

Four Degrees of Separation: Conway, the Clarks and Canberra

David Headon

In October 1883, American Unitarian minister and controversial ‘freethinker’, Moncure Conway, delivered four public lectures in Hobart. He had been invited by Andrew Inglis Clark who, as Conway would recall in his fascinating travel memoir, written late in life, ‘told me of a small club of liberal thinkers who met together to read liberal works and discuss important subjects’.¹

Conway’s understanding of the small Australian island colony had been shaped and, as he wrote, ‘darkened’ at a distance by his reading of Marcus Clarke’s classic Australian novel, *For the Term of His Natural Life*, published less than a decade before, in 1874. Conway remarked on the book’s ‘tragical power’, an impression dramatically reinforced by an apparition of a ‘gloomy forest’ that he experienced at night, mid-ocean, on the ship voyage from Melbourne to Launceston. However, many years later, reminiscing about his southern sojourn in the memoir, *My Pilgrimage to the Wise Men of the East* (1906), he noted that ‘All gruesome imagination about Tasmania vanished when I found myself in the delightful home circle at Rosebank, residence of the Clarks at Hobart’.² Conway delighted in the serious discussions that took place in the Clark study, discussions, he remembered fondly, on ‘high themes’.³

Moncure Conway’s visit to Tasmania had a profound impact on both men, the 51-year-old, London-dwelling, rebellious Virginian and the 35-year-old Tasmanian. It would alter the course of their lives.

Two weeks after Conway’s departure from Hobart back to the Australian mainland, Andrew’s wife Grace gave birth to the couple’s fourth child, a boy. They named him Conway Inglis Clark. An architect in later life, Con Clark would play an unobtrusive yet distinctive role in Canberra’s grand foundation narrative—the result, at least in part, of his father’s political and cultural affinities and preoccupations, and the three and a half years that Con spent in the north-east of the United States, from May 1905 to December 1908.

Conway Clark was working in New York in 1907 when, on 14 November, his much-loved and admired father died suddenly in his home, the elegant ‘Rosebank’, apparently of a ruptured blood vessel in the heart. He was 59. The very next day, on 15 November, in far-off Paris, Moncure Conway died peacefully in his apartment, aged 75. While this symbolic connection is not quite the equal of the extraordinary 4th of July, 1826, Independence Day 1826, that witnessed the deaths of esteemed American Revolutionary fathers, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, there is nonetheless a neat accord in the historic link in death between the American Conway and the Australian Clark. As with Jefferson and Adams, from their first meeting they too would maintain an active correspondence for the rest of their lives, a correspondence based on mutual affection, as well as common interests, attitudes, reading, and a like-minded philosophical and spiritual stance.

1 Moncure Daniel Conway, *My Pilgrimage to the Wise Men of the East*, Archibald Constable & Co., London, 1906, p. 80.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 80–1.

3 Moncure Conway to Andrew Inglis Clark, 28 May 1884, A.I. Clark papers, University of Tasmania Library—Special and Rare Materials Collection, C4/C28–36 (hereafter referenced as Clark papers). Chapters IV and V of *My Pilgrimage to the Wise Men of the East* (pp. 70–103) detailing the months in Australia, provide some engaging reading. Conway is a keen observer. His comments on the Melbourne Cup, more than a decade before Mark Twain’s famous remarks about the same race, deserve their own place in Australian sport literature (see pp. 74–5 of this volume).



Photograph of Andrew Inglis Clark's home, 'Rosebank', Battery Point, Hobart. Image courtesy of the University of Tasmania Special and Rare Collections, <http://eprints.utas.edu.au/11793>

Through an assessment of selected aspects of the lives and careers of Andrew Inglis Clark and Moncure Conway, and using as a sounding board those American writers and thinkers that they most admired (such as Tom Paine, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman), this paper will reveal some surprising ties that bind them. Conway Clark and Canberra enter the frame briefly, at the end. My discussion will concentrate on two compelling individuals, and the cluster of radical ideas that shaped them, passed with enthusiasm in correspondence between them, and contributed to the articulation of a new democratic nation in the south.



In his seminal essay, 'The Future of the Australian Commonwealth: A Province or a Nation?', written in late 1902 or early 1903, Andrew Inglis Clark quotes with approval Professor J.A. Woodburn's *Causes of the American Revolution*, and that writer's acknowledgement of how ridiculous it would be to account for the American Revolution merely as the result of the 'imposition of a tax'. 'Rather', as Woodburn suggests, and Clark obviously endorses, 'the great movements of history have been the result of moral and spiritual forces which, gathering for centuries, have needed only favourable circumstances for the manifestation of their power'.⁴ We better understand the dimensions of Clark's imposing legal and constitutional career if we consider some of those 'moral and spiritual forces' that he absorbed. To do this, we must start early.

Clark was born in Hobart on 24 February 1848, the exact day of the proclamation of the Second French Republic. Perhaps this was an omen. His parents were warm and loving, Andrew's younger brother Carrell, or 'Tiff', remarking in his unpublished 'Personal Memoir' that it was a 'sacred treasure' to have known them.⁵ Clark's father, Alex, and his mother, Ann, were Baptists—she devout, he not so much. Clark's two sisters and five brothers were subject to a clearly articulated social code that insisted on no smoking, drinking, gambling or dancing. The Hobart Baptist Church's doctrinal machinations

4 Andrew Inglis Clark, 'The future of the Australian Commonwealth: a province or a nation?', in Marcus Haward and James Warden (eds), *An Australian Democrat: The Life, Work and Consequences of Andrew Inglis Clark*, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 1995, pp. 213–14.

5 See Alex C. McLaren, *Practical Visionaries—Three Generations of the Inglis Clark Family in Tasmania and Beyond*, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, Hobart, 2004, p. 162.

in Clark's youth, on the other hand, were quite the opposite. Biblical interpretation, the rituals of the communion, were bitterly contested.⁶ After a literal full immersion baptism in his early 20s, Clark soon after rejected Baptist strictures, not just withdrawing his participation but actually moving in a meeting that his parish be dissolved (which, for a short time, it was).

We know that from an early age Clark had an admiration for the United States. During his middle teens, as the American Civil War raged, he became a staunch supporter of the Union, expressed primarily as a rejection of what he would always refer to as the 'hideous' institution of slavery.⁷ Clark's career path in his father's successful engineering firm appeared assured when, in the late 1860s, and barely in his twenties, he became a qualified engineer and the firm's business manager.

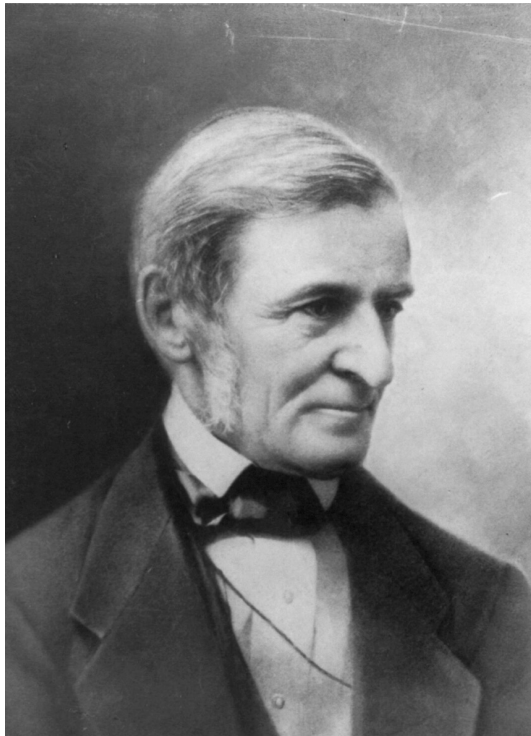
This apparently settled, predictable world changed irrevocably in the decade of the 1870s, and the young Clark was himself the main catalyst. In 1872, a milestone year, he evidently went on strike, defying the family's chosen vocational path and becoming articled to R.P. Adams, the colony's long-serving Solicitor-General. He was called to the Bar in 1877. By mid-decade, Clark had embraced Unitarianism. He began writing poems, and became increasingly radical in his politics as he gathered about him an exuberant group of like-minded mates. One of them, A.J. Taylor, would later become the Librarian of the Tasmanian Public Library. Taylor's eloquent obituary upon Clark's death in 1907 provides us with genuine insight into the engaging personality of his close friend. He brings Clark to life:

Intense to a degree, and enthused with a divine unrest, that soon made him a leading spirit in all movements having for their object the uplifting of humanity ... The convictions that governed him then governed him up to the time of his death; and at no period of his life could it be said that he proved false to the principles that he professed, or betrayed the trust reposed in him. Generous by nature ... he was a passionate advocate for the true democracy which means the affording of equal opportunity to all men ...⁸

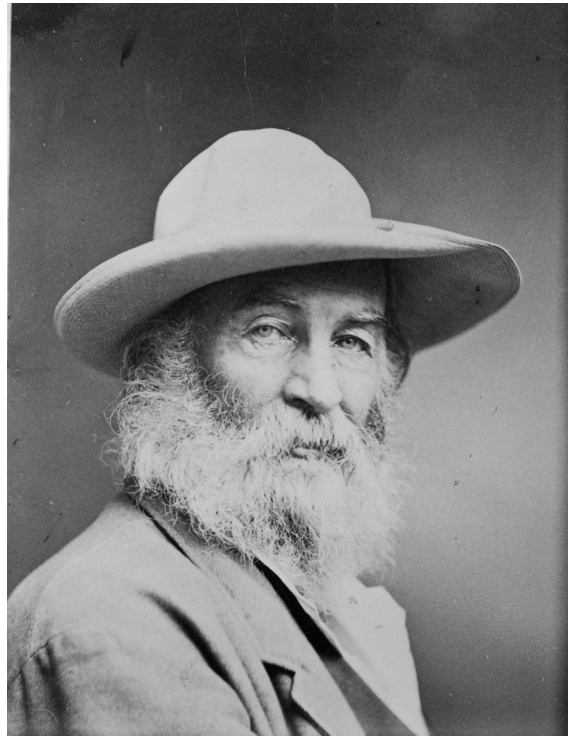
Clark's commitment to this 'true democracy' had, by 1878, become so combative (under the influence of American political theory), and public, that the *Mercury* newspaper censured him for 'holding such very extreme ultra-republican, if not revolutionary, ideas'.⁹ He properly belonged, the paper sneered, 'in a band of Communists'. While such claims were nothing but a nineteenth-century version of routine News Ltd pejoratives, Clark's speeches, toasts and debates, at sometimes rowdy venues such as the Macquarie Debating Club, the American Club and, in particular, the Minerva Club, along with his growing list of publications, are instructive markers of a rapidly maturing intellect. A sharp, enquiring, independent intellect. Richard Ely's creative phrase, his 'disputatious dynamism', fits nicely.¹⁰ Clark's mates dubbed him 'the Padre'.¹¹

The list of contents of the twelve issues of the short-lived periodical, *Quadrilateral*, edited by Clark through the calendar year, 1874, adds some depth to this portrait of the artist (and thinker) as a young lawyer. The title page declared the journal's thematic directions: 'Moral, Social, Scientific and Artistic'. This is a fair summary of intent, for the journal included articles on the French Republic, John Stuart Mill and the Australian poets, Adam Lindsay Gordon and Henry Kendall; two pieces, in 1874 note, on 'Our Australian Constitution'; and, in keeping with the era, especially in the United States, no less than five articles on phrenology and two on spiritualism.

6 See Alex C. McLaren, 'Andrew Inglis Clark's family and Scottish background', in Haward and Warden, op. cit., p. 1.
7 See Frank Neasey, 'Andrew Inglis Clark and Australian federation', *Papers on Parliament*, no. 13, November 1991, pp. 83–4.
8 A.J. Taylor, 'Andrew Inglis Clark (1848–1907), an Australian Jefferson', in McLaren, *Practical Visionaries*, op. cit., p. 96.
9 *The Mercury* (Hobart), 15 July 1878, p. 2; John M. Williams, "'With eyes open": Andrew Inglis Clark and our republican tradition', *Federal Law Review*, vol. 23, 1995, p. 155.
10 Richard Ely, 'The tyranny and amenity of distance: the religious liberalism of Andrew Inglis Clark', in Haward and Warden, op. cit., p. 102.
11 Quoted in Ely, op. cit., p. 106.



Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1803–1882, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003670025/>



Walt Whitman, 1819–1892, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/00649765/>

Of significance for this paper are two articles on America's most important nineteenth-century writers, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman. Clark may have written both. Regardless, the sentiments expressed under his editorial imprimatur add substance to a bold statement in the journal's second issue (that we know he definitely did write) when he referred to 'a universal Church of conscience and Commonwealth of Righteousness'.¹² The two Americans are essentially proposed as exemplars of this new order.

One of the articles, 'The Teaching of Emerson', praises the Transcendentalist author for his strong egalitarian instincts, his mysticism embracing the religions and philosophies of both West and East, and, above all, his determination to resist any hint of pedagogy in his writings in favour of stimulating, provoking and inspiring his readers. For Emerson, the purpose of books was not just to inform but, rather, to 'lead [a person] to think ...'¹³

This last phrase is *Quadrilateral's*. The long piece on Whitman, with its assertion of the American poet's claims to greatness and written in response to the publication of the uncompromising 'Democratic Vistas' essay of 1870 and the 1872 iteration of *Leaves of Grass*, deserves its own literary recognition as one of the earliest and most searching Whitman analyses to appear in Australia to that point. The 'good gray poet' is lauded as a 'true artist, prophet, teacher ... revealer', a 'Genius, Poet'—and notably, a writer with special relevance to Australia:

[Whitman's] utterances [are] more capable than those of any European teacher of guiding the Australias to that moral unity which alone can afford a basis for that nationality, which, through whatever difficulties and windings, they must one day arrive at, or decay.¹⁴

12 Andrew Inglis Clark, 'Prelude', *The Quadrilateral—Moral, Social, Scientific and Artistic*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1874, p. 2.

13 'The Teaching of Emerson', *Quadrilateral*, vol. 1, no. 11–12, 1874, p. 255 (page incorrectly numbered—it should be p. 245).

14 'Walt Whitman', *Quadrilateral*, vol. 1, no. 7, pp. 163–4.

The cluster of lengthy excerpts in the *Quadrilateral* article, drawn from some of Whitman's finest Civil War *Drum Taps* poems, are astutely chosen by someone comfortable discussing Whitman's work—his subjects, poetic innovations, politics and provocative moral and spiritual stance. This was Whitman for an antipodean audience, and in 1874. Surprisingly early.

The 1870s decade shaped the young Andrew Inglis Clark and, it would appear, a number of those close to him. Clark's 'boys', as they would be called, responded to his 'ideals and aspirations', as Alfred Taylor remembered, and his firm principles. In his 1876 toast to the Declaration of Independence, at the American Club, Clark foreshadowed an enlightened future where the life principles he had forged would be:

... permanently applicable to the politics of the world & the practical application of them in the creation & modification of the institutions which constitute the organs of our social life to be the only safeguard against political retrogression.¹⁵

Shift now to 1883, a second eventful year in Clark's life, when he learned from his mainland friends that two Melbourne Unitarians, influential banker and lay preacher, Henry Gyles Turner, and his associate, Robert J. Jeffray, had invited a celebrated American Unitarian minister, Moncure Daniel Conway, to deliver a series of lectures in their city. Conway tells us in his 1906 memoir that the invitation came about because both Turner and Jeffray had made occasional visits to his London church, South Place Chapel, the famed home of 'freethinkers' in Finsbury, London.¹⁶ But what were the American's credentials? His attraction for an Australian audience?

Where do you start?

The career of Moncure Conway, son of Virginian slave-holding Methodists, is straight out of *Ripley's Believe It Or Not*. As Paul Collins puts it in his terrific yarn, *The Trouble with Tom—The Strange Afterlife and Times of Thomas Paine* (2005), Conway was 'a veritable Forrest Gump of the Victorian world'.¹⁷ Author of over seventy publications, Conway provided the best summary of his Gump-like life in the 'Dedication and Preface' to his two-volume, *Autobiography—Memories and Experiences*, written late in life, about the time of Australian federation:

The eventualities of life brought me into close connection with some large movements of my time, and also with incidents little noticed when they occurred, which time has proved of more far-reaching effect ... I have been brought into personal relations with leading minds and characters which already are becoming quasi-classic figures ... [already] invest[ing] themselves with mythology ...

In my ministry of half a century I have placed myself, or been placed, on record in advocacy of contrarious beliefs and ideas. A pilgrimage from proslavery to antislavery enthusiasm, from Methodism to Freethought, implies a career of contradictions.¹⁸

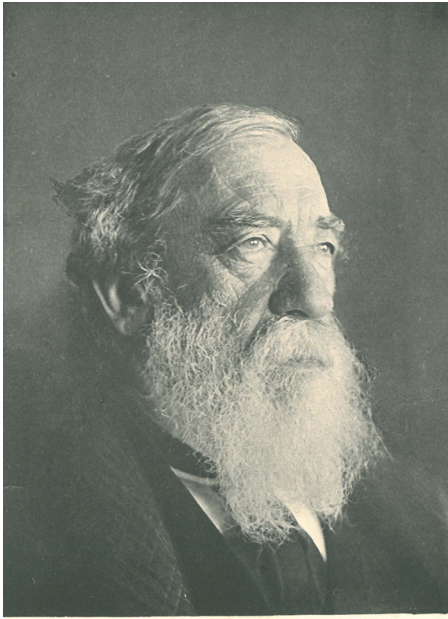
It was this extraordinary life pilgrimage, his internationally publicised 'contrarious' advocacy of the liberating qualities of 'freethought', that surely appealed to his Australian sponsors in Melbourne, and to Andrew Inglis Clark.

15 See McLaren, *Practical Visionaries*, op. cit., p. 103.

16 See Conway, *My Pilgrimage*, op. cit., p. 8.

17 Paul Collins, *The Trouble With Tom—The Strange Afterlife and Times of Thomas Paine*, Bloomsbury, London, 2005, p. 260.

18 Moncure Daniel Conway, 'Dedication and Preface', *Autobiography—Memories and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway*, vol. 1, Houghton, Mifflin and Company (The Riverside Press, Cambridge), Boston and New York, 1904, p. vi.



Moncure D. Conway

Moncure Daniel Conway, 1832–1907

Moncure Conway was a promoter's dream. This was the man who, a Methodist circuit rider in Pennsylvania, stumbled upon a community of Elias Hicksite Quakers, was overwhelmed by their spirit and harmony, and changed his denominational affiliation and, in turn, his life course, almost immediately. This was the rabid slavery-defender who, after reading Emerson's essays, struck up a lifelong friendship with the Concord divine, travelled to Boston to undertake a Doctor of Divinity degree at Harvard, became a Unitarian minister and outspoken abolitionist, and in the process befriended virtually every significant writer of what F.O. Matthiessen labelled the 'American Renaissance'—among them, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, the Alcotts, George Ripley, Ellery Channing and Theodore Parker. Conway met and befriended Walt Whitman in New York, before the poet met Emerson. He was the go-between. Later, he looked after the publication rights, in England, of Whitman, Emerson and his close friend in later years, Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain); he championed Margaret Fuller, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Louisa May Alcott; he lobbied Abraham Lincoln about the detail of the Emancipation Proclamation; he went to London in 1863 to raise funds for the Union cause, and stayed on, in the first instance for 21 years as the minister for the South Place

Chapel, reputedly 'the oldest and largest association of free and independent thinkers in the world'¹⁹; and he produced fine biographies of George Washington, Emerson, Thomas Carlyle and Giuseppe Mazzini. Each of these works was widely acclaimed during his lifetime, though none could rival the international impact of his 1894 two-volume biography of Thomas Paine—the American Revolutionary writer who President Theodore Roosevelt dismissed as a 'filthy little atheist'. As Australian scholar John Keane, in his majestic 1995 biography of Paine puts it: Conway's study today is 'the standard ... still considered by every authority of Paine [to be] the key reference'.²⁰

In 1883, 'Marvellous Melbourne', Sydney and Hobart played host to a bona fide celebrity. The spare details of Conway's Australian stay are these: he was in the country for two and a half months, delivering at least thirteen lectures in Melbourne, four in Hobart, and an unknown but large number in Sydney. His Melbourne and Hobart series were advertised as Conway's 'Lectures for the Times', to be delivered by the 'finest intellect in the southern hemisphere', on marketable subjects such as 'Mother Earth', 'Woman and Evolution', 'Development and Arrest in Religion', 'The Pre Darwinite and Post Darwinite World', 'Emerson', 'Shakespeare', 'America' and, a very popular one wherever he delivered it, 'Demonology and Devil Lore'.²¹

With the benefit of hindsight, we know that when he embarked on his epic 1883–84 journey, Conway's religious, cultural and social attitudes and beliefs were undergoing change, his secular stance hardening, his interest in the world's non-Christian religions growing.²² In his memoir he states that, in Australia, 'Some handling of religious themes was expected of me, but my opening lecture (on Darwin) must

19 'Mr Moncure Conway', *Launceston Examiner*, 20 October 1883, p. 3.

20 See John Keane, *Tom Paine—A Political Life*, Bloomsbury, London, 1995, p. 393.

21 See, for example, 'Mr Moncure Conway', *Launceston Examiner*, 20 October 1883, p. 3; Editorial, *The Mercury* (Hobart), 12 November 1883, p. 2; Letter to the Editor, 'Mr Moncure Conway', *The Mercury* (Hobart), 17 November 1883, p. 2.

22 See Conway, *Autobiography*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 416.

have revealed to the keen-eared sectarians heresies of which I was not yet conscious'.²³ In the lecture to which he refers, he did put his argument bluntly: '[After Darwin] Not only could not man any more look upon the world with the same eyes as before, but the new Genesis called Evolution was necessarily followed by a new Exodus from the land of intellectual bondage'. Here, the conscious allusion is to his mentor Emerson's famous opening to the culture-redefining 'Nature' essay (1836), where he states that: 'The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe'.²⁴

On his Australian trip, Conway acted on this momentous invocation with audacity. In an article on Queen Victoria, intentionally placed in the Sydney *Evening News* to coincide with his first visit to that city, he critiqued the dowager Queen, warts and all. The English people remained fiercely loyal to the Crown, Conway wrote, but as for Victoria Regina, 'a Queen less loved, or even cared for, never reigned in England'.²⁵ And more: 'She is variously objected to as morose, morbid, stingy, grasping, ugly, sullen, ill-humoured, and torpid, if not stupid'. Australian audiences had a taste of what was to come.

In Tasmania, in front of attentive Hobart crowds, including Clark and his 'boys', Conway's heresies directed at prevailing community mores multiplied: churches, he observed in lecture one, were 'propagating superstition'²⁶; in the anti-war second lecture, 'Woman and Evolution', with informed reference to Brahmin, Babylonian, Iranian and Rabbinical creation myths, he declared that while Evolution was 'giving women more courage, more strength, more self-respect', female equality would only be inevitable if a '“reign of peace” could be appointed'; his message for Australian orthodox Christians in lecture three was, as he described it with Tom Paine-like trenchancy, 'At the very moment this dogma of the Trinity was formed, the humanity of Christ was doomed'²⁷; and in the final talk on 'The Martyrdom of Thought', he 'argued at length against the creed of Christianity', spoke of the 'death' of God, and concluded with a few pithy sentences drawn from a key source, Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*.²⁸

Such incendiary remarks did not go unchallenged. There was a conservative backlash, the *Launceston Examiner* maintaining that 'Moncure Conway proved a frost in Tasmania', but if that was so, the fire certainly burned bright within the cosy Rosebank circle of friends. One observation by Conway in his final Hobart lecture may well have been directed at his set of new companions when he stated that 'the real martyrdom of thought [occurred when] young men of promise were brow-beaten into mean conformity with Conservative codes when their brilliant talents should be bestowed to freeing their fellow men'.²⁹ This was surely Conway's antipodean call to arms.

Did this challenge provide new inspiration for Andrew Inglis Clark's evolving, ostensibly secular views? We don't know for sure. What we do know is that he and Conway established a friendship during the short visit that endured. In a letter from Conway to Clark written in Sydney shortly after his Hobart visit, the American was already ending his communication with love to 'Mrs Clark ... [and] the children',

23 Conway, *My Pilgrimage*, op. cit., p. 74.

24 Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Nature' (1836) in Larzer Ziff (ed.), *Ralph Waldo Emerson—Selected Essays*, Penguin Books, New York, p. 35.

25 'Her Majesty the Queen, as regarded by her subjects', *Evening News* (Sydney), 26 September 1883, p. 7.

26 'Mr Moncure Conway at the Tasmanian Hall', *The Mercury* (Hobart), 27 October 1883, p. 2.

27 'Mr Moncure Conway's lectures—Woman and evolution', *The Mercury* (Hobart), 31 October 1883, p. 3. See also 'Mr Moncure Conway's lectures—Development and arrest in religion', *The Mercury* (Hobart), 1 November 1883, p. 3.

28 *ibid.*; 'Mr Moncure Conway's lectures—Toleration and the martyrdom of thought', *The Mercury* (Hobart), 2 November 1883, p. 3.

29 'Mr Moncure Conway at Hobart', *Launceston Examiner*, 2 November 1883, p. 2.

and he drew attention to the alteration to his standard salutation, shifting from the polite ‘Mr Clark’, to the very English informality of ‘My dear Clark’.³⁰ When he heard while still in Sydney about the Clark family’s new arrival, he was tickled. His response, a delightful one, is worth quoting in full:

I must not let even one mail go without congratulating you on the birth of your new boy, and gratefully acknowledging your exceeding goodwill in giving him my name. Gratefully—yet rather tremblingly,—for now I must try and ‘live up to’ that baby, in order that he should not have reason in the future to regret the confidence of his parents. But I deeply appreciate this mark of your friendship, which is very dear to me. I feel with you that in the future we shall have thoughts that must pass and repass between us. Hobart, by you and your circle of ‘Friends in Council’, has been made a beautiful souvenir of my visit to the Antipodes.³¹

While it is common knowledge amongst Clark scholars that the Italian republican Mazzini’s portrait hung on the walls at Rosebank, perhaps on every wall the story goes (see Paul Pickering’s comments in this volume pp. 68–71), less well-known is that Moncure Conway was up there as well. In a letter written to Conway some fifteen years after the Australian trip, Clark mentions that his tight group continued to meet in the Rosebank library ‘where your portrait looks down upon us as we exchange our thoughts upon our respective experiences in the two worlds in which we live’.³²

The fifteen or so years between Conway’s ‘beautiful souvenir’ letter, and Clark’s endearing missive to his friend written on ‘Tasmanian Judges’ Chambers letterhead, 1883–99, effectively bookend a remarkably productive and eventful period for both men. Shortly after his return to London from his southern ‘pilgrimage’, Conway informed Clark in May 1884 that he had resigned from his South Place Chapel ministry in London, after 21 years of polemical preaching, to devote himself to writing and, as he said, ‘[giving] lectures from time to time in America’.³³ Conway would write prolifically in his later years. Clark’s notable trajectory into Tasmanian and national public life over the same period has been amply documented elsewhere, including in this issue of *Papers on Parliament*. My interest lies in the evidence for an emergence of identifiable Conway preoccupations in Clark’s work. As expected, the dominant themes of Conway’s Australian lectures do frequently surface in Clark’s array of socio-cultural writings in the ensuing years. John Reynolds, Henry Reynolds’ father and the first serious Edmund Barton biographer, in his 1958 *Australian Law Journal* article on Clark puts it succinctly: ‘[Conway] the American divine, abolitionist, publicist and author ... exercised a considerable influence upon his host’s thinking upon ethical and social problems’.³⁴ While Reynolds does not pursue the statement in any detail, there is ample evidence for its validity.

Clark’s 1884 article, ‘An Untrodden Path in Literature’, enlarging on the new religious trend in theosophy, surely had as its stimulus Conway’s experiences in India, immediately after the Australian stay, when the American met the controversial Madame Blavatsky, together with a significant number of Indian political and religious figures.³⁵ Alfred Sennett’s book, *Esoteric Buddhism* (1884), a cult hit in Victorian England and a cited source for Conway, was also studied closely by Clark. His mid-1880s Minerva Club

30 Moncure Conway to Andrew Inglis Clark, 25 November 1883, Clark papers, C4/C28–36.

31 *ibid.*, 23 November 1883.

32 Andrew Inglis Clark to Moncure Conway, 26 August 1899, Moncure Daniel Conway papers, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Butler Library, Columbia University, MS#0277.

33 Moncure Conway to Andrew Inglis Clark, 28 May 1884, Clark papers, C4/C28–36.

34 John Reynolds, ‘A.I. Clark’s American sympathies and his influence on Australian federation’, *Australian Law Journal*, vol. 32, July 1958, p. 63.

35 See Conway, *My Pilgrimage*, *op. cit.*, chapter X, pp. 195–214.

presentation, 'A Critical Approach to Religion', drew heavily on Conway's philosophical peregrinations while in Australia, Clark also advocating 'intellectual emancipation', the need for the liberated thinker to estimate impartially the claims of 'the various religious beliefs of mankind as moral forces', along with 'the respective claims of science and intuition'.³⁶ The sentiments are straight out of the Emerson/Conway songbook. Clark's 1886 Minerva Club essay, 'The Evolution of the Spirit', begins with two sentences that could well have been Conway's own: '[S]ince Emerson, Carlyle and Darwin wrote, the course of thought in the world has been changed. No man now thinks as he thought before their ideas became known to him'.³⁷



MADAME BLAVATSKY

It was inevitable that Clark would visit the country that had steadily become his primary moral and political/legal compass. And he did, in 1890, embarking on the first of three trips, and meeting many Americans who further shaped his ideas and his life path—political movers and shakers, as well as a host of cultural, literary and religious figures, among them high-profile Unitarians in Boston. One individual stands out from the rest. Moncure Conway—there is that man Gump again—provided his Australian friend with a letter of introduction to the feted New England man of letters, the 'Autocrat of the Breakfast Table', Dr Oliver Wendell Holmes. As it happens, Dr Holmes was out of town, and he asked his lawyer son, the jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes (1841–1935), to look after the Australian visitor while in Boston. As John Reynolds points out, meeting this new acquaintance would be, for Clark, a defining moment:

The two men immediately became friendly, a friendship which continued in spite of geographical separation ... With Clark's strong predilection towards American institutions and his study of American history, it is safe to assume that Holmes had much influence in the final development of his thinking upon the structure and working of the Australian Constitution.³⁸

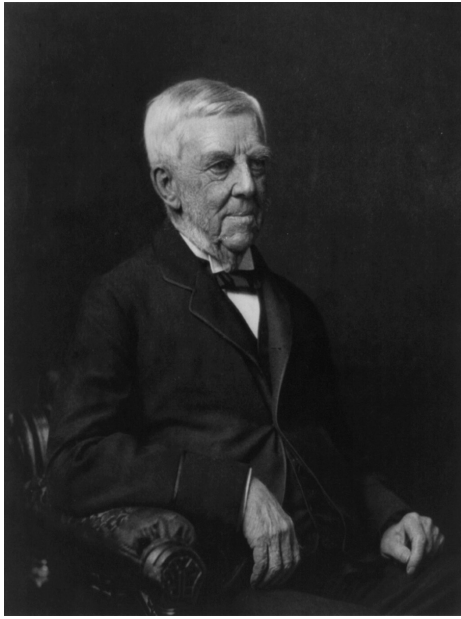
As the career arcs of both men rose sharply in the later 1890s and early years of the new century, they drew strength from a mutually beneficial correspondence. Holmes would spend a remarkable thirty years, 1902–32, on the bench of the United States Supreme Court.

In 1905, a few years after Clark's third and last American trip, the opportunity arose for his architect son Conway (Con, as he was called) to pursue his promising architectural career in America. He lived first in Boston, and this was no accident. Through Moncure Conway, Andrew Inglis Clark had made many Unitarian friends when staying in the Unitarian Church's most populous city. On his arrival, Con house-sat for a family of one of these Unitarian connections, the Cummings, at 104 Irving Street, Cambridge. The Cummings, husband and wife, we know from other sources, met through Harvard-based philosopher William James. Edward Cummings, a former Harvard sociology professor, became the Unitarian minister for the influential South Congregational Church in Boston, which for many

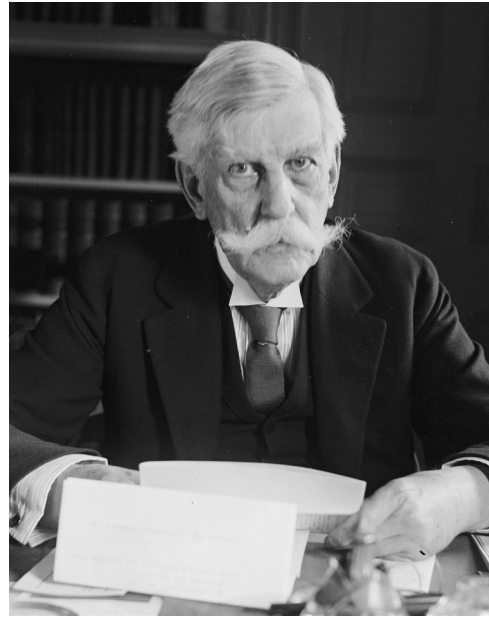
36 Andrew Inglis Clark, 'A critical approach to religion', quoted in Ely, op. cit., p. 115.

37 Andrew Inglis Clark, 'The evolution of the spirit', quoted in Ely, op. cit., p. 104.

38 Reynolds, op. cit., p. 63.



Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1809–1894, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003653451/



Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1841–1935, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, www.loc.gov/pictures/item/npc2008006912/

years dedicated itself to the task of alleviating the plight of the under-privileged. Edward resolutely implemented the church's motto, 'That They May Have Life More Abundantly' (a favourite biblical phrase of another Australian Clark, Charles Manning Hope).³⁹

The Cummings' son, Edward Estlin, ten years old when Con was in Boston, would go on to become one of America's most famous modernist poets, e e cummings, he of the non-negotiable small 'i' who wrote some of the twentieth century's most admired nature and love poems.

In Boston, Con Clark worked for the prestigious firm of Shepley, Ruten and Coolidge, or, as he mischievously tagged it in one of many letters home to his father, 'Simply, Rotten and Foolish'.⁴⁰ The University of Tasmania Library has a selection of these letters, son to father, written over a number of months in 1905 and, later, in New York, in 1907, where Con had his last job. The last letter in the archival collection takes us to within several months of his father's death.⁴¹

It is apparent in the first letters in the correspondence that Con made sure that he did the right thing by his father, including meeting all Andrew's 'Cambridge friends', and undertaking the obligatory pilgrimage to Concord—Emerson country—and Lexington, site of the shot heard round the world. On at least two occasions Con also attempted to meet up with the man after whom he had been named. We don't know whether he was successful in meeting Moncure Conway, but he skited to his dad that, searching for the right words to introduce himself, he 'worked out quite a masterpiece'.⁴² Andrew must have been chuffed. As the correspondence progresses, Con proved himself to be something of a student of the contemporary American political scene. This, too, must have pleased his ailing father.

39 Richard S. Kennedy, *Dreams in the Mirror: A Biography of E. E. Cummings*, Liveright Publishing Corporation, New York, 1980, p. 14.

40 Conway Clark to Andrew Inglis Clark, 5 August 1905, Clark papers, C4/C2–8.

41 *ibid.*, 21 July 1907.

42 *ibid.*, 9 September 1905.

When he finally returned home in December 1908 (the same month that ‘Yass–Canberra’ was declared as the official site for the new national capital), little did Con Clark realise that, when the time came to promote an international design competition for Australia’s new national capital city in 1911, the incumbent Minister for Home Affairs would be the ‘legendary’ King O’Malley, an extroverted member of the House of Representatives, representing a Tasmanian constituency—and an American. O’Malley was supposed to be Canadian, but his political colleagues knew the truth of his background. Both of these facts would not have harmed Con’s prospects when he was chosen, in February 1912, as the proactive, informed secretary to the competition’s judging committee.⁴³

It is probable that Con Clark was more familiar with contemporary town planning and architectural trends—better qualified than the three judges to assess the hundred-odd serious, professional entries in the competition. It is virtually certain that he was aware of the origins of the 23 American entries, including number 29 from a design dream team from Chicago, Walter and Marion Griffin.

The 2013 Centenary year of the national capital was, by any reasonable assessment, a community triumph. Yet Robyn Archer, the Centenary’s Creative Director, was right in saying that the franking of such a great year would come after, in the range of legacy projects that expand on Canberra’s foundation story. The unlikely threads that link the city to Andrew Inglis Clark, Moncure Conway and Conway Clark deserve a prominent place in the burgeoning narrative.

43 See ‘The most beautiful city’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 May 1912, p. 8.