

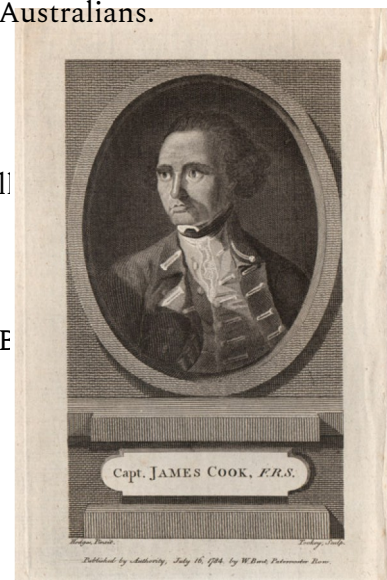
This report is the outcome of a 2019 Miegunyah Student Project Award, and is the result of independent research undertaken by the student.

I acknowledge that this essay was written on stolen land, the land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, and that sovereignty has never been ceded. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and I'd also like to extend that respect to any First Nations readers.

I will also give notice that this essay covers sensitive histories of colonial violence, discrimination and incarceration, so if this content is not suitable for you at this time, I completely understand.

Colonial Australia was founded on the criminological, which is well documented through artworks in the Miegunyah Collection. This summary touches on the areas of Captain Cook, his imperialism and how representations of him in art reflect this, and how the cultural impact of bushrangers is enduring and complex, especially considering the history of Aboriginal Australians.

James Tookey's engraving of Captain Cook (1784, right), based on a painting by the appointed Pacific expedition artist William Hodges, now resides in the Miegunyah Collection. It provides an opportunity to analyse how such detailed, classicised depictions of Cook glorify his status as the public figurehead of British imperialism. Cook first landed in Australia in 1770, the Fleet of convicts from Britain arrived in 1788, and this portrait was engraved in 1784, meaning it would have been created around the height of Cook's fame. This image was etched specifically for publication by bookmakers W. Bent, to increase awareness of Cook's position in British society. Russell and Mab Grimwade shared this interest in early colonial history, and had the means to become avid collectors of Captain Cook imagery and objects. They imported Cook's cottage from Yorkshire to Melbourne, brick by brick, as a gift for Melbourne people to do this. This portrait of Cook is the main image of an article referring to the annual anti-colonial vandalism of Cook's cottage, a policeman was quoted as saying, 'Coming so close to Australia Day... it's quite



in postcolonial society: certain acts committed by certain people are labelled as 'disturbing' and criminal, such as graffiti promoting decolonisation, whereas acts such as the violent genocide initiated by Cook's voyage, committed by his countrymen with colonial, class or financial power, are not. They, conversely, are celebrated culturally.

Cook perceived the land as not belonging to anybody, 'terra nullius', and this mindset enabled him and his crew to treat Indigenous people as objects of conquest rather than as members of an ancient, highly complex culture with spirit and personhood. Once details from Cook's 1770 voyage deemed the Eastern coast most suitable for settlement, the criminal justice system in Britain determined who would be shipped out to establish the new colony. Essentially, convicts were defined as such, then their unwilling labour of up to 14 unpaid hours of work per day established imperialism. This essentially conceives Australia as a prison, and the violence that ensued between classes and races positions unregulated criminal violence as the defining, founding tenet of modern Australian society. The valorised image of Cook, which is embodied in James Tookey's representation, conceals a history which, through a contemporary postcolonial lens is criminological, but through the lens of the current criminal justice system which continues the mass incarceration and subjugation of Indigenous people especially, actually upholds colonial values exactly as it is designed to.



Another criminological aspect of Australian history that somewhat stems from Cook's imperialist ventures is the existence of Bushrangers. 'Bushranger' is the name given to a convict who escaped and lived in the bush to avoid the authorities, committing

armed robberies among other crimes to make a living. Some, such as Ned Kelly, became cultural heroes of Australian nationalism due to the perceived bravery and roughness of their desperado lifestyles that defied the police state's wishes for them, but were also among the most controversial characters due to their ruthless criminal status. William Strutt's painting 'Bushrangers' (above) is representative of these ambivalent cultural attitudes. It depicts a robbery taking place on St Kilda Road, and the range of emotions that each of the victims and

bushrangers are feeling as a result. Each character is uniquely expressive. From the left, the bushrangers exclaim at the loot they've extracted from the party of people, compositionally and metaphorically separated by the rest of the figures by two adjacent guns and the body of a dead man lying in the background. The landscape is sparse and arid, the sun beats down harshly on the scene, and most of the victims look tired above all. It appears dusty, as the figures receding into the distance are blurred with a brown haze that doubles as a device to bring the focus back to the central characters. Slightly beyond this, there is a slice of blue ocean in the distance, a promise of relief which is just out of reach. The one common thread between these characters is that they represent colonial lifestyles and values directly transplanted from England, which is at odds with the bushranger lifestyle, although it is important to note that white bushrangers defected from this societal ideal more voluntarily than Indigenous Australians, who, although sometimes allied, did not necessarily have the same choice. From the time of the penal colonies, crime is inherent to the glorification of the White Australian identity.

There is a collection of photographs from the Miegunyah collection, taken by J.W Lindt, which essentially spell the end of the bushranging era: the capture of the Kelly Gang. These photographs are some of the oldest in Australia, and illustrate how important this event was culturally. One, referred to as '*Group of troopers and black trackers engaged in the capture of the Kelly Gang*' (right),



represents the complex relationship Aboriginal trackers had with colonial forces hunting down bushrangers. Every relationship would have been different, and many involuntary, as trackers were simultaneously praised for the knowledge of country whilst often being subject to ill-treatment. It is difficult to attest to the degrees of free will, pressure to assimilate, and active desire to find and kill the bushrangers involved in the group depicted, but it invites a necessary discussion about how Aboriginal people were involved in many colonial and anti-colonial aspects of criminology.

To bring everything together, the concept of Australia is founded on crime and criminology, whether or not it be classed as such by the colonial justice system, and so a criminological reading of the art history that illustrates the development of the culture is essential, if we are to

truly understand the lasting effects of colonisation. Analysing art of Australia subjects by the British, and by white Australians, inherently has this criminological context due to the ways in which the land has been used to facilitate its production. The complexity and ambivalence of Australian attitudes towards Captain Cook and Bushrangers is evidenced by these artworks from the Miegunyah collection, and these tensions endure prominently in many contemporary postcolonial artworks created here.