — did find publishers in England. Academic works and commentaries on Australian affairs by Australians were also published there from time to time, as were anthologies of Australian verse. Some of these publications attracted critical attention, not all of which was unfavourable. Not all members of Australia's EngLit departments were hostile to or

contemptuous of Australian literature, and some did a good deal to promote interest in it, notably Brereton, Walter Murdoch and J.J. Stable. Neither they nor others who collected or wrote about Australian work regarded it as necessarily or invariably inferior to English writing, and they did not always or unquestioningly accept English opinions or expectations.

The claim that respect for Australian work was refused by Australians, and refused out of prejudice, looks even weaker if we transfer our gaze from students and critics to publishers and readers, especially from the 1930s onwards. Writers complained that publishers were unwilling to produce books and publishers complained that economic circumstances were against them, but in practice many Australian books were published, and many copies of them were purchased, and probably many were read many times. (The private circulating libraries were important in that period.) One of the complicating factors is that some of the most successful of these books were not of a kind that the nationalists liked or wanted to be liked, but they were nevertheless Australian products and many Australians found excellence in them.

Among the most-widely welcomed of those Australian products were the works of the popular writers Frank Clune, Ion Idriess, E. V. Timms and F.J. Thwaites (for these writers, see the entries in Wilde et al., 1985). Clune (with and without the help of P.R. Stephensen) was probably the most prolific of them all, and has been credited with more than 60 volumes published between 1933 and 1971. Idriess was only a little less productive, with nearly 50 in roughly the same period (including more than a dozen during the 1930s), and he may have found more readers. His works were reprinted many times, possibly 40 or 50 times in the case of the most popular ones, and they established their popularity very quickly. *Men of the Jungle* (1932) was re-issued four times within a year of its publication, *Flynn of the Inland* (1932) eleven times within two years, *The Cattle King* (1936) eleven times within one year, and *Lasseter's Last Ride* (1931) 15 times within three years. All of this was accomplished, it should be recalled, at a time of economic depression and slow recovery, and when the population of the country was only about two-fifths of its present size. (The population of New South Wales and the ACT — 5.9 million — now exceeds that of Australia in the census year 1921 — 5.4 million — and is approaching the 6.6 million recorded for Australia at the next census in 1933.)

Thwaites's 30 or so novels were also very popular, especially the

twelve he published in the 1930s. Some of these were again reprinted 40 or more times, and he could claim sales of more than 100 000 for some of them within a relatively short period. In 1947, for example, his publishers maintained that the ten-year-old *Rock End* was in its 17th printing and that 130 000 copies of it had been sold. A feature of the publication of his works was that the size of first printings of them grew substantially in the course of his career. In the late 1930s the print-run seems to have been about 7000–10 000 copies; by the early 1950s it was said to be 30 000. It is unlikely that Timms could match those figures, although on the dust covers of his later novels Angus and Robertson claimed that he had 'an immense following'. After producing some miscellaneous works (including an account of T. E. Lawrence's exploits) in the 1920s, he established a reputation in the 1930s with a series of historical novels set in various parts of 17th-century Europe. The earlier volumes in the set were published in England, the later ones in Australia. After the war, which had interrupted his writing career, he focused on Australian settings and produced what he described as an 'Australian Saga' consisting of eleven novels. Like Thwaites, he has not received much attention, during his lifetime or later, in historical or other accounts of 20th-century Australian literature, but his failings from a literary point of view do not seem to have deprived him of readers.

In addition to those frankly 'popular' writers, there were of course a good many other novelists and authors of travel and other non-fiction works who were successful on a more modest scale in finding Australian readers. Some had established their reputations before the 1930s, others were doing so in that decade or later. As examples of the two categories one might take Miles Franklin and Xavier Herbert. *All That Swagger* and *Capricornia* enjoyed considerable popular as well as official patronage. The publishing record tells the story again in Franklin's case. *All That Swagger* was printed twice in 1936, the year of its first publication, and for the eighth time in 1952. Another but rather different sign of the acceptability of Australian material to the Australian public was that for many years large and appreciative audiences were found for John Byrne's readings of the verses of Father Hartigan, after large numbers of copies of them had been sold in the 1920s.

The Performing Arts and the Australian Response

The case of Byrne may serve to introduce consideration of the performing arts of various kinds, and public response to them and the

performers. It is convenient to begin with films, because the 'renaissance of Australian film' in more recent times has often been presented as a sign and an expression of the break with the passive and inert past. There is no doubt that Australian film-making — the making of feature films — was in a depressed state between 1940 and 1964, but its situation in the 1930s was rather different. According to Pike and Cooper in their chronicle of Australian film production, in the quarter-century after 1939 there were 48 new Australian films; in the earlier period, despite the difficulties created by supersession of silent by sound films, and by the tightening grip of American distributors on exhibition in Australia, there were 51 (Pike & Cooper, 1981). Not all of the 51 were released, and not every one that was released was financially successful, but many were. As Pike and Cooper relate, one company — Cinesound — was able to maintain production 'throughout the 1930s on a self-supporting basis, with the income from one film providing the finance for the next' (Pike & Cooper, 1981:199). Cinesound adopted the policy of importing some of its actors from overseas for leading roles in its films, but that has been common enough in the film industry at other times and in other places. Most of the human resources that it and other companies employed were already in Australia. Perhaps the most interesting example of this was one of the last of Cinesound's pre-war crop, *The Broken Melody* (1938). The story was derived, rather freely, from Thwaites's first novel (1930), and the script was prepared in Australia. As the central character was a musician, the musical score for the film was very important and this too was supplied locally. The most spectacular part of it was 'an operatic sequence composed by Alfred Hill' (Reade, 1979),² the sometime professor of theory and composition at the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music and a prominent figure in the musical life of Sydney (and, earlier, of New Zealand). Pike and Cooper (1981:277) say of *The Broken Melody* that 'it made an easy profit'. Perhaps even more profitable for Cinesound was *Lovers and Luggers* which had been released six months earlier than *The Melody Lingers*. Eric Reade (1979:111–12) reports that when it was shown at the Tivoli Theatre, Brisbane, 'this picture altered the theatre's normal policy of a weekly change of programme to that of a fortnight's season due to the overwhelming response from the public', and Pike and Cooper (1981:236) concur in seeing it as 'one of Cinesound's most profitable ventures'. It is evident that the Australian public had a liking for, not a prejudice against, locally-made films when they were available.

The fate of some of those involved in film-making, mainly the

actors, has a bearing on another issue that has been raised concerning attitudes to public performers. It is apparent — undeniable — that many people who had grown up or settled in Australia, from vaudevillians to radio actors and 'personalities', to stage actors and dancers, to classical musicians of various kinds, were very popular and were greatly admired. But it is sometimes argued, in support of the cultural-tinge hypothesis, that the pervasive practice has been the 'knocking' of local talent, and the pervasive attitude 'the assumption that real stars come from overseas' and a refusal to make people 'real stars in Australia without [their] being blessed at the courts of London, New York or Hollywood' (Alomes, 1988:234). It would be hard to produce evidence for these claims, especially if one sought one's evidence in the field of popular culture to which Alomes explicitly refers in this passage. Some of the 'real stars' had worked at the foreign courts, some not; some of those who had done so had been 'blessed' with success, others not; in some cases stardom in Australia preceded the pilgrimage to the foreign courts; in most cases it would be difficult to show that their local reputations depended on overseas success. For example, Bert Bailey, Gus and Fred Bluett, Roy Rene, Dick Bentley, Jack Davey, the team of George Edwards, Maurice Francis and Nell Stirling, Cecil and Alec Kellaway, Gladys Moncrieff and Shirley Ann Richards built their careers in Australia. Bailey's failure in London seems to have done him no harm when he came back to Australia. Moncrieff's relative success there in the 1920s is unlikely to have counted much with Australian audiences in the 1930s and 1940s. Kellaway and Richards went to Hollywood after, not before, they appeared successfully in Australian films. Peter Dawson is perhaps a more doubtful case, but it is again unlikely that those who bought and listened with pleasure to his records in the 1930s knew much about his career in Europe earlier in the century or were greatly interested in it. Perhaps the partnership of Madge Elliott and Cyril Richard would provide a better example for Alomes; but even in this case it would be difficult to disentangle the respective effects of overseas reputation and performance, since each of the partners had a previous Australian reputation as an additional asset.

This topic is, however, subject to some additional points that also have a bearing on the basic controversy between the nationalists and the internationalists in relation to literary culture. And Australian attitudes have been shaped here by practices and concerns that are no less an authentic part of Australian life than the egalitarian and

nationalist sentiments expressed by Furphy and Lawson,* namely the practices of sport, including international sport. It is and was apparent that one could create a local reputation, become a local hero, by being (for example) a run-machine at Bowral or unplayable at Wingello. But if one wanted a wider reputation one had to participate in wider arenas, ultimately international ones, and establish one's competence in them. To do that did not necessarily involve adopting established or traditional techniques, or even refraining from attempts to change the rules, but it did involve meeting external tests of some kinds and not making up your own rules as you went along. Similarly — as most Australians well understood — if you wanted to be an international star or celebrity in the arts, or even wanted international respect for your achievements, you could not do so by catering for purely local audiences.

This points to a weakness or ambivalence in the nationalist literary case put forward by, say, Vance Palmer. One of Palmer's complaints was that Australian writings were not known and respected in London. He consequently urged his fellow-Australians to recognise them more enthusiastically as significant for Australia (*The Age*, 9 February 1935). But acceptance of his advice could have done little to change perceptions in London. Something more (such as, at the least, a demonstration that certain unique or unusual technical problems had been solved) would have been required. These considerations were particularly important at the 'high culture' end of the performing-arts spectrum. And it applied to or was understood by audiences as well as performers. A claim to be an international celebrity had to be supported by international respect.

None of this implies, however, that local talent could not be or was not appreciated at home. On the contrary local recognition, and often local financial assistance either official or private, provided the means by which the transition to an international setting was effected. Stanley Clarkson and William Herbert were fully professional and widely-admired singers in Australia before they went to England in the 1940s. The Sun and Shell Aria contests, Elder Fellowships, and the Mobil Quest, all of which were in some respects outgrowths of the well-

* Joseph Furphy (1843–1912) contributed anecdotes to *The Bulletin*. His major book, *Such is Life* (1903), was imbued with a spirit of radical nationalism. Henry Lawson (1867–1922), poet and short-story writer, was probably the most typically Australian author the country has produced. Like Furphy, he wrote for *The Bulletin*; his major books appeared between 1896 and 1911. [Ed.]

established network of Eisteddfods, provided valuable help to Arnold Matters, Richard Watson, Marjorie Lawrence, June Bronhill and of course Joan Sutherland, among others. The fund raised for Joan Hammond in the 1930s was a late example of a practice which had enabled a number of earlier artists, such as Florence Austral, to get wider experience and more opportunities (the careers of these musicians are described in some detail in Mackenzie, 1967). It should be obvious, but perhaps it needs to be spelt out for the benefit of those who evangelistically denounce others' cringing, that these various initiatives and arrangements imply confidence in local talent, and one's own talent, not a sense that the local is inferior. Attempts to create a protected environment, and to encourage people to stay within it, suggest the reverse.

Attitudes Within the Universities and the 'Educational Establishment'

Literature and the arts are not, of course, the only fields in which it is alleged that the prevailing attitudes have been a worship of imported items and a sense of inferiority in relation to local products and talents. Educational institutions, and in particular the universities, have received a fair amount of abuse.³ There are some specific issues here that I shall be taking up later, but in relation to the general cringing or obsequious attitudes that are said to have dominated the universities, I think that negative evidence is once more readily available. One example is the notorious Ern Malley affair,* which I treat as an expression of campus attitudes; not 'typical' campus attitudes, because there were not any, but well-established ones. The affair had many aspects, but one of them was precisely a repudiation of certain English views of the value of particular trends in recent poetry and of particular poets. It signally lacked any cringe to those well-publicised views. Two other examples can be found in the pages of the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* (and its predecessor). J.A. Passmore (1943, 1944, 1948) provided a searching assessment and critique of the then-fashionable

* The poets James McAuley and Harold Stewart, scandalised by some forms of modern poetry that they felt lacked form and craftsmanship, cobbled together a collection of phrases from army sanitary manuals and suchlike, and submitted them for publication as the work of a dead poet/motor mechanic named Em Malley. The work was published with some fanfare by Max Harris in the August 1944 issue of the progressive magazine *Angry Penguins*. [Ed.]

philosophy, of overseas provenance, called Logical Positivism. Whatever may now be thought by other philosophers of his specific criticisms and judgments, what is significant for the present discussion is Passmore's readiness to make them, and the cool and confident tone in which he did so. Equally significant was the tone of the debate, in the same journal, between John Mackie (1951) and Peter Herbst (1952) concerning the character and value of contemporary Oxford philosophy. (This had been prompted by some published comments on Australian philosophy by the distinguished Oxford philosopher, Gilbert Ryle [1950].) Mackie criticised the Oxford style of philosophy and Herbst defended it, but on neither side was there any suggestion or assumption that the authority of Oxford counted for anything in the matter. These are only scattered illustrations of the ways in which university people thought and argued during and shortly after the war, but they would be incredible if the cultural cringe really operated as Alomes, Head, Walter and others allege.

Imports and Innovation in Australian Economic Life

Another area which is said to have been dominated by the cringe is that of material products, and especially manufactures. This is one of the important fields where, it is alleged, indigenous enterprise has been hampered by the common assumptions that innovations are made only by foreigners and 'that the best comes from overseas or is, in the words of the ads "Imported" while the 'merely Australian is thought inferior to that from the more sophisticated world of "OS" (or overseas)' (Alomes, 1988:233). It is often suggested that these attitudes are still influential in this area, but they are supposed to have been even more prevalent in the benighted pre-Whitlam era.

Now it is undoubtedly true that many Australians did think that many imported commodities were superior to competing Australian products: that the materials incorporated in them were superior or more ample, that the finish or (in the case of clothing) the cut was superior, or that the range of styles and kinds was greater or better adapted to consumers' or users' needs. But this set of preferences does not establish that Australians were merely making **assumptions** about these matters or had been brainwashed into holding unjustified beliefs. In many cases they were simply right, and the Australian products **were** inferior. And on many occasions they did not judge the imported products to be superior, or to offer better value when they might be technically superior. The customs tariff was at least partly successful in diverting demand from imports to local products, as in agricultural

machinery, numerous sorts of chemicals, motor car bodies and some parts, and clothing and textiles. In relation to some of these things, suitability to local requirements or tastes was also a factor, perhaps especially in clothing (e.g. Akubra hats — the brand, not the currently fashionable style) and also in foodstuffs (e.g. the common Australian contempt for English beer, the notorious preference for Vegemite over Marmite, and the equally notorious resistance to kinds of food brought to Ausualia by post-war migrants). The evidence is consistent only with the conclusion that the behaviour of Australian consumers and purchasers was guided widely and persistently by the practical and discriminating judgments that they made, not by unthinking prejudice.

In this area of manufactures, too, the idea that most Australians regarded innovation as an alien activity, or one for which Australians had no talent, seems equally without foundation. There can have been few children in Australia between the wars who had not heard of, and felt some pride in, the development in this country of the stump-jump plough, the stripper, the harvester and header-harvester, and wool-shearing machinery. Some may have heard, as some of their elders certainly did, of such things as the Potter-Delpratflotation process, the Nicholas brothers' (re-)discovery of the process for manufacturing aspirin and their success in producing and marketing it on a large scale, the centrifugal process for the manufacture of concrete pipes, and the automatic totalisator. In due course they encountered and embraced the rotary motor mower, the Hills hoist, and the Siroset process for treating woollen cloth. Innovation was regarded as a quite normal part of industrial life in Australia, although one that would necessarily be limited by the small size of the local markets for most products, the distance of the country from the most lucrative foreign markets and the cheapest and most reliable suppliers, and a shortage of capital.

A related issue concerns the repeated suggestions that the beneficiaries of the allegedly unthinking admiration for things foreign were 'especially British'. (This is very important, of course, in establishing that any cringe was, genuinely, **colonial**.) The interwar motor trade provides a striking falsification of any purported generalisation along those lines. British-made vehicles were familiar enough on Australian roads, but American vehicles were still more common and were preferred for many purposes. The appeal of the British products was principally at the bottom end of the market, where Austins, Morrisises, Standards and some other brands sold quite well. But in the middle of the market, and commonly in country districts, purchasers preferred the more robust American cars, of which many kinds were successfully

marketed: several from the General Motors range (Chevrolet, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, Buick); Ford; different versions of Chrysler products (Plymouth, Dodge, DeSoto, Chrysler); Hudson; Studebaker; Packard; Willys; and possibly others. Once more the behaviour of purchasers reveals that they were not acting as the dupes of imperialist ideology, but were carefully measuring performance against requirements (which in this case were determined by Australian roads and distances), and were spending their money accordingly.

Dispersed Social Attitudes

More general attitudes which were widespread in the community are hard to document, because the people who adopted them did not ordinarily record them in a form that is accessible to us. Fortunately, however, we have recently been given access to 'the spirit of the times' in the published reminiscences of John Bowden (1989) of Tasmania. Bowden belonged to the urban lower-middle class. He was the son of a government official who rose gradually to the middle ranks of his department, and was himself at different times self-employed and an employee, and was more often the latter than the former. As we shall see later, the members of this social stratum and the lives they lead are not greatly admired by Australian intellectuals, but their numbers ensure that their views and sentiments have a better claim than most, and as good a claim as any, to be treated as representative or typical. This makes Bowden's opinions particularly valuable as evidence.

Some of his underlying views come through most clearly, and least affected by tricks of memory and hindsight, in the letters he wrote to his wife while he was in the Army, serving with or alongside British troops and sometimes being transported on British ships. These letters and other comments make it clear that he began his Army service with less than unstinted admiration for the English or their arrangements. When he identified people as 'Poms' or 'Englishmen' it was not in a spirit of natural or automatic admiration or even approval. He found some of them tolerable or even likeable, but he did not really expect to do so. As he put it on one later occasion, 'Nutty Almond was a Pom, but there are Poms and Poms, and he gave us a good go' (Bowden, 1989:230). In performing his military duties as an officer in a technical training unit, he was quite willing to be judged by British officers, confident that he could stand up to their scrutiny, and equally willing to assess what they had to offer. He recorded while at a British Army school at which he had already given at least one lecture on the work of his unit:

I have been attending British lectures here, and I like their methods, in spots well ahead of us, and in others well behind. Our equipment has staggered them and we have shown them some of the instructional films we have. They have met with enthusiasm. (Bowden, 1989:210)

If that is an example of cringing, it would be difficult to see how anybody could ever achieve an upright stance. And in Bowden's case it all comes out perfectly naturally, without any attempt to show that he is behaving independently or any sense that he might need to show it. His attitudes seem to me to be typical of Australians in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. About later periods, I shall have more to say presently.

III. THE CAMPAIGNERS' SELECTION AND USE OF EVIDENCE

Up to this point I have been accumulating evidence which seems to me incompatible with the broad generalisations that appear in the literature about allegedly prevalent forms of cringing. I want to turn now to examine various pieces of evidence and argument which have been produced as examples of the cringe or in other efforts to support the generalisations.

I propose to argue that almost all of this material is flawed in various ways, often by sheer inaccuracy but sometimes by the inept use of statistics or by faulty or gratuitous inference. It covers a variety of matters similar to those that I have already discussed, including attitudes as broad as those of John Bowden, Australian beliefs about heroes and heroism, the opinions of our early literary historians, the employment practices of universities, research and teaching in Australian-oriented topics in schools and universities, and the economic policies of Australian governments and some of their advisers.

Assumptions About Society and Literature

A significant part of the evidence concerning broad attitudes consists of various anecdotes (some reporting facts, some in fiction) about what was said or done on particular occasions. Among these are Phillips's report of the sycophantic laughter with which a Melbourne audience greeted what it took to be a derogatory remark about ordinary Australians (Phillips, 1958:91); the exchanges between several characters (one Australian and the others cultured foreigners) in the Cusack-James novel *Come in Spinner* (1988:403–6); and an account, related by Alomes, of the refusal of the Adelaide Club to

supply 'colonial' products to its members (Alomes, 1988:27, 213).

The reports are doubtless accurate and they may well relate to the tip of an iceberg, but one should understand that it was a local iceberg and was formed in a rather peculiar locality. The people who figure in the anecdotes are members of the wealthy upper classes, and those to whom Phillips refers on this and other occasions are primarily the upper classes of Melbourne. What those people said and did was of little concern to most Australians, except those who had a direct interest in seeking their custom and their patronage. Few Australians knew anybody who belonged to the Adelaide (or the Melbourne or the Union) Club, had any expectation or practical desire to enter it, or cared about what its members thought or did. The club members may have looked down on the rest of the community, and in particular on those who bought the novels of Thwaites or, later, Hills hoists and Holden motor cars, but most Australians continued to buy those things and refrained from looking up to those who were looking down.

What the anecdotes illustrate, and are intended to illustrate, is a sense of insecurity, but what they do not make clear is that this sense of insecurity was, effectively, an upper-class phenomenon, the insecurity of the *nouveaux riches*. The riches in Australia were all pretty *nouveaux*, and nowhere more so than in Melbourne. While that city was founded in 1834, it was a small country town until it was transformed by the Gold Rushes. When Phillips was born in 1900, that transformation had occurred less than 50 years earlier, and much of the wealth had been acquired much more recently. So it was a case of very *nouveaux riches* in a *parvenu* society. Added to this was the fact that the city in the early years of this century was the home of not one but two Vice-Regal establishments through which social acceptability and assurance could be sought. This all produced a classic recipe for social insecurity and the jostling and pretensions that might function as a means of overcoming it. Perhaps these conditions survived into the 1940s, although they must have been weaker by that time. But most members of the community, in Melbourne as in other parts of Australia, did not share the anxieties and did not need to look for an antidote to them. They were much more like John Bowden.

Another general attitude that is said to have prevailed in Australia, and to have encouraged people to cringe, is a sense and a celebration of failure and defeat. This line of argument is conveniently summed up by Alomes (1988:214–15):

Colonial inferiority was reinforced by colonial experience of defeat . . . Defeat has long been enshrined in Australian

symbols, folklore and history. Like all colonies it has few heroes of its own, and long saw its past as not worthy of much interest. Australia's heroes have been mainly anti-heroes, the defeated or dead, or horses, including the boxer Les Darcy, Ned Kelly, the lost explorers Burke and Wills, and champion racehorse Phar Lap . . . The celebration of defeat has always found its apotheosis in Anzac Day and in war memorials.

Alomes's particular claim that Australia 'long saw its past as not worthy of much interest' is one that he states in several different ways in a number of contexts. It is also echoed by other people who associate it with the cultural cringe. It deserves and will be given a fairly extended discussion of its own. Most of the rest of the detail here, I suggest, is either seriously inaccurate or irrelevant to the claims that it is supposed to support.

Most of every country's heroes are dead, and many heroes have achieved their truly heroic status in defeat or death. Hector, Beowulf, Roland and Oliver, King Arthur, the Young Pretender, Horatio Nelson, General Gordon, and Captain Scott and his companions are moderately well-known examples. The incidence of the dead and defeated has not been shown to be unusually high in Australia. It has been made to appear so only by the omission of the names of others, and the repetition of a popular (among publicists) misinterpretation of the significance of Anzac Day. Henry Parkes, Melba, Billy Hughes, Mannix, Kingsford Smith, Jack Lang, Gladys Moncrieff, Bradman and possibly Monash became heroes while they were alive and because they were successful; in some cases, notably that of Lang, death or failure brought about their demotion. Anzac Day recalls (or used to recall before contemporary ideologists got to work on it) the belief that in their first serious test the troops of the new nation were **not** defeated, although they faced terrible difficulties that were not of their own making. They did not gain much, but they were never driven back. That interpretation of what happened at the Dardanelles may be correct or incorrect, but it sustained the 'myth of Anzac' during and beyond the interwar period. And the broader ideology of Anzac and the RSL — that organisation which is both goad and enigma to Left intellectuals — has not depended only or primarily on the events at Gallipoli. Its main constituents have been achievements: the achievements of the Light Horse in the Middle East, and above all 'the Australian victories in France in 1918', from Villers-Brettoneux to Amiens and beyond. The whole popular attitude to Australia's participation in the War of 1914–18 was suffused with a

sense of success not failure (Mood, 1944:317–22). That sense was not in any way contradicted or undermined by the erection of war memorials. The mourning or praise of the dead who have helped to bring victory is familiar enough as a human practice to merit no special comment.

Alomes's (now-conventional) treatment of the significance of Anzac Day indicates that the cultural-tinge hypothesis not only relies on false information, but that it also generates false information as facts are reshaped in order to fit its requirements or the predilections of those who embrace it. Another form of this process is the hasty or careless attribution of the cringe to people on the basis of casual or unexamined assumptions. An interesting example of this is the passage in *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia* to which I referred earlier as the fifth and most substantial reference to the cringe in that work.

The relevant passage appears in Peter Pierce's article in the volume, and it follows a brief account of the contents of Douglas Sladen's *A Century of Australian Song*, published in the Centennial year 1888. It runs:

A decade afterwards . . . Henry Gyles Turner and Alexander Sutherland considered the extent of *The Development of Australian Literature* (1898). They opened with a lament which — in a later year — would have been regarded as cringing: 'even if our history had been pregnant with the sublimest material, instead of hopelessly commonplace, we have, by the very nature of our surroundings, been precluded from developing the local Motley or Macaulay.' (Bennett et al., 1988:80).⁴

Well, Turner and Sutherland did not do that. They did not open with that lament, and if their lament is enough to convict them of cringing, few indeed could be declared innocent. What they opened with was a few paragraphs that might — in a later year — be paraphrased as a claim that Australians used to display a cultural cringe but by 1898 were ceasing to do so:

Australian literature begins to assume some definiteness of form. Though still of utter immaturity, it is gathering a certain individuality of its own, and asserts its usefulness in its own department and in its own fashion. During half-a-century it has had of necessity to be judged entirely by an alien standard, the test being always what the English reader was likely to think of it, what an English critic would be likely to say of it.

But now, less frequently, do we ask what other people have to say about Australian literature; we are growing more and more concerned to know what Australian literature has to say to ourselves. And, of a certainty, we begin to realise that its writers, though their rank is far from the very highest, have the power of raising in Australian minds emotions that are peculiar, and agreeable, and such as are not elsewhere by us to be attained.

This is especially true in the domain of poetry . . . (Turner & Sutherland, 1898:vii)

The two authors were quick to dissociate themselves and other Australians from 'any great tendency to exclude the greatest of our Anglo-Saxon literature', and thus to avoid any commitment to purely local criteria (p.x). But they developed with some force and some subtlety their point about poetry. This, they argued, 'must be judged by its capacity to awaken emotions', and the reader's emotional response depends on his or her prior experiences (pp.vii-viii). ('Clearly', they maintained, 'the reader has to bring to his reading of poetry, fully as much as the poet had to bring to the writing of it.') Since Australian experiences are in various ways different from English ones, they explained, persons brought up in Australia will respond more readily to a good deal of Australian verse than to a good deal of English verse: 'Australia has now nearly four millions of native-born population to whom a great deal must be second-hand that is most delicious to the Englishman in the descriptions of the natural poets' (p.x). For example, they suggested, 'the most musical description of scented hawthorns and nightingales warbling through the twilight dusk will waken but a far-off emotion' in these native-born Australians (p.viii). The greatest English works will retain their appeal, but only because they focus on **universal** experience, and transcend a concern with local European conditions and circumstances.

It was only after 30 pages of text that Turner and Sutherland reached the passage quoted by Pierce. It too was a development from their general point about the significance of experience, and it was directed in the first instance at the character rather than the quality of Australian writing. In this aspect it was not very different from the fairly common complaints that '[one] of the difficulties confronting writers who wished to write about postwar Australian life was the boredom of actual existence for most people' or the fact that 'Australia . . . is the land where nothing happens' (McKernan, 1989:42-3); these complaints do not appear to prompt charges of

cringing. But the real subject of the authors' lament was not the 'hopelessly commonplace' character of Australian history. It was 'the very nature of our surroundings', that is the smallness of the Australian literary market with its consequence that, except for full-time journalists, 'we have not yet got any men or women in Australia living exclusively by the products of their pens' (Turner & Sutherland, 1898:25). This again is a very familiar point, accepted and voiced no less frequently by those who are anxious to detect and expose examples of cringing than by those whose misdemeanours they expose. In sum I think that it would be impossible to maintain either that Turner and Sutherland had an unthinking admiration for everything English, or that they held any view which precluded regard for any excellence that might be found at home. As pioneers in the location and discussion of Australian writers and their works they had some influence on later students, but that influence was not exercised in favour of a cringe.

The Employment Policies of Universities

I mentioned earlier, when referring to the intellectual atmosphere within universities, that some more specific complaints had been made concerning their operations and performance. One of these is a claim that — in the words of Alomes (1988:224–5) — in their employment of academic staff they awarded too many posts to 'foreigners or to returning graduates of the same institution who [had] been sanctified abroad', and had thus adopted a 'habit of bowing before overseas degrees'. On this occasion, Alomes does provide some concrete evidence to support those claims.

One piece of his evidence is that '30 per cent of lectureships' in the traditional centres of the cultural cringe go to the unwelcome foreigners and the sanctified returning graduates. Unless an overseas degree awarded to an Australian is to be regarded as a disqualification, these raw figures — applying, apparently, to lectureships in all subjects — strike me as enormously unimpressive. The other piece of evidence relates to 'English departments, the apotheosis of the cultural cringe'. It consists in the fact that '[despite] a staff increase in English departments in Australian universities between 1947 and 1973 from 26 to 246', the proportion of those with 'Oxbridge or London degrees' had only dropped from 50 to 45 per cent. Again this is pretty unimpressive, and indeed uninformative. In the field of English language and literature, possession of a degree awarded in England might reasonably be regarded as an advantage in the making

of at least some appointments. But even if that consideration is disregarded, the figures do not establish any bias against local talent, primarily because they do not give any information about the numbers of staff who had obtained their first degrees in Australia.

In that connection, and if we revert to the period when the cringe is supposed to have been all-pervading, it is interesting and relevant to note that — if the figures are correct — already 50 per cent of lecturers in English departments did not have Oxbridge or London degrees. It appears that local talent was then being recognised, or had been recognised. To this I will add a personal recollection about the Faculties of Arts and Economics at Sydney University in the 1940s. At that time Australian candidates were appointed to Chairs in Economics (two), Government, French, German, History and Psychology. Some of them had degrees from overseas as well as Australian universities, some not. Several of them were succeeding Australians in their respective Chairs. At the same time, it is true, non-Australians were appointed to posts within the university, but it seems to me that any attempt to show that there was a systematic bias against Australian candidates in that university and at that time would soon founder. If it were not to do so it would require, as a necessary but by no means a sufficient condition, a much more careful and comprehensive collection and analysis of statistics than Alomes has undertaken. Until and unless he does undertake it successfully, his complaints do not deserve to be treated seriously.

Teaching and Research in Universities and Schools

Alomes extends his critique of the prewar universities into the courses they offered and the subjects for research that they approved. Some of his points are best considered in common with similar ones made by other people, but a couple have a distinctive form and can be discussed separately. These are his claims that until the 1970s the universities displayed an 'indifference to Australian culture' and paid 'virtually no attention to Australian subjects'. He then offers evidence, of a sort, to back up those claims in the form of two questions: 'In what other country, it might be asked, are there so few courses dealing with its own culture, society and history? How many universities still only have one or two undergraduate courses in Australian history, geography, literature or politics, or even less when staff are on leave? (Alomes, 1988:224–5).

The answers to those questions might well be interesting, if (contrary to experience) the statistics could be presented in a rational

form, with acceptable definitions of 'a course' and other variables, and with due attention to institutional, historical and other differences between the countries being compared, and to the modes in which the statistics were collected and aggregated. But Alomes seems not to be able to supply any information in any form which would help to provide answers, and it is therefore pointless to pursue the matter in the way he has raised it. But I expect to show conclusively that neither Australian universities nor Australian schools⁵ were indifferent to Australia or Australian subjects, and that Alomes and others who advance such claims are either confused about or indifferent to the evidence.

In inquiring into this matter, it is important to look carefully at the terms in which the claims have been stated and the further evidence that has been brought forward in support of them. I propose to do that by first quoting a number of passages which either make or bear upon the claim, and then commenting on the quality of the evidence on which their authors are relying.⁶

The first two of these passages come from Geoffrey Serle's (1973) book, *From Deserts the Prophets Come*, and might be said to bear upon rather than to make the claim:

The universities [in the interwar period] made little contribution to the study of Australian society, partly . . . because the social sciences were so undeveloped and because of lack of interest . . . One seeks in vain for any major research in Australian government, sociology or current affairs, other than in economics or history, from the universities in the inter-war period. (p.151)

It is extraordinary that, not forgetting G. W. Rusden, H. G. Turner and Timothy Coghlan, there had been such little interest in investigating the Australian past before the 1920s. (p.152)

The rest of the authors whom I quote make the claim about neglect in unmistakable terms, although some refer to a general neglect, some direct their remarks at the universities, and some refer mainly to the schools:

- (i) Michael Davie in *Australia: The Daedalus Symposium* (Graubard, 1985:371):

Why, then, did the British settle [Australia]? It is only in the past twenty years that Australian historians have begun to investi-

gate their own origins, an omission attributed, by Australian historians themselves, to a misguided absorption in European history, especially British, at the expense of their own. An outsider may surmise, without evidence, that the omission may have been connected with a feeling that the first years of Australia were, until very recently, too painful to contemplate ... Once latter-day Australian historians began to investigate the origins of Australia, they questioned the old idea that the pathetic occupants of the prison hulks had been shipped off to the other side of the world merely to get them out of the way. The British government's motives were, as now seems to be established, largely imperial.

- (ii) Andrew Wells in *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society* (Head & Walter, 1988:214–15):

[Some] attempts to describe, interpret and explain Australia's history had been made. Insofar as the ruling culture in Australia maintained powerful links with British institutions, attitudes and traditions, Australia's past remained neglected. The university system, which reinforced the Anglo-cultural dominance, kept the study of Australian history largely outside its precincts and thereby reinforced its somewhat eccentric framework.

(I find it hard to reconcile these statements about universities with what Wells says on the next page, but the meaning of '... kept ... largely outside its precincts' seems clear enough and clearly intended.)

- (iii) Brian Head in *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society* (Head & Walter, 1988:17):

Despite the formation of public affairs institutes during [the 1920s and 1930s] there was little research on political and social issues in the universities, and the quality of current affairs discussion in the press was very poor.

- (iv) Stephen Alomes in *A Nation at Last?* (1988:29):

The virtual absence of Australian heroes and the Australian past in school curricula was another form of colonial culture, denying historical memory to the settler colony.

- (v) Stephen Alomes in *A Nation at Last?* (1988:222):

The imperial and European orientation of school geography,

history and literature reinforced the superiority associated with language [i.e. attitudes to the Australian accent]. Maps of the world on Mercator's projection inflated the size of Europe and reduced the size of the continents of the southern hemisphere in a projection of northern narcissism. World time zones were measured from Greenwich Observatory on the Thames near London. History and geography were largely British and imperial with the Australian reduced to imperial tales of explorers and primary industry. Such an emphasis confirmed for students the view that the real and interesting was British and European, the dull and dreary Australian. In novelist Shirley Hazzard's memory of schooling in the 1930s and 1940s, literature 'had placed Australia in perpetual, flagrant violation of reality' . . . History varied from the rich colourful story expressed in the colonial's view of the coronation on the class-room wall to 'Australian history, given once a week only' and 'easily contained in a small book, dun-coloured as the scenes described'.

It seems to me that what we have here is a process similar to the game of Chinese whispers, starting from Serle's statements but producing something very different at the end. Serle's statements were already contestable but were also carefully (and rather strangely) qualified. In the course of transmission the contestable came to be treated as incontestable, and the qualifications were simply overlooked, so that the message in its final form consists of a set of gross distortions. The character and extent of the distortions can best be seen through a closer look at what Serle said and the evidence for his assertions.

In the first place it must be recognised that Serle explicitly excepted history (along with economics) from his generalisation about the lack of major research in the interwar period. Indeed, he went on to remark, and to illustrate his point, that during that time 'the few university teachers of history and research students . . . made a remarkable contribution to blocking in outlines of Australian history' (Serle, 1973:152). His comment that there was 'such little interest' applies to the period before 1920. But what constitutes a little and what a lot depends partly on one's expectations. Serle's expectations seem to have been high here, and his supporting reference to the work of Rusden (1897), Turner (1904) and Coghlan (1894, 1918) does less than justice to many other people who wrote about Australia's past before the university-based work of the 1920s got under way.

The bibliographies in the Australian volume of the *Cambridge History of the British Empire* reveal that about 20 works dealing with the history of one colony or the Australian colonies as a whole were published in the 19th century, and in the early years of the new century there were many more than Turner and Coghlan writing on specialised topics such as exploration. In New South Wales in particular, there were important works by Flanagan (1862), Bonwick (1882), and Barton and Britton (1889–94). Rusden's *History of Australia* was preceded by the Sutherlands' much shorter work with the same title (1877), and it was succeeded by a series of relatively short general histories designed for the general reader and the more serious student, by Jenks (1895), Jose (1899), Scott (1916) and Dunbabin (1922). It is once again true that most of these volumes did not fall still-born from the press but went through several (in some cases many) editions. Moreover governments and their agencies in several of the colonies, and later in federated Australia, gave some official and monetary support to historians and their projects. They helped to finance the making of Bonwick's transcripts,* to house the collections of Petherick** and Mitchell,† to produce official histories and to publish collections of official records, and thus to provide more, and more accessible, material for the use of later historians. The general histories were soon accompanied by works designed more deliberately to be used as textbooks in schools at various levels. The Sutherlands' little volume was perhaps intended for that market and certainly found an enduring place in it. Its later competitors included works written by academics such as Walter Murdoch (n.d.), W. K. Hancock (1934), G. V. Portus (1936), and F. L. W. Wood (1944), and others involved more directly in the school system such as K. R. Cramp (1935), J. P. Chard (1928), C. H. Currey (1933), H. L. Harris (1936) and G. T.

* James Bonwick transcribed official records in England for the governments of Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales. This provided the basis of eight volumes entitled *Historical Records of New South Wales* (1882–1901). [Ed.]

** E. A. Petherick's collection of materials on Australia and the Pacific was acquired by the federal parliament in 1909. It is now located in the National Library, Canberra. [Ed.]

† David Scott Mitchell in 1906 donated his collection of over 60 000 volumes of Australiana, with an endowment of £70 000, to the government of New South Wales. This forms the basis of the Mitchell Library in Sydney. [Ed.]

Spaull.* Even if we discount the textbooks written in the 1920s and the 1930s, it seems unduly exacting and censorious to say that the Australian community had shown little interest in investigating the Australian past. To say that the Australian past remained neglected seems utterly absurd. And to say that the university system kept Australian history largely outside its precincts is to indulge in fantasy: what it did was to appoint people interested in Australian history to posts within itself (Scott, Mills, Roberts, Shann, Portus, Hancock, etc.), and to watch benignly as they did further work in the field and encouraged others to do the same.

The absurdities and the fantasies multiply as one looks more closely at many of the statements in the passages quoted above. Davie was quite wrong, for example, when he claimed that until 20 years earlier Australians had not investigated their own origins or had left unquestioned the 'old idea' about the convicts in the hulks. There can be very few textbooks or other general histories of Australia from earlier periods which do not show a lively interest in the topic and do not refer to various possible reasons for Britain's interest in establishing a colony at Botany Bay. (Presumably Davie had not heard of the Sydney suburb called Matraville which, like Banksia, is not far from the shores of the Bay.) And not 20 but 40 years before Davie wrote, there had been published a widely-admired work devoted specifically to *The Foundation of Australia*, whose author (E. M. O'Brien) included a careful summary of preceding discussions of the British Government's motives. O'Brien, working with the evidence that was then available, rejected the 'imperial thesis', but his account makes it clear that the thesis was quite familiar to himself and other Australian historians (O'Brien, 1937:126-7). The outcome of Davie's foray into Australian historiography is a body of misinformation about the priorities and the achievements of earlier generations of Australian historians.

The stock of misinformation is sensibly increased in the passages that I have quoted from Alomes. It should already be clear that Australian history was *not* 'virtually absent' from school curricula: people do not write, publish, or revise and reprint textbooks for subjects that are either not offered, or have very few students. Australian history **was** studied, in both primary and secondary classes, and it was taken seriously. As Alan Barcan records, Australian as well as English history was introduced into the state schools in

* G. T. Spaull, a New South Wales teacher, wrote primary school textbooks in history, geography and English between 1925 and 1960. They were published by William Brooks & Co., Sydney. [Ed.]

the 1880s, and it remained there until it was partly absorbed for a time into the 'progressive' subject Social Studies in the late 1930s and early 1940s (Barcan, 1980:157, 281–2). Much the same is true of the geography and the literature of Australia: places for them existed in the curricula, textbooks and maps were produced for them by academics (e.g. J. W. Gregory) and schoolteachers — S. H. Smith (n.d.), Spaul, C. A. Wittber (1923), and E. Ford and A. R. McInnes (1940)⁷ — and pupils studied the books and the maps.

Alomes tries to support his case by quoting Shirley Hazzard's memories of the teaching of Australian subjects in the 1930s and 1940s. There are two fundamental flaws in his appeal to this material as evidence. The first is that the work from which he quotes (*The Transit of Venus*) is a novel, not a set of memoirs; the relevant passages are best read as an imaginative account of a young girl's response to what she encountered, not as an historical record. The source of the second flaw is that Shirley Hazzard is too young to have first-hand memories of the teaching of history or geography (or much in the way of literature) in the 1930s. If the guide-books are correct she was aged eight in 1939, and is unlikely to have studied any form of history or geography by that time. And when she did begin to study them, the Coronation (which took place when she was six) had been quite overtaken in the classrooms of New South Wales by later events, such as the spectacle of the Sesqui-Centenary celebrations, the excitements and fears of the Munich Crisis and then the War. By 1940, little girls' memories of the Coronation, and teachers' interest in it, must have been as faded as any surviving posters relating to it.

On more specific issues the memories of the character in the novel are demonstrably either false or unrepresentative. Textbooks of Australian history came in various colours and various sizes in both the 1930s and the 1940s. Some were blue, some were red and some had other colours including 'dun'. Their outward appearance did not differ much from that of books dealing with British or European history, partly because all publishers wanted to supply 'serviceable' covers, and partly because books dealing with Australian and non-Australian topics were sometimes produced by the same publisher. They tended to be smaller than the non-Australian ones — Australia's history was noticeably short — but this was not always or invariably the case. Thus Chard's *History of Australia for Commonwealth Schools*, Cramp's *A Story of the Australian People*, and *Modern British History* by Roberts and Currey (1932) (covering the period from 1688), all look to be of much the same size, although the last of these is in fact more tightly-

packed. The contents of the works dealing with Australia varied as much as their colours, but the view that they consisted entirely of 'imperial tales of explorers and primary industry' or failed to mention Australian heroes is quite fanciful. They of course **included** tales about those things; any book that purported to be a history of Australia and did not have a fair bit to say about them would really be a history of some other country with the same or a similar name (Austria, perhaps?). But they included other things as well, such as descriptions of the convict system, the conflicts between Exclusives and Emancipists, constitutional changes and 'the growth of responsible government', the gold discoveries and the Eureka Stockade, the federation movement, secondary industry and the tariff issue, native writers and their writing and Australia's involvement in the War of 1914-18 and beyond.

A treatment of all of those things is to be found, for example, in a book that I have mentioned in another connection, namely Wood's *A Concise History of Australia*, which might be described as 'dun-coloured' in some of its printings and might therefore be the target of Shirley Hazzard's denigratory remarks. In describing these activities and developments, the authors of the texts naturally gave prominence to the leading or easily-identifiable participants, from Wentworth, Macquarie and E. S. Hall to Peter Lalor, Parkes, Deakin and Barton, and ensured that they came to be seen as heroes. If any one theme could be said to run through most or all of the histories, it would be 'the growth to nationhood'. Accordingly, signs of initiative and independence were sought and identified: the anti-transportation movements, the successful demands for the establishment of parliamentary institutions, the work of the Constitutional Conventions, the change in the country's status from part of the Empire to membership of the Commonwealth, the Australian Government's participation in the Versailles Conference and its membership of the League of Nations. Members of later generations may not regard those things as important but to the authors and their readers they were very significant.

Similarly, and despite Alomes's strange complaint about the Mercator projection and his still stranger complaint about time-zones, the authors of geography books went to some trouble to draw attention to the size and significance of the Australian land-mass. They reminded their readers that Australia was not an island (like Britain) or part of a continent (like France or Germany), but that its mainland was itself a continent (Smith, n.d.:43); that Sydney and Melbourne were among

the largest cities in the Commonwealth, having outstripped some of the most famous British ones; and that the size of Australia as a whole was not greatly less than that of the United States of America, was vastly greater than that of Britain, and bore comparison with that of continental Europe (Ford & McInnes, 1940:1; Wittber, 1923:4). A not unfamiliar teaching device of the period was a map of Australia on which most of the countries of Europe had been superimposed, in order to illustrate how easily they could be accommodated within Australia's borders. Chard's *History of Australia for Commonwealth Schools* contains one of these as its Frontispiece; G. S. Browne's *Australia: A General Account* (1929) contains another.

It turns out, then, that the complaints that the study of Australian history (or geography) was neglected are quite strikingly ill-founded. It is, however, always possible to ask for more, and to ask why more was not done, for example in the universities. We have seen Serle's judgment that the contribution of university teachers and others in the interwar period consisted in 'blocking in outlines'. 'Should they not', it may be asked, 'have gone on to fill in the details? Can we explain their failure to do so except by positing the existence of a cultural cringe that acted as a curb?' The answer to those questions is that we can readily explain the volume of their output without referring to a cultural cringe. A perfectly adequate explanation is supplied by Serle, in a couple of sentences immediately before his observations about the smallness of the universities' contribution:

The universities continued to operate on a pinchpenny basis; it was common for a professor to teach half a dozen courses with the help of one or two lamentably paid junior assistants. Research was a luxury, not reasonably to be expected. (Serle, 1973:151)

In the circumstances, the question to be asked is how they achieved so much, not so little. The cultural cringe is an unnecessary entity in this environment. It cannot be inferred from the facts as we know them. And I think that it remains an unnecessary entity if we take up the rest of Serle's point that there was no major research in Australian government, sociology or current affairs.

That judgment seems to under-rate the work of the lawyers (who were interested in more than constitutional law in the narrow sense) and of F. A. Bland. The latter's *Government in Australia* (1939, 1944) looks to me like the product of major research. But if we accept Serle's judgment, it becomes pertinent to ask where in the universities, except

in departments of history and economics, such major research might have been carried on. In fact a little was done, or at least initiated, in departments of geography and anthropology, but they had other commitments and few resources to spare.⁸ And in order to explain the relatively small range of departments we once more do not need to proceed beyond the pinchpenny (or impoverished) state of the universities.

Economic Policy and its Intellectual Foundations

The discussion necessarily becomes more complex when we turn to the other main area where the cringe is either inferred or employed as an explanation, namely, the character of the economy and the determination of economic policy. The source of the complexity is that most of the theorists of the cringe incorporate into their characterisation of the economy a certain amount of controversial theory, and it is difficult to avoid being drawn into a debate about the merits of that theory. It may yet be possible to establish common ground and to avoid the debate on this occasion. But it will not be possible to avoid saying something about the theory and how it is employed.

The theory is 'dependency theory', which was 'all the rage' a few years ago as a purported explanation of the poverty and underdevelopment of so-called Third World countries. Its crucial features are the identification of some economies and some kinds of economy as dependent upon others which are dominant, and the assertion that the dependent adopt patterns of economic activity and organisation which serve the interests of the dominant and independent but not those of the dependent. Different versions of the theory can give greater or less weight to consciousness, motivation and political organisation on the one hand, or to underlying economic forces on the other. But they cannot accommodate a significant sharing of power or of benefits (a coincidence of interests) between the different participants in the relationships: either of those circumstances would imply interdependence, not dominance and dependence. The signs (or sometimes the sources) of dependence are said to be such things as having a high proportion of primary and unprocessed or little-processed products in one's exports, being an importer (not an exporter) of capital, and having either a small and weak secondary sector or one which produces consumers' goods but few or no capital goods. An economy with such a secondary sector is sometimes described as having experienced a truncated or semi-industrial form of development. Correspondingly, an economy which produces capital goods on a

significant scale is a mature one, and one which has to import foodstuffs and raw materials, and to rely on returns from foreign investments or the export of capital goods, is dominant.

This sort of analysis has been applied to Australia by various observers, and those who write about the cultural cringe seem to find it very attractive. At one level its application both contains some obscurities and involves controversial claims. The principal obscurity relates to the ground on which a truncated or immature form of development is judged to be objectionable. Sometimes the suggestion seems to be that it leads to the enrichment of others (the imperial and dominant countries) at the cost of the impoverishment of Australia; but at other times it appears to be that the lack of a highly-developed secondary industry (including a capital-goods sector) is incompatible with national and individual self-respect. If either of those is adopted it becomes a controversial claim which other people might be disposed to dispute. But at another level one can render these issues irrelevant by acquiescing in a **definition** of a 'dependent economy' as one that exports primary products and imports capital and manufactures, and accept that Australia is — by definition — such an economy. It then becomes possible to focus on the questions how and why it became an economy of that kind, and this is what — up to a point — the theorists of a cultural cringe want to do.

Their answer is of course that the dependent economy is the product of attitudes of dependency and subordination, a willingness to serve others' interests and to neglect one's own, and to follow indiscriminately the lead of others and to accept whatever subordinate role the others allocate. (They thus, at least in this part of their argument, adopt a 'motivational' or 'voluntarist' rather than a 'material forces' form of dependency theory.) Alomes, as one might expect, makes this kind of point a number of times. 'Pastoral, commercial and financial capitalists', he maintains, 'saw their role as dealing in and financing the export of wool, wheat and minerals and the import of British manufactures and investment capital' (1988:213). To this he attributes the circumstance that 'economic growth in manufacturing has been left mainly to foreign-owned companies' (p.214). The primary-industry orientation of the CSIRO, and the 'limited development of the universities', he similarly attributes to the persistence of 'colonial attitudes' (p.231). In order to explain further the 'truncated' development of manufacturing, he deploys his claim that any preference for imported goods is a mere 'colonial assumption' (p.233). It is presumably on this basis that he feels able to say that the persistence

of the 'nineteenth-century imperial division of labour, the exchange of wool and wheat for manufactures' is 'no longer natural but contrived' (pp.213–14).

Another commentator who takes the same sort of line is Donald Horne. He maintains that 'it was not by necessity but by "choice" that, after Canada, of the prosperous capitalist societies Australia is the world's most dependent and foreign-controlled economy ... [by a choice] not related to economic pragmatism, taking one's economic good where one finds it, but to a whole inherited cast of mind that can see no alternatives'. He implies that Australians' pride in the fact that the country had not sought a moratorium on its foreign debts during the Great Depression rested on and bequeathed 'an attitude towards foreign capital that is far more deferential towards foreign capital than mere considerations of prudence would dictate. It is as if foreign capital is good in itself and foreign money (at least from prestigious nations) is better than Australian money' (Graubard, 1985:187). In more detail, he maintains that even after the war 'the conventional wisdom was that the industrialisation of Australia was better conducted by foreign companies. A Labor Government, for example, when wishing to establish a motor vehicle industry, ignored Australian initiatives and called in General Motors' (Graubard, 1985:189). In more detail still, Andrew Wells has identified the historian and economist Edward Shann as a leading publicist who took 'a classical free trade attitude in his economics and economic history' and 'untiringly defended Anglo-colonial economic dependency' (Head & Walter, 1988:218).

It is not hard to find claims of this sort. It is much harder to find evidence for them. It would be interesting to know whether Alomes has any ground at all for his belief that pastoralist, commercial and financial capitalists dealt in and financed the export of primary products and the import of capital and manufactures because they 'saw it as their role' and not because they saw these as the most profitable of the activities available to them; if he has, he is being remarkably discreet about it. The same comments apply to the claim that industrial development was 'left' to foreign-owned companies. On the face of things, when the foreign corporations seized the initiative and moved into gaps that Australian investors had left unoccupied, they did so because they were much better equipped than any Australians to engage in the relevant activities. What Alomes needs to establish is that the Australians were just as well-equipped but had been duped into believing that they were not, or that they would have been just as well-

equipped if the CSIRO had behaved differently or some parts of the universities had been financed more generously. He does not in fact try to demonstrate either of those things, either in general or in any particular case; prudently, I think. (We shall return to this question a little further on, when we reach Horne's beliefs about the motor industry.) His view that preferences for imports over domestic products rest on a mere 'colonial assumption' remains itself a mere assumption, and a very implausible one as we have already seen.

Horne's remarks suffer from the same defects, and from some additional ones. He does not seem to appreciate that in one important respect foreign money (and especially money from the prestigious nations) is better than Australian money. It can be used to purchase foreign goods and thus in the short run to add to the supplies available to Australians, as Australian money cannot. It is true that in this matter there is an alternative and therefore a choice, but it is ridiculous to suggest that governments or their advisers had 'an inherited cast of mind that [could] see no alternatives' or that they were not conscious of making a choice. Horne's own offhand remarks do nothing to elucidate the nature of the alternative or the choice. The alternative was (as it now is) to do without the goods and services that the foreign money could purchase, and then to make a whole series of further decisions about adapting the economy to its more straitened circumstances. Adapting it in a way that would promote secondary industry, or the Australian ownership of secondary industry, would have been very difficult. It is easy enough to create regulations, and not too difficult to establish regulatory agencies, but it is very difficult to enforce shifts in resources and difficult for regulatory agencies to put themselves in control of events and to avoid being controlled by them.

What Horne says about Australia's record as a debtor during the Depression is equally ill-founded, and his complaints about the Chifley government's treatment of the motor industry are hard to reconcile with the known facts. Early in the 1980s when international bankers and other lenders, stimulated by sustained inflation and vicariously generous governments, were freely distributing their largesse around the world, it may have seemed irrational to establish or maintain one's record as a good credit risk. It no longer does so, and it certainly was not so during the Depression. Mere dictates of prudence were quite enough to encourage the Australian authorities to show 'loyalty to' (i.e. to keep faith with) their creditors. Incidentally, it is misleading to say that this 'loyalty' was directed to 'the Bank

of England'. It was directed to the body of holders of Australian bonds and other securities, whoever they were.

In a consideration of Horne's references to the motor industry, there are two major difficulties. The first is to identify the 'Australian initiatives' that he believes the Labor government ignored. There seem to have been four of these: Australian Consolidated Industries (whose pre-war plans to begin the manufacture of vehicles had been frustrated by the war), Liberty Motors, Pengana Motors, and the company created by L. J. Hartnett, the former Managing Director of General Motors in Australia (see Butlin & Schedvin, 1977:752–62; Berulsen, 1989:131). But Horne may have had in mind some other, more obscure, candidates for the role. The second problem is to judge whether any of these was credible as an alternative to the foreign-owned companies such as General Motors Holden; that is, whether any was really able and willing to produce an 'Australian car' and not merely to assemble vehicles from mainly-imported components as the existing, foreign-owned, companies had been doing. The production of a genuinely Australian car required not merely the establishment of **motor vehicle** plants and processes, but the establishment (by the principal manufacturer or others) of a whole series of ancillary plants and processes adapted to the production of components that were shaped to the particular requirements of the manufacturer and were not already produced in Australia. The need for the ancillary equipment and operations was simultaneously one of the principal attractions and one of the principal problems to be faced in the development of an Australian car. The problems were especially serious when the Labor government was in office, because the 'dollar shortage' was then so prominent a feature of the international economy.

The nature of some of the problems can be illustrated by reference to the best-documented and most nearly successful of the Australian initiatives, namely Hartnett's. (Hartnett was an Englishman, but he had lived in Australia since 1934, he had been a strong supporter and perhaps a principal sponsor of the Holden project, and he continued to live here after he parted company with General Motors in 1947.) He hoped to raise the capital for his project in Australia. Initially he seemed to receive a good deal of encouragement from both State and federal governments, but gradually they cooled, especially after the Labor government was replaced by a non-Labor one in Canberra at the end of 1949. The project finally collapsed, according to Hartnett, when the Australian company that had contracted to supply the body panels for the vehicles could not or would not do so. Whatever the justice of

Hartnett's complaints against the governments, there is a vital point that needs to be understood (and that seems to have escaped Horne's attention, if it is Hartnett's experience that he is referring to). As an exercise in the manufacture of motor vehicles, what Hartnett was proposing was considerably less ambitious and significant than the production of the Holden. It was to involve the assembly in Australia of a French-designed front-wheel drive vehicle, and the materials were to include a large component of imported parts and equipment. 'Our plan', Hartnett related, 'was to have the overseas manufacturers make the engine, transmission, the castings, and send them to Australia where we'd assemble them with Australian-made panels' (Hartnett, 1981:249). He went on to explain that the imported parts were to include the gears and gear boxes, the engines, the brakes, the instruments, the universal joints in the front-wheel drive, the electrical equipment, the clutch, the steering wheels and the wheels.

If the plan had succeeded, its mode of production would have resembled much more closely that of General Motors before rather than after it embarked on production of the Holden. It could not have done much to reduce Australia's dependence on the dreaded rest of the world, and indeed (like many other import-saving projects) would have increased that dependence in certain respects. To change the character of the enterprise to one which would employ Australian-made components would have been extraordinarily difficult and perhaps impossible. It would have required large injections of capital and the creation of a sophisticated components industry in an economy which had already failed to produce an adequate supply of body panels. In terms of the government's ambition to get an Australian car into production, it could never have been a serious competitor with the General Motors project or have had an equal claim on government help or promotion.⁹

It is doubtful whether any of the other three Australian companies was as well placed as Hartnett's to produce a car with significantly increased Australian content, or as determined to do so. The ease with which the Labor government sidestepped Australian Consolidated Industries (headed by the pugnacious W. J. Smith) suggests that this company was no longer very interested in this form of enterprise. Information about the remaining two companies is very sparse. Liberty Motors is said to have intended to base its vehicle on an American design (Berulsen, 1989:131); it is difficult to see how it could have injected more Australian content than Hartnett intended to do, or could have avoided or overcome the problems he encountered. Pentana

made greater claims, but these were not tested and they must be subject to the same doubts about the company's ability to achieve what General Motors was in fact able to do. On the evidence, there is no reason to believe that the Labor government made anything but a rational decision in regarding the 'Australian initiatives' as unworthy of encouragement in relation to its objectives, and in looking to the more experienced and highly-developed foreign enterprises.¹⁰ As on so many occasions, the treatment of rational discrimination as the product of simple prejudice is gratuitous, and it acts as a barrier and a disincentive to the gaining of understanding.

A blatant example of misunderstanding is Andrew Wells's description of Edward Shann as one who 'untiringly defended Anglo-colonial economic dependency'. What is unquestionable is that Shann untiringly criticised tariff protection and what he regarded as the artificial cultivation of secondary industry, and untiringly advocated the expansion of exports of primary products. He therefore supported the retention of one aspect of the dependency-by-definition that I referred to above. Wells simply jumps from that point to the assumption that Shann wanted to defend all aspects of it and a real dependence on Britain. Shann's actual position was very different from that one. As is well known, his activities as a publicist were directed mainly to reducing Australia's dependence on overseas (i.e. mainly British) lenders, and to dissuading Australia from remaining tied to an increasingly protectionist (and therefore, in his view, increasingly stagnant) British economy. The course that he favoured for Australia, as he made very clear in his Preface to his *Economic History of Australia* (the immediate target of Wells' slighting remarks) was to seek 'self-reliance' by eschewing foreign borrowing and by exploiting Australia's proximity to the markets of South and East Asia. He believed that 'India, China and Japan [were] well started on the road to industrialism' and would need the foodstuffs and other products in relation to which Australia possessed comparative advantage, and that they would be able to pay for them (Shann, 1930a: vii-viii). Those recommendations summed up much of what he had been saying and writing on earlier occasions, and he repeated them in slightly different and sometimes more aggressive forms in the changed circumstances of the Depression.

Some of those more aggressive statements are to be found in the pamphlet entitled *Quotas or Stable Money? Three Essays on the Ottawa and London Conferences*. 'If "autarky" is to be [Britain's] future', he wrote in the first of the three essays, 'we Australians must

look squarely at the change in our position. We are no longer children at the maternal knee' (Shann, 1933:4). And the conclusion that he drew when looking squarely was that Australia 'must . . . seek for herself fresh market openings, especially where as in the East she has geographic and economic advantages' (p.26). In the same set of essays he was sharply critical of the British policy and policy-makers that were on display at the Ottawa and World Economic Conferences. The real aim of the British delegation at Ottawa, he wrote, was 'a sheltered home market for British farmers and [rural] landlords as well as for British industrialists' (p.5). Their strategy was 'to throw on the Dominions the onus' of restricting supplies of cheap foodstuffs to British working class families, they gave undertakings which were 'mere eyewash' and they made 'offers of co-operation' which were really disguised commands and threats (pp.14–15). And he was just as sceptical about the pretended disinterestedness of the Australian Association of British Manufacturers when it came out in support of struggling Australian manufacturers who were seeking an embargo on the import of goods from Japan (p.28). He did not have great expectations of British altruism. But more fundamental than his attitude to contemporary Britain was his hostility to overseas borrowing, and his confidence that there was an alternative. He expressed this most fully and succinctly in a passage in his paper of 1928 on 'Restriction or Free Enterprise?':

If we continue to borrow abroad we shall mortgage with the interest bill every increase in our productive power and send it to swell the loanable funds of New York and London. Probably, as Mr [E. C.] Dyason argues, we can do this without growing poorer. But why not manage and set our pace of development by our own loanable capital? That would be ultimately to the advantage of both public and private finance. (Shann, 1930b:27)

There is evidently a good deal in Shann's ideas with which Donald Horne, if not Wells, could agree. But Shann was putting them forward in the 1920s and 1930s, and apparently without damage to his role as a respected and sought-after adviser to governments and private corporations. Deference to London and New York and a desire to promote the interests that they were promoting were evidently neither universal nor requisite in economic life at that time.

IV. RISING ABOVE THE CULTURAL CRINGE

Donald I-Iorne is a thinker who fears that a cultural cringe may still be hindering Australia's movement towards the kind of country he would like it to be. Many others occasionally voice similar fears. But more commonly, as I suggested at the outset, the cringe is seen as a disease of which Australia was cured in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and later symptoms of it are noted as regrettable consequences of the earlier infection. 'I am much less cringing than thou' is an important part of the message that allusions to the cringe are intended to convey. It 'was a little while ago', according to Thomas, that Australia was so inert, passive and deferential. It was 'until the end of the Menzies era', according to Brian Head that the assumption of local inferiority permeated Australian life. There is much use of the past tense in other references to it and its manifestations. This inexplicit distancing of contemporary 'intellectual movements and Australian society' from the cringe is sometimes complemented by specific claims that things are different now. Several of the contributors to Head's and Walter's book point to the innovations and the new spirit of innovation in the areas and activities that they discuss. In other places Jim Davidson writes of a new self-confidence, both among writers and the public at large (Smith et al., 1984:19-23), Ian Turner of 'a new awareness and a new hope' among Australian artists (Dutton, 1976:76), and Craig Munro of an 'upsurge of Australian self-confidence beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Introduction to Stephensen, 1986:*vii-viii*). The historians of the cringe are claiming, in however qualified a way, that there has been a break from the cringing past.

But the truth of that claim is something that can also be tested, and one place where it can be tested is in the intellectual life from which it and like claims issue. The setting for its testing is, of course, to be found in attitudes to foreign things, that is in the extent and the basis of the admiration accorded to them. Particular tests are provided conveniently by Alomes in his article in *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society*: he illustrates there 'the dependent character' of earlier Australian intellectuals and their 'deference to overseas models' by pointing out that their new departures were merely 'comparable with changes occurring in other countries', and that their research and analysis showed 'a strong emphasis on the reporting and assimilation of the latest overseas ideas' (Head & Walter, 1988:81, 82). The question to be asked, then, is how far the newly-confident intellectuals,

appreciating the worth of Australia as never before, have avoided these dependent and deferential modes of behaviour.

The answer is clearly and immediately available. So far from avoiding them they have enthusiastically embraced them. They have hardly paused from praising or adopting foreign models of behaviour, foreign modes of artistic activity, foreign governments' policies and institutions and foreign modes of thinking, and hardly paused from trying to impose these on the Australian community. Their foreign modes and models have included fewer British ones than before the war, or before the election of the Whitlam Government, but that does not make them any more Australian, and those of British origin have not been entirely absent. Much of the evidence is conveniently gathered together in *Intellectual Movements* and Australian Society, as the editors and some of the contributors seem uneasily aware.

A reader of that work would have to look very hard to find even one new idea or one intellectual movement that is not 'comparable with changes occurring in other countries' or is not built around 'the reporting and assimilation of the latest overseas ideas'. (Perhaps the notion of the cultural cringe is itself the most promising candidate; but even that is not without precedent in the history of other ex-colonies, including the United States.) As the contributors to the volume have recorded local successes and tried to explain them, they have repeatedly found the starting-point for innovations or for their own analysis in foreign thinkers. The list of such sources includes Althusser, Hester Eisenstein, Fanon, the Frankfurt School, Gramsci, John Grierson, Marshall McLuhan, Wright Mills, the New Wave filmmakers of France, Wilhelm Reich and Virginia Woolf, as well as a vaguely-defined 'non-Western thought'. Several attempts are made to suggest that while this might look like an undue admiration for things foreign, it is not really so. John Docker remarks that while the New Left and counter-cultural movements 'were certainly heavily and directly influenced by overseas student and black, feminist and gay liberationist ideas and forms . . . they also developed and transformed them in distinctive ways in the particular conditions of Australian society and in terms of Australia's history' (Head & Walter, 1988:299). Dennis Altman also acknowledges that those movements were 'strongly influenced by overseas ideas' but describes them as 'stressing their appeal to Australian values' and selecting those that had 'a certain resonance in recent Australian history' (p.319). The editors take up and generalise that last point into a claim that 'the process was one of the selective adaptation of overseas ideas' (p.236).

But these provide a quite lame, or even limp, case for distinguishing the supposedly independent moderns from the dependent ancients. No less could be said for the ancients (such as Shann) than the self-applauding moderns say for themselves. In fact, in this volume no less is said of the early post-war film-makers by Albert Moran (p.118), or of psychiatrists earlier in the century by Stephen Garton (p.184). The crusaders against the cultural cringe evidently put as much effort into building glass houses as they do into throwing stones.

Why the Crusade?

An obvious question to ask is why these intellectuals are so committed to a thesis that they explain so rarely and defend so poorly. One answer is just as obvious: the thesis meets a need. The sources of that need, and of the several subordinate needs that it generates, lie in a number of interconnected circumstances in the background to their thinking.

The most fundamental of those circumstances is the enthusiasm with which contemporary Australians intellectuals have taken up the notions of ideology and 'cultural hegemony' and have made them the starting points for their own thinking. Closely related to this is their concern with the role of intellectuals in society, and in particular concern about their own not-very-satisfying role in Australian society.¹¹ Impinging on those factors, but not deriving from them, is the further commitment of most of the Left intellectuals to a revived Australian nationalism. That commitment itself requires some explanation, but I propose to leave it aside until after I have dealt with the other points that I have raised.

The first relevant point about the theory of ideology and hegemony is that it treats the life of a community and the lives of its individual members as dominated by thought in the form of ideas and 'myths', especially those of an abstract or general character such as 'free enterprise', 'equality', 'development', 'the Empire', 'exploitation and the class struggle' and the like. These ideas and myths are seen as typically the creation of ideologists or intellectuals. Accordingly, any community is seen as divided into two sections, one consisting of the intellectuals who do the thinking and the publicists who disseminate the products, the other consisting of the rest of the community who receive the ideas and myths and ultimately reproduce them in their own thinking.

At any one time, it is supposed, there will be within a community one more or less coherent set of myths and ideas (a culture) which will be predominant or enjoy 'hegemony', but there may at the same time

be alternative ideologies or counter-cultures which have been produced by non-hegemonic ideologists who hope to become hegemonic. The important political processes will be the struggles for hegemony between rival ideologies and their respective sets of ideologists and publicists. The character of social life will be, in important respects, a reflection of the character of intellectual life: ideologies will beget their own movements, movements will depend on ideologies.

This is the approach to intellectual and social life that has been adopted by the editors and many of the contributors to *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society*. 'This book', write the editors, 'begins from the assumption that the formulation, dissemination and control of ideas is a central shaping influence in any society . . . [and intellectuals] are those who organise and articulate the ideas that help us to make sense of the world . . .' (Head & Walter, 1988: *vi*). The book is primarily an attempt to give an account of Australian intellectual movements and their relationships with society in those terms. And the authors' references to other writers, such as R.J. White and Tim Rowse, make it clear that they are part of a broader tendency and are not adopting an entirely idiosyncratic approach. Within the volume, John Docker (whose viewpoint is much closer to traditional Marxism than to the neo-Marxism of other contributors) has some pertinent remarks on the distinction that is assumed between the active (and virtuous) intellectuals and the passive and dominated 'underlying population' (pp.300-1).

The same point is brought out, perhaps less deliberately, in two glosses by other contributors on the thought of Antonio Gramsci, one of the heroes in the identification of cultural hegemony as a social and political phenomenon. One is a reference to Gramsci's notion of 'organic intellectuals', who are 'the thinking and organising elements of a social class who specialise in giving it homogeneity and an awareness of its social function', and on whom we must focus if 'we are to understand the function of ideas and the role of the bearers of ideas in political debate'.¹² The second reference to Gramsci is in Patrick Buckridge's article on 'Intellectual Authority and Critical Traditions in Australian Literature 1945 to 1975'. Buckridge explains that he is using "'authority" in a loosely Gramscian sense to denote cultural power that is able to command the respectful acquiescence of a large majority of those it rules' (p.189). In sum, the theory is one that holds out to intellectuals the prospect of acquiring and exercising real power in the community, of setting its guidelines and providing not so much

solutions to its problems as the definition of its problems and its means of recognising them.

Buckridge's use of the Gramscian notion of authority is valuable for a further reason. He shows that it can be applied to the ambitions if not the achievements of the literary nationalists, whom he refers to as those adopting a 'liberal' perspective or belonging to 'the liberal tradition'. The constant feature of the liberal perspective, he maintains, is a notion of 'responsibility' on the part of writers and critics which becomes 'the chief ground of their authority as literary intellectuals' (p.191). This responsibility is firstly to Australian literature and its preservation, development and promotion, but secondly to 'national well-being and self-respect' which are assumed to depend on literature and its creators and nurturers. He supports this interpretation with some telling extracts from Chris Christensen's contributions to *Meanjin*, but it was not peculiarly Christensen's outlook. Brian Kiernan (1971:161) had previously found substantially the same sentiment in the thought of Vance Palmer, pointing out that it was one of Palmer's persistent objects 'to generate a sense of national identity in and through literature'. This line of argument indicates that Altman was right in claiming that the newly-imported ideas of the 1960s and 1970s had some 'resonance' in Australian history: the expectation that building a sense of national identity would be the work of intellectuals was well established among some Australian intellectuals long before the works of Gramsci and the phrase 'cultural hegemony' were made familiar in this country. The fact that the expectation was established first in relation to literature provides another reason why the contemporary discussion of Australian society tends to drift back to the status of literature.

When it is understood that it was from this intellectual base that the campaign against the cultural cringe was launched, many of its features, including the deficiencies in the arguments it employs and its errant use of evidence, begin to fall into place. The Australian intellectuals who occupied the base were predominantly of the Left, and especially of the New Left. They had apparently been allocated the task of providing other members of the community with the conceptual and other skills that would enable them to make sense of the world, and concomitantly been offered the glittering prizes of power and authority in the community. But the prizes, disappointingly, had not and have not yet been awarded to them. Their generous offer to do other peoples' thinking has not been accepted, although for a time it appeared that it would be. As Brian Head soberly records, for a few

years starting in the late 1960s, 'it seemed that everything was changing. New issues and new social movements were undercutting the hegemony of a complacent conservatism'. But the 'sense of optimism about social reform' did not survive beyond 1973, and 'since 1974–75 it has been clear that the intellectual tide has turned. The initiative in social and political discussion passed to the conservative liberals' (Head & Walter, 1988:28–9). This turning of the tide seemed to require explanation, and in terms of their theory the intellectuals could explain it in only one way. Their ideology had been overcome by another one, a more deeply-entrenched or more advantageously-placed set of ideas and myths which resisted the inroads of the Left's offerings.

It did not take long or prove very difficult to identify that rival and successful ideology. It was the 'Australian Liberalism' described and analysed by Tim Rowse (1978). But while this went a long way to explain the Left intellectuals' failures and problems, it did not satisfy all their needs because there were other strands in their thought. They were influenced by and sought to contribute to and ally themselves with a revived nationalism that appeared at about this time. For that reason they shared the desire, common in settler societies with a relatively short history, to see their New World as relatively virtuous and innocent and the Old World as relatively corrupt and as the source of local evils. At the same time they retained in their thinking vestigial elements from the 18th-century stages-of-civilisation account of history which had contributed powerfully to the development of socialist thought. That account predisposed them to see any but a highly industrialised economy as inadequate and immature.

In this situation dependency theory had obvious attractions. It incorporated the tendency to export and externalise the source of problems and barriers to national progress, for it made them the responsibility of the dominant partners in international intercourse. It also incorporated the tendency to see the not-highly-industrialised countries as necessarily in a state of tutelage and as lacking the capacity to be dominant. It could therefore provide a model for a description of the failure of the Australian economy to take the form — to reach the 'stage of civilisation' — that they preferred. But it then enabled them to push their argument in another direction. In terms of their theory of ideology, a dependent condition must be matched by and the product of an ideology of dependence, with its creators, its disseminators and its captive 'underlying population'. Phillips had already identified such an ideology with his notion of the cultural cringe. All that remained to

be done was to embrace it and extend its application to Australian social life as a whole.

One of the advantages, to its adherents, of this particular theoretical approach is that it requires no more than perfunctory efforts to demonstrate that the dependent ideology exists and is influential. These things can be inferred from the fact (if such it is) of dependence. Alternative explanations of the supposed signs of dependence, such as the small research output of Australian universities in the interwar period, can be treated as merely inconvenient complications, not real competitors. What is required is no more than a few illustrations of attitudes and forms of behaviour in order to fill out the account. And these can be safely found in the segments of society that possess some advantage in relation to the rest, for in this model of the functioning of society opinions and judgments always flow downwards and are never formed among or combated by the bulk of the community, unless the latter are fortunate enough to possess their own group of organic intellectuals to advise them. Accordingly, the prejudices of the Adelaide Club can be taken to represent the outlook of a large swathe of the community; and the fact that intellectuals concern themselves with questions of 'national identity' is taken as sufficient to establish that this is a vital issue in the community at large. Moreover the theory — especially that part of it that explains the frustrating success of the complacent conservatism in maintaining its hegemony — allocates certain roles to particular people in the community, especially those engaged in education at one level or another. As in relation to the cringe itself, there is no need to demonstrate that they perform those roles because the theory guarantees that they do. The more ambitious theorist needs to do no more than illustrate the circumstance, and almost any piece of evidence, however unreliable or fanciful, will serve that purpose.

The grip of this theoretical approach on latter-day Left intellectuals therefore explains their apparently slack treatment of evidence, their neglect of a large body of evidence that seems to contradict their assertions, and their summoning in support of further evidence that turns out to be either spurious or to point towards quite different conclusions.

The least easily explained feature of their thinking, but one that is nevertheless instructive, is the Anglophobic form of their nationalism. It is not easily explained because it has been anachronistic. It has flourished at a time when Britain has shown a steadily declining interest in Australia, and her ability to influence or threaten Australia

has been declining just as quickly. Even if we supposed that Britain's real sin had been to constitute a barrier to Australia's ready acceptance of the American and Continental European cultural products that so strongly attract the Left intellectuals, we would have to judge it to be a pretty insignificant sinner. The Anglophobia may, however, be informative if we explore it with the help of some of the things that Phillips said about the cultural cringe, and some of the things that we know about nationalism.

In his brief analysis of the cringe, Phillips asserted that it 'mainly appears in a tendency to make needless comparisons'. This seems to me to describe precisely the content of much of the cringe-denouncing literature that I have been discussing, and the making of those comparisons seems to have been observed by commentators who have themselves contributed to that body of literature. The point is illustrated most clearly in two passages in Mark Thomas's *Australia in Mind*. The first is in a comment that one of the notable features of Geoffrey Blainey's treatment of Australian pioneering is 'the lack of any anti-British feeling' (1989:158). We might well ask why that is notable, why anti-British feeling should be expected. The answer is provided in the second passage, which remarks that David Williamson's position is novel because 'he has not needed to define himself as an Australian by the criterion of hostility to the English' (p.189). To say that is to define the condition of the normal Australian intellectual as one of desperate insecurity: only the desperately insecure can need to define their own identities through hostility to other people. And we can now understand the campaign against the cringe as an extension of that hostility to people who failed or fail to join in the expression of it.

This leads to a further point about the recent history of Australian intellectual life. We have seen that those who talk about the cringe commonly contrast the infamous inertness of the past with their own 'robustness, optimism, buoyance and assurance' (Thomas, 1989:183).¹³ But their claims must now be doubted, for they are contradicted by the evidence that I have just been discussing. And the significance of that evidence is strengthened when we remember that talk about the cultural cringe was associated with, and was an aspect of, a revival of nationalism. Nationalism is another product and aspect of insecurity and self-doubt, not of robustness, optimism, buoyance or assurance. Communities which are comfortable with themselves and sure of their place in the world do not embrace nationalism: people who habitually act independently and feel independent do not feel a need to assert their independence.

Conclusion

The conclusion we are left with is that the late 1960s and the 1970s were not a period of new optimism or assurance but a period in which those qualities had been undermined. When Munro, Turner and others wrote of self-confidence, optimism and the like, what they were really referring to were the rising expectations of Left intellectuals that they would be much better treated and supported by an imminent and then actual Labor government than by its predecessors over the previous 20 years. Those expectations are understandable, but they are not, and do not even slightly resemble, self-confidence or independence or self-respect. Other evidence of the existence of those qualities is altogether lacking. Their absence emerges as precisely the most striking feature of the period in which talk about the cultural cringe has flourished, and it is an aspect of our recent history that deserves close study. Its existence is perhaps the most important thing revealed by an examination of the campaign against the cringe and previous generations of cringers.

The best way to sum up the whole campaign may be to paraphrase Voltaire's famous aphorism about the existence of God. The cultural cringe — that pervasive, unthinking, admiration for British and foreign things — did not exist, but it was needed, and so it was invented.

Notes

1. There are numerous accounts of the course of this war, or parts of it. They include Heseltine's 'Introduction' to the second edition of A. A. Phillips' *The Australian Tradition* (1980), Patrick Buckridge's essay on 'Intellectual Authority and Critical Traditions in Australian Literature 1945 to 1975' in Head & Walter, *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society* (1988), and Craig Munro's 'Introduction' to the second edition of P. R. Stephensen's *The Foundations of Culture in Australia: An Essay Towards National Self Respect* (1986).
2. Hill has been the subject of a biography by John Mansfield Thomson (1980).
3. See the comment by Head and Walter quoted by on p.3 above; and see also the claim by Alomes (1988:234) that 'the larger and older universities' were 'the traditional centres of the cultural cringe'.
4. It is not quite clear that Pierce is adopting the cringe-hypothesis in a general form, but his use of it in this context is very misleading.
5. As we shall see, the charge of indifference and neglect is sometimes extended from universities to schools, notably by Alomes.
6. The passages and the evidence relate almost entirely to the so-called humanities and the nascent social sciences. I assume that none of the accusers would dare to maintain that Australian university scientists — botanists, geologists, zoologists — ignored Australian topics.
7. In the 1930s, Angus and Robertson were producing a whole series of geography textbooks and reference books for Australians, some by unnamed authors, some by J. Macdonald Holmes and J. Andrews of the University of Sydney.
8. J. Macdonald Holmes's *The Geographical Basis of Government specially applied to New South Wales* (1944) did not win an enduring body of admirers, but it was clearly the product of much research, extending over a good many years.
9. They were not, of course, competitors. Hartnett had got plans for the production of the Holden well under way before he was eased out of his post with General Motors.
10. The more plausible charge is that the government favoured General Motors Holden at the expense of the other foreign, and especially American, producers. See Butlin & Schedvin, 1977:761–2, where the evidence is summarised.
11. Cf. Brian Head in Head & Walter, 1988:5: '... many Australian intellectuals have felt unappreciated and misunderstood by the general public, by the wielders of social power, and by some of their colleagues in adjacent fields.' Quite so.

12. James Walter, pp.240–1. On p.4, Brian Head gives a less class-bound account of organic intellectuals, but he still has them providing the 'conceptual, strategic and organisational skills' for their respective groups. See also Andrew Wells's references to Gramsci's concept on p.217 and the accompanying Note 15.
13. The phrase is a gloss on Williamson's views.

References

- Alomes, S. (1988), *A Nation at Lust? The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism, 1880–1988*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney.
- Barcan, A. (1980), *A History of Australian Education*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- Barton, G. & A. Britton (1889–94), *A History of New South Wales from the Records*, Charles Potter, Sydney (2 vols.)
- Bennett, B. et al. (eds) (1988), *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, Penguin Books, Ringwood,
- Berulsen, J. (1989), *Beneath the Bonnet: A History of Australian Automotive Parts Manufacture Since 1896*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne.
- Bland, F. (1939/1944), *Government of Australia*, NSW Government Printer, Sydney.
- Bonwick, J. (1882), *The First Twenty Years of Australia*, Low & Marston, London.
- Bowden, T. (1989), *The Way My Father Tells It: The Story of an Australian Life*, ABC, Sydney.
- Browne, G. (1929), *Australia: A General Account*, Nelson, London.
- Butlin, S. & C. Schedvin (1977), *War Economy 1942–1945*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra.
- Chard, J. (1928), *History of Australia for Commonwealth Schools* (second edition), Cornstalk Press, Sydney.
- Coghlan, T. (1894), *A Statistical Account of the Seven Colonies of Australasia*, Sydney.
- (1918), *Labour and Industry in Australia*, Oxford.
- Cramp, K. (1935), *A Story of the Australian People*, G. B. Philip, Sydney.
- Currey, C. (1933), *Australian and General History, together with chapters on Civics and Morals*, Whitcombe & Tombs, Sydney and Melbourne.
- Cusack, D. & F. James (1988), *Come in Spinner*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney.
- Dobrez, L. (ed.) (1982), *Review of National Literatures*, vol. 11, Griffin House, New York.
- Dunbabin, T. (1922), *The Making of Australasia*, London.
- Dutton, G. (ed.) (1976), *The Literature of Australia* (revised edition), Penguin Books, Ringwood.
- Flanagan, R. (1862), *A History of New South Wales*, London.
- Ford, E. & A. McInnes (1940), *Australia and the Pacific*, Walter Standish, Sydney.

- Graubard, S. (ed.) (1985), *Australia: The Daedalus Symposium*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney.
- Hancock, W. (1934), *Two Centuries of Change: An Elementary History for Young Australians*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- Harris, H. (1936), *Australia in the Making* (Angus & Robertson, Sydney).
- Hartnett, L. (1981), *Big Wheels and Little Wheels* (third edition), Wildgrass Books, Victoria.
- Head, B. & J. Walter (eds) (1988), *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- Herbst, P. (1952), 'The Nature of Facts', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 30: 90–123.
- Holmes, J. (1944), *The Geographical Basis of Government specially applied to New South Wales*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney.
- Jenks, E. (1895), *A History of the Australasian Colonies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Jose, A. (1899), *A Short History of Australasia*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney.
- Kiernan, B. (1971), *Images of Society and Nature: Seven Essays on Australian Novels*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- Mackenzie, B. & F. (1967), *Singers of Australia: From Melba to Sutherland*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne.
- Mackie, J. (1951), 'Logic and Professor Anderson', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 29: 107–13.
- McKernan, S. (1989), *A Question of Commitment: Australian Literature in the Twenty Years after the War*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Murdoch, W. (n.d.), *The Making of Australia: An Introductory History*, Whitcombe & Tombs, Melbourne and Sydney.
- O'Brien, E. (1937), *The Foundation of Australia (1786–1806)*, Sheed & Ward, London.
- Passmore, J. (1943), 'Logical Positivism I', *Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy* 21: 65–72.
- (1944), 'Logical Positivism II', *Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy* 22: 129–53.
- (1948), 'Logical Positivism III', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 26: 1–19.
- Phillips, A. (1958), *The Australian Tradition*, first edition, Cheshire, Melbourne.
- (1980), *The Australian Tradition*, second edition, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne.

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE CULTURAL CRINGE

- Pike, A. & R. Cooper (1981), *Australian Film 1900–1977: A Guide to Feature Film Production*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- Portus, G. (1936), *Australia Since 1606: A History for Young Australians*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- Reade, E. (1979), *History and Heartburn: The Saga of Australian Film 1896–1978*, Harper & Row, Sydney.
- Roberts, S. & C. Currey (1932), *Modern British History*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney.
- Rowse, T. (1978), *Liberalism and National Character*, Kibble Books, Victoria.
- Rusden, G. (1897), *A History of Australia*, Melville, Mullen & Slade, Melbourne.
- Ryle, G. (1950), 'Logic and Professor Anderson', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 28: 137–53.
- Scott, E. (1916), *A Short History of Australia*, Oxford University Press, London.
- Serle, G. (1973), *From Deserts the Prophets Come: The Creative Spirit in Australia 1788–1972*, Heinemann, Melbourne.
- Shann, E. (1930a), *An Economic History of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- (1930b), *Bond or Free? Occasional Economic Essays*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney.
- (1933), *Quotas or Stable Money? Three Essays on the Ottawa and London Conferences*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney.
- Smith, F., S. Goldberg & A. Lane (eds) (1984), *Australian Cultural History, No. 3, Academy of the Humanities and the History of Ideas Unit*, ANU, Canberra.
- Smith, S. (n.d.), *A First Geography for Young Australians*, William Brooks, Sydney and Brisbane.
- Stephensen, P. (1986), *The Foundations of Culture in Australia: An Essay Towards National Self Respect*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Sutherland, A. & G. (1877), *The History of Australia from 1606 to 1976*, George Robertson & Co., Melbourne.
- Thomas, M. (1989), *Australia in Mind: Thirteen Influential Australian Thinkers*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney.
- Thomson, J. (1980), *A Distant Music: The Life and Times of Alfred Hill 1870–1960*, Oxford University Press, Auckland and Melbourne.
- Turner, H. (1904), *A History of the Colony of Victoria from its Discovery to its Absorption into the Commonwealth of Australia*, Longman, Green, London.
- & A. Sutherland (1898), *The Development of Australian Literature*, George Robertson, Melbourne.

L. J. Hume

Wilde, W., J. Hooton & B. Andrews (eds) (1985), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Wittber, C. (1923), *An Australian Geography Illustrated*, Rigby, Adelaide.

Wood, F. (1944), *A Concise History of Australia* (revised impression), Dymock's, Sydney.

Selected CIS Occasional Papers

	A\$	NZ\$*
<i>The Egalitarian Conceil: False and True Equalities</i> by Kenneth Minogue (1989) ISBN 0 949769 50 9 [OP25]	\$4.95	\$6.95
<i>The Education Monopoly Problem</i> by Edwin G. West (1989) ISBN 0 949769 51 7 [OP26]	\$4.95	\$6.95
<i>Economic Control or Economic Development?</i> by Peter Bauer (1990) ISBN 0 949769 53 3 [OP27]	\$3.95	\$5.95
<i>Population Growth: Curse or Blessing?</i> by Peter Bauer (1990) ISBN 0 949769 55 X [OP28]	\$3.95	\$5.95
<i>Socialism Is Dead But Leviathan Lives On</i> by James Buchanan (1990) ISBN 0 949769 57 6 [OP30]	\$3.95	\$5.95
<i>Reflections on Privatisation</i> by Roderick Deane (1991) ISBN 0 949769 63 0 [OP32]	\$4.95	\$6.95
<i>The Fraternal Conceil: Individualist versus Collectivist Ideas of Community</i> by Chandran Kukathas (1991) ISBN 0 949769 63 0 [OP33]	\$4.95	\$6.95
<i>Dismantling Socialism: A Preliminary Report</i> by Václav Klaus (1991) ISBN 0 949769 69 X [OP35]	\$3.95	\$5.95
<i>Liberating Labour: The Case for Freedom of Contract in Labour Relations</i> by Richard A. Epstein (1991) ISBN 0 949769 70 3 [OP36]	\$3.95	\$5.95
<i>Equalising People: Why Social Justice Threatens Liberty</i> by David G. Green (1991) ISBN 0 949769 73 8 [OP37]	\$9.95	\$13.95
<i>From Welfare State to Welfare Society</i> by Michael James (1992) ISBN 0 949769 77 0 [OP38]	\$5.95	\$8.95
<i>Freedom, Tradition, Conservatism</i> by Frank S. Meyer (1992) ISBN 0 949769 78 9 [OP39]	\$3.95	\$5.95
<i>How Much Justice Does a Society Need?</i> by Kenneth R. Minogue (1992) ISBN 0 949769 80 0 [OP40]	\$3.95	\$5.95
<i>Why I Am Not a Conservative</i> by F.A. Hayek (1992) ISBN 0 949769 82 7 [OP41]	\$3.95	\$5.95
<i>Advertising Bans: Administrative Decisions or Matters of Principle?</i> by John Gray (1992) ISBN 0 949769 83 5 [OP42]	\$4.95	\$6.95
<i>Welfare States and the Problem of the Common</i> by David Thomson [1992] ISBN 0 949769 85 1 [OP43]	\$4.95	\$6.95
<i>Lessons from the Freiburg School: The Institutional Foundations of Freedom and Prosperity</i> by Wolfgang Kasper and Manfred Streit (1993) ISBN 0 949769 88 6 [OP44]	\$4.95	\$6.95
<i>Another Look at the Cultural Cringe</i> by L. J. Hume (1993) ISBN 0 949769 89 4 [OP45]	\$9.95	\$13.95

Prices are in Australian dollars and New Zealand dollars (*including GST) as shown and are subject to change without notice.

Please include 10% of your total order for postage & packing (min. 80c, max. \$5.00)

Another Look at the Cultural Cringe

L. J. Hume

The notion of the Australian cultural cringe is one of the myths that undermine the vigour of our social and intellectual life. According to legend, Australian colonials were 'inert, deferential and passive' before the overseas powers, especially Britain, but this dismal state of affairs changed for the better during the 1960s and early 1970s.

The late L.J. Hume's painstaking analysis of the myth shows it to be based on ignorance, selective quotation, and misreading of documents. Hume argues that progressive intellectuals have fostered the myth of the cringe because they like to think they have escaped from it and are robust and assured enough to rekindle the fires of nationalism. But nationalism is itself a product of insecurity and self-doubt because communities that are truly sure of their place in the world do not embrace nationalistic postures or feel a need to assert their independence.

L. J. Hume (1926–1993) was Reader in Political Science at the Australian National University before his retirement in 1988.

His publications include *Bentham and Bureaucracy* (1981), the leading commentary on the political thought of Jeremy Bentham.

