

Unexpected Encounters

Neglected histories behind the
Australia – Japan relationship



Edited by Michael Ackland and Pam Oliver

To Alison Tokita

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Monash Asia Institute
Clayton

Monash University Press
Monash University
Victoria 3800, Australia
www.monash.edu.au/mai

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National Library of Australia cataloguing-in-publication data:

Unexpected encounters : neglected histories behind the Australia–Japan relationship.

ISBN 9781876924508.

Bibliography

I. Australia - Relations - Japan - History. 2. Japan - Relations - Australia - History. I. Ackland, Michael, 1951–. II. Oliver, Pamela M.

327.94052

Cover design by Emma Fisher.

Printed by BPA Books, Burwood, Victoria, Australia.

contents

Preface.....	vii
About the authors.....	viii
Introduction.....	xi
1 Henry Black: consummate Meiji man	1
<i>Ian McArthur</i>	
2 Harold S Williams and his Japan	29
<i>Keiko Tamura</i>	
3 Frank A Nankivell's Japan: from means to marker.....	51
<i>Ron Stewart</i>	
4 Peter Russo and Japan: a controversial relationship.....	73
<i>Prue Torney</i>	
5 Paths of wrath and reconciliation: homophobia, Japan and the life-work of Harold Stewart.....	89
<i>Michael Ackland</i>	
6 A matter of perspective: two Australian-Japanese families' encounters with white Australia, 1888–1946.....	113
<i>Pam Oliver</i>	
7 The Hirodo story: a three generational family case study of bi-cultural living.....	135
<i>Graham Eccles</i>	
8 Ten years in a Victorian jail: the convict as the 'other'	155
<i>Hideko Nakamura</i>	
9 Theatres of discipline in the age of consensual euphoria: performing globalisation and 'empire' in recent contemporary performance in Australia and Japan.....	171
<i>Peter Eckersall</i>	
Bibliography	191

Preface

Michael Ackland and Pam Oliver

Work on this volume was begun at the instigation of Associate Professor Alison Tokita in the final year of her ten years as Director of the Japanese Studies Centre at Monash University. She oversaw its early stages and offered crucial advice on its shape and contents, while a number of the essays had their beginnings as papers given at symposiums she had organised. The volume is dedicated to her as a mark of respect for this contribution and, more importantly, in recognition of her outstanding work over many years in promoting research on the Australia–Japan relationship. Herself the author of many essays on various aspects of the relationship, she has been instrumental in highlighting key issues and profitably bringing together experts from a range of disciplines. Her enthusiasm, energy and generous sharing of her knowledge have been of untold benefit to her students and many researchers in the field.

Our work was saddened, however, by the sudden death of Dr Prue Torney just before this volume went to press. She will be missed both as a friend and colleague. We wish here to extend our sympathy to her family and her colleagues at the Department of History, University of Melbourne.

About the contributors

Dr Michael Ackland is Reader in English at Monash University and teaches English and Comparative Literature. His most recent monograph is *Henry Handel Richardson: a life* (Cambridge University Press, 2004). He is currently working on a book-length study of Christina Stead.

Graham Eccles began his writing career as a newspaper reporter in Sydney. He spent almost 30 years as a journalist with the Melbourne *Herald*, where he worked as European correspondent for the *Herald* and *Weekly Times* group and later as Chief of Staff of the *Herald*. He held several senior executive positions within the *Herald* and *Weekly Times* organisation before serving as Press Secretary to a leading federal politician and later as a public relations executive. In semi-retirement he continues to write articles for magazines and recently has completed a biography on the Hirodo family's involvement in the Australian wool trade.

Dr Peter Eckersall is Senior Lecturer in Theatre Studies at the University of Melbourne. Recent publications include *Theorising the angura space: avant-garde performance and politics in Japan 1960–2000* (Brill, 2006) and, as co-editor, *Alternatives: debating theatre culture in an age of confusion* (Peter Lang, 2004). He is co-editor of the journal *Performance Paradigm* and dramaturge for the Not Yet It's Difficult performance group.

Dr Ian McArthur teaches Japanese language and Japanese studies at the University of New South Wales. During his 14 years in Japan, he studied at Keio University and worked as an English teacher, a journalist for *Kyodo News* and a correspondent for the Melbourne-based *Herald* and *Weekly Times* group of newspapers. It was in the 1980s as the *Herald* and *Weekly Times* Tokyo correspondent that Ian first became aware of the story of Henry Black, the Adelaide-born man who worked in Japan as a *rakugoka* (oral storyteller). In 1992, while at *Kyodo News*, Ian authored a Japanese-language semi-fictionalised book about Black. He later settled in Sydney where he wrote his PhD dissertation on Black's contribution to the reform debate in Meiji-period Japan.

Dr Hideko Nakamura is a Japanese-born freelance writer and researcher. Her PhD on Japanese women in the peace movement was completed at the University of Melbourne. Her interests are Japan's responsibility for the war and issues about human rights, sexual violence against women in war

situations and the minority. She regularly writes for various periodicals of women's non-government organisations and peace organisations of Japan. In March 2005, together with her 'peace concerned' friends, she founded a group called 'Japanese for peace'. Also, she has been acting as Vice-President of Hope Connection Inc, a Melbourne-based Japanese welfare organisation, since 1996. The research on the Melbourne Case formed part of her work as an Honorary Research Associate at the Japanese Studies Centre at Monash University. She is currently a Research Assistant to Associate Professor Alison Tokita at Monash University.

Dr Pam Oliver is an Honorary Research Associate of the School of History, Monash University. She completed her PhD in History at the University of Melbourne and holds a Master of Arts in Japanese Studies from Monash University. She has written many articles and chapters on her specialty, the history of the Japanese presence in Australia, and is preparing a monograph on this subject. Her books include *Changing histories: Australia and Japan* (co-edited with Paul Jones, Monash Asia Institute, 2001), *Allies, enemies, trading partners: records on Australia and Japan* (National Archives of Australia, 2004) and *Empty north: the Japanese presence and Australian reactions* (Charles Darwin University Press, 2006).

Ron Stewart studied Japanese, printmaking and education at the University of Wollongong. Since 1995 he has spent eight and a half years studying in Japan on scholarships from the Yokoyama Foundation, Rotary International and Monbusho. Ron has studied at Sophia University, Tokyo University and Nagoya University, where he completed his Masters in 2001 on representations of nation, race and ethnicity in late-Meiji period cartoon magazines. He is currently a PhD candidate at the same university, working on a dissertation titled 'Contextualizing Nankivell'. Papers by Ron have been published in Japanese in the journals *Manga Kenkyu*, *Tagen Bunka* and *The Community*. He was also one of *Yomiuri shinbun's* 'Manga saito' columnists from April 2002 to October 2003. Ron began working as an instructor at Ritsumeikan University in April 2005.

Dr Keiko Tamura was born and raised in Osaka, Japan. She graduated in English from Kobe College and then undertook postgraduate studies in anthropology at the Australian National University, where she was awarded her PhD in 2000 on the Japanese war brides. In 2002 she was a Harold White Fellow at the National Library of Australia, where she carried out research on Westerners in Japan based on the Harold White Collection. She has held

positions at the Australian War Memorial, where she is currently a Senior Research Officer in the Australia–Japan Research Project. She is also a Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University. Her publications include *Michi's memories: a story of a Japanese war bride* (Pandanus Books, 2001).

Dr Prue Torney was a Research Fellow of the Department of History, University of Melbourne. She held a PhD from the University of Melbourne. She published articles on aspects of Australian journalism history and had a particular interest in Australia–Japan relations. She published two monographs, *Somewhere in Asia: war, journalism and Australia's neighbours, 1941–75* (University of New South Wales Press, 2000) and a biography of Peter Russo, *Behind the news* (University of Western Australia Press, 2005). Sadly, she died suddenly in May 2006

Introduction

Michael Ackland and Pam Oliver

Unlike many studies that focus on official, bilateral transactions and large-scale engagements, this volume explores the less publicised experiences of individuals and non-government groups within the Australia–Japan relationship. It represents diverse areas of involvement of men and women who moved geographically and vocationally as they pursued their special interests in the creative arts, media, business and international trade. It encompasses many aspects of personal life, such as travel, marriage, family dynamics and the experiences of children. It spans 150 years of peace, war, globalisation and terrorism, and examines how these issues have affected individuals. Rather than concentrating on the familiar chronicle dominated by military, political and trade milestones, these essays investigate how personal space and alien customs were negotiated, how foreign cultures were drawn on and selectively recast in accordance with particular needs, and how competing codes and loyalties have sometimes generated great emotional and psychological dilemmas in these little-known participants.

A similar diversity characterises the contributors to the volume, who are based in Australia and Japan. Like the individual subjects of their research, some are expatriates, others are writing from the country of their birth. They include academics and non-academic researchers from history, cultural studies, social research, journalism, English and communications, arts and media studies.

Taking the individual as our central focus raises a number of issues that are tested in successive case studies. Most obviously there is the question of the extent to which people, although shaped by their times and circumstances, can exert some influence on the course of events and the contours of their own landscapes, in ways often unremarked by conventional history. Of special interest to this inquiry are unexpected, unscripted encounters within the Australia–Japan relationship. For this reason the volume has excluded some obvious and well-known subjects who were influential politically and diplomatically. Instead it concentrates on those without power to make policy or to dictate governmental and cultural directions. Nevertheless, they made contributions that fed, in small but often significant ways, into mainstream historical and artistic developments. They also demonstrate in diverse ways how, as Cynthia Enloe argues, the international becomes the personal. The essays of the present volume strongly support her viewpoint (Mackie & Jones 2001:4).

The background context of individual encounters

The Australia–Japan relationship, on official and personal levels, affords a longstanding and diversely lit drama, stretching from before the Meiji Restoration of 1868 to the post-modern age. The historical focus has invariably fallen on landmark events that affected the lives of the individuals represented in this volume. Nevertheless, our understanding of even these key scenes and their actors is arguably often episodic and far from objective. The experiences of the Second World War, as well as wartime propaganda, indelibly marked successive generations of men and women who lived through the turmoil and uncertainty that characterised the period from the late 1930s to the mid-1950s. Issues of internment, the treatment of prisoners of war, occupation and repatriation put further strain on relations and public perceptions in both nations. More recently, however, political and trade alliances have dominated media coverage and perceptions. Increasing economic interdependence has provided an important impetus for initiatives to promote mutual understanding. The year of exchange in 2006 marks the 30th anniversary of the Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation. English is now the most widely taught foreign language in Japan, while in Australia Japanese language education thrives and supports interaction at many levels. Both Australians and Japanese are familiar with the trade, tourism, cultural and student exchange programs that have dominated the relationship since the 1950s. These developments are well represented in recent research.¹

This deeply fractured and uneven public knowledge has, not surprisingly, fostered stereotypes and produced shifting as well as selective perceptions of the respective nations. By the middle of the 20th century, the sword and cannon had eclipsed the pagoda and cherry blossom as stock associations with the exotic, once-forbidden kingdom of *Dai Nippon* in Australian minds. These leitmotifs have given way, in turn, to commercial images that have shifted as Japanese products moved up the scale of consumer recognition, from the inexpensive to the technologically sophisticated, while Australian awareness of Japan's arts has evolved from woodblocks of the floating world to *manga*, innovative theatre and the post-modern wedding of traditional and contemporary art forms, as in Yasumasa Morimura's reworking of Goya's *Caprichos*. From the Japanese perspective Australia has been successively engaged as a rural cornucopia, as a bountiful source of raw materials and, most recently, as a highly desirable tourist destination. But the record of interaction at a personal level is undeservedly far less explored and less well known. As Mackie and Jones observe, international relations between the two nations are not the exclusive realm of intergovernmental negotiations—they are also forged through individual contacts. This is further underscored by the

essays in this volume; however, first we need to sketch in crucial aspects of the macro-picture in which our subjects found themselves encountering the other (Mackie & Jones 2001: introduction).

Japan's interest in the outside world predates white settlement in Australia by many centuries. Its long engagement with China and the Asian mainland has been thoroughly documented. Less well known is the story of its contact with the West. This began, as Henry Frei, Christopher Howe and Harold Williams argue, long before the Tokugawa seclusion of 1639-1853. Williams maintains that it was Queen Elizabeth I who initially encouraged English trade with Japan in 1599. Japan also traded with Portuguese, Dutch and other European traders who visited its ports. Japan in its turn, as a successful seafaring nation, traded beyond its shores with the far-flung islands and archipelagos to its south, particularly with modern-day Indonesia, where tens of thousands of Japanese settled and established trading concerns. What these transactions, in defiance of oceans, borders, foreign tongues and baffling conventions, meant for the individuals involved in those early centuries of encounter is largely lost. None the less their impact can be surmised from later case studies, where the categories of self and other, normative and deviant, citizen and foreigner, often blur, warp or are otherwise challenged.²

At the end of the seclusion period, with the forced opening of Japan's ports and sea lanes by Commodore Perry's 'black ships' in 1853, talented, highly motivated foreigners were permitted to enter Japan, and Japanese nationals could again travel overseas. From this time onwards the historical record becomes more detailed, as disparate individuals and identifiable groups took advantage of Japan's new accessibility and its desire to acquire foreign skills. From the 1850s Australian men such as Alexander Marks and TA Tallermann travelled to Yokohama to establish trading businesses, to be followed by figures with more diverse interests, who are represented in this volume by Henry Black and Harold Williams. The foreign population of the compounds of the treaty ports swelled quickly in the 1850s and 1860s (Barr 1967; Sissons 1988), as did the number of Japanese subjects who voyaged southwards on passports from the 1860s. This wave of *minami e* (southward ho!) fever provided an opportunity for young men like Muramatsu, Nakashiba and Hirodo (represented in this volume) and thousands of others to explore the possibilities awaiting them in other countries.

The stage was set for the opening acts of the Australia--Japan relationship, which passed through discernible phases marked initially by reciprocal interest, then by growing suspicion and hostility. Japanese officials assiduously promoted overseas, fact-finding missions, as well as their nation's changing

image. Unlike their Eurocentric Australian counterparts, they made expert use of international exhibitions in Britain, Europe and the Australian colonies of Victoria and New South Wales to display the goods Japan had to offer. These displays, particularly at Australian international exhibitions, unfailingly attracted huge visitor numbers (Meaney 1999:43ff), while Australians shared Anglo-European interest in the East, as testified to by the widespread vogues of chinoiserie and 'Japonisme'. Prejudice, however, as well as language and cultural barriers, helped obscure the fact that both the Australian colonies and *Dai Nippon*, in spite of vast differences in the histories of their settlement and development, had much in common as they strove to attain the status of independent, modern nation states during the latter part of the 19th century. This shared endeavour produced shifting but parallel experiences (Meaney 1999).

Japan's rapid development generated initial strains in the fledgling relationship. For, whereas the 19th century Australian economy played the role of resource and market for the finished goods of the British mercantile system, Japan pursued an accelerated path to industrialisation and modernisation. Its highly successful acquisition of manufacturing technologies and heavy industry soon enabled local products to be substituted for imported goods. The next step was to manufacture sufficient quantities to compete in international markets and challenge the dominance of market leaders like Britain which, as Howe has documented, it did between 1899 and the 1930s (Howe 1996:part 1). The development of banking, shipping and large trading companies assisted the rise of a modern competitive nation. Additional causes of potential concern to the Anglophone world were Japan's desire for a world-class navy and overseas territory. Colonies or their equivalent, it was argued, were necessary to supply the raw materials needed for a modern industrial state. These immense changes came at a time when Australia was still a handful of colonies, economically under-developed and heavily reliant on Britain for defence.

The colonies' defence concerns escalated after the withdrawal of British troops in 1870, but not initially in response to a resurgent Japan. Thompson, investigating Australian imperial ambitions in the Pacific region, argues persuasively that the major cause of anxiety in the colonies, after 1870, was the annexation of territory by European powers, not threats from Asia: the Crimean War and French and German annexation of Pacific islands, especially those close to Australia's northern borders in New Caledonia, the New Hebrides and New Guinea, unnerved Australian colonial governments (Thompson 1980). La Nauze (1965) has underlined how the need to develop potent defence forces was a persistent theme at Federation, articulated forcefully by Alfred Deakin, first as Minister for External Affairs, then as Prime Minister. But the millennium

ushered in a new menace. Although China posed little military concern to the West, Japan did. First it achieved notable successes in the Sino–Japanese War (1894–95). Then the full extent of its advance from an essentially medieval to a modern fighting force became apparent during the Russo–Japanese War (1904–05). Japanese victories on land and sea shocked Australia, as well as the traditional great powers of Europe (La Nauze 1965:517–18; Sissons 1956).

The Australian response to Japan's defeat of Russia at the Battle of Tsushima in 1905 was immediate. Deakin, in the *Herald* (1905), argued strongly for the pressing need to establish a separate defence force and a navy. The growth of three new naval powers, the United States of America, Germany and Japan, he maintained, jeopardised Britain's mastery of the seas. From July 1905 to April 1910, Deakin lobbied for an Australian naval force. England's increasing reliance on the goodwill of Japan for the safety of British interests in Asia and the Pacific led Australia to believe that it was in a perilous position and to foresee an impending crisis. Deakin also feared possible Japanese interference in Commonwealth affairs should a substantial minority of Japanese reside in Australia. Japan, for instance, might press for modification of immigration laws. Australia also feared Japanese southward expansion into the islands to Australia's immediate north. The worse case scenario of invasion was often discussed and, after Tsushima, the intended targets of fortified batteries, which guarded Australia's main waterways, were not exclusively Caucasian. The existence of formal agreements between Britain and Japan, like the Commercial Treaty of 1894 and its successor, the Anglo–Japanese Alliance of 1902, did not remove the unease felt in Australia over Japan's growing naval and military power.

Race was destined to remain a vexatious issue between Australia and Japan. Neither had a tradition of incorporating the ethnic 'other', and both set considerable store on racial homogeneity. Also, both shared the desire to restrict the residence and involvement of the racial 'other' in their national affairs. But neither the closed kingdom of Tokugawa Japan, nor the 'quarantined colonies' of white Australia could entirely fend off officially undesirable foreigners. Creating special enclaves for *gaijin* was one way Edo attempted to control the pressure from abroad; however, the system gradually crumbled and, following the Meiji Restoration, racial intermingling became more widespread. Porous conditions existed in Australia as well. Although the six colonies, and later the Federation, publicly pursued policies aimed at deterrence, such as the Immigration Restriction Acts, governments of the day responded flexibly to individual situations and specific economic needs.

Australia's measures to establish and preserve a white British nation, though not specifically aimed at Japan, nevertheless affected its nationals

adversely. Japanese residents who arrived before 1902 were granted 'domicile', or residence, on condition that they obtained a Certificate of Domicile before leaving and re-entering Australia. This exemption provided some stability for Japanese residents. But white racist notions and discriminatory legal proceedings surrounding the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, or 'white Australia' policy, strained personal and governmental relations. In addition to official protests, the Japanese government sought practical solutions to this rhetorical and ideological impasse, as the archival record attests and Murakami and others have argued (Murakami 2001:45ff).³ The 1904 agreement with Japan permitted merchants, tourists and students to enter Australia on a passport for 12 months. Thereafter individuals could apply for a Certificate of Exemption from the Dictation Test, valid for a period of between three months and three years, with multiple three-year extensions possible for those engaged in business (Oliver 2004).

The restrictive provisions both nations placed on the racial 'other' were products of an age when theories of racial hierarchy were widely accepted. Australians viewed themselves as southern heirs to the mantle of the superior white man, destined eventually to found a local empire and, perhaps, to bear the torch of progress if ever British might was to wane. This was the traditional course of empire: a concept implicit in the writings of historians and theorists from Thucydides and Gibbon through to Spengler, and directly evoked by Australian colonial poets such as Michael Massey Robinson and William Charles Wentworth. This prospect, however, demanded the preservation of the colonies' core stock and, in the year of Federation, parliamentary debates on the Dictation Test referred to racial theorists such as Charles Pearson (Pearson 1893). Japan, on the other hand, expected respect as a nation at the pinnacle of development among Asian countries. It had long prided itself on its stable institutions and advanced civilisation. Concentrated efforts had seen it throw off the designation of barbarian, conferred on it by a haughty China, with a vigour reduplicated by its determined embrace of Western customs and technology in the Meiji period. It also learned from, and prepared to follow, the European practice of gunboat diplomacy, or foreign policy imposed through force of arms. Old dreams of a foothold in Korea were rekindled. The ebb and flow of invasion between the Asian mainland and the island kingdom would soon resume.

The literary record

The call for a white Australia and fear of invasion by a great power were strongly represented in the literature of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many of the colonial and early-Federation works were variations on a relatively

new form of fiction: the projection of future wars, whose literary prototype, entitled 'The battle of Dorking', had appeared in 1871 in *Blackwood's* magazine. This story, by Lieutenant Colonel Sir George Tomkyns Chesney, set the pattern until 1914 for most futuristic war stories, which often highlighted the effect of technological developments, such as new or improved weaponry, on warfare, and implicitly warned readers of the dangers of remaining unprepared in a belligerent, strife-torn world. European, American and Australian writers adopted the theme. Prior to Federation, when the actual sense of threat was amorphous and its source a matter for speculation, different nationalities featured as potential invaders in these vivid narratives. In *The battle of the Yarra* in 1883 it is the Russians, while in William Lane's novel, *White or yellow? A story of race-war in AD 1908*, which appeared in serial form in the *Boomerang*, the plot turns on a projected Asian aggressor.

The local social and psychological wellsprings of this literature have been thoroughly explored. Dixon (1995), for example, argues that writings about an imagined invasion of Australia reflected a mood of crisis that characterised the pre- and immediate post-Federation eras—a view confirmed by Docker (1991). Another aspect of this fear, directed towards the nation's northern borders, was the concept of the land beyond Australia as uninscribed earth, or empty 'no-man's-land', ready for the taking, and so posing a threat to the Australian colonies. The rivalry of colonial powers such as Germany, France, Britain and the United States of America for that 'no-man's-land' in the Pacific in the late 19th century was of urgent concern to Australians. If good harbours in the Pacific Ocean were established by foreign powers, Australia was at risk from naval attack. Stories of adventure in the South Seas, such as those of Marcus Clarke and Louis Becke, are often sinister and gruesome rather than idyllic. Others dealing with invasions, or the establishment of unknown colonies of 'Asiatics' deep in the unexplored regions of the north of Australia, show the nation, Dixon (1995:ch 8) contends, at its most strident and paranoid (see also Clarke 1966).

Post-Tsushima, the stock 'hordes to the north' theme of the invasion literature was supplemented by specific fears of Japanese spies and intelligence activities, particularly along the Queensland coast.⁴ Espionage became an important component of the demonising of Japan, as in the September 1908 issue of *The lone hand*. There the serialised adventure episodes of 'The big five' were followed by Walter Kirton's article 'A Jap school for spies'. This featured information about and pictures of students especially selected for covert operations. From this school in Shanghai had allegedly come the Japanese agents who had engaged in such effective work during the Russo-Japanese War. The new threat of Japanese espionage was underscored when AK Shearston

May (1911) asserted that Japanese spies from New Caledonia made periodic visits to Queensland and other states. Twelve months before, for example, so-called Japanese emissaries had visited Maitland and Newcastle in New South Wales and inquired about the extent and output of mine deposits and the price of minerals. The message of such articles was clear. Australia needed to wake from its slumber. Later that year Arnold White stressed the importance of including spying in any plan to counter a future invasion. Japan, he claimed, had a wonderful system of espionage and would know the location of mines and submarines before attempting to land: 'The secretive capacities of the Japanese [are] so highly developed that the preparation and dispatch of a raiding force of twelve thousand picked men might easily take place without any Australians or any European Power being any the wiser' (White 1911:41). The need for greater preparedness and improved intelligence was strongly urged. Espionage and invasion became paired themes in the literature of the time, as well as within defence and intelligence circles in Australia before 1914.

This evidence of paranoia and the demonisation of Asiatics must, however, be treated with circumspection. Though true for selected strands of popular literature and defence thinking, these blood-chilling scenarios were not widely accepted across the political spectrum or by society in general, as has sometimes been claimed. Examination of individual experiences and relationships between Australians and Japanese in this volume supports the need for caution, and shows that Australians were far from constituting, en masse, the xenophobic nation catered to by many 'ripping yarns' and jingoistic press releases.

A related complexity has been established in contemporaneous discourses on race and national identity. Far from there being a united chorus in favour of white supremacy, David Walker, for instance, has identified conflicting views of Australia's racial future. Some visionaries imagined the elimination of the white race from the Australian continent, others the development of a powerful nation with strong trading and cultural links with Asia. Moreover, Walker argues that almost every possibility between the two extremes of white ascendancy and eclipse was canvassed. 'Asia', in the discourse of the day, often functioned as a rhetorical device to force Australians to behave responsibly on matters of concern, such as population growth and defence. As an example, Walker (1999:6,10,102,107) cites William Lane's pillorying of the Australian male for being passionate about horseracing but indifferent to matters of defence. Similarly, the issues of the ideal constituents of the Coming Man and Coming Woman were hotly debated. On this question, too, the voice of the *Bulletin* was long held to be representative, whereas more recent feminist studies have recuperated a counter discourse, closely linked to women's concerns (for example, Grimshaw et al 1994). Moreover, in women's literature of the early

1900s the Japanese could be presented not as imminent violators of the fair sex but as well mannered and gentlemanly; hence, Rosa Praed's *Madame Izan* can portray them as potentially more desirable husbands than rough Australian males. Similarly, the grace and handsomeness of Japanese officers on visiting ships were admitted, and feelings of excitement and wonder were more likely to be stirred in the minds of young Australian women by the arrival of a Japanese training squadron than by the xenophobic sentiments and fear of miscegenation tirelessly propagated by the *Bulletin*. Some comparable evidence of Japanese attitudes to Australia is evident in two of the chapters of this volume.⁵

Interwar years

Trade, a recurrent theme of this volume, is a good barometer of the Australia–Japan relationship from the Edwardian period through to Pearl Harbour. Initially it boomed. Japanese exports to Australia increased almost tenfold from £1 million in 1913 to over £9 million by 1918, partly because of the difficulty of importing cotton piece goods from Britain under wartime conditions. Japanese purchases of wheat and metals from Australia increased fivefold during the war. But the surge in trade was strongly in Japan's favour. By the 1930s, for instance, it had made serious inroads into Britain's trade with both Australia and India, as Howe has demonstrated. Further *zaibatsu*⁶ firms established branches in Australian capital cities as the Japanese trading company network expanded. Mitsui & Co, F Kanematsu (Australia) Ltd, Mitsubishi Shoji Kaisha and Okura Trading Co supplied Australia's department stores and assisted the retail boom of the 1920s.⁷ Australia, on the other hand, was slow to make use of opportunities in Asian markets, except where individuals had longstanding company ties. Although government advisers such as HW Gepp recommended increased involvement in Asian trade, and especially better trade representation and delegations, official drives into Asia were short-lived, as Oliver and Walker have shown.

Economic issues came to a head at the Ottawa Conference in 1932. Political opposition to trade with Japan, fuelled by increasing imbalances, had been growing during the 1930s (Gepp 1932). These developments encouraged the establishment of a system of preferential tariffs among British dominions, officially to help them overcome the Great Depression. Japan felt itself unfairly targeted. None the less Sir John Latham, faced with opposition from Chambers of Commerce throughout Australia, led a goodwill mission to Japan in 1934, and Special Minister Katsuji Debuchi returned the mission with a visit in 1935. But a new low point was reached in 1936, when Australia's decision to divert trade away from Japan to Britain was answered with a Japanese decree that import licences were required for Australian wool, wheat and flour. Both

Australian and Japanese firms in Sydney worked to resolve the damaging situation, and key events from these years resonate in the life-stories discussed in chapters three, six and seven.

Apart from trade inequities, there were serious tensions between Australia and Japan. Despite the Anglo–Japanese Alliance and Japan’s assistance to the Allies during the First World War, Australian anxieties had increased with Tokyo’s strides towards parity with Europe and the United States. The Pacific nations clashed diplomatically over Japan’s support of a racial equality clause in the League of Nations charter at the Washington Conference in 1922 and again over its successful claim to former German territories in the Pacific (Jones 2001:25–48). Then came the tariff dispute that seriously impaired trade. Even after its resolution, trade levels never returned to those of the early 1930s and did not improve substantially until war broke out in 1939, when some Japanese firms gained contracts from the Australian Army (see NAA: SP1096/6). Meanwhile international hostilities were straining the bilateral relationship. The Manchurian Incident of 1931, the war with China from 1937 on and the signing of the Axis treaty in 1940 all caused official alarm in Australia. Although international condemnation and sanctions proved ineffectual as a deterrent to military campaigns on the Asian mainland, they did make Japan’s elite feel that war with the United States was inevitable. Fearing America’s wealth, resources and industrial capacity, Japanese military leaders argued that they could only be sure of winning a short conflict, and called for a surprise strike, like that which had been so successful at Tsushima. The attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941 ushered in the Pacific War. It climaxed with the dropping of an atomic bomb, code-named ‘Little Boy’, on 6 August 1945 on Hiroshima. Decades would be required for Japan to recover from the nuclear holocaust, to redress many of the stereotypes of wartime propaganda and for a young ‘school’ of Japanese artists, headed by Mirokami, to win international acclaim for works that overtly alluded to, and creatively appropriated, the ‘Little Boy’ iconography.

These difficult global experiences, however, did not entirely overshadow positive individual interaction, which provided an affirmative, unprejudiced basis for the post-war resumption of relationships. Since then, trade and commercial exchange, as well as artistic and cultural influences, have often worked to blur national boundaries in favour of global perspectives, while individuals have moved comfortably between formerly warring nation states to create new personal spaces and co-operative situations of mutual benefit to themselves and their countries of origin.

Individual encounters—race and identity

Common sense would suggest that the attractions exercised by one country on the nationals of another are likely to be almost as varied as the number of individuals involved. In reality, however, the allure of particular nations is more limited and tends to be a recurrent feature of emigrant stories. Prominent in the case of Japan has been the appeal of its aesthetic and artistic traditions. During the 19th century the vogue of chinoiserie was gradually supplanted among Western connoisseurs by an appreciation of traditional Japanese arts and handicrafts. Exquisite detailing, refined lacquer work and the accoutrements of *bushido*⁸ had attracted attention in the Australian colonies by the time of Federation (Broinowski 1996). Meanwhile Western painting, and hide-bound Western academies, were about to be revolutionised by the Japanese woodblock. It challenged the dominance of perspective and encouraged, among the transatlantic avant-garde, bold experimentation with colour and abstract patterning. In due course Australian painting was transformed by these changes, while gifted individuals, from Henry Black to Harold Stewart, immersed themselves on the spot in Japanese arts and popular culture. Each man created his own distinctive interblending of the two cultures and became, over time, an emissary either of Anglo-European enlightenment to Japan, or of Eastern spiritual lore to a benighted Western world.

For Japanese, beginning with the *minami e* (southward ho!) movement, Australia was a land of diverse opportunities. The contribution of Japanese nationals to pearling centres, cane-cutting operations and in import–export trading areas was crucial. It also encouraged an unsuspected level of intermingling between the two communities. Recently available records of Japanese trading companies, opened by the National Archives of Australia and described in its 2004 guide to records on the relationship between Australia and Japan, provide new evidence of communities in Sydney and Melbourne that rivalled those of pearling centres in size and importance.⁹ Japanese married Australian women. Children, either born in Australia, like Kenji Hirodo in chapter seven, or arriving in Australia in their early years, like Muramatsu and Nakashiba in chapter six, integrated into Australian society. Other Japanese families became part of local suburban life. Rich records now enable a detailed examination of individual encounters of Australians and Japanese in business, social and family life (*Asia Pacific Focus* 2004).

These individual encounters raise a host of questions that sit uncomfortably with pre-war notions of identity and race. Before the Second World War, racial and cultural identity were often considered to be fixed, and the biological theory of race was accepted as scientific truth. But in practice these monolithic

notions were far from unassailable, as the administration of the white Australia legislation showed. Though official policy distinguished rigidly between self and other, the difficulties of interpreting and applying it to a particular group or circumstance to decide who was 'one of us', or 'other', were recognised. Furthermore, the definition of terms and their usage did not constitute an exact science. The white/non-white binary referred principally to skin colour. However, it is evident from the following case studies that culture played a large part in defining whiteness (Oliver 2002). As chapter six demonstrates, a white person with white parents could be classed as Japanese. A Japanese could be considered British, a term customarily used to refer to white Australians whose origins lay in the British Isles, while the designation 'Australian' usually denoted a person whose cultural orientation was Australian more than anything else. Similarly, 'British subject' could refer to non-white or white citizens born in the British Empire.

In instances where Australians or Japanese lived most of their working lives in respectively Japan or Australia, often with their families, it is sometimes difficult to define precisely the space to which they belonged, or in which they predominantly forged their personal identities. Potentially, then, traditional binaries of self and other, local and foreign, white and non-white are far from absolute, their boundaries porous. Few studies, however, have addressed the question of the shifting identity of Japanese in Australia, or Australians in Japan. This permeability is repeatedly evident in the life-stories discussed in this volume. In most cases of long-term residency in an alien land, people embraced the host country in various ways; the possibility of entirely cutting themselves off from its influence was virtually impossible.

Consider, for example, the position of the Japanese residents in white Australia, who occupied an unusual space. The laws controlling entry to Australia defined Japanese identity from an official perspective. This perspective is, however, misleading, as it suggests the existence of an immutable position not subject to interpretation. A much more complex and, in some respects, unexpected picture of relations between Japanese and white Australia emerges when the stories of individual encounters are examined. As Nagata notes, we lack adequate words to describe Japanese people who live in Australia in a way that places them within a meaningful socio-cultural context. The term 'Japanese-Australian' is almost never heard in Australia. Designations used, such as 'Japanese in Australia', fail to convey the layering of culture and experience behind their identity. Chapter six of this volume expands on the useful insights provided by the exploratory work of Jones on Japanese in Western Australia, and Tamura on war brides (Jones 2002; Nagata 1999; 2001; Tamura 2003:81-2). In addition, chapter seven, on the Hirodo family,

raises questions of how to categorise families that embraced both Australia and Japan. Their lives were neither totally Australian nor totally Japanese because they could shift comfortably within the geographic and cultural space that encompassed the two nations. Their wartime encounters as residents in Japan, where some of the family were Australian-born and some held Japanese citizenship, raise further dilemmas concerning identity.

Post-modern theories have heightened awareness of identity as multivalent, fractured and self-dramatising—insights supported by the individual stories dealt with in this volume. Identities, according to Hall, are constituted from within representations. They involve a certain suturing together of perceptions. At issue are how we are represented and the ways in which that bears on how we represent ourselves. Hall's notion of suturing or articulation, moreover, leaves the self with a very fragile identity and a consequent risk of dissolution, reflected diversely in Henry Black's attempted suicide, Harold Stewart's rigidly compartmentalised existence or the shifting confessional stances of Japanese prisoners in Australian jails. Alternatively Powell calls for a reconfiguring of identity that acknowledges a multiplicity of cultural influences and the 'lived perplexity' of peoples' lives. The notion of hybridity captures aspects of this condition. So does the metaphor of border crossings, which acknowledges both boundary limitations, or 'originary characteristics', and psychological as well as geographical and intellectual mobility. The relevance of these conceptions is repeatedly underscored by our specific case studies, as is the need to move beyond notions of identity as biologically or racially given to embrace such issues of background, class, nurture and trans-nationality (Hall & du Gay 1996:91–2; Powell 1999; Malik 1996:2–7).

In addition, each of our subjects has been called on to stage his or her existence before a critical, alien audience. While this is, of course, a condition of individuality, as Stephen Greenblatt has eloquently argued (see in particular Greenblatt 1980), it is so to a heightened extent in this bilateral relationship. For here distinctive racial characteristics mark the Japanese in Australia, and Australians in Japan, as always and irremediable 'other'. He or she is perpetually on stage and constantly subject to critical scrutiny. There is little chance to blend in indistinguishably with the local crowd, to assume local colour. And this is often a key feature of the lives investigated here where, for example, some tried to embrace it to their advantage, while others cocooned themselves in private or separate worlds. The last essay of the volume encompasses the issues involved in individual participation in a group context and closes the theatrical trajectory begun with Henry Black's career as a performer. Through its analysis of two case studies, it examines how contemporary theatre deals with topical issues, from global terror to human

displacement. In addition, it is concerned with matters close to Black's heart, for example, how theatre may renew itself as it responds to and, in some cases, resists global forces. In addition, it investigates how such forces intersect with resurgent nationalism, which excludes the outside, the 'other', a point also explored in other chapters.

What lies ahead for the bilateral relationship is unclear, though some of the effects of living in an era marked as much by terrorism as by globalisation and post-modern conceptions are shown here. Recently, emphasis on the strategic and economic imperative for the Australia–Japan relationship has weakened. But there has been little perceptible lessening in personal contacts. Instead, within the broad framework of political, diplomatic, cultural, trade and military co-operation, the real strength of the relationship can be seen in the burgeoning informal exchanges between individuals, far surpassing in volume anything in the pre-Hiroshima era. Presumably, these and future encounters will continue to throw doubt on the concept of a static and unitary identity, and reconfirm the role played by personal movement within the Australia–Japan relationship as a crucial catalyst in reshaping, and often in crystallising, individual identity and careers.

Finally, these life studies have not been selected to illustrate a theoretical position, or to serve a polemical end. Essentially they are acts of recuperation, which afford insights into neglected existences, incidents and exchanges, and more generally throw light on the role of individuals in the complex web of relationships that have long linked Australia and Japan. They add detail and colour to the broad, and often crude, brushstrokes of historical narratives; they are, to borrow Ezra Pound's evocative description of striking faces materialising from the hurly-burly of the Paris Metro, 'petals on the wet, black bough' of history. Personal interaction between cultures and countries cannot be prescribed, or trammelled up in a single, resonant phrase. It varies according to the circumstances of the day, the needs of individuals and the nature of the contact. As these essays show, defining and negotiating personal space along the many continuums of the Australia–Japan relationship was a task undertaken in as many different ways as there were individuals engaged in it, with the global and international ultimately promoting particular, often challenging and highly personal, experiences then perhaps as much as they do today.

Notes

- 1 Some notable examples include Rix (1998) and Meaney (1976; 1996; 1999). The introduction to Meaney (1999) provides the general background not specifically noted here.
- 2 For Williams, see chapter two of this volume. See also Frei (1984; 1991); Howe (1996); Saxonhouse (1974); Wray (1984).
- 3 For an overview of Japanese immigration to Australia and legal provisions, see the introduction to Oliver (2004).
- 4 For an understanding of the relationship between the literature and suspected Japanese spying in Australia, see Oliver (2003b).
- 5 See *The new idea* for 1903–11, where Japan and Japanese cultural mores are featured in almost every issue.
- 6 The term *zaibatsu* refers to large, family-owned companies established after 1868 in Japan that had diverse trading arms in areas of endeavour such as shipping, mining, banking, commodity trading and importing and exporting particularly in primary areas such as silk, cotton, rayon and wool in return for manufactured goods.
- 7 References pertaining to the interwar years include Murphy (1980); Nish (1982); Sissons (1976); Tsokhas (1989; 1994); Howe (1996:228–9).
- 8 The term *bushido* refers to Japanese samurai or warrior culture.
- 9 These are found in NAA: SP11/4, Japanese A–Z; NAA: MT33/1, WOS; NAA: B13/0, WOS. See also work by Sissons (1977; 1979a; 1979b).