

Drawing Geographies of Belonging: Representations of the European in the Australian Press of the 1920s and the 1960s

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RESÜMEE

Der Artikel vergleicht die Position, die „Europäer“ im öffentlichen Diskurs Australiens in den 1920er und in den 1960er Jahren einnahmen und stützt sich dabei auf die Auswertung von Wochenmagazinen wie *The Bulletin*, *Smith's Weekly*, *The Australian Worker* und *Nation*. Die gewählten Untersuchungszeiträume sind für die Formierung einer australischen Identität besonders relevant und markieren Stufen in einem Prozess der Auseinandersetzung mit der europäischen Abstammung der weißen Australier und mit der Rolle, die den Aborigines im australischen Nationsbildungsprozess spielen sollen. Es wird argumentiert, dass das Label *Europäer* eine spezifische Position in der kulturellen Logik australischer kollektiver Identität hat und sowohl der Betonung von Zugehörigkeit als auch der Abgrenzung dienen kann.

In November 1934, Egon Erwin Kisch, a Czechoslovak writer and journalist, travelled to Australia as a delegate and speaker at the Peace Congress of the *Movement Against War and Fascism*. Known as a campaigner of the *Communist International*, the right-wing Australian government declared him to be an alleged revolutionary and undesirable alien and denied him entry upon arrival. Kisch tried to defy the ban by jumping onto the wharf in Melbourne.¹ Despite fracturing his leg, he was taken into custody but later released on the order of the High Court. The tug-of-war continued as the conservative Lyons Government repeatedly attempted to exclude Kisch by means of the *Immigration*

1 Kisch gave detailed account on his visit to Australia in his book *Landung in Australien* (published under the English title *Australian Landfall*) in 1937.

Restriction Act. As a component of the *White Australia Policy*, the legislative measure allowed for a dictation test in any European language, infinitely repeatable and primarily aimed at restricting those considered 'non-white' from immigration by feigning to test English language competence but was occasionally misused to enforce political preferences.² The polyglot activist was requested to write the Lord's Prayer in Scottish Gaelic, and as expected, he failed. The Australian High Court over-ruled this decision arguing that Scottish Gaelic was not a European language within the meaning of the Act and thence unlawful, providing Kisch with the opportunity to address the crowds attracted by the publicity.³ Apart from illustrating the arbitrariness of governmental action, this episode exemplifies the processes of negotiating belonging and modes of *Othering* to carve out boundaries of citizenship to the imagined national community. Kisch's European descent did not ensure that he was welcomed to Australia. His political attitude was of more immediate concern to the ruling Government. The *Kisch Affair* not only exposed the will to curtail free speech and undermine democracy but also alluded to the significance of the category 'European'⁴ as a valuable tool to create social cohesion in larger narratives of Australian nation building.

The imagining of 'Europe' and the construction of the European person have received increased academic attention. Fundamental social and political changes initiated by the end of the Cold War and the widening of the European Union toward the East have stimulated interest in questions of collective identity formation. Dipesh Chakrabarty's pioneering study *Provincializing Europe* (2000) has explored how the mythical figure of Europe saturates postcolonial thought and Wolfgang Schmale has traced the advent of ideas of the 'European' back to antiquity, asserting that the European was a historical subject whose emergence and manifestations are in need of documentation and historical explanation.⁵ Recently, this research field has been enlarged as historians place greater emphasis on how the *Other* features within processes of imagining 'Europe'.⁶ However, scholars are so far reluctant to devote their attention to places and communities beyond the geographical entity Europe, where the imagined 'European' evolved as a device within a larger rhetoric of nation building. Australian historians on the other hand have interrogated the historical development, definition and deployment of similar categorisations – 'white' and 'British' in particular – in Australian settler society, and have highlighted the significance of these categories in the problematic search for national self-definition. But there is as yet no study that has been exclusively concerned with notions of the 'European', and the label's functionality and significance as an axis along

2 H. Zogbaum, *Kisch in Australia. The Untold Story*, Carlton 2004, p. 41.

3 F. Farrell, *International Socialism and Australian Labour: The Left in Australia 1919–1939*, Sydney 1981.

4 I use inverted commas throughout this article to specify when I refer to constructions of 'Europe' or the 'European'.

5 D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton 2000.; W. Schmale, *Die Konstruktion des Homo Europaeus*, in: *Comparative European History Review* (2001), pp. 165–184.

6 Notable works include: I. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: The „East“ in European Identity Formation*, Minneapolis 1999.; J. Osterhammel, *Europa Um 1900: Auf der Suche nach einer Sicht „von Außen“*, Bochum 2008.; B. Stråth, *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other*, Bruxelles 2000.

which differentiation and belonging could be negotiated in the Australian context. Recently, David Dutton and Ann Curthoys have acknowledged the potential of examining the 'European', but mainly as part of larger studies dedicated to Australian immigration history and the problematic issue of 'racialising' specific groups of arrivals.⁷

This article is concerned with the currency and connotations of the 'European', arguing that the term has often been used as an undeniable given rather than an imagined construct. I argue that the label holds a specific position in the cultural logic of Australian collective identity. This article will examine the label's deployment in the 1920s and the 1960s in the Australian press, specifically in weekly magazines such as *The Bulletin*, *Smith's Weekly*, *The Australian Worker* and *Nation*. Metaphorically speaking, the aim is to take a returning gaze through the Australian mirror investigating how press correspondents and readers consolidated representations of the 'European' in diverse media contexts to suit contemporary political imperatives. It will be shown that the 'European' as a category of classification and differentiation did not fit neatly into a Manichean divide, where representation is constructed in opposition. Rather, I argue, the 'European' served as a blanket-term that could operate to either emphasise belonging or to highlight demarcation with regard to understandings of being 'Australian' in different contexts. An introductory overview on the changing nature of Anglo-Australian relations at the turn of the twentieth century will precede the empirical findings. To reconstruct the versatility of representations, this paper will then compare selected examples from the 1920s and 1960s. Both decades mark decisive periods of radical social and cultural change in Australia, and are characterised by intensified nation building. I argue that over a brief period of a few decades the 'European' gradually shifts in the Australian national imaginary from being constructed as part of the *Self* to being seen as an *Other* among *Others*, without being understood this way completely.

Locating the European: The Australian case

Benedict Anderson has identified the interplay between the *Self* and the *Other*, identity and alterity, as essential to the cultural creation of *imagined communities*.⁸ He specifies that every *Self* – a person, group or nation – has a set of *Others* against whom it identifies itself either in opposition or in alliance, but only a few of these *Others* are utilized at a specific time. Despite acknowledging the significance of *Others* while reflecting underlying asymmetries of power and being critically aware that categorizations are based on cultural presuppositions, few studies have examined representations of the 'European' as created and circulated in societies beyond the perceived geographical borders of the continent.⁹ The case of Australia as a settler society that has been formed by fragments

7 D. Dutton, *One of Us? A Century of Australian Citizenship*, Sydney 2002; A. Curthoys, *White, British, and European: Historicizing Identity in Settler Colonies*, in: J. Carey and C. McLisky, *Creating White Australia*, Sydney 2009.

8 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1983.

9 For exceptions see among others: D. Sachsenmaier / J. Riedel, *Reflections on Multiple Modernities. European, Chinese and Other Interpretations*, Leiden 2002.

of European diaspora challenges any simplistic binarism such as *Us* versus *Them* or *East* versus *West*. The fundamental tension of cultural closeness to Britain and self-understanding as a 'white', Western society and geographical remoteness in an Asian, non-European location and the problematic relations to the Indigenous peoples characterized by a history of loss, violence and suppression, indicate the complexity and fragmentation of processes of identity construction taking place in the ex-colonies. Following Said's criticism about the western representation of the *Other* and by implication, the creation of self-identity, recent scholarship emphasizes the need to study these multiple entanglements and exchanges between European and non-European societies in history. This approach is regarded as a promising alternative to *Eurocentrism*, respectively contributing to the decentralization of the West in historical narratives.¹⁰

By way of detailing the rhetorical deployment and underlying meanings of the category 'European', I examine how and for what purposes social boundaries between different groups have been drawn. An academic inquiry into constructions of the 'European' in Australia requires an understanding of the significance of selective immigration as a central means of internal and external processes of *Othering*. From its colonial beginnings, Australia's economic and social development as a 'white nation' relied on attracting settlers. Colour consciousness shaped the composition of transoceanic migration flows. Those who were to make the newly established colonies their home were almost exclusively 'white' and British. The commitment to whiteness as the decisive feature of society was enacted into law in 1901. Restrictive legislation was implemented on a national level to ensure the prevalence of a high degree of racial and cultural homogeneity of the Australian society for future generations. Within this context of channeling population movements, different cohorts of migrants were constructed as either welcome or undesirable. Social, political and economic groups within Australia frequently mobilized aspects of collectively held ideas of the 'European' to mark out either a distinctive 'Australian-ness', or a cultural closeness as a Western nation, thereby marginalizing segments of the population. By the end of the Second World War, successive Australian governments gradually allowed for changes in the composition of migration intake. Racial ideas were discredited and Australia aimed to become an integral part of Asia. I argue in this article that although Australian policy makers mainly understood 'whiteness' as a racially inscribed 'Europeanness' in the first decades of the twentieth century, these terms were neither synonymous nor interchangeable. Further, the categorisation 'European' was not always perceived *per se* as different to the label 'Australian'. Rather, the category is used context-specifically and its meaning is subject to a constant remoulding. My main argument is that the 'European' was forged through engagement with a 'movable pool' of exclusionary and inclusive attributions, and became a powerful tool that could be utilized to claim entitlements, to form self-understandings and to manage populations.

10 S. Conrad/S. Randeria, *Geteilte Geschichten – Europa in einer postkolonialen Welt*, in: Idem (eds), *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus. Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften*, Frankfurt am Main 2002, pp. 9–49.

Knowledge of the 'European' was, for example, germinated within and disseminated by the printed press, a site within which social boundaries were drawn. Newspapers reflect and are influenced by public opinion. As the central authority of mediation of discursive processes and knowledge, the media participate in how different individuals or groups are integrated into or excluded from society via the selective use of language and images.¹¹ The analysis of media manifestations therefore aims to shed light on diverging representations and perennial themes referring to the 'European' and linguistic specifics in constructing self-images and images of the *Other*. In order to provide depth and breadth of data, articles and political cartoons from leading weekly newspapers have been collected, covering the broad spectrum of political opinion. Between 1880 and 2008, *The Bulletin* was probably the most significant weekly magazine in Australia. Especially in its earlier years, it held a nationalist, protectionist and overwhelmingly racist attitude, providing well-informed business and political news. Likewise, *Smith's Weekly* aimed at close interaction with its (mainly male) readers, but held a more moderate view towards the Labor party. In contrast, the independent bi-weekly journal *Nation*, published between 1958–72, represented minority views strongly opposing the restrictive immigration legislation. Lastly, the union-based newspaper *The Australian Worker*, representative of the political Left, provided a wide range of national as well as local news through both decades of research.

Imagining the new nation: A British White Australia

Racial exclusion formed the basis of the evolving Australian nationalism and significantly shaped the way in which Australians imagined themselves and *Others*. In 1901, the six separate British colonies consolidated into the *Commonwealth of Australia*. Among the first legal enactments of the newly formed parliament, the *Immigration Restriction Act* passed into law constituting the cornerstone of the *White Australia policy*. Disguised in the form of a dictation test, non-Europeans were excluded on racial grounds from entering the country:

*The immigration into the Commonwealth of the persons described in any of the following paragraphs of this section (herein-after called "prohibited immigrants") is prohibited, namely: (a) Any person who when asked to do so by an officer fails to write out a dictation and sign in the presence of the officer a passage of fifty words in length in an European language directed by the officer.*¹²

These boundaries affected the composition of the population and reaffirmed its Anglo-Saxon character. As illustrated earlier in the Kisch case, the Act was also employed

11 M. Jäger, Zweierlei Maß. Die Berichterstattung über Straftaten von Deutschen und MigrantInnen in den Printmedien und das Dilemma der JournalistInnen, in: K. Liebhart, E. Menasse and H. Steinert (eds), *Fremdbilder – Feindbilder – Zerrbilder*, Klagenfurt 2002, pp. 57–77.

12 Immigration Restriction Act, National Archives of Australia, NAA: A1559/1, 1901/17, 1901.

deliberately against people who though they were racially considered 'European' were regarded as political opponents and therefore had to be prevented from entering the country. Thus, the restrictive immigration legislation stipulated categories of inclusion and exclusion. Furthermore, the adoption of racial determinism and the notion of whiteness reshaped the complex emotional identifications of Australians. In general, Australians thought of themselves as primarily a British people, and likewise Britishness remained the central defining idea of the Australian community up until the late 1950s.¹³ However, in addition, the notion of 'White Australia' cultivated a sense of national unity among the general public.

The desire to build a society founded upon racial and cultural homogeneity emerged out of a set of hybrid Western racial theories.¹⁴ Linked by the doctrines of Social Darwinism, Australian ethnocentrism was a composition of European imperialism, Caucasian racism and an emerging Australian nationalism.¹⁵ Exclusivist tendencies date back to the early days of colonial settlement and intensified with increased global mobility that caused closer encounters with the extra-European *Other*. At the beginning of European occupation, access to the colonies was almost solely permitted to British subjects, but with the end of convict transportation, the need for a cheap workforce to ensure territorial and economic development could not be met with free labour migration only. A trade in indentured labor began with Pacific Islanders working in Queensland's sugar industry constituting the largest group.¹⁶ Further, the discovery of gold during the 1850s attracted large numbers of Chinese to Australia. In the eyes of the colonists, the surge in arrivals was identified as a competition for resources and employment and sparked a series of riots. As a consequence colonial governments enacted legislation to reduce the number of non-European newcomers to a minimum. The growing trade union and Labor movement championed the idea of a *White Australia*, but liberal forces equally accepted it, arguing that certain groups were incapable of becoming part of an egalitarian, democratic society.¹⁷ The economic repression of the 1890s, followed by a rapid increase in unemployment, evoked hostilities toward non-Europeans once more. Together with spatial fears provoked by the imperial invasion of Germany and France in the immediate Pacific region, this provided a new push for the federal movement and with the creation of a restrictive immigration policy of national scope at the top of the agenda.

Gwenda Tavan, Andrew Markus, James Jupp and others have illuminated the ways in which the *White Australia* ideal has been expressed with the intention to create and maintain a homogeneous 'white society': the demand for restrictive immigration laws,

13 A. Hopkins, Rethinking Decolonization, in: Past and Present, no. 200 (2008), p. 221.

14 R. Evans, The White Australia Policy, in: J. Jupp, The Australian People: An Encyclopaedia of the Nation, its People and their Origins, Cambridge 2001, pp. 44-49, here p. 45.

15 D. Wyndham, Eugenics in Australia: Striving for National Fitness, London 2003, p. 23.

16 E. Richards, Migrations: The Career of British White Australia, pp. 163-185, in: D. Schreuder and S. Ward (eds), The Oxford History of the British Empire: Australia's Empire, Oxford 2008, p. 165.

17 A. Curthoys, Liberalism and Exclusionism, in: D. Walker/J. Gothard/L. Jayasuriya (eds), Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation, Crawley 2003, pp. 8-32, here p. 29.

the repatriation of indentured laborers, the segregation of Indigenous Australians on reserves and the pursuit of Eugenic programs to “breed out color.”¹⁸ In addition, David Walker has examined how the image of an external Asian aggressor has been used to serve nation-building processes, arguing that the establishment of the policy was a statement about its future racial destiny and exemplified its position in the world. In *Drawing the Global Colour Line* (2008) Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds have been concerned with the growth and dissemination of racial thought in late nineteenth century, tying the ‘white men’s countries’ – Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the United States – together in a struggle over securing their territories against possible ‘non-white’ intrusions.¹⁹ Historians have acknowledged overlapping meanings of what it meant to be ‘white’, Australian, and/or British within this context, yet the role of the ‘European’ has not been conceptualized as in need of separate explanation. This is surprising as a close reading of the historical sources suggests that the label though utilized to a lesser extent than other categorisations provided for an alternative method of framing subjectivity within the debate on immigration, giving indication of Australian self-understandings.

The 1920s: Focus on self-confidence and cultural closeness

Framed by the Great War and the Depression, the 1920s marked a time of contradiction for the Australian population and a period of intensive nation building. Urbanisation continued as more people were drawn to the cities. The majority of the (‘white’ and ‘British’) Australian society began to take pleasure in the advantages of a new age of prosperous living, but only those belonging to the middle class could enjoy the full extent of the rise in consumerism.²⁰ Uncertainty prevailed and was fostered by industrial unrest and prolonged unemployment. At the political level, the leading Nationalist government under Stanley Bruce (1923–29) experienced a threatening growth in support for Communism and Fascism. With regard to foreign politics, Australia remained financially dependent on Britain, economically vulnerable to shortfall in external markets. Anxieties were met with a perceived need to increase population and productivity, but in the mind of the Australian public, future prosperity and national cohesion remained intrinsically linked to racial and territorial integrity. Australia was still imagined as a ‘white country only’ and immigration was only selectively encouraged. The commitment to a ‘White British Australia’ necessarily involved the stereotypical labelling of groups of people to set their status of belonging in relation to the nation at large. Still, whiteness was not synonymous with Europeanness. In fact, those considered ‘European’ became subject to classification and racialisation in the 1920s.

18 G. Smithers, *Science, Sexuality, and Race in the U.S. and Australia, 1780s–1890s*, New York 2009, pp. 191–192.

19 M. Lake/H. Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*, Cambridge 2008.

20 D. Denoon/P. Mein-Smith/M. Wyndham, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific*, Oxford 2000, p. 291.

Representations of the 'European' dominate three intertwining debates in the Australian news coverage. Firstly, the label is frequently utilised in regard to the project of developing the tropical north. Political leaders began to stress that more comprehensive settlement of the entire landmass was vital to Australia's future in the Pacific. In their view, the success of the project would determine whether national commitment to selective immigration could be justified both at home and in the international arena. However, the argument that the tropical climate caused racial degeneration still had credibility. With the support of scientific research, this argument was to be dismantled. In proving that the 'white' man, not necessarily the 'European', was capable of living and working in the tropics without the assistance of 'coloured labour', Australia's commitment to the survival of racial homogeneity and territorial integrity could be justified. Closely linked to the topic of settlement, the issue of European immigration to Australia was repeatedly discussed in the news headlines. While the exclusion of non-Europeans had been the foremost concern, comparatively little interest surrounded the terms and conditions under which non-British Europeans were to enter the country. After the First World War, the classification of continental Europeans as either 'desired' or 'unwanted' migrants suddenly moved into the centre of attention. Politicians and interest groups (such as trade unions) stressed the need to implement a systematic immigration policy toward so-called 'white aliens', a term that referred predominantly to people of Southern European origin.²¹ The questionable racial status of these 'Europeans' emanated from the perceived threat they posed to Australia's commitment to racial purity. Despite the small number of arrivals, the clustering of these immigrants in certain industries (especially in the Australian north) was exploited through media misrepresentation to evoke the sense of a steady influx. Lastly, the 'European' emerges in debates about Australia's administrative role in its external territorial holdings of Papua and New Guinea. In the late 1800s, Australian colonies had developed an increased interest in these islands as possible 'buffer zones' against an imagined Asian invasion and as sources of cheap labour that could be accessed for physically demanding work in the sugar industry on the Australian mainland. In its coverage on territory-related issues, the Australian press frequently labelled Australian expatriates residing in Papua and New Guinea as 'European'.

The First World War had an unsettling impact on almost every nation in the world. European domination came to an end and the United States of America evolved as a new global player. In addition, the growing power of Japan in the Pacific reinforced existing security concerns in Australia. Apart from the new spatial realignment not limited geographically to the European continent, the war experience triggered profound changes in previous self-understandings of Europe.²² In the past, Europe had represented the center of civilization, but in the light of the war atrocities, its position as a moral role model was gradually questioned. This severe crisis in European self-understanding was

21 Dutton, *One of Us?*, p. 50.

22 H. Kaelble, *Eine europäische Geschichte der Repräsentationen des Eigenen und des Anderen*, in: J. Baberowski / H. Kaelble / J. Schriewer (eds), *Selbstbilder und Fremdbilder*, Frankfurt am Main 2008, p. 67-81, here p. 72.

also perceived in Australia and reflected in the press. In September 1923, a political cartoon titled *The European Menagerie* appeared on *The Bulletin's* cover page.²³ On top of a vantage point, secure behind a fence, stands a little boy, embodying Australia as revealed by the lettering on his hat. The so-called *Little Boy at Manly* observes the scene below with some curiosity: an ensemble of animals and birds, each a stereotypical symbol for a European nation, deliver each other fierce blows. The French tiger snaps at the tail of the German eagle, calmly observed by the British lion. The Spanish bull is already wounded, whereas the Italian frog is ready to jump at the Greek fly. The Australian boy comments the situation stating that he has the best position after all. Although Australia's self-image reflects both immaturity and a feeling of inferiority as evident in its depiction as a child, it remains the only human player in the illustration, ascribing ideas of reason, common sense and morality compared to the pugnacity of the present European crowd. Moreover, the young boy's gaze onto the complexity of the shifting image(s) presented to him indicate the 'European's significant place in the Australian social imaginary.

A stronger focus on national interests linked with claiming recognition for Australia's war contribution marked the 1920s. Following the Canadian lead, Prime Minister Billy Hughes pressed for individual representation at the peace negotiations in Versailles, as well as separate membership in the *League of Nations*.²⁴ Australia was also conferred the status of a colonizing nation. Apart from being given a mandate to administer the former German part of New Guinea, Papua as an External Territory of the Australian Commonwealth created a buffer zone against the believed possibility of an Asiatic invasion. It is within this context of reporting on the situation in the new territorial holdings that Australians made frequent references to themselves as 'Europeans'. In both territories, the division between social groups was enforced in a similar way. The settler population, which ruled on behalf of the Australian government, dominated the economy and enforced discriminatory legislation against the natives. Australian policy makers sought to establish a new framework for relations with the native populace in their external territorial holdings, aiming to abandon the coercive and brutal system of colonial practice. During the previous decade, colonialism had been undergoing a striking redefinition into a philanthropic project, distinguished by humanitarianism, morality and rationality.²⁵ This change only gradually seeped into the mind of colonizing agents and the public. The adherence to established mentalities continued to reverberate in the way indigenous people were depicted and the expatriate community was portrayed. To be identified as 'European' was linked to a set of associated norms and obligations, equated to being educated, civilized and morally superior, and highlighted specific responsibilities of those subsumed under this term towards the native populace. A common prevailing view can be obtained in *Smith's Weekly*, which advocated a strong patriotism with

23 P. A. Leason, *The European Menagerie*, in: *The Bulletin*, 27 September 1923, cover page.

24 S. Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia*, Vol. 4: 1901–1942: *The Succeeding Age*, Oxford 2006, p. 180.

25 A. Lattas, *Humanitarianism and Australian Nationalism in Colonial Papua: Hubert Murray and the Project of Caring for the Self of the Coloniser and Colonised*, in: *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1996), pp.147.

a tendency towards the right-wing political spectrum. In the article “A White Man’s Burden”²⁶ as published in January 1923, criticism is raised about the legal situation of the natives, who were able to wrongly accuse members of the expatriate community of physical violence and press charges before the *Native Affairs Department*. This reverse representation of victim-perpetrator, the Papuans as barbarians rather than noble savages, served to undermine the necessity to keep the process of civilizing under control. On the one hand, indigenous people were characterized as cunning and audacious. On the other hand, they were pitied as naïve and childlike in their behavior, unaware of the consequence of their accusations, whereas ‘Europeans’ were reserved the role of guardians and patient teachers. Representations of the *Self* and the *Others* thus remained geared to the maintenance of unequal power relations.

Positive portrayals of the ‘European community’ were at the forefront of news coverage, but infrequently, press correspondents drew attention to the appalling working conditions and physical violence towards natives. The left-wing *The Australian Worker* stands out in its direct criticism of what it perceived as slavery-like relations in the territories. Papuans were looked at with regret as the victims of the continued colonial relationship. Drawing a comparison to the Australian aborigines, the native population was regarded as “doomed by the white man’s ‘civilisation.’”²⁷ Disease, alcohol and drug abuse were identified as the causes of high mortality among them, introduced by the colonists. Moreover, there are – but highlighted as single cases – references to maltreatment of native workers on European plantations:

*Natives were continually struck and beaten by the Europeans in charge of them. [...] We have on us the responsibility of seeing that the native population of our Pacific Islands are not oppressed or enslaved; and if we are worth a tuppenny damn as a civilised nation, we won’t (either) shirk that responsibility [...]*²⁸

Here, ‘Europeans’ were depicted as violent, taking advantage of their superior position by unjust means and thus counteracting their responsibility as “benevolent civilizers”. The media denounced the described behaviour, because it ran contrary to what was expected of a reliable colonial agent. These deviances could threaten the legitimacy of the colonial project and Australia’s reputation in the international arena. As can be seen in the debate on Papua and New Guinea, competing representations of the ‘European’ as benevolent coloniser on the one hand, and violent, brutal supervisor of native labour on the other, reflect that the category was subject to social and historical variation. Interestingly, Australians did not stress their national affiliation within this context, but emphasised cultural belonging. In the process of promoting a new imperialist morality, Australians labelled themselves first and foremost as ‘Europeans’.

26 White Man’s Burden, in: Smith’s Weekly, 6 January 1923, p. 3.

27 Australia and Papua, in: The Australian Worker, 4 August 1921, p. 10.

28 J. M., A Papuan Horror, in: The Australian Worker, 6 May 1920, p. 7.

Constructions of the 'European' also frequently occurred in the press debate about the development of the northern parts of Australia adjunct to the question, if the tropics were to be permanently settled and cultivated only by 'white labour'. The media showed an avid interest in the publication and evaluation of scientific opinions and frequently quoted medical reports to either support scientific views or discredit ideas that did not agree with the papers' agenda. Adopting the academic language of the day, the press predominantly deployed 'European' as a biological-cultural grouping or racial category, used to qualify the term 'white race'. By the 1920s, the concept of a 'European race' (or 'European races'), defined by a set of specific physical and behavioural characteristics, was well established and popularised. Correspondents repeatedly cited internationally recognised scholarly publications on racial theory, such as Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916) and Lothrop Stoddard's *Racial Realities in Europe* (1924), to advance their own arguments for the permanent settlement of the tropical regions. This practice is exemplified in a *Bulletin* editorial published in 1925:

*The white man, who has been settled in the tropics for four centuries or so, has done nothing to prove that the tropics are unfit for his habitation. [...] Yet the white man who has been longest in the tropics, when his blood is still pure European, hasn't fallen away from the merits (nor from some of the defects) of his ancestors in any noticeable way, either physical or mental.*²⁹

In contrast to the loose definition of 'white', the qualification "pure European" operated as a genealogical signifier to validate ideas of robustness and resilience. Thus, journalists did not simply adopt the pre-existing academic vocabulary, but supplemented the label's use as a racial category with ideas of discipline, bodily strength, hygiene and healthy lifestyle.

For those who utilised the label, the 'European' served to create a sense of social cohesion against perceived threats, real or imagined, such as the possibility of an Asian invasion. The label facilitated solidarity at the frontier of settlement. Previous research has reasoned that the term 'white' referred to a "finely graded spectrum of national types" in the context of tropical Australia.³⁰ These findings only partially coincide with the operation and functionality of the category 'European' in the press. Popular journals regularly revisited the topic of north Australia's development along multi-ethnic lines. The Sydney *Bulletin* and *Smith's Weekly* exploited the "deep unease of southern Australians"³¹ by carrying stories about the inconceivable normalcy of close social interactions between ethnicities, drawing particular attention to the 'problematic' of inter-racial sexual relations and the consequence of mixed-raced offspring. In the sensationalised reporting, the 'European' was utilised as an umbrella term to summarise those of 'white' racial background residing

29 N.N., There Are Really, in: *The Bulletin*, 25 June 1925, p. 12.

30 Bashford, 'Is White Australia Possible?' Race, Colonialism and Tropical Medicine, in: *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2 (2000), pp. 248-271, here p. 63.

31 H. Reynolds, *North of Capricorn: The Untold Story of the People of Australia's North*, Crows Nest 2005, p. 145.

at the national margins. At a public school in Darwin, as a *Bulletin* correspondent noted in dismay, the enrolments of “46 English-speaking Europeans, 17 Malay half-castes, 38 Chinese and 27 Greeks”³² illustrated the realities of racial intermingling. Interestingly, Greeks were not labelled as ‘white’.³³ The journalist further limits belonging to the category ‘European’ by command of language. Full particulars were not given for the national background of those classified as ‘English-speaking Europeans’, although it can be assumed that this group did include students of non-British European heritage. The decision to abstain from separate enumeration of individual nationalities illustrates that the main concern was to draw audiences’ attention to the pressing issue of racial mixture in public institutions and to criticise the government’s failure to intervene. The southern press readily assumed the role of a watchdog that monitored the destitute conditions under which ‘Europeans’ were perceived to live and work in the north. Journalists emphasised the economic deficiency of the region, its lack of infrastructure and industrial investment. In so doing, the press willingly exerted the nation’s obsession with ideas of racial purity. Concerns rested with indigenous Australians, Asians and other non-whites residing in the north. For the press and their targeted audience, these groups’ presence in the north posed a more immediate threat to racial homogeneity than non-British Europeans.

Ideas of racial differences between those considered ‘European’ were disregarded in the debate on the economic development of the sparsely populated tropical North, but highlighted in media discussions on preferential migrants. The distinction between Northern and Southern Europeans drawn along geographical lines, but subtextually associated with grouping along assumed racial differences, sparked increased interest in the interwar years. A lively debate over preferential arrivals evolved among policy makers, trade unions and the general public. ‘Southern Europeans’ were stigmatised as *Others*. Although their geographical and cultural affiliation as ‘Europeans’ classified them as ‘white’, their phenotypic attributes distinguished them as ‘dark’ or ‘semi-white’ (or ‘olive’). This ambiguity reflects the different parameters of Australian ‘whiteness’, and, furthermore, highlights the arbitrariness of taking political action to limit the migration of individual ethnic groups.³⁴ These physical differences were readily emphasised to set Southern Europeans racially apart from Anglo-Australians or Northern Europeans, in general, and to reason why they were less desirable immigrants. This practice of demarcation is exemplified in the coverage of *The Bulletin* and *The Australian Worker*:

The Dago may be a European, but the fact remains that we are subsidising a backward white race which is largely unassimilable to run pure Britishers out of the industry. At

32 „Wallaby“, The Last Published Report, in: *The Bulletin*, 23 June 1921, p. 28.

33 According to Martinez, Greeks endured the most prejudice from British Australians. Antagonism was sparked by the perceived ‘ambiguous position’ of Greece in the First World War. – See J. Martinez, Questioning ‘White Australia’: Unionism and ‘Coloured’ Labour, 1911–1937, in: *Labour History*, no. 76 (May 1999), p. 6.

34 C. Dewhurst, Collaborating on Whiteness: Representing Italians in Early White Australia, in: *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 32, no. 1 (2008), pp. 33–49, here p. 35.

*the present rate of going it is only a matter of time before all Australian-grown sugar will be produced by Italians.*³⁵

*Italian immigrants are a damage to our White Australia policy, because we have no guarantee whatever that they are white men, or even that they have been domiciled in Europe for any length of time.*³⁶

Despite categorising Italians as ‘Europeans’, published opinions considered such ethnicities as deviant from one’s racial norm of ‘whiteness’, describing them as biologically unfit or rejecting them for cultural differences. This ambiguous classification relegated Southern Europeans to a state of social limbo. The articles deduce that as their racial status was unclear, particular groups of migrants posed a ‘threat’ to Australia’s ideal of being a ‘white nation’. This drawing of a ‘colour line’ within Europe amplified the specificity of racial categorisation and initialised a period of defining ‘White Australia’ in more exclusive terms.

In summary, the label ‘European’ functioned as a gate-keeping mechanism in the 1920s, by which the circle of eligibility to become an Australian citizen could be expanded, to include the expatriate community in the offshore territories of Papua and New Guinea, or narrowed, to exclude ‘Southern Europeans’ as undesired immigrants. The category served as a discursive tool to carve out Australia’s identity as a ‘white’ and mature nation, riddled with anxieties about territorial vulnerability and racial purity.

The 1960s: Towards new horizons – Being Australian (and still ‘European’)

The end of the Second World War triggered transformations on an unprecedented scale, affecting both domestic matters and the nation’s relations with the wider world alike. Political, financial and economic ties with Britain remained strong, but Australia’s collaboration with the United States as principal military ally in the Pacific indicated that both countries were parting from each other’s company. Australian governments were confronted with arising Cold War rivalries, in particular in the politically unsettled Southeast Asian region. Colonial rule in Papua New Guinea was drawing to a close and Australia’s governing elite was forced to prepare the Melanesian territory for self-government. At home a large majority of post war society experienced a growing affluence but was also subject to “tensions, contradictions and inequalities”.³⁷ Aware that the nation’s economic development would require a labour force that could not be covered by the existing population, the Chifley Government launched a large-scale assisted immigration scheme drawing newcomers from Continental Europe. To mitigate citizens’ anxieties that changes in the ethnic composition of society would devalue the British Australian ideal, newcomers were forced to quickly and smoothly adopt into the Australian ‘way

35 „Cleveland”, I Am One of Those, in: The Bulletin, 3 August 1922, p. 18.

36 W., The Latest Black Threat, in: The Australian Worker, 18 March 1925, p. 5.

37 A. Haebich, Spinning the Dream. Assimilation in Australia 1950–1970, Fremantle 2008, p. 27.

of life'. On the other end of the social spectrum, political activism among indigenous Australians, who had long endured harsh discrimination, sparked with raised demands for equal citizenship rights and acknowledgement of their land title. The 1960s marked a decade in which Australians stood at the crossroads faced with the need to forge new policies and alliances, and to redefine their position and self-understanding as an independent nation and foreign actor.

The press remained one major site where the reorientation and redefinition of the national imaginary took place. It is here that the categories 'European' and 'Europe' continue to be mobilised as significant tools for identity construction and *Othering*. The 'European' emerges once more as an essential category of identification in the coverage of Australia's administrative responsibilities in PNG. Further, the label is frequently utilised in discussions over shifts in immigration policy, in detail the contentious debates about the abolishment of the *White Australia* ideal and the idea of becoming a multicultural society. Lastly, the winding down of the British Empire and Britain's decision to secure its future as part of Europe forced Australian Governments to form new political and economic partnerships in the immediate Asia-Pacific neighbourhood. The media coverage of how the Anglo-Australian relationship evolved during the 1960s occasionally made reference to the 'European' and 'Europe' as threatening *Other(s)*, that interfered with traditional Commonwealth bonds.

Industrialisation and urban development were the impetuses to construct a modern, progressive Australia in the aftermath of the Second World War. There was bipartisan consensus that the nation's future, economic prosperity as much as national security, depended on a significant increase in population. Australian policymakers were forced to locate new migrant sources at Europe's fringe areas when Winston Churchill refused to support British emigration to the same extent as before the war. Arthur Calwell, the first Australian *Minister for Immigration and Information*, initiated an extensive campaign under the slogan *Populate or perish* to increase the number of newcomers: The 1947 *Mass Migration Act* enabled thousands of Europeans from the Netherlands, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Latvia, Scandinavia and others, to settle as *New Australians*.³⁸ Soon thereafter, Italian, Greek, Yugoslavian and other Mediterranean immigrants followed as the immigration programs were extended.³⁹ Against the backdrop of mass European immigration and the gradual erosion of discriminatory legislation toward Asian migrants, the unifying ideal of 'white' Britishness lost currency. In the light of changing circumstances, anxieties about what it meant to be 'Australian' fermented among existing citizens and were articulated in the Australian press. The leftist *Nation* took a vanguard role in disseminating the change of mood in public opinion and the political course that was under way. An editorial published in July 1960 reasoned why a change of policy was vital:

38 The term was adopted in the press and even inspired further neologisms such as "European Naussies." – Cf. F. Snow, *Migrants and the Law*, in: *The Bulletin*, 30 March 1960, pp. 46-47.

39 Denoon, p. 350.

*While Australians are entitled to preserve their inherited Western culture [...], we also need Asian migrants to increase our understanding of neighbouring countries [...].*⁴⁰

Xenophobic views and attitudes that had been a fundamental component of Australian 'white' identities still prevailed. In November 1961, *The Australian Worker* argued that the policy was to be maintained as a means of preventing the danger of tensions that was thought would arise within a multi-racial society. The idea of introducing a quota for non-European arrivals was also rejected on a number of reasons, whereby one stands out:

*Those who want to allow Asians and Africans to enter Australia in limited numbers, or on the same terms as Europeans, suggest that educated or skilled persons be admitted. Such people are the very ones that Asia and Africa can least afford to lose [...] The duty of such people is to their own, and if they wish to avoid their obligations and go elsewhere they are escapists and deserters.*⁴¹

In assuming that the number of Africans and Asians who have received further education is significantly smaller compared to that of educated Europeans, the argument that those skilled people cannot be spared by their home countries is utilized to support the maintenance of immigration restrictions. Again, the label 'Europeans' holds positive connotations: 'Europeans' are preferred migrants; educated, skilled labourers with the potential to contribute to society and to adopt the 'Australian way of life'. Reading in between the lines, the article carries the tone of the civilizer who speaks in a noble manner, acting "correctly," as the immigration policy provides a means to prevent "brain drain" migration from less developed countries. This is most evident when those educated Asians and Africans who even consider leaving their home for Australia, are degraded as "escapists" and "deserters". Similarly, *The Bulletin* espoused antagonistic views towards any non-British arrivals, arguing their non-assimilability into Australian society:

*It is questionable whether the present Australian immigration policy, based on a theory that numbers are the prime factor and that any European will do, is the right one for this country. [...] It would be better to go slowly than to dilute the fibre of the British races which were hardening into a solid core of Australian nationalism before World War II.*⁴²

In the course of its radical modernisation in 1961 into a respected mainstream magazine, the *Bulletin's* new editor Donald Horne however was eager to draw attention to the cultural mentality of Australia's Asian neighbors through a series of articles titled "What Asians Think of Us."⁴³ Arguing for a more liberal approach to Asian migration, the label

40 'Colour Blindness', in: *Nation*, 2 July 1960, p. 3-4.

41 'White Australia' Policy – Echo of Pre-Federation Days. Where Labor Stands, in: *The Australian Worker*, 22 November 1961, p. 11.

42 'Untapped Immigration', in: *The Bulletin*, 3 August 1960, p. 6.

43 N. McInnes, What Asians Think of Us: To Indians: Distant, Insignificant, in: *The Bulletin*, 28 December 1960, vol. 81, no. 4220; A. Soon, What Malaysians Think of Us: Young Brother to Tuan Besar, in: *The Bulletin*, 4 January 1961, vol.

'Non-European' would gradually move closer to that of the 'European' through the ascription of a set of more favourable attributions within the media coverage.

Concurrently, the 'European' was still applied as a figuration of identity for the Australian expatriate community. The nation's unease about the direction and pace in leading Papua New Guineans to self-government, coupled with aspirations to secure its future in the Asian-Pacific region, reverberated in the versatile deployment of the category. The label 'European' offered flexibility to manage different sections of the settler community, often positively connoted as a role model and teacher for the indigene. These colonialist representations became subject to vehement criticism in the left-leaning press, which challenged out-dated understandings that still underpinned politics of exclusion, contrasting them with representations of the exploitative 'European businessman' and the arrogant 'European settler'. Coverage emphasised the injustice of the two-wage policy and the appreciation of indigenous mimicry of 'European' habits and behaviour. *Nation's* intellectual contributors, including Amirah Inglis, targeted the continued existence of discriminatory legislation and the practice of segregation, dissecting the society of PNG as one of

*two worlds: the world of white skins (expatriates; Europeans or overseas officers are some of the euphemisms used) and the world of dark-skinned (natives, indigene or local officers). For the most part the worlds are completely separate.*⁴⁴

The press tendency to deliberately choose a vocabulary of deviance and affinity that largely refrained from references to national affiliation can be argued as a means to expose the discursive reaffirmation of ideas of racial differences. 'European' was not synonymous with 'white'; however, the use of the label implied a cultural closeness among its subsumed members. The self-aggrandising narrative of the 'European' as morally superior, as much as prevailing attitudes of high-mindedness, were exposed as myth, and condemned as a means to retain control over the indigenous *Other*. The unmasking of these earlier attributions to the category 'European' in *Nation*, and, later, *The Bulletin*, were testament to changes to the prevailing social orders as PNG moved towards independence.

Representations of the 'European' and 'Europe' also featured in the press discussion on how Australia figured as a non-European, formerly British Dominion, in the light of the newly formed community of Europe and Britain's protracted bid to become a vital part of this community. The Australian political elite and general public alike saw this involvement as an affront to the validity of the nation's ties with Britain and the imperial notion of Anglo-Saxon unity. For Australians, the notion of Britishness remained central to how they thought of themselves and how they related to other parts of the world. The Macmillan Government's decision to integrate Britain into a politically united and economically exclusive Europe thus constituted, as Australian historians unanimously

82, no. 4221; C. Meeking, 'What Indonesians Think of Us: Little or Nothing', in: *The Bulletin*, 25 January 1961, vol. 82, no. 4224.

44 A. Inglis, 'Tale of Two Cities', in: *Nation*, 8 June 1968, p. 5-7.

agree, a decisive moment of reorientation, prompting a crisis of identity and search for a new one.⁴⁵ Both the labour and liberal press utilised the categories 'Europe' and 'European' as part of a larger rhetoric of anxiety that differed in its degree and intensity of concern. 'Europe' (and the 'European') could emerge to describe a political ally, an economic competitor, or a cultural entity. Conversely, the labels' attributed competing meanings, indicating an uncertainty and hesitancy on behalf of the press correspondents in articulating self-understandings that were specifically 'Australian'. This struggle over self-definition, and the distancing of oneself from the notion of being a (geographically displaced) 'British people', was a wider trend within Australian society that was slow to unfold. In October, less than a year before Britain's first attempt to join a united European community, *The Bulletin* ran the editorial "A Third Force" (1960). The article favourably commented on the economic recovery of Western Europe since the end of the Second World War, and noted its ascent as a new centre of power outside the US and the USSR:

*The most notable change in the state of world politics seems to be the shifting relationships of Western Europe and the emergence of de Gaulle as an aspiring leader of a Continental bloc [...], a Europe with a concerted trade policy, or even with a sort of federation politically, but a Europe limited to the Continent and not necessarily the United Kingdom.*⁴⁶

Distinctly aware of Britain's proximity to the European Continent, the paper nevertheless stressed Britain's traditional commitments to the Commonwealth, including Australia. In this view, widely shared within the Australian public, 'Europe' connoted a geopolitical space, that of Western Europe, an alliance of capitalist democracies who collaborated economically, with France leading the way. The conception of a continental or mainland 'Europe' was enveloped by tangible markers in the form of sea borders, which excluded the United Kingdom. The article exemplified the press' power to preserve a specific image of 'Europe' in the Australian public mind, that of 'Europe' as a distinct non-British *Other*.

The positive attitude of the Australian media towards the bonding of EEC members however was challenged in 1961 when the Macmillan Government announced its aim to join the alliance. The press indeed held contrasting views on the strategies of Australia's governing elite to cope with the arising situation, in particular concerns about the economic consequences that the nation could face as a major primary produce exporter to Britain. In a *Bulletin* article in April 1962, foreign correspondent Neil McInnes adopted a reassuring tone, informing the Australian audience that

45 J. Curran and S. Ward, *The Unknown Nation: Australia After Empire*, Melbourne 2010; D. Goldsworthy, Menzies, Macmillan and Europe, in: *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 51, no. 2 (1997).

46 'A Third Force', in: *The Bulletin*, 26 October 1960, p. 4.

*[...] Europeans are aware of their responsibilities and are ready to arrange matters so that Australia suffers no loss when Britain enters the Common Market. [...] That's why ECM officials say there is no need for Australia to appear in person to argue her case [...].*⁴⁷

McInnes' representations of the 'European' as attentive and sympathetic to Commonwealth interest, but also as not complying with the national demands of the Commonwealth states at the expense of Europe's own interests, differ from the local media coverage in *The Bulletin*. Rarely did local Australian journalists identify the people behind the political mechanisms as 'Europeans'. In general, the distancing and objective label 'Europe' was deployed instead. Furthermore, the conservative paper resorted to a more anxious tone than that of the foreign correspondent when informing its audience about Menzies' visit to London to discuss the political consequences Britain's membership might have:

*For the political consequences of Britain's entry into the ECM must be immense. When Britain enters ECM it will be accepting heavy responsibilities in Europe. [...] As an inexorable necessity, Australia must be driven into closer association with other countries, such as the United States and Japan.*⁴⁸

The left-leaning press adopted a more optimistic outlook. Reporting in *The Australian Worker* and *Nation* did not deny that Britain's repositioning would affect the Australian export market, but both magazines were receptive to new possibilities arising from Britain's move. *The Australian Worker* first diverted its readers' attention to the fact that also a major outlet for British exports Australia was in a bargaining position to "insist that equally satisfactory arrangements are made for her goods to enter British and other EEC markets".⁴⁹ The journal sharply criticised the Liberal government for not anticipating the European situation, and engaged eagerly in a discussion about the need to search for supplementary markets in Asia. As early as May 1962, *The Australian Worker* delivered a sobering summary:

*Mr. McEwen set out to teach Europe the position as he saw it but he admitted ruefully that instead Europe had taught him.*⁵⁰

The Australian Worker and *Nation* closely followed the evolution of the Anglo-Australian conflict of interests in the negotiation process. In their coverage, 'Europe' was presented as a powerful international unit of nations. Moreover, in its institutionalised form as the EEC, it presented a single economic competitor and significant trade partner, with the potential to harm Australia's exporting industry, and with whom the Australian Government therefore needed to be on good terms to ensure future benefits. This portrayal indicated respect and attention towards a serious actor in foreign politics, and generated

47 N. McInnes, 'Mr McEwen Pushes In', in: *The Bulletin*, 14 April 1962, pp. 22-23.

48 A. Reid, 'Menzies' Bundle for Britain', in: *The Bulletin*, 26 May 1962, pp. 6-7.

49 'U.K. Goes into Space', in: *The Australian Worker*, 2 August 1961, p. 1.

50 'It Costs Us 10,000 for McEwen's Somersault', in: *The Australian Worker*, 9 May 1962, p. 3.

reasonable doubts about Australia's power to influence the outcomes of the EEC membership negotiations. By the end of the decade, when the Australian press had grown weary of the issue, 'Europe' was portrayed as a closed, inwardly disintegrating community, and reservations about Britain's desire to join this alliance were expressed across the media landscape.

Conclusion

The scope, complexity and challenge of a Pacific history that simultaneously is and is not a history of a Western civilization, which extends beyond Europe but is inevitably connected to it and is indeed a history of Europeans as has been emphasized by British historian J. G. A. Pocock.⁵¹ By virtue of Australia's largely European cultural heritage since its 'white' settlement but with regard to the original owners of the land, the Indigenous peoples, and the reality of its geographical position, the question of Australia's belonging to either 'the West' or Asia is an exceptional one and is closely linked to and reflected in multiple, competing representations of the 'European' circulating within society at any given time. Serving as categories of belonging and demarcation, these representations were formed in a triangle of definition and demarcation of the Indigenous populations within, the inhabitants of the surrounding Pacific region and the Australians themselves. As the analysis has shown, constructions of the 'European' did not fit a predetermined template. The label was subject to shifts in meaning and always served situation- and context-specific needs of those who deployed it. Nevertheless, in its various deployments, the 'European' served as a rhetorical device in the larger vocabulary of Australian identity formation, forged through engagement with a moveable pool of exclusionary and inclusive attributions. In so doing, the 'European' served as a powerful tool to form self-understandings, to manage populations and to create social cohesion. Gradually over time, the 'European' emerged from a category that identified segments of the Australian population – such as in the media debates on tropical settlement – to a category that ascribed those considered outside of Australia's imagined community – as in the press correspondence on the Australian reaction to Britain's application to the EEC. Although it is possible to trace an evolution in textual constructions of the 'European' – from being constructed as part of the *Self* to being seen as an *Other* among *Others* – this did not occur in a linear way. As is evident in the debate on Australia's role in its offshore territories in the 1960s, the 'European' becomes an Other in the Australian social imaginary, without being understood this way completely.

Australia has yet to come to terms with the political and social legacies of the Empire. As suggested, the impact of European colonialism and the following emancipation process have been reflected in changing Australian media images of the European. An analysis of these representations provides a valuable contribution to historical narratives of the

51 J. G. A. Pocock, *Deconstructing Europe*, in: *History of European Ideas*, 18, no. 3 (1994), p. 331.

formation and implementation of Australian cultural identities. Although the end of the *White Australia Policy* and changes in the perceptions of Asia have led to an abandonment of a homogeneous British “White Australia,” the process of redefining itself as a multi-cultural society, future Eurasian nation and/or a nation with a modified British heritage is still in full force.⁵² Since the late 1990s, the *History Wars* have been an incessant public debate about how to write Australian history correctly. The history writing of left-orientated historians has been criticized as *black armband history*, aiming to evoke an unjustified sense of shame among the “white” Australian society. In contrast, right wing historians have argued that empirical dates have been falsified within historical publications in order to promote reconciliation and mourning. The recent formal apology by the Australian Government to the Stolen Generations might have been a defining moment in the nation’s history. However, the interpretation of the British colonization and its impact on Australia and her geographies of belonging remains an ongoing debate, in which an uncovering of the hidden and complex layers of meaning that mark the label ‘European’ proves to be a valuable path to extend our knowledge of the evolution of the Australian social imaginary.

52 N. Meaney, ‘The End of ‘White Australia’ and Australia’s Changing Perceptions of Asia, 1945–1990’, in: *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 49, no. 2 (1995), p. 188.