

**THE AUSTRALIAN CONTROVERSY AND THE CANADIAN COMPROMISE:  
A COMPARATIVE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF ABORIGINAL  
HISTORY TEXTS WRITTEN IN 20<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY AUSTRALIA AND CANADA**

**A Thesis submitted to the Committee on Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the Faculty of Arts and Science**

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## **Abstract**

### **The Australian Controversy and the Canadian Compromise: A comparative historiographical analysis of Aboriginal history texts written in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Australia and Canada**

**Erin Stewart Eves**

Historical omissions, misinterpretations and silence characterize much of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century national historiography in Canada and Australia. In particular, Aboriginal peoples were marginalized or absent from national history texts. Informed by similar ideology and academic tradition, Canadian and Australian Aboriginal historiographies emerged alongside social history in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the reception of revisionist scholarship has varied. In Australia, Aboriginal historiography directly challenged nationalist historical mythology which established the controversial character of public historiographical debates. In Canada, national historiography has adapted to include multiple narratives. The comparative framework of this analysis provides an opportunity to examine the contexts of both nations' scholarships and the dissimilar impacts of national mythology. The confrontational and public nature of Australian historiography and historiographical debate can be traced to the academy's preservation of a singular narrative, whereas English-Canadian historiography has received relatively minimal public exposure for the compilation of historical narratives representing the nation's diversity.

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## Chapter One

### Moving in from the Margins: Aboriginal historiography in Canada and Australia<sup>1</sup>

As a people of the past, rather than a people with a past, Indians and Aborigines were marginal to the Canadian and Australian national narratives of the twentieth century. Historians of the mid-twentieth century were matter-of-fact about the absence and marginality of Aboriginal peoples in the history of the nation. They were a minor codicil – “an appendage” – to Marjorie Barnard’s 1962 Australian history text, and J.A. LaNauze referred to the fate of Aboriginal peoples as a “melancholy anthropological footnote” in 1959.<sup>2</sup> Canadian George Stanley likened the status of the Indian in Canadian history as an unappreciated recurring actor “limited to a walking-on part; but . . . never . . . dropped from the cast.”<sup>3</sup> Looking back from the 1980’s, Canadian historian James Walker characterised past treatments of Aboriginal history as “confusing, contradictory, incomplete” and “peripheral to ‘real’ Canadian history.”<sup>4</sup>

Today, historians’ attentions have shifted from the politics of inclusion to rhetoric around interpretative frameworks, methodologies, and the influence of academic advocacy in the legal and political arenas. Questions about inclusionary practices have

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<sup>1</sup> From the beginning of this analysis, I would like to make my terminology very clear. To maintain a sense of continuity and to adhere to the standards and traditions of Canadian scholarship, the term Aboriginal will be used to describe Indigenous peoples and scholarship on Indigenous peoples in both Canada and Australia. All efforts have been made to maintain clarity and to distinguish Aboriginal peoples in Canada and Australia. Note that the inclusion of terms like “aborigine” or “Indian” are intentional to distinguish and contextualize certain texts and to highlight how terminology and interpretation have changed over decades of scholarship. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word “Aboriginal” can refer specifically to the original peoples of Australia and their descendants, but it also refers to peoples “dwelling in any country before the arrival of (later) European colonists.” <http://dictionary.oed.com/>

<sup>2</sup> Marjorie Barnard, *A history of Australia* (London : Angus & Robertson, 1978, c1962) 653. J.A. La Nauze, “The Study of Australian History, 1929-1959,” *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand* 9:33 (Nov 1959) 11.

<sup>3</sup> G.F.G. Stanley, “The Indian Background of Canadian History,” *Canadian Historical Association Report* (1951-1952) 14.

<sup>4</sup> James W. St. G. Walker, “The Indian in Canadian Historical Writing, 1971-1981,” *As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows: A Reader in Canadian Native Studies* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1983) 340, 349.

waned as the place of Aboriginal history is assumed to be safe in the three founding nations interpretation of Canadian history and post-colonial, post-Mabo approach to Australian history. However, concerns about the state of Aboriginal historiography remain; these concerns are inherent in current debates about interpretation, methodologies and the politics of historiography, which have influenced the integration of Aboriginal historiography into the discipline and shaped the directions of historiographical debates in Australia and English-Canada.

Although Aboriginal history may not hold a central place in national historical consciousness, a great deal of work has been accomplished in the Australian and Canadian academies in the last half of the twentieth century. Historiography has been influenced as much by real historical events and characters as by contemporary socio-politics and nationalist mythologies. The realities and constructions of the Aboriginal historiographies of Australia and Canada, characterised by conflict and compromise, have created divergent paths for current historiographical development. Innovation and development are rooted in public debate over past Aboriginal historiography, including discussions surrounding the violent nature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Australian frontier. In Canada, historical dialogue is generally limited to the academy, which has led to the integration of multidisciplinary methodologies and development of alternative or critical interpretations. Both nations' scholarships demonstrate progressive approaches to Aboriginal historiography, practiced in different sites.

The purpose of this paper is to take stock of a small section of scholarship, which rose out of the rapid explosion of social history and to identify trends and patterns in Aboriginal historiography by tracing its historiographical developments in a comparative context. A clear understanding of the forces behind scholarly revisionism and

historiographical development may inform future Aboriginal historiography in Western academe; it may also open the door for further public engagement with historiographical analysis and discussion.

There are a growing number of historians who recognize the significance of comparative history; however, relatively few have pursued comparative historiographical analyses.<sup>5</sup> A comparative examination of Canada and Australia will prove quite valuable; a brief review of the histories of these settler nations indicates polarized colonial experiences despite their comparable positions in the British Empire where similar policies unfolded, institutions were planted and values were embedded. This investigation will explore questions about historiographical trends and patterns in mid to late-twentieth century texts, academic isolationism and public engagement with academic study, the role of national historical consciousness and myths in the development of an inclusive national narrative, and the relationship between two nations' historiographical advancements.

Although founded upon similar Western scholarly traditions, current Australian and Canadian Aboriginal historiographical debates are engaged in different ways – the former develops a critical public discourse around past historiography and the latter seeks to develop diverse historiographical traditions within the academy. The location and intensity of these debates are based on the relationship of Aboriginal historiography with national historiography. In Australia heated public debate about the nature and place of Aboriginal historiography is indicative of the strength of the national narrative, whereas

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Ruth Roach Pierson and Nupur Chaudhuri (eds.) Nation, Empire, Colony: Historicizing Gender and Race (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998) and Penny VanToorn, "Stories to Live In: Discursive Regimes and Indigenous Canadian and Australian Historiography," Canadian Literature, No. 158 (Autumn 1998) 42-64.



Aboriginal historiographical dialogue, rooted in the Canadian academy, is one of many evolving conversations about English-Canadian historiography and the nature of Canadian identity. The diversity and adaptability of Canadian historiography is evident as Aboriginal historiography – representing both cooperative and exploitative colonial relationships – has been integrated into the collective of narratives which represent Canadian historiography without significant debate. Aboriginal historiographical debate dominates Australian intellectual and political discourse as it directly challenges the metanarrative of the egalitarian frontier and quiet colonisation, and has redefined the nature of Australian historiography.

The tendency for Canadian historiography to develop in relative academic isolation has provided a foundation for methodological innovation and to broaden the scope of the field. The Australian public is much more engaged with historical debates, influenced by past left-wing Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating and current right-wing Liberal Prime Minister John Howard. The link between national pride and revisionist Aboriginal history has led to heated debate in public arena. Few historians in Australia stray from central themes of violence and dispossession on the frontier, but this narrow vision has allowed the opportunity to find significant evidence and to develop strong arguments for their position.<sup>6</sup> Minimal public engagement in Canadian historical debates is indicative of the acceptance of an Aboriginal presence in the nation's past, and perhaps ambivalence for any deeper understanding of the multiple narratives of Canadian historiography.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Debate is also intense within the academy, but it too remains focused solely on nineteenth-century frontier conflict, one element of Aboriginal history in Australia.

<sup>7</sup> In history, benign history is often boring history, which is reflected in the minimal Canadian public interest in Aboriginal history. Rather than stir up controversy, the publication of the Royal Commission on

Although a study such as this could be applied to various nations and historiographical issues in a comparative context, an examination of Canada and Australia's Aboriginal historiographies provide an interesting and significant starting point. Generally, a comparative historiographical analysis should inform readers of the scholarly relationship between two nations and the current models of writing and research. Too often, current historiographical analyses do not contextualize their studies within Western scholarship;<sup>8</sup> however, as indicated by Chris Lorenz, Andrew Armitage and Paul Havemann, the impact of comparative investigations are significant. They demonstrate trends and patterns evident in Western scholarship and ask essential questions about nationalist assumptions and constructions. In an introduction to a special issue of the American journal *History & Theory*, Chris Lorenz examines the historiography of fragmenting nations in the Western world. Although this phenomenon is part of a larger post-modern interpretation of Western history, he suggests that it is not uncommon for historiographers to misappropriate this shift as a national, rather than global, issue. "At the most general level, comparison is the only effective antidote to the 'only the lonely' complex that is still rampant in historiography. It is basically the only methodological procedure to prevent empirically unjustified attributions of particular (local or national) characteristics and problems of historiography to particular (local or national) causes."<sup>9</sup> Considering this framework, Aboriginal historiography in Canada and Australia can be examined within and outside of Western nationalist models.

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Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) report and the current redress politics surrounding residential schools garnered significant interest and support, but no real engagement with historical scholarship. This scholarship may have sparked socio-political debates, but is unlikely it will lead to discussion about historiographical interpretation or methodology.

<sup>8</sup> As indicated by Chris Lorenz, "Comparative Historiography: Problems and Perspectives," *History and Theory* 38: 1 (February 1999) 25-40.

<sup>9</sup> Lorenz, 36.

A comparative analysis of Australian and Canadian scholarship is based upon sound reason; they face similar obstacles and opportunities. The difficulties faced by writers of Aboriginal history have foundations in the Western academy, which privileges the Euro-Christian structures of imperialism, patriarchy, liberal democracy, and progress; the entrenched power structures which exist in both nations are evident in past and present politics, economy and society and are reflected in historiography. As both grew into similar federal states, policies of colonialism were maintained; the paternal relationship between the state and Aboriginal peoples reinforced power structures which continue to be felt today.<sup>10</sup>

As Canadian sociologist Andrew Armitage indicates in his 1995 monograph *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation*, Aboriginal social policy in Canada, Australia and New Zealand can be linked to the 1837 House of Commons Select Committee on Aborigines. This committee established the foundation for British colonial assimilationist policy, which was realized in Canada and Australia in reservation systems and residential schools with varying degrees of success.<sup>11</sup> With reference to the Australian Commonwealth Human Rights Commission's report *Bringing Them Home* and the *Final Report* of the Canadian RCAP, both released in 1996, historian Paul Havemann argues that "Indigenous peoples continue to experience the 'frontier'

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<sup>10</sup> The construction of nation, as explored in nineteenth century Canadian and Australian texts by Nancy Christie, was founded in the imperial project: "Unlike Britain, Australia and Canada had arisen as unified nations as a result of their progressive struggle and adaptation to their natural environments. From their point of view, the empire did not exist until the nation evolved." Nancy Christie, "From Intellectual to Cultural History: The Comparative Catalyst," *Intellectual History: New Perspectives*, ed. D.R. Wolf (Lewiston, N.Y.: Bishop's University, 1988-89) 88. See further, Christie, "The Cosmology of New Societies: Geography, the Natural, and the 'Savage'," *Prophecy and the 'Principles of Social Life': The Writing of History and the Making of New Societies in Australia and Canada, 1880-1920.*, Ph.D thesis, University of Sydney, 1986.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Armitage, *Comparing the policy of Aboriginal Assimilation: Australia, Canada and New Zealand* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995).

everywhere, long after the settlers' 'civilising mission' and appropriation of their lands has ostensibly ended."<sup>12</sup> However, Havemann indicates that emerging dialogues and debates (official and unofficial) are working to "reconfigure the power balance."<sup>13</sup> Past and modern-day confrontations and negotiations around regulation, disenfranchisement, redress, and atonement share parallels in these privileged, Euro-Christian settler societies. Socio-political and scholarly analyses illustrate the similar institutional frameworks in Canada and Australia and the oppressive conditions shared by the indigenous peoples of both nations. These analogous circumstances provide a suitable foundation for comparative examination and in-depth understanding of the divergence in twentieth-century Aboriginal historiography.

Furthermore, there exist several comparative history texts which illustrate both the similarities of subjugation by one imperial power and the contrasting response and impacts of diverse Aboriginal peoples. Early comparative examinations of Aboriginal policy in British settler colonies were framed as oppositional institutions or experiences. Polarized perspectives of cooperative colonization in Canada and the victimization of Australian Aborigines are further developed by Grenfell Price in his 1950 comparative monograph; although he constructs similar paternalist and racialized dichotomies of civilized European colonizer bringing progress to primitive savage Aboriginal peoples, he recognizes the differences between indigenous cultures in different places and the different reactions to the spread of the great British empire. Price suggests that the Canadian fur trade enabled a smoother colonial transition, what he calls "peaceful

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Havemann, "Introduction: Comparing Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand," Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, ed. Paul Havemann (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1999) 1.

<sup>13</sup> Havemann, 5.

penetration” because Europeans and Aboriginal peoples were willing to work together.<sup>14</sup> Although Price recognizes the entrenched inequity of the government’s treaty policy, he maintains that “the Canadian record was clean and honest . . .”<sup>15</sup> Based on his comparative approach, Price evaluates colonial practices and race relations based upon a spectrum, ranging from peaceful to devastating, and he places Australian colonial history on the far end of the spectrum: devastating.<sup>16</sup> He suggests Australian colonial relations were limited because of the aborigines’ inability to adapt to advanced Western civilization. Australian aborigines, Price argues, were too primitive to engage economically or politically with colonists, which led to a cycle of violence, population decline and eventually, he suggests, the virtual disappearance of the race.<sup>17</sup> Price’s essentialist understandings of aboriginality and colonization shape his interpretations of benign Canadian colonization and victimization for progress in Australia.

Canadian historian Robin Fisher recognizes the colonial similarities of European-Aboriginal relations in Australia, New Zealand and British Columbia, but focuses upon the significant differences in race relations in the settler colonies. He creates a comparison by evaluating colonial power structures between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in the colonies:

“The Australian Aborigines were either killed or shunted aside during the early settlement period. Aboriginal adaptation and resistance was comparatively limited and those that survived were relegated to the position of fringe-dwellers. The Maoris, by contrast, were vigorous and innovative in their response to the coming of the European, so that their

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<sup>14</sup> Grenfell A Price, White Settlers and Native Peoples: An Historical Study of Racial Contacts between English-speaking Whites and Aboriginal Peoples in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Melbourne: Georgian House, Cambridge UP, 1950) 64, 82.

<sup>15</sup> Price 85.

<sup>16</sup> Grenfell A. Price, White Settlers and Native Peoples: An Historical Study of Racial Contacts between English-speaking Whites and Aboriginal Peoples in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Melbourne: Georgian House, Cambridge UP, 1950).

<sup>17</sup> Price 106.

society was in a stronger position by the end of the nineteenth century. The Indians of British Columbia were in an intermediate position. They were not totally subjugated like the Aborigines, but they asserted themselves less than the Maoris.”<sup>18</sup>

Fisher’s interpretation is different from Price, as he suggests colonization was not shaped by benign settlers or violent pastoralists, but by Aboriginal agents and their actions/reactions to colonization.<sup>19</sup>

Rather than polarizing the Canadian and Australian colonial experiences, Ann McGrath and Winona Stevenson illustrate the power and influence of “the hard-edged world of colonizer and colonized” within an analysis of Canadian and Australian policy and legislation designed to marginalize and disempower Aboriginal women.<sup>20</sup> According to McGrath and Stevenson, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Aboriginal policy was entrenched in patriarchal tradition; women’s identity, independence, and power were stripped by legislation which defined status and citizenship, regulated property ownership and waged labour, and limited sexual and personal autonomy. McGrath and Stevenson’s article indicates that power structures of colonialism and patriarchy transcended national boundaries to subjugate Aboriginal women. Penny VanToorn also analyses similar politics of oppression in her historiographical examination of Aboriginal history construction or expression. VanToorn argues that the “discursive regimes” of Australian and Canadian scholarship restrict Indigenous peoples’ participation in and contribution to historiography, and “[i]n historical actuality, people rank different histories into hierarchies.”<sup>21</sup> These values, VanToorn suggests, are most visible and influential within

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<sup>18</sup> Robin Fisher, “The impact of European settlement on the indigenous peoples of Australia, New Zealand, and British Columbia : some comparative dimensions,” Canadian Ethnic Studies, 7:1 (1980) 1.

<sup>19</sup> Fisher, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Ann McGrath and Winona Stevenson, “Gender, Race, and Policy: Aboriginal Women and the State in Canada and Australia,” Labour/Le Travail 38 (Fall 1996) 39.

<sup>21</sup> Penny Van Toorn, “Stories to Live In: Discursive Regimes and Indigenous Canadian and Australian Historiography,” Canadian Literature, No. 158 (Autumn 1998) 59.

powerful government and legal institutions which favour “certain versions of history over others” and maintain power-knowledge scales which diminish the impact of contributions by Indigenous historians.<sup>22</sup> Comparative works demonstrate the complexity of this scholarship. Multiple perspectives reveal the layers of comparable and contrasting elements of Aboriginal historiography in Canada and Australia, which further indicate the value of this framework.

This analysis is informed primarily by a large body of scholarly articles and monographs, primarily published in mid to late-twentieth century Canada and Australia. Due to the nature of this research, comparative examinations of Aboriginal history in Canada and Australia are prized. Trends and patterns of Aboriginal historiography in Canada and Australia have been extrapolated from a thorough examination of a large selection of Aboriginal history and general history texts.<sup>23</sup> Integrated in this analysis is a survey of four leading journals in Canadian and Australian historical scholarship: *Canadian Historical Review*, *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, *Australian Historical Studies*, and *Aboriginal History*.<sup>24</sup> This analysis spans three decades, beginning with the surge in social history, including Aboriginal history in the early 1970s, noting particularly the introductory editions of *Aboriginal History* (1977) and *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* (1981). Identifiable trends include methodological developments, shifting interpretative frameworks, and increasing politicization of historiography. Additional sources from outside of the academy provide further insights into the national historic-mythic consciousness and present-day debate and discourse around national metanarratives and Aboriginal historiography.

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<sup>22</sup> VanToorn, 59.

<sup>23</sup> For data on bibliographic analysis, refer to Appendix A.

<sup>24</sup> For results of text analysis, refer to Appendix B.

In order to maintain a clear focus on Aboriginal historiography and its relationship with national historiography, it is important to isolate English-language Canadian historiography. It may be argued that just as the French colonial experience established fur trade traditions and relations, so too has it influenced French-Canadian Aboriginal historiography. However, it is more important to consider that the lasting impact of colonisation and Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relations came from the longer-term contact with English colonial officials, law enforcement, traders, and settlers and how influenced how Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relations are represented in English-Canadian historiography. This provides a solid basis for a comparison of two English-settler nations and their historiographies. It must also be noted that inclusion of French-Canadian sources could shift attention away from Aboriginal historiography in Canadian scholarship to intriguing discussions about Canadian identity and nationalism – a debate to engage in a later time.<sup>25</sup>

In the context of this study, a definition of Aboriginal historiography has been developed based upon common characteristics of texts from both nations. Generally, Aboriginal history is an interpretation of colonial contact – in Canada, one school refers to this field as “Native-Newcomer Relations”, while in Australia, a large group has identified this field as “invasion studies”. Earlier Aboriginal history texts relied on Euro-Christian records to return Aboriginal peoples from the margins of national history – some suggest this approach was compensatory, superficial and uninspiring because it may have included Aboriginal peoples but it remained a Eurocentric analysis of

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<sup>25</sup> Please refer to Catherine Desbarats for a comprehensive view of French and English-language sources in historiographical analysis, “Essai sur quelques éléments de l’écriture de l’histoire amérindienne,” Revue d’Histoire de l’Amérique Française 53:4 (printemps 2000) 491-520.



Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal contact.<sup>26</sup> By the late twentieth century, historians developed new frameworks of interpretation, including multidisciplinary approaches like ethnohistory and the adoption of innovative methodology including the integration of oral narratives. Despite these changes, this field continues to be defined by colonial relationships. However, Aboriginal peoples have a more significant role and are recognized as active participants – victims, resisters, and allies – in current historiography. Pre-contact Aboriginal history remains in the field of anthropology, with occasional references from historians and participation from community elders. By the turn of the twenty-first century, very few Aboriginal scholars have entered this field, which reinforces the emphasis on relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Therefore, Aboriginal historiography, for the purposes of this study, is not informed solely by Aboriginal scholars or sources, but instead, it is a field dominated by non-Aboriginal historians increasingly informed by ethnohistorical methods and post-colonial theories.

This examination builds over four chapters examining historiographical contributions from Canada and Australia, public and private forums for historiographical debates and the influence of national historical consciousness and myth on historiographical discourse and development. In Chapter Two, questions of innovation and politics in historiography are addressed within an exploration of academic dialogue and public debate. Historiographical debate in Canada tends to remain within the academy in journals and at conferences. While it may be inferred that more innovation is

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<sup>26</sup> Kerry Abel, “‘Tangled, Lost and Bitter?’ Current Directions in the Writing of Native History in Canada,” *Acadiensis* 26:1 (Autumn 1996) 92-101. Peter Biskup, “Aboriginal History” *New History: Studying Australia Today*, eds. G. Osborne & W.F. Mandle (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin Australia Ltd, 1982) 11-31.

sparked by scholarly contributions, some suggest that Canadian historiography suffers from lack of debate. The controversial nature of Australian historiography has garnered significant interest and input from the general public, as debate is presented in national newspapers, television, and by Australian leaders. Public engagement with Aboriginal historiography - which Peggy Brock argues is more about Australian historiography within this framework<sup>27</sup> – provides a dynamic framework for innovation; however, it is possible that unqualified contributors skew the debate and that narrows the historical vision of the nation. It is clear from this examination that the location of historiographical discourse is significant both to its production and impact.

Chapters Three and Four address the development of Aboriginal historiographies in Canada and Australia, respectively. Individual chapters ensure unpolluted examinations of national historiography and the place of Aboriginal historiography; the intent of this paper to avoid essentialist or polarized representations of the two nations' histories, which could construct one history as peaceful in relation to other. Early Canadian Aboriginal historiography is characterized by compromise and cooperation; the foundations of these patterns, the fur trade and treaties, have been challenged by more recent works which examine Aboriginal resistance to systemic acculturation. The controversial nature of Australian historiography is analysed in Chapter Four, from breaking the silence in national history texts to the formation of a genocide model of frontier history. The analysis of each nation's Aboriginal historiography, from the periphery in metanarrative to the publication of dedicated scholarly journals, is

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<sup>27</sup> Peggy Brock, "Skirmishes in Aboriginal History," *Aboriginal History*, 28 (2004) 207.

comprehensive and links to integration and innovation and the place of Aboriginal historiography in the public.

Historiographical patterns of compromise and controversy will be examined within contexts of national historical mythologies in Chapter Five. The relationship between historical myths and historiographical research has significant impact on the nature and location of debate. The Australian myth of quiet colonization was shattered by Aboriginal historiographies of violence and dispossession; therefore, the public became engaged with this debate to protect and renew their national historical consciousness. The narrow focus on Australian Aboriginal historiography limits the sphere of research and scholarly innovation, but engages the public in important conversations about the nation's past and forces clear arguments with solid evidence. As part of this historiographical confrontation, Australian scholars have directly challenged the nationalist myths of colonial innocence by re-centering it within new national narratives. Past national mythology in Canada was represented by the cooperative relationship between voyageurs and Native trappers – the First Nations were an integral part of the national historical consciousness of a peaceful colony and nation. Fur trade historiography provided a legitimate foundation for Aboriginal historical narratives within Canadian scholarship. Current academic research may fundamentally challenge Canadian understandings of 'native-newcomer relations' by problematizing federal protectionist and assimilationist policy, but Aboriginal historiography has become an essential component of Canada's multiple historical narratives.

The hegemonic myths of national history both challenged and inspired Aboriginal historians. The Canadian and Australian approaches to Aboriginal historiography diverge significantly, but they are both innovative and advocacy. Scholars from both nations

can see potential in the historiography of the other. Australians can look to the Canadian example to broaden their field with interdisciplinary approaches, feminist or socialist theory, or historical examinations stretching past the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By confronting Canadians with unified, controversial historiography, the public can become engaged in historical and historiographical dialogue, shifting its dynamic and intensifying the field. Historiography benefits from multiple interpretations and methods; this comparative analysis traces the development of Aboriginal historiography in Canada and Australia within their respective nationalist frameworks and then considers the possibility of an Australian past typified by compromise and a controversial Canadian history.

## Chapter Two

### Academic Isolation and Public Engagement

The differences between Canadian and Australian historiographical debate is made quite clear with a brief examination of sources: the former is generally located within academic discourse while the latter is carried out within and outside of the academy. As this examination demonstrates, both nations' historiographies are innovative and politicized, despite their dissimilar forums for debate. The nature and location of these discourses appears to be determined by their distinctive histories and historiographies – the Canadian public has limited engagement with a multiple histories of conflicting and cooperative Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relations, while the Australian public is fascinated and troubled by a violent and controversial frontier history. Canadian scholars focus on methodological innovations, including adoption of interdisciplinary approaches, non-traditional sources, and collaborative community research; the Canadian academy is characterized by diverse contributions to the field. Australian historians represent two distinct camps: academic historians tend to explore ethnohistorical approaches to non-Aboriginal documentary evidence while engaged in political issues of native title and genocide, while non-academic historians seemingly rely on neo-conservative populist rhetoric which seeks absolution for a dark past, by attacking solid academic theses, their interpretive frameworks, and their documentation. This dialectic prevents significant divergence from analyses of Australian frontier conflict.

In Canada, historiographical questions are mostly limited to the academy, particularly at conferences and in refereed journals.<sup>1</sup> There has been minimal public

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Ken Coates, "Writing First Nations into Canadian History: A review of recent Scholarly Works," *Canadian Historical Review* 81:1 (Mar 2000) 99-114; Kerry Abel, "'Tangled, Lost and Bitter?' Current Directions in the Writing of Native History in Canada," *Acadiensis* 26:1 (Autumn 1996) 92-101;

engagement with or response to the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, to redress movements for residential school graduates, or to critiques of social history by Jack Granatstein or the Dominion Institute.<sup>2</sup> In Canada, connections between academic history and public history are limited to official bodies, courts and royal commissions, and tend to be isolated from public engagement in the popular press or news networks. Public engagement seems to be rooted in present politics rather than historiography.<sup>3</sup> The minimal criticism presented to revisionist interpretations of history may be a testament to the adaptability and diversity of Canadian historiography. As Ken Coates suggests, within this framework, "... the field has developed into one of considerable methodological sophistication, important historical insights, and, occasionally, heated debates."<sup>4</sup> Academic segregation has allowed Aboriginal historiography in Canada to develop innovative interpretations and methodologies. This innovation does not challenge, but complements the many interpretations of Canadian history which inform the public.

In Australia, the debate has been part of the public consciousness for some time. In 1972, anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner's lectures, broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Company, identified and condemned the common silence around

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Robin Brownlie and Mary-Ellen Kelm, "Desperately Seeking Absolution: Native Agency as Colonialist Alibi?" In Notes and Comments in Canadian Historical Review 75:4 (December 1994) 543-56. Also refer to . Coates, "Learning from Others: Comparative History and the Study of Indigenous-Newcomer Relations," Native Studies Review, 16:1 (2005) 3-14 and other papers from the Natives-Newcomers: Comparative Perspectives conference held at the University of Saskatchewan in 2002 published in NSR (2005).

<sup>2</sup> Limited public engagement does not make Canadian Aboriginal historiography any less politicized – see Jennifer Brown, "Doing Aboriginal History: A View from Winnipeg," Canadian Historical Review 84: 4 (Dec 2003) 613-35 and A.J. Ray, "Native History on Trial: Confessions of an Expert Witness," CHR Forum in Canadian Historical Review 84:2 (June 2003) 253-73.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, CBC Online, In Depth: Aboriginal Canadians. This feature was posted in November 2005, pursuant to the tainted water crisis in Kashechewan, Ontario, the Ipperwash Inquiry, and the federal agreement-in-principle for residential school address.

<sup>4</sup> Coates, 2000, 100.

Aboriginal history in Australia. In the 1990s, Labour Prime Minister Paul Keating offered public apologies to indigenous peoples in Australia for colonial subjugation and dispossession. Currently, a movement against “black armband history” led by Keith Windschuttle, Geoffrey Blainey, and Liberal Prime Minister John Howard has engaged both the public and the academy in debate about the violent nature of Aboriginal historiography and how it has impacted Australians’ connection with the past and their identity. For approximately 30 years, Aboriginal historiography has been a significant part of the Australian public’s engagement with history. Historians have been united in their desire to challenge the myth of quiet colonization; in this attack, they have questioned the basis of Australian identity resulting in unequalled attention from the public.

In Australia, great historians are icons, like Manning Clark and Henry Reynolds; as columnist Probyn claims “. . . history remains the field that can make you into a superstar. Internationally, it’s histories of the great wars that make your name. Here it’s Aboriginal-white history that gets you fame and infamy.”<sup>5</sup> The public nature of Australian historiographical debate provides a framework for dual stages of confrontation – debate occurs within academic spheres (refereed journals and academic presses) and in public arenas (popular press, national print news, publically broadcasted debates, online discussion forums).<sup>6</sup> In the past, the nation’s “cult of forgetfulness” was exposed and Aboriginal history became part of the socio-political consciousness. More recently, heated arguments about genocide and the violent nature of Aboriginal historiography

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<sup>5</sup> Elspeth Probyn, “No shame, no gain,” The Australian, (Jan 22, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Discussions are common in national newspaper, The Australian and in popular periodicals like Quadrant and New Criterion. Also refer to popular web-based discussion sites like [ninemsn.com.au](http://ninemsn.com.au) and [onlineopinion.com.au](http://onlineopinion.com.au).

have polarized the public and dominated debate. The public engagement with academic and non-academic investigations of Aboriginal historiography laid a foundation of solid methodology within a narrowed focus.<sup>7</sup>

### **CANADA: academic skirmishes and concord**

Once an emerging field which received little recognition from mainstream historians, Aboriginal history is now a large and dynamic part of Canadian historical scholarship. One indication of the growth of this field is the increasing number of historiographical assessments which range from critical bibliographic surveys to analyses of methodologies and interpretative frameworks. Isolated debates regarding voice and perspectives of agency have proved noteworthy, particularly in opposition to claims by Ken Coates that "Only rarely have the new studies critiqued existing scholarship. Professional politeness and the desire to avoid replicating earlier studies remain cornerstones of historical study in Canada. The field, then, is dynamic, wide-ranging, increasingly cross-cultural, and unfailing cordial."<sup>8</sup> The discipline may be populated by a small, specialized and cooperative population of scholars, but it is not without debate. Standard interpretations have been challenged and defended – issues of voice, agency, and marginalization are central to the legitimacy and authority of the field. For example, both Coates and Kerry Abel are critical of the focus on the 'newcomer' in 'Native-Newcomer' history – Abel suggests that the compensatory treatment of Aboriginal peoples within Aboriginal history is unacceptable and looks to her contemporaries for a

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<sup>7</sup> Australian Aboriginal historiography is far from stagnant despite the limited breadth of the field – innovation in scholarship is focused on conflict history.

<sup>8</sup> Coates, 2000, 101. This assertion is further supported by Keith Thor Carlson, Melinda M. Jetté, and Kenichi Matsui: "As a result, some worry that the continued compartmentalization of Aboriginal history keeps the field a mile wide in terms of subject matter, but an inch deep with regard to internal debates." "An Annotated Bibliography of Major Writings in Aboriginal History, 1990-99." Canadian Historical Review 82:1 (March 2001) 126.



new vision.<sup>9</sup> Coates suggests that Canada must look to the scholarship of other nations, as their texts are shifting to 'Native-centered' focus, which is a "powerful corrective to the historical pattern of seeing First Nations people almost exclusively in the context of their relationship with the immigrant societies."<sup>10</sup> Other important dialogues have been sparked by Bruce Trigger's questions about relativism and rationalism, George Sioui's claims about voice and authenticity, and Calvin Martin's examination of the spirituality of the fur trade and the metaphysics of Aboriginal history writing.<sup>11</sup>

Further evidence of the vitality of the field and the impact of debate can be found in the *CHR Forum*, where, for example, Robin Brownlie and Mary Ellen Kelm engage in critical analysis of the hegemonic interpretations of Aboriginal history. Writing in 1994 as graduate students, Brownlie and Kelm charged several high-profile Canadian scholars with "us[ing] evidence of Native resilience and strength to soften, and at times to deny, the impact of colonialism."<sup>12</sup> Concerned that historiography had become too favourable for colonizers, Kelm and Brownlie suggest that historians draw attention both to Aboriginal agency and their oppression and dispossession because "[o]nly then can we produce truly balanced and nuanced histories in which neither Native actors nor colonial power is ignored."<sup>13</sup> Their analysis elicited responses from J.R. Miller and Douglas

<sup>9</sup> Kerry Abel, "'Tangled, Lost and Bitter?' Current Directions in the Writing of Native History in Canada." *Acadiensis* 26:1 (Autumn 1996) 104.

<sup>10</sup> Coates, 2000, 104.

<sup>11</sup> Bruce Trigger, "Early Native North American Responses to European Contact: Romantic versus Rationalistic Interpretations." *The Journal of American History*. (March 1991) 1194-1215. Georges Sioui, *For an Amerindian autohistory: an essay on the foundations of a social ethic*. Transl. S Fischman. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992. Calvin Martin, *Keepers of the game: Indian-animal relationships and the fur trade*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978 and response from Stephen Krech III, ed. *Indians, animals, and the fur trade: a critique of Keepers of the game*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981). Calvin Martin, *The American Indian and the Problem of History*. Ed. Calvin Martin. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.

<sup>12</sup> Robin Brownlie and Mary-ellen Kelm, "Desperately Seeking Absolution: Native Agency as Colonialist Alibi?" In Notes and Comments in *Canadian Historical Review* 75:4 (December 1994) 545.

<sup>13</sup> Brownlie and Kelm 556.

Cole, two scholars at the centre of Brownlie and Kelm's critique. While Cole dismisses the claims of Brownlie and Kelm,<sup>14</sup> Miller "welcome[s their] contribution to the scholarly interchange that is badly needed."<sup>15</sup> The initial questions of Brownlie and Kelm has also engaged Sarah Carter in her historiographical analyses.<sup>16</sup> In contrast to suggestions by Coates and Carlson et.al., debate is present within the cooperative frameworks of Aboriginal historiography in Canada.

The innovation of Canadian Aboriginal historiography may be framed within the balance between scholarly criticism and cooperation. See, for example, Sarah Carter's *Aboriginal People and the Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900*.<sup>17</sup> To provide context for her interdisciplinary survey of the region's history, Carter discusses the impact of historiographical developments on her understanding of and approach to Aboriginal history. She navigates issues of methodology – including the use of Cree oral narrative as historical source – and theoretical debates regarding relativism, rationalism, and agency in her argument which deconstructs essentialist understandings of aboriginality and colonial history. As Carter illustrates, Aboriginal peoples in western Canada welcomed the economic opportunities of a partnership with Euro-Canadians while they maintained cultural beliefs and customs; unfortunately, by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the federal government and settlers were unwilling to share the region's prosperity and the

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<sup>14</sup> Cole suggests Brownlie and Kelm's research is skewed and their interpretation and terminology dismiss Aboriginal power and agency in contact relations. "Some codewords . . . are invasion, colonizers, assault, European diseases, cultural genocide, and disgrace to descendants. The general interpretation itself, if not the loaded words and phrases, is a persuasive one." "Desperately Seeking Absolution: Response," *Canadian Historical Review* 76:4 (Dec 1995) p 630.

<sup>15</sup> J.R. Miller, "Desperately Seeking Absolution: Responses." *Canadian Historical Review* 76:4 (Dec 1995) 634.

<sup>16</sup> Sarah Carter, *Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999) 10.

<sup>17</sup> Carter, 1999.

partnership died.<sup>18</sup> Carter's strong historiography provided the foundation for an analytical and influential survey of colonisation in Western Canada. Beyond historiographical surveys and evaluations, scholarly innovation is more apparent in original research, as evident in the collection *Reading beyond Words*, edited by Jennifer Brown and Elizabeth Vibert.<sup>19</sup> Most recently, Jennifer Brown's evaluation of "Doing Aboriginal History" indicates that historiography marries with socio-political context, and this union has led to exciting shifts in methodology – most important, the integration of community-based research and oral records.<sup>20</sup> The vitality of the field is evident in its dynamic nature – topics vary, opinions clash, methodology shifts, and interpretations transform.

Within the academy, innovation in Aboriginal historiography is based upon scholarly cooperation and criticism. Public dialogue about historiography does not focus on Aboriginal history, but the impact of social history (to which Aboriginal history belongs) on national character and consciousness. Generally, the Canadian public has little interest in historiography – debates are minimal and those that do exist receive little attention in the public press. For example, noted Canadian historian Jack Granatstein received little attention for his examination of national history despite a controversial and captivating title: *Who Killed Canadian History?*<sup>21</sup> Granatstein does not directly attack or discredit academic work on Aboriginal history; rather, he addresses the whole of national history and its decline in relation to the specialization and politicization of scholarship.

<sup>18</sup> Carter 1999, 12-13.

<sup>19</sup> Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert (Eds.) *Reading Beyond words: Contexts for Native History*. (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996) includes articles informed by court records, photography, oral history, and biography.

<sup>20</sup> Jennifer Brown, "Doing Aboriginal History: A View from Winnipeg," *CHR Forum, Canadian Historical Review* 84:4 (Dec 2003) 611-35.

<sup>21</sup> J.L. Granatstein, *Who killed Canadian history?* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 1998).

He examines the place of the national story in the Canadian consciousness and suggests the breakdown of the nation coincided with the breakdown of the national historical narrative. Granatstein argues that the death of Canadian history, which he identifies as political history, has led to a breakdown in Canadian society and citizenship. He suggests that hypersensitive public school curriculum, the Canadian obsession with multiculturalism and the trivial pursuits of academics has weakened the foundation of Canadian history and created a nation without historical consciousness. Critical of the sources, methodologies, theories and rhetoric of social historians, Granatstein suggests that "(t)heir aim was to use history, or their version of it, to cure white males of their sense of superiority."<sup>22</sup>

Criticisms of current Canadian historiography may exist,<sup>23</sup> but there has been no major outcry denouncing Aboriginal historiography. Aboriginal historiography is one of the many narratives in Canadian scholarship; rather than challenge Canadian mythology, Aboriginal historiography is integral to multiple variations of Canadian history. Rather than attack Aboriginal historiography, Granatstein suggests that the fragmentation of national history is problematic; he argues that the metanarrative be reintroduced and edited to include regional, women's, and Aboriginal histories. Unlike Australian scholars, Aboriginal historians in Canada do not confront a hegemonic myth entrenched in national identity. In an approach as strong as it is flexible, Aboriginal historiography offers another narrative for the understanding of the diverse experiences in Canadian historiography.

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<sup>22</sup> Granatstein, 59.

<sup>23</sup> Beyond comments from Granatstein, see Michael Bliss, "Privatizing the Mind: The Sundering of Canadian History, the Sundering of Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 26:4 (Winter 1991-92) 5-17 and Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Writing since 1900*, 2nd edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

Therefore, the public's interest is not dominated by criticism for the existence or challenge of Aboriginal history, rather, public discourse tends to centre on the historical background of current issues. Vigorous debates have been launched in support and opposition to land claims, Oka, residential school redress, the Berger Inquiry, and the findings of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.<sup>24</sup> Although these issues are discussed in the pages of national newspapers and on public radio broadcasts, public debates minimally engage Canadian society, and the core of historiographical dialogue remains firmly grounded in the academy. Questions of authority, accessibility, and authenticity create a divide between public and academic history. Although the isolation of academic history may be cause for its innovation, it maintains a general Canadian disengagement with historiography.

#### **AUSTRALIA: historiographical forgetting and fabrication**

Once a forgotten history in Australia, *The Fate of a Free People* has become the centre of debate and public historical consciousness. There has been a great deal of change in Australian historiography since W.E.H. Stanner addressed the absence of Aboriginal historiography by calling it the "great Australian silence" and examining "the history of indifference."<sup>25</sup> The confrontation between emerging scholars and existent scholarship established a historiography typified by conflict – the controversial nature of Australian Aboriginal historiography has engaged both the public and the academy in debates about inclusion, interpretation, and standards of scholarship.

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<sup>24</sup> Public interest is most clearly expressed in coverage by the CBC and *The Globe and Mail*.

<sup>25</sup> W.E.H. Stanner, *After the Dreaming: Black and White Australians – An Anthropologist's View. The Boyer Lectures, 1968*, (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1969) and "The history of indifference thus begins." *Aboriginal History*. 1:1 (1977) 3-26.

The public nature of historiographical debate is grounded in both the exclusive nature of the Australian metanarrative and the aggressive nature of early contributors to Aboriginal historiography. In the 1968 Boyer lectures, broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Company, Stanner attacked the existent body of Australian historiography; he argued that the absence of Aboriginal peoples from the national narrative was

... a structural matter, a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape. What may well have begun as a simple forgetting of other possible views turned under habit and over time into something like a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale. We have been able for so long to disremember the aborigines that we are now hard put to keep them in mind even when we most want to do so.<sup>26</sup>

The systemic erasure of Aboriginal history (and Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relations) from the Australian metanarrative created a guilt-free history of peaceful colonisation. Other scholars, like C.D. Rowley, have also condemned the forgiving nature of Australian historiography, as settlers and governments were excused from their roles on the violent frontier.<sup>27</sup> However, historian Henry Reynolds indicates that the amnesia was only a 20<sup>th</sup> century condition; his examinations of 19<sup>th</sup> century reports and texts indicate the recognition and acceptance of frontier conflict and suggest that national forgetfulness was “a recent phenomenon . . . [which] coincided with Federation and the flowering of Australian nationalism.”<sup>28</sup> Based upon examinations of mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century historiography, being Australian was to be “different” from their imperial fore-bearers; Australians were not colonisers. Revisionist historiography attacked the foundations of

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<sup>26</sup> Stanner, 1969, 25.

<sup>27</sup> C.D. Rowley, Aboriginal policy and practice: the Destruction of Aboriginal Society (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970-71).

<sup>28</sup> Henry Reynolds notes silence from 1900-1950 approximately, which he examines in relation to the openness in which violence was discussed in newspapers and late 19<sup>th</sup> c national history texts. Why Weren't We Told?: A Personal Search for the Truth About our History (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1999) 91-92, 106-110.

this national historical mythology and the Australian identity to which it was tied. The problematization of the peaceful Australian metanarrative began in the 1970s with the inclusion of the “complex interactions between indigenous peoples and Europeans or others during the last three hundred years of what is often unhelpfully referred to as ‘contact history’” which led to public engagement with this debate.<sup>29</sup>

The debate about Aboriginal historiography received interest from all corners, most particularly former left-wing Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating. Although Keating focused on contemporary social and political issues, he also addressed the absence of active Aboriginal Australians in national texts and wished to correct Australians’ understanding of colonial history. To mark the International Year for the World’s Indigenous People in 1993, Keating urged the Australian people to integrate Aboriginal Australia into their historical consciousness:

[I]t might help us if we non-Aboriginal Australians imagined ourselves dispossessed of land we had lived on for fifty thousand years - and then imagined ourselves told that it had never been ours. Imagine if ours was the oldest culture in the world and we were told that it was worthless. Imagine if we had resisted this settlement, suffered and died in the defence of our land, and then were told in history books that we had given up without a fight. Imagine if non-Aboriginal Australians had served their country in peace and war and were then ignored in history books. . . . Imagine if our spiritual life was denied and ridiculed. Imagine if we had suffered the injustice and then were blamed for it.<sup>30</sup>

Keating’s advocacy for a new Australian history is more significant in the face of opposition from the current, long- governing federal Liberal party. Informed by divergent ideology, Aboriginal historiography appears to disinterest Liberal Prime

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<sup>29</sup> Isabel McBryde, “Perspectives of the past: an introduction,” Terrible Hard Biscuits: A Reader in aboriginal history, eds. Valerie Chapman and Peter Read (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, Journal of Aboriginal History, 1996) 2.

<sup>30</sup> Paul Keating, International Year for the World’s Indigenous Peoples Speech at Redfern, 1993. <http://www.keating.org.au/main.cfm>

Minister John Howard. He stands accused as an enemy of “black armband” history.<sup>31</sup> By attacking Aboriginal historiography which prioritizes frontier violence and the power imbalance of colonization, those with “white blindfolds” seek to deny guilt, and maintain their innocence and identity.<sup>32</sup> It may be more interesting to note that Howard’s platform for Aboriginal issues is grounded firmly in the idea of practical reconciliation to recognize current social issues. “Symbolic expressions of support are important. However, they are given real meaning when backed with improvements in living standards. That is why we place a great degree of emphasis on practical reconciliation.”<sup>33</sup> Howard avoids discussing history and historiography by redirecting public attention away from genocide models of Australian history and the debate surrounding it to current political issues.

Australian history, as written by Henry Reynolds, Lyndall Ryan, Jan Critchett, and others, has been characterized by its focus on interracial conflict. Reynolds contrasts this revisionist emphasis on race and conflict with earlier perceptions of “the passing of the Aborigines’ as an indicator of colonial progress, a measure of achievement.”<sup>34</sup> The focus on frontier warfare is no more one-sided than its absence in the metanarrative. Further to the introduction of the hostile frontier and colonial invasion model of Australian history, scholarly and public debates about the genocide model have

<sup>31</sup> This term was coined by historian Geoffrey Blainey who wished to create a more “balanced” view of Australian history – representative of national progress and of some elements of colonial shame. See further discussion in Stuart McIntyre, “Australia and Empire,” *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. V: Historiography, ed. Robin W. Winks. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 179-80.

<sup>32</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, “‘Black Armband’ versus ‘White Blindfold’ History in Australia,” *Victorian Studies* (Summer 2004) 655-674. Colin Tatz, “Confronting Australian Genocide,” *Aboriginal History* 25 (2001) 16-36. Reynolds, *An Indelible Stain? The question of genocide in Australia’s history* (Ringwood, Vic: Viking, Penguin Books Australia Ltd., 2001).

<sup>33</sup> P.M. John Howard, “Menzie’s Lecture Series: Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Issues,” Speech from Official Website of Prime Minister of Australia, John Howard: News Room. Dec 13, 2000. Retrieved March 2006 from <http://www.pm.gov.au/News/speeches/2000/speech587.htm>.

<sup>34</sup> Henry Reynolds, *An Indelible Stain? The question of genocide in Australia’s history* (Ringwood, Vic: Viking, Penguin Books Australia Ltd., 2001) 177.



“intensified”.<sup>35</sup> In 2001, *Aboriginal History* published a special edition on genocide in Australian history, and several books been recently gone to press. Terminology, rather than historical methodology, is at the core of the debate in this periodical. The warfare and massacres on the Australian colonial frontier are embedded in modern Aboriginal historiography; however, academics have yet to agree whether the history of violence and dispossession can be called “genocide”.<sup>36</sup> This debate about genocide and the violent nature of Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relations on the frontier may have been sparked by academics, but the public has become involved through the popular press and broadcasters. The public debate is broader, focused not on the rhetoric, but on the “truth” of frontier history, upon which Australian (some suggest) identity hinges. More specifically, Keith Windschuttle suggests revisionist history is mythology, and his work has become the driving force behind the public discussion about black-armband history.

Windschuttle’s critique of current Aboriginal historiography is developed through the three-part series entitled: “The Myths of Frontier Massacres in Australian History.”<sup>37</sup> Throughout the series, Windschuttle targets well-respected historians like Henry Reynolds, Lyndall Ryan, and Richard Broome; he suggests that other scholars have been “duped” and “misled” by these historians, who over the past twenty years, have focused

<sup>35</sup> Ann Curthoys and John Docker, “Introduction – Genocide, definitions, questions, settler-colonies,” *Aboriginal History* 25 (2001) 2.

<sup>36</sup> “Genocide?”: Australian Aboriginal history in international perspective,” *Aboriginal History* 25 (2001). This question is examined further in Reynolds, *An Indelible Stain?* and within an American perspective in Ward Churchill, *A little matter of genocide: Holocaust and denial in the Americas 1492 to the present* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997).

<sup>37</sup> Windschuttle, “The Myths of the Frontier Massacres in Australian History. Part I: The Invention of Massacre Stories,” *Quadrant* 44:10 (Oct 2000) 8-21; “The Myths of the Frontier Massacres in Australian History. Part II: The Fabrication of the Aboriginal Death Toll,” *Quadrant* 44:11 (Nov 2000) 17-24; “The Myths of the Frontier Massacres in Australian History. Part III: Massacre Stories and the Policy of Separatism,” *Quadrant* 44:12 (Dec 2000) 6-20. See further, Keith Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History. Vol 1: Van Diemen’s Land 1803-1847* (Sydney: Macleay Press, 2002).

their attentions on the “invention of massacre stories.”<sup>38</sup> Windschuttle declares that he will prove that these stories have been fabricated by undertaking a thorough examination of the texts and their sources.

Interestingly, Windschuttle is unsettled by historical interpretations of frontier conflict as it “contrast(s) between the Australian ethos of egalitarianism and a ‘fair go’.”<sup>39</sup> He suggests that large-scale genocide in the nineteenth century would be impossible as the Australian colonies were “civilized societies governed by both morality and laws.”<sup>40</sup> It is apparent that Windschuttle idealizes colonial society, and by creating a polarity between civilization, morality, and egalitarianism and savagery, lawlessness, and inequality, he suggests that non-Aboriginal colonists would be incapable of brutal, large-scale frontier warfare. Windschuttle suggests that both twentieth century left-wing historians and colonial missionaries used the genocide argument to support the development of an autonomous Aboriginal state in Australia.<sup>41</sup> He reverses the gaze of discrimination upon historians like Reynolds and Coombs and suggests their anti-modern movement for Aboriginal sovereignty is segregationist and does not reflect the ideals of Australian egalitarianism.

Windschuttle has seized the attention of the Australian public by appealing to their patriotism. Dirk Moses, a history lecturer at University of Sydney reinforces this interpretation by noting that “Windschuttle gets attention because he has a simple

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<sup>38</sup> Windschuttle, Oct 2000, 9.

<sup>39</sup> Windschuttle, Oct 2000, 8.

<sup>40</sup> Windschuttle, Nov 2000, 23.

<sup>41</sup> He suggests the missionaries supported segregation to facilitate assimilation; while, today, historians are motivated by romantic notions of primitiveness to support an autonomous Aboriginal state. However, Windschuttle notes, modern Aboriginal peoples have clearly indicated they do not want sovereignty as they have abandoned their traditional lands, languages and roles. See Windschuttle, Dec 2000, 19. Of course, Windschuttle’s understanding of aboriginality is essentialist; he does not recognize the complexities of Aboriginal identity or history.

message many Anglo-Australians want to hear: historians have concocted the evidence of large-scale frontier conflict . . . We can all feel relaxed and comfortable about the past.”<sup>42</sup> However, he diminishes Windschuttle’s legitimacy and influence by critiquing his insufficient historical training and his long-time absence from the academy. Reynolds suggests that Windschuttle’s work is popular because he is not a professional historian; in fact, Reynolds argues that it is Windschuttle’s savvy with the media, rather than his historical foundations which have increased his visibility and the controversy of the subject.<sup>43</sup> As Windschuttle garners more attention to his fabricated controversy, the debate flares in the public and academic spheres.<sup>44</sup>

More recent controversy has entered the Australian dialogue on Aboriginal historiography with the 2005 publication of Michael Connor’s *Invention of Terra Nullius* which charges Reynolds for fraudulence in his application of the term *terra nullius* to ascribe colonial policy of dispossessing aborigines of land and questions it as the basis of native title.<sup>45</sup> Reynolds has received support from fellow historians like Greg Melleuish and Lorenzo Verancini, not for his methodological errors which Connor uncovers, but for the ideological basis of *terra nullius* and its significant impact on current law, policy and

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<sup>42</sup> Dirk Moses, “Rendering the past less unpalatable.” *The Australian*. (Jan 13, 2003).

<sup>43</sup> Henry Reynolds, Interview, *Conference on Native-Newcomer Relations: Comparative Perspectives*, University of Saskatchewan May 9 2003. See Appendix C.

<sup>44</sup> Graeme Davison’s critique of social history, while more moderate than Windschuttle, does question the motivation and validity of social history. He makes various claims regarding the significance of historical study to the maintenance of a healthy national identity informed by progress. He extends his argument to emphasise the necessity of academic involvement with public history and he suggests this ensures the public is getting “good” history. *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (St. Leonard’s, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000) and “Navigating Australia’s Past: Milestones, Crossroads, Slow Curves and Blind Turns,” *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, 7:2 (2001) 4-15.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Connor, *The Invention of Terra Nullius: Historical and Legal Fictions on the Foundation of Australia*. (Macleay Press, 2005).

historiography.<sup>46</sup> This most recent debate is further evidence of the vitality of Australian historiography, its coverage in public forums, and its impact on Australians' sense of nation and identity.

Australians are more engaged with Aboriginal historiography – as Australian historiography – because its controversial nature competes with the core of their identity. Public engagement in the historiographical debate has created a situation for historians to focus on frontier conflict in Aboriginal history, but there are examples of historians who have ventured into the 20<sup>th</sup> century or explorations of work, gender or education.<sup>47</sup> Aboriginal historiography cannot be considered stagnant; this element of history has led to innovation in theory and methodology, and has created strength in the discipline which may not have existed otherwise. If, as Canadian historians Carlson, Jetté, and Matsui suggest, Canadian historiography is a mile wide and an inch deep, it may be suggested that Australian scholarship has little breadth but much depth.<sup>48</sup>

Clearly, there has been reaction against the revision and fragmentation of national history in Western scholarship both in Canada and Australia. However, these reactions have been expressed in different ways. Canadian scholarship has become more diverse as Aboriginal historiography has developed, generally isolated within the academy. Cooperation and criticism between historians has resulted in innovative and diverse scholarship. Australian scholars united to confront the national narrative and contribute

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<sup>46</sup> Greg Melleuish, "Ideology fogs the past," *The Australian* (Jan 11, 2006). Veracini, Lorenzo. "Terra nullius and the 'history wars'." Online Opinion – Australia's e-journal of social and political debate. Feb 10, 2006. Retrieved March 14, 2006 from <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/print.asp?article=4141>.

<sup>47</sup> Some notable exceptions include: Ann McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle': Aborigines in Cattle Country*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987); McGrath, "'Modern Stone-Age Slavery': Images of Aboriginal Labour and Sexuality," *Labour History* 69 (November 1995) 30-51. Katherine Ellinghaus, "Margins of Acceptability: Class, Education, and Interracial Marriage in Australia and North America," *Frontiers* 23:3 (2002) 55-75. Ann Curthoys and Clive Moore, "Working for the White People: an Historiographic Essay on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Labour," *Labour History* 69 (November 1995) 1-29.

<sup>48</sup> Carlson et al. 125-26.

to a controversial debate about the violent nature of Aboriginal historiography. This controversy has engaged the public in historiographical dialogue which has strengthened the discipline.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Canadian historiography: Cooperation, Compromise, and Acculturation**

Alongside the development of Canadian social history, the role of Aboriginal peoples gained importance in the national historical narrative. No longer relegated to early colonial histories of the fur trade or The Seven Years War, most current metanarratives recognize the significant impact of Aboriginal peoples on the shape of the nation, reflecting governmental support of Aboriginal sovereignty and the three founding nations interpretation of history. Fur trade and treaty history were the fore-bearers of current Aboriginal history, and despite a rise in cultural and social examinations of Aboriginal history, economic and political interpretations of Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relations continue to dominate the field. The most significant change over the past half century is the recognition of Aboriginal agency and motivations – no longer passive victims or noble savages, interpretations now acknowledge active Aboriginal economic, political, and social participation. These historiographical changes further support the cooperative nature of Canadian colonial history, which has been given the relatively benign label ‘Native-Newcomer’ history. Generally, Canadian historiography focuses upon the relationships developed between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to facilitate economic gain, military success, or political concord. However, the relationships, as most current scholarship suggests, were not always cooperative. Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relationships were also characterised by compromise, conflict, and acculturation.

This chapter will explore the historiographical trends and patterns evident in the body of work spanning several decades, beginning in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Themes of compromise and cooperation are entrenched in Canadian Aboriginal historiography; they

will be examined from their origins in the national metanarrative, to early contributions to the field, to current debates about agency and the socio-cultural impact of colonisation in Canada.

Generally, the Canadian story focuses upon pre-20<sup>th</sup> century economic and political relationships between various Aboriginal groups. Although themes of dispossession and acculturation are significant, the lasting image of 'native-newcomer' relations is often one of cooperation and compromise framed within understandings of the fur trade and early political-military alliances (which dominated Aboriginal historiography of the 1970s and 1980s). Analyses of treaties and cultural policies (mostly published in the 1990s and 2000) provide balance to earlier Aboriginal historiography; these treatments are much more politicized and place emphasis on Aboriginal agency under strains of colonial exploitation. This is a reflection of real history where reciprocal relationships faltered with the fall of the great fur trade empire, but also influenced by Western scholarly traditions concerning evidentiary documentation and contemporary socio-political attitudes. The interpretive shifts in Aboriginal historiography are further evidence of the adaptability and diversity of Canadian scholarship.

### **First Chapters/First Nations: The Fur Trade & Frontier in National Historiography**

Within the framework of mid-century national historical narratives of economic and political progress, Aboriginal peoples are marginal support characters to the successful and heroic military, trading, and government officers. Examinations of frontier contact were brief and superficial, as the focus of the story was the development of the nation, founded in Euro-Christian institutions of democracy, capitalism and social order. The narrative of benign colonisation was developed in early texts and their

minimalist recognition of company-determined Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal trading relationships on the frontier. Later in the century, Aboriginal historians built upon this peripheral interpretation to develop a historical narrative of cross-cultural cooperation, which became entrenched in national historical consciousness. Early treatments of Aboriginal history illustrate a range of interpretations from incidental characters in economic nation building to romanticized images of the noble savage. All treatments highlight the cooperative nature of contact relationships; the image of “peaceful penetration” runs parallel to characterizations of Canada’s peaceful past.<sup>1</sup>

The groundwork for 20<sup>th</sup> century Canadian historiography was laid by Harold Innis in his iconic work *The Fur Trade in Canada*. His work had significant impact on the whole of Canadian historiography.<sup>2</sup> Innis portrays the Euro-Canadians as the driving force for an economic system which was effectively serviced by several Aboriginal nations; the role of the Aboriginal peoples was that of a worker dependent upon the goods provided by the paternalistic and monopolistic fur trade companies. He constructs an unequal relationship between the two players in the colonial economy and outlines the devastating impact of the Aboriginal adoption of European technology:

The history of the fur trade is the history of contact between two civilizations, the European and the North American, . . . The limited cultural background of the North American hunting peoples provided an insatiable demand for the products of the more elaborate cultural development of Europeans. The new technology with its radical innovations brought about such a rapid shift in the prevailing Indian

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<sup>1</sup> See further Bruce Trigger, “The Historians’ Indian: Native Americans in Canadian Historical Writing from Charlevoix to the Present,” *Canadian Historical Review* LXVII:3 (Sept 1986) 315-342 and Robin W. Winks, “Canada,” *The historiography of the British Empire-Commonwealth: trends, interpretations and resources* Edited by Robin W. Winks (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1966) 69-136: 66.

<sup>2</sup> Harold A. Innis, *The Fur trade in Canada: an introduction to Canadian economic history* (New Haven: Yale University Press; London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1930). Innis’ Eurocentric interpretation led to a common perception of cooperative colonization in Canada, but more significant is his role in Donald Creighton’s development of the Laurentian thesis, which made waterways, the St. Lawrence River, and central Canada the focus of Canadian historiography.



culture as to lead to whole-sale destruction of the peoples concerned by warfare and disease.<sup>3</sup>

Despite Innis' dire description of the breakdown of a people, his interpretation does not suggest that Aboriginal peoples were victims of a belligerent or violent colonial experience. Rather, the Indians in Innis' story are willing participants and a minor casualty in the economic and political progress of the nation.

Innis was a major influence on many historians in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Donald Creighton. Creighton's conservative analysis of Canadian economic and political history discusses the fur trade in some detail; in fact, it is the basis for his Laurentian thesis. The impact of Donald Creighton's single-volume historical narratives, including *Dominion of the North*, *Empire of the St. Lawrence*, and *The Story of Canada*, is significant to the current state of Canadian historiography; although his conservative approach may now seem antiquated, the themes of civilizing a harsh wilderness, the conquest of colonial New France, and economic and political progress of the dominion are evident in the Canadian metanarrative.<sup>4</sup>

The beginning of Creighton's history is marked by the arrival of Europeans. He introduces Aboriginal peoples as sources of information and trade; however, he clearly demarcates the differences between the two groups and sets the stage for a chronological history with an emphasis on progress and European civilization.

Immediately these migrants had to come to terms with the new continent. From it they had to wrest a living; and since they were Europeans and not Indians, a living meant not merely the food to sustain life but the amenities of West-European civilization which alone could make it tolerable. They had to find means to produce their own necessities and to pay for their

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<sup>3</sup> Innis, 388.

<sup>4</sup> Donald Creighton, *Dominion of the North: A History of Canada* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1944); *The empire of the St. Lawrence* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1956); *The Story of Canada* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1965).

imports from Europe. They had to live in and by the new world; and they were driven, by this double compulsion, to understand the possibilities of the new continent and exploit its resources.<sup>5</sup>

This indicates a clear framework polarizing the primitive Aboriginal with the civilized Euro-Canadian, and lays a foundation for an ethnocentric analysis and marginal treatment of Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history.

Creighton's story focuses on Europeans in British North America – their settlement, development and progress. The original peoples of the land are relegated to the early pages as representatives of the uncivilized environment, the fur trade, and the power of European technology and civilization (as peoples who succumbed to the lure of the trappings of civilized society). Using descriptors like “primitive” and “simple”, Creighton suggests Indians were a “savage and often degraded people”<sup>6</sup> The first contact stories were ones of danger and fear, while later he describes relations as interdependent in context of the colonial French fur trade:

Indian society was not a separate and self-sufficient organism; it was vitally dependent upon the fur trade. And the fur trade, in its turn, could only exist in the primitive hunting community of the Indians. . . . It was the great fur-trading economy of the St. Lawrence which linked the administration at Quebec with the Indians in the interior, for it was the basis of Quebec's western imperialism. It was essentially a single, primitive economy which lay at the bottom of this complex of political and economic interests.<sup>7</sup>

Beyond trade with the French, Creighton pays little attention to Aboriginal peoples in the English colonies, and their important relationship with early colonists remains on the periphery of the narrative.

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<sup>5</sup> Creighton, 1937, 2-3.

<sup>6</sup> Creighton, 1944, 38-39.

<sup>7</sup> Creighton, 1937, 94-95.

In contrast to early works by Innis and Creighton, nationalist historian Arthur Lower dismissed any relationship or cooperation between European traders and Aboriginal nations. The two monographs included in this analysis of his work are *Canadians in the Making* and *Colony to Nation*.<sup>8</sup> As do most historians writing in a traditional format, Lower marks the beginning of Canadian history with European appearance and activity – the nation was an empty, savage wilderness to be overcome by European civilization. He ends his triumphant tales with the celebration of the modern, independent Canadian nation and its likely success in the future – having conquered the wilderness in the face of massive cultural conflict.

Lower relegates Aboriginal peoples to the first chapters of his work, paying little attention to their roles in the fur trade or settlement. Rather, he discusses contrasting images of “Indian filth and carnality” and “the ‘noble red man’” in his critique of the European romanticization of Aboriginal culture.<sup>9</sup>

For the whites in America, to whom the Indian was always more or less visible, sentiment never grew to romantic heights: the best that could be done out here was to make the Indian an expert hunter and trail-blazer, the hero of a ‘wild west show’, a *Last of the Mohicans*, a picturesque, rather than a romantic figure. The French term for ‘Indians’ was realistic, *les sauvages*.<sup>10</sup>

These representations are very different from Creighton and Innis’ recognition of the necessity of Aboriginal peoples in the economic development of Canada; Lower’s texts provide little room to build upon Aboriginal historical study.

The Aboriginal presence in traditional Canadian historiography reflects the social confusion over race, status, and sovereignty. Mid-century texts recognized the

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<sup>8</sup> Arthur R.M. Lower, *Colony to Nation: A History of Canada*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (McCelland and Stewart, 1977; 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1946); *Canadians in the making: a social history of Canada* (Don Mills: Longmans Canada Ltd, 1958).

<sup>9</sup> Lower, 1958, 11-12.

<sup>10</sup> Lower, 1958, 13.

significance of the fur trade in the development of Canadian economy, and in effect, recognized the significance of Aboriginal peoples in the past. However, these texts were written through the lens of ethnocentrism; Aboriginal roles were minimized and peripheral in both national metanarratives and early contributions to Aboriginal history. Competing images of the romanticized wisdom and childlike savagery were developed to study and write the historical Indian.

The field of Aboriginal history slowly evolved out of traditional Canadian history, within the frameworks of political and economic history with evidence of some integration of anthropology. Early Aboriginal history was written solely in the context of relations with European colonizers in economic or political circumstances. An analysis of initial Canadian Aboriginal historiography will provide further support for understanding the stereotype of the benign colonial experience, which is founded in early texts which highlight economic, political and social cooperation between Aboriginal peoples and European colonizers.<sup>11</sup>

The impact of A.G. Bailey's *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures* is one of the most significant contributions in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> Bailey was one of the first historians to recognize the mutual effect of colonization – the necessity of adaptation of both Aboriginal and French-colonial cultures. His use of anthropological data informs his study of Algonkian culture over two centuries in the early colonial period. This monograph laid the groundwork for later socio-cultural

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<sup>11</sup> For example, Innis, 1930. George F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (Toronto: U of T Press, 1961). Stanley, "The Indians in the War of 1812," (originally published in *Canadian Historical Review*, 1950) *Sweet Promises: a reader on Indian-white relations in Canada*, ed. J.R. Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

<sup>12</sup> Alfred Goldsworthy Bailey, *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures 1504-1700*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969; c.1937).

analyses of colonization and developed a model for a cooperative interpretation of colonization. Bailey's discussion indicates that the better or most successful tools and methods for subsistence were adopted; with little analysis, he indicates that the Algonkians quickly adapted to European utensils, tools and weapons (and later foodstuffs because of loss of game), while Europeans adopted Aboriginal modes of transportation.

It was, therefore, an obvious desire on the part of the Indian to obtain those articles by which his own crafts could be carried out more rapidly and easily. Hence, the native utensils and implements were cast aside. . . . The effects of the influx of European materials upon the native life were far-reaching.<sup>13</sup>

There is a clear imbalance of power and an indication that Bailey feels Aboriginal adoption and dependence on European goods were necessary parts of the colonization. Bailey's interpretation is representative of a large body of Canadian historiography; the framework of his analysis is early colonization dominated by economic, military and religious contact; his work helps to build the image of benign colonization in Canada.

G.F.G. Stanley made significant contributions to the study of Aboriginal history in the 1950s and 1960s through examinations of the War of 1812 and colonization in Western Canada. His focus on the relationships between Aboriginal peoples and British officials demonstrates his perception of Canada's benign colonization. He suggests that European-Indian military alliances were important foundations for future relations for Aboriginal peoples and Europeans alike. Although he maintains a colonialist dichotomy by characterizing "Indian warfare" as "barbaric",<sup>14</sup> he emphasized the significance of Aboriginal participation and alliance with the British against the Americans. He maintains a romanticized image of the noble warrior, quoting Brock at length, describing

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<sup>13</sup> Bailey, 46.

<sup>14</sup> Stanley, 1950, 118.

Tecumseh as a “sagacious” and “gallant” warrior.<sup>15</sup> Stanley further romanticizes the past relationships between Aboriginal peoples and Euro-Canadians by constructing the Western treaties as examples of the good will of the colonial officials and their relationship with Aboriginal peoples.<sup>16</sup> Throughout his body of work, Stanley maintains a discourse which polarizes Euro-Canadian civilization and progress and the prescribed inability of Aboriginal peoples to abandon their primitive culture for a new nation while supporting an interpretation which celebrates Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal cooperation.

The work of E.E. Rich builds upon the narrative of the cooperative fur trade frontier. Rather than limit his research to European actors, Rich turned his attention to the Aboriginal participants and their objectives and intentions in the fur trade. Rich argues that Aboriginal participation in the fur trade was precipitated by economic need and that Aboriginal motivation was significant in the shaping of the fur trade. Through an examination of official and personal post communications and HBC trading records, Rich demonstrated that “To a large extent these Indian traders dictated the pattern of European expansion in the continent, and they influenced the character of the European trade even when they could not confine it.”<sup>17</sup> Rich’s work was ground-breaking because he introduced Aboriginal agency to the cooperative model of fur trade historiography. Before Rich, the relationship between European traders and Aboriginal trappers had been cooperative, but dominated by the traders. Rich’s recognition of the significance of the Aboriginal roles in the economic foundations of Canada established a new framework for fur trade history and Aboriginal historiography. From Innis to Bailey and Stanley to

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<sup>15</sup> Stanley, 1950, 105, 110-11.

<sup>16</sup> “The Métis were not only defeated; as a distinct national and political group they were annihilated.” Stanley, 1961, 378.

<sup>17</sup> E.E. Rich, “Trade Habits and Economic Motivation Among the Indians of the North America,” Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science (26) 1960 36.

Rich, the place of Aboriginal peoples in Canadian historiography became more significant as a benign interpretation of colonial history was constructed. All treatments highlight the cooperative nature of contact relationships; the image of “peaceful penetration” runs parallel to characterizations of Canada’s peaceful past.<sup>18</sup>

### **Aboriginal Agency: Frameworks of Cooperation, Concession and Defiance**

Fur trade historiography informed Aboriginal historiography – without the former, the shape of the latter may not be familiar today. Fur trade history was legitimate as a part of growing social history because of its economic impact on the nation and its maintenance of the myth of benign colonization. Although some historiographers may be critical of these early “compensatory studies”,<sup>19</sup> they were the first to indicate the strength of Aboriginal agency in the fur trade, to recognize motivations for involvement and to dismiss the perception of the Aboriginal victim duped by savvy European traders.

The early interpretation of the fur trade minimized the role of Aboriginal peoples; in the metanarrative, the Euro-Canadian traders were the dominant figures controlling trade and profiting at the Indians’ expense. New rationalist interpretations introduced concepts of Aboriginal agency and trading power in the cross-cultural economic relationships of the fur trade in works written by Arthur Ray, Donald Freeman, Bruce Trigger, and Richard White in the 1970s and 1980s.

Sparked by questions posed by E.E. Rich, A.J. Ray and Donald Freeman explored the motivations and choices of Aboriginal players in the fur trade in *Give us Good*

<sup>18</sup> See further Bruce Trigger, “The Historians’ Indian: Native Americans in Canadian Historical Writing from Charlevoix to the Present,” *Canadian Historical Review* LXVII:3 (Sept 1986) 315-342 and Robin W. Winks, “Canada,” *The historiography of the British Empire-Commonwealth : trends, interpretations and resources* Edited by Robin W. Winks (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1966) 69-136: 66.

<sup>19</sup> See the critique by Kerry Abel who suggests that fur trade historiography treated Aboriginal actors as secondary characters in “‘Tangled, Lost and Bitter?’ Current Directions in the Writing of Native History in Canada,” *Acadiensis* 26:1 (Autumn 1996) 92-101. Also refer to Adrian Tanner, “The End of Fur Trade History,” *Queen’s Quarterly* XC (1983).

*Measure.* Ray and Freeman choose to undertake an economic analysis of the fur trade, as they suggest economic motivation was more significant than political or social interaction:

In sum, the Indians' motivation for participating in trade with the Hudson's Bay Company was complex. They traded to satisfy their own immediate demand for European goods and to acquire status through the redistribution of material wealth that they gained through exchange. The love of adventure, ceremony, and social contact were also factors which encouraged them to travel to the bay. The political dimension did not assume great significance in that exchange at the bay and was not predicated on the negotiation of military alliances nor intended to cement political treaties.<sup>20</sup>

This rationalist approach was a major break in traditional fur trade historiography; first, it placed much greater emphasis on the Indians and their relationship with the company and second, it demonstrated their choices and agency in this colonial economic system and its impact on Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relations outside the fur trade. As Ray suggests, fur trade history is Aboriginal history: “For these reasons Indian history should not simply be devoted to recounting the manner in which the aboriginal peoples of Canada were subjugated and exploited, but it must also consider the positive contribution that the Indian peoples made to the fur trade and hence, to the development of Canada.”<sup>21</sup> Ray argues that more positive treatments of Aboriginal peoples within the fur trade, a significant component of the national historiography, provides a window for more inclusionary history.

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<sup>20</sup> Arthur J. Ray and Donald B. Freeman, *"Give us good measure": an economic analysis of relations between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company before 1763* (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, c1978) 241. On Aboriginal agency and economic motivations in the fur trade, see E.E. Rich, 1960 and *The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857* The Canadian Centenary Series (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1967). Also see Robin Fisher's discussion on Aboriginal peoples' political and economic motivations in the fur trade in *Contact and conflict : Indian-European relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (2nd ed. Vancouver : University of British Columbia Press, c1992.)

<sup>21</sup> Arthur J. Ray, "Fur Trade History as an Aspect of Native History," *One Century Later: Western Canadian Reserve Indians Since Treaty 7* ed. Ian A.L. Getty & Donald B. Smith (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1978) 7.



Despite the cooperative nature of the fur trade, Aboriginal peoples made many compromises to ensure survival in colonial Canada. Cultural adaptation and transformation is a significant part of the Canadian story; although a pattern of cooperative historiography dominates scholarship, evidence also exists in fur trade historiography of the pain of acculturation and segregation:

Over time the character of this trade changed, as did the roles which the Indians played in it. Yet, even though their roles changed, they were central characters in the system and without them the trade could not have been successfully prosecuted. But, in spite of the fact that necessity for cooperation prevented any deliberate attempts to destroy the Indians and their cultures by hostile actions, their traditional life ways were transformed nonetheless. . . . (O)ut of economic necessity, rather than intensive political and military pressure, the Indians agreed to settle on reserves with the promise that the government would look after their welfare and help them make yet another adjustment to changing economic conditions.<sup>22</sup>

Themes of cooperation and compromise are also significant in Bruce Trigger's *Natives and Newcomers*. Trigger's earlier works, much more anthropological in nature, established him as an important contributor to emerging ethnohistory in Canada.

Although Trigger's focus is in New France and early colonial relations with Iroquois and Huron, the archetypes of British colonization are quite similar. He counters older texts which reinforced the image of the dependent Indian victim. His emphasis on Aboriginal agency in colonial relations was shaped by his rationalist approach; Trigger argues that Aboriginal participation in the fur trade was informed by their economic, political, and social interests.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Arthur J. Ray, Indians in the fur trade: their role as trappers, hunters, and middlemen in the lands southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974) 228.

<sup>23</sup> Aboriginal agency was significant in the shaping of Aboriginal –non-Aboriginal relationships in the fur trade, as indicated by Black-Rogers' study of Subarctic Algonquian and Athabaskan manipulation of

It is tempting to portray native North Americans in sombre tones as the victims of unrelenting European self-interest. . . . To some degree this view is a necessary antidote to a long-standing tendency of historians to minimize the moral responsibility of European settlers for the sufferings of native peoples. Yet such a view fails to acknowledge the tenacity with which native peoples, in the face of increasingly unequal odds, despite a spiralling death rate, growing economic dependence, and unrelenting efforts of Europeans to control every aspect of their lives.<sup>24</sup>

Both Trigger and Ray's interpretative frameworks reflect a large section of Canadian Aboriginal historiography – emphasis is placed upon Aboriginal agency within the colonial relationship, but economic, political, social losses are noted and linked to the acculturative policies and practices of colonization. However, the overall message illustrates a kinder, gentler colonial legacy. Although this experience was not universal, it is the dominant picture of Canada's Aboriginal history.

Although economic analyses remained significant, the field expanded beyond fur trade analyses in the 1980s with the introduction of social examinations, in particular research on women in the fur trade and the development of Métis society. One of the earliest and most notable studies is by feminist historian Sylvia Van Kirk. In *Many Tender Ties*, Van Kirk examines the complexity of the social and economic relationships between Aboriginal women and European men. She argues that women were active participants in complex relationships — they made the choice to leave their Aboriginal community to escape the drudgery of their lives and receive the benefits of life with a white trader.<sup>25</sup> Although her emphasis rests on the inequalities of traditional Aboriginal life, she does recognize the entrenched patriarchy within European models of marriage.

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economic supply and demand. Mary Black-Rogers, "Varieties of 'Starving': Semantics and Survival in the Subarctic Fur Trade, 1750-1850," *Ethnohistory* 33:4 (Fall 1986) 353-83.

<sup>24</sup> Trigger, 1985, 297.

<sup>25</sup> Sylvia VanKirk, "Many Tender Ties": *Women in Fur Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870*. (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing Ltd., 1980) 75-77.

However, it is important to note that these marriages “in the custom of the country” were mutually beneficial.<sup>26</sup> Within these relationships, women acted as ties between communities and traders which maintained and increased the momentum of the fur trade in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. They introduced skills and knowledge of the land to their European husbands whose survival often depended upon traditional foodstuffs and remedies and familiarity with the local terrain and climate. Unlike their mothers, the Métis daughters of these relationships had few ties to their Aboriginal communities — Van Kirk suggests they demonstrated less autonomy as they relied more heavily on European ways of life.<sup>27</sup> The cooperative nature of Aboriginal-European relationships moved beyond the fur trade, as illustrated by VanKirk. Social interpretations of Aboriginal history further entrenched the understanding of or appreciation for a cooperative/benign frontier.

According to Jennifer Brown’s monograph *Strangers in Blood*, the development of fur trade families was a necessary social development in the early stages of the fur trade. The impact of this early social interdependence could be measured in the success of the fur trade. However, the skills, knowledge and kinship Aboriginal women brought to a relationship became unnecessary as the fur trade became a well-developed economic structure. Brown argues that Métis women became more desirable as wives; because of their mixed heritage it was assumed they would assimilate much more quickly and readily than Aboriginal women.<sup>28</sup> Although women actively participated in the fur trade — as processors for their Aboriginal husbands or as country wives to European traders —

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<sup>26</sup> VanKirk, 28-36. The mutual benefits of a fur trade marriage are also discussed in Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980) 64-7.

<sup>27</sup> VanKirk (1980) 95-6; 121-2.

<sup>28</sup> Brown, 70-77.

the fundamental change which manifested from this participation had negative effects on the value and power of Aboriginal women. Beyond politics and trade, both Brown and Van Kirk illustrate the social partnerships embedded in the fur trade. Both the creation and abandonment of Métis community and family indicate the significance and fragility of the Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal partnership. Furthermore, Brown and Van Kirk's integration of feminist and cultural analyses laid the groundwork for the field to move beyond the economic boundaries of the fur trade.<sup>29</sup>

The significance of the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies and economies in the fur trade were key to establishing the foundation of Canadian Aboriginal historiography of cooperation and compromise. This interpretation gained further impact with the 1990 publication of *The Middle Ground* by Richard White.<sup>30</sup> White examines nearly two centuries of trade and Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relations in the Great Lakes region; he tends to focus on Algonquian and French societies, but also considers Iroquois, Huron, British and American societies. White argues that it is difficult to separate the fur trade from analyses of contemporary Aboriginal and colonial societies and politics. White suggests the success of the middle ground was based upon a system of mutual accommodation, and was maintained in ritual

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<sup>29</sup> Refer to categories developed by Keith Thor Carlson, Melinda Marie Jetté, and Kenichi Matsui in "An Annotated Bibliography of Major Writings in Aboriginal History, 1990-99," *Canadian Historical Review* 82:1 (March 2001) 122-71. Their historiographical survey shows the breadth of Aboriginal historiography, including analyses of gender, society and culture, and post-colonial relations. For additional interpretations which integrate feminist interpretation, see Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997) and Joan Sangster, "Criminalizing the Colonized: Ontario Native Women Confront the Criminal Justice System, 1920-60," *Canadian Historical Review* 80:1 (March 1999) 32-60 and "'She Is Hostile to Our Ways': First Nations Girls Sentenced to the Ontario Training School for Girls, 1933-1960," *Law and History Review* 20:1 (Spring 2002) 59-96.

<sup>30</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1814*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991).

and gift-giving. Within this framework, the fur trade was an integral component of all

Aboriginal - non-Aboriginal relations on the frontier:

Normally, any discussion of the fur trade is segregated from the wider spectrum of social relations and exchanges between Indians and white. Yet the exchange of goods is not so easily fenced off into an economic realm whose rules are at once distinct from other aspects of life and present in all societies. . . . The fur trade was a constantly changing compromise, a conduit, between two local models of the exchange – the French and the Algonquian.<sup>31</sup>

The middle ground was the basis of successful relations and trade and the foundations for the social and political future of Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relationships. According to White, “[t]he middle ground is the place in between: in between cultures, peoples, and in between empires and the non-state world of villages.”<sup>32</sup> The middle ground interpretation redirects the power of the fur trade – the economic and social foundations of Canada – into the hands of Aboriginal nations. White’s model is representative of the bulk of Aboriginal historiography, it centralizes Aboriginal presence and celebrates Aboriginal agency.

The fur trade provided a solid avenue to further explore Aboriginal history in Canada. The legitimacy of this economic system validated the field in mainstream history, which engaged historians from the Prairies, Ontario, Quebec, and the United States. Scholars gathered at conferences on North American fur trade studies; particularly successful conferences were followed up by publications.<sup>33</sup> The dialogue

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<sup>31</sup> White 94.

<sup>32</sup> White x.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray (Eds.). Old trails and new directions : papers of the third North American Fur Trade Conference (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1980.) Bruce Trigger; Toby Morantz; Louise Dechêne (Eds.). “Le Castor Fait Tout.” Selected Papers of the Annual North American Fur Trade Conference, 1985. (Montreal: Lake St. Louis Historical Society, 1987.) Jennifer S.H. Brown; W.J. Eccles and Donald P. Heldman (Eds.) The fur trade revisited : selected papers of the sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991 (East Lansing :

generated by these conferences helped to develop an academic community for the fur trade, whether examinations were social or economic, centred on the companies or officers or Aboriginal trappers and traders. It is through fur trade historiography that Aboriginal peoples became more visible and significant to Canadian historiography – the imagery of the fur trade provided some shape to Aboriginal history.

The legitimacy and acceptability of the growing field of Aboriginal history is evident in an examination of the foremost historical periodical in Canada, *Canadian Historical Review*. From 1977 to 2003, nine percent of all articles published in the CHR could be classified as Aboriginal history.<sup>34</sup> Subject matter concentrates on two areas: policy issues (particularly mid to late-19<sup>th</sup> century, including Aboriginal resistance) and historiography. The focus on policy and legislation can be linked to available archival sources and shifting interpretative frameworks shaped by current socio-politics and historiographical assessment of methodology. The development of a peer-reviewed journal specific to Native Studies is further evidence of the growing significance of this interdisciplinary study, outside of historical scholarship.

*Native Studies Review*, published at the University of Saskatchewan since 1981, is an interdisciplinary forum for discussion of Aboriginal issues in the Canadian past, present and future. Approximately half of the articles published in NSR are historical in nature, with emphasis on policy, land, and race. This publication represents current work in Indigenous Studies in Canada – often issues are presented within holistic discussion of

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Michigan State University Press ; [Mackinac Island, Mich.] : Mackinac Island State Park Commission, 1994).

<sup>34</sup> As outlined in Chapter One, Aboriginal history is the history of social, political, economic, religious, and military relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. See Appendix B for data analysis.

theme or topic.<sup>35</sup> The political focus of these scholarly periodicals demonstrates the growth of the field, the increasing politicization of Aboriginal history, and the need for improved methodologies and interpretative frameworks.

Aboriginal historiography may have grown out of economic foundations, but the impact of political analyses is equally significant to the development of this field. Beyond examinations of military alliances and celebrations and vilifications of Louis Riel, Canadian Aboriginal historiography has a strong tradition of political analysis, particularly of treaties and the Indian Act. These analyses are equally interesting because they provide examples of Aboriginal history beyond the mid-nineteenth century and have led to important dialogues about sovereignty, traditional rights, and redress.

There is a clear shift, historically and historiographically, with the transition from early fur trade economy to settlement society. The Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relationships of economic cooperation quickly shifted to political compromise and subjugation with the expansion of settlement on the frontier. The introduction of western legal and social institutions, supported by assimilative legislation and segregationist policies, fundamentally changed the colonial relationship in Canada. This shift has been documented by historians; however, a shift is also evident between fur trade and political historiography. Policy analyses and treaty studies demonstrate stronger political motivation than earlier fur trade contributions. Often, studies link to current or more recent social-political issues which have stemmed from historical relationships.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The remainder of *NSR* articles engage readers in current political and social issues. See Appendix A for data analysis.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1993); Jean Friesen, "Magnificent Gifts: The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of the Northwest 1869-76," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, Series V, Vol I (1986) 41-51; and John Milloy, *A national crime: the Canadian government and the residential school system, 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999).

Although Aboriginal agency continues to be a strong interpretative theme, the nature of the relationship with “newcomers” changes – the motivations of the English and Canadian officers are more sinister and the outcomes more significant.

The difficult transition between fur trade and settlement is best illustrated in Robin Fisher’s 1977 work *Contact and Conflict*. His examination of the transition between economic “symbiosis”<sup>37</sup> and political manipulation is significant for its regional emphasis and its examination of the complex relationships between Euro-colonial attitudes toward Indians and their actions:

The differences between the attitudes of fur traders and settlers coincided with their intentions. When trade was the Europeans’ object the Indian was seen as primitive but responsive to the advantages of co-operation rather than hostile. When permanent settlement was the intention of the Europeans and they coveted Indian land, the Indian became a hostile savage, a hindrance rather than a help to the new arrival.<sup>38</sup>

Fisher refers to anthropological evidence which suggests that “acculturation, particularly when it is not forced, can be a creative process.”<sup>39</sup> Indeed, Aboriginal peoples throughout Canada demonstrated creativity in their approach and response to the Euro-Canadian models of political and cultural colonization, which has been discussed in more current examinations. Fisher’s work is significant because he explores the changing nature of colonial relationships and how these changes influenced the colonial legacy in British Columbia.

The relatively conciliatory nature of Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relations in the fur trade era led to some confusion over the nature of nineteenth century colonial policies of the British Colonial Office and the new government of Canada. The standard

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<sup>37</sup> Robin Fisher, *Contact and conflict : Indian-European relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* 2nd ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, c1992) 47.

<sup>38</sup> Fisher, 1992, 94.

<sup>39</sup> Fisher, 1992, 48.



approach, as represented by George Stanley in *The Birth of Western Canada*, maintained the nationalist myth of the peaceful and compassionate government offering protection and progress to backward and ungrateful peoples of the past. However, a new approach to sources supports a different interpretation. For example, John Tobias argues, "This traditional interpretation distorts the roles of both the Cree and the Canadian government, for the Cree were both flexible and active in promoting their own interests, and willing to accommodate themselves to a new way of life, while the Canadian government was neither as far-sighted nor as just as tradition maintains."<sup>40</sup> A.J. Ray, Jim Miller and Frank Tough also demonstrate new approaches to old sources can lead to different conclusions in their analysis of Saskatchewan treaties:

The reinterpretation we offer here contends that First Nations played a more active role in initiating and shaping treaties than academic scholarship has acknowledged to the present. We argue further that less praise is due the federal government and Canadians at large for the making of the treaties than older scholarship has suggested. Our title, *Bounty and Benevolence*, is intended to capture, with an ironic twist, this ambivalent rereading of the treaty story.<sup>41</sup>

Whereas fur trade studies quite clearly demonstrated active Aboriginal agency in the economic partnership between cultures, treaty analyses indicate a much different relationship where Aboriginal peoples acted as their own agents, but were forced to compromise for survival. In *Magnificent Gifts*, Jean Friesen problematizes Ray, Miller, and Tough's emphasis on Aboriginal participation in treaty-making by recognizing the "imbalance of power" inherent in nineteenth century treaty negotiations. However, Aboriginal negotiators were quite creative and skillful; Friesen notes,

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<sup>40</sup> Tobias, John, "The Subjugation of the Plains Cree," *Sweet promises : a reader on Indian-white relations in Canada*, ed. J.R. Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, c1991) 212.

<sup>41</sup> Arthur J. Ray, Jim Miller, and Frank Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence: A History of Saskatchewan Treaties* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 2000) xvii.

They may not have wanted the treaty they got; they may not have been able to influence the commissioners as extensively as they desired; but within the political and diplomatic framework they were presented with, they manoeuvred, stalled, debated, compared offers, and with some success played upon the commissioners' desire to win their friendship and peaceful acceptance of white intrusion into their lands.<sup>42</sup>

Aboriginal creativity and agency are quite clear in stories of EuroCanadian subjugation as post-fur trade historiography departs from imagery of partnership and goodwill.

Although earlier texts on Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal military and political relationships suggest colonisation was peaceful and charitable, more recent examinations indicate the opposite. Aboriginal approaches to colonial segregationist and assimilationist policies were a significant factor in the shape of current Aboriginal historiography; the story of cooperation is minimised by the reality of Aboriginal compromise and conciliation in the face of legislative marginalization.

### **Beyond the Fur Trade: The Diversification of Historiography**

Although a significant amount of work has centred on the frontier and early settlement, a greater portion of more recent work – published from 1990 on – tends to examine a wider span of contact history.<sup>43</sup> Although there remains relatively little written on 20<sup>th</sup> century Aboriginal history, the few examples which exist are evidence of the quality and significance of expanding the field to include examinations beyond the fur trade; these works extend politicized interpretation and further examine themes of acculturation and marginalization. Texts like *Lost Harvests* and *A National Crime* create a hard break from interpretations of cooperation characterised by fur trade history.

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<sup>42</sup> Jean Friesen, "Magnificent Gifts: The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of the Northwest 1869-76," Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, series V, vol I (1986) 43.

<sup>43</sup> This is not to say that historians writing prior to 1990 did not explore Aboriginal history outside of the fur trade – see early works by Stanley, Van Kirk, Friesen, Trigger, and Brown.

Policy analyses illustrate the divergence in historiography to problematize interpretations of colonial cooperation and demonstrate the conflict also evident on the Canadian frontier. Racism and aboriginality become central in works examining the Indian Act and its accompanying policies on agricultural development, health care, education, and cultural tradition. Some texts focus on policy and government action to subdue Aboriginal populations in Canada, while others focus on Aboriginal action – organization, resistance, and adaptation. Euro-Canadian institutions of government, property ownership, education, and religion were the instruments of colonisation in the post-fur trade era. As historians increasingly turn their attention away from fur trade history, the strains of 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century “native-newcomer” relationships are evident. The foundations of assimilative policy were formed as the colony of British North America was transformed to the dominion of Canada, namely in the Indian Act. This legislation was created prior to confederation to regulate Indian lands, strengthened in 1869 to enforce segregation, to implement governance, and to impose strict definitions of aboriginality, and expanded in 1876 to centralize federal powers over Aboriginal peoples.<sup>44</sup> This early legislation, Olive Dickason argues, was an indication of future colonial relationships: “Amerindians, already the most regulated of peoples in Canada, would become even more so; their lives would be interfered with at every turn, down to the personal level.”<sup>45</sup> The shift from British to Canadian regulation was significant. According to John Milloy, the change in governance led to a reassessment of the relationships with Aboriginal nations. Under the Canadian government, Aboriginal

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<sup>44</sup> Olive Patricia Dickason, Canada's first nations: a history of founding peoples from earliest times, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992) 259, 283.

<sup>45</sup> Dickason, 283.

peoples were wards of the state rather than sovereign nations.<sup>46</sup> In the face of increased regulation, Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relationships are rarely characterised as cooperative; post-confederation Aboriginal historiography tends to focus on resistance, conflict, and adaptation.

To build upon our understanding of the impact of assimilationist policies on Aboriginal societies, scholars engage in further political activity as they challenge assumptions of the government and introduce debate. Both results of treaty negotiations and the Indian Act, the federal government had an obligation to provide Aboriginal peoples with education, health care, and alternative means of economic development. As evident in recent historiography, the shape of these plans was influenced by colonial control and acculturation. Both Miller and Milloy argue that the residential school system was an essential part of the assimilationist project of the national government.<sup>47</sup> The problems of Plains agricultural policy are examined by Sarah Carter in *Lost Harvests*.<sup>48</sup> While difficult for some, her critique challenges misconceptions about the good will of the federal government and older anthropological interpretations which suggest the hunter-gatherer tradition of many Aboriginal nations made them reluctant to adopt agriculture and other forms of European production economies. Tina Loos' examination of potlatch laws, Joan Sangster's study of criminalized Aboriginal women, and Mary Ellen Kelm's analysis of the failures of Aboriginal health care policy further question traditional models of cooperative Aboriginal historiography and provides clearer

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<sup>46</sup> See further John Milloy, "The Early Indian Acts: Developmental Strategy and Constitutional Change," *Sweet promises : a reader on Indian-white relations in Canada* ed. J.R. Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991) 145-46.

<sup>47</sup> John Milloy, *A national crime : the Canadian government and the residential school system, 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999). J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

<sup>48</sup> Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1993).

direction for the field's development.<sup>49</sup> These texts make Aboriginal agency a central theme; they highlight conflict and compromise between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, which diminishes the hegemony of benevolent interpretations of colonisation established by early fur trade history texts. This is an important objective, because as Milloy points out in *A National Crime*,

It is essential, too, that, while healing proceeds, we strive to ensure that the terrible facts of the residential school system, along with its companion policies – community removal, the Indian Act, systemic discrimination in the justice system – become part of a new sense of what Canada has been and will continue to be if our historical record is not recognized for what it has meant to Aboriginal people and repudiated generation by generation.<sup>50</sup>

Beyond early contributions to Aboriginal history which focused on fur trade relations and treaty issues, the field has evolved to include varied and complex examinations of Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relationships. Although the nature of Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relationships changed over centuries of colonisation and 20<sup>th</sup> century historiography has shifted significantly, it remains focused upon the nature of the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. The introduction of interdisciplinary examinations of race, gender, and class has informed the field and the integration of oral narrative and community-based research has balanced interpretative frameworks. These texts indicate the growing diversity of the field – spanning regions, time periods, and areas of interest. As scholars have expanded their repertoires, they have diverged from the traditional economic and political histories of the nation to address questions of patriarchal and imperial hierarchies. Re-reading old sources,

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<sup>49</sup> Tina Loo, "Dan Cranmer's Potlach: Law as Coercion, Symbol, and Rhetoric in British Columbia, 1884-1951," *Canadian Historical Review* 73:2 (June 1992). Joan Sangster, "Criminalizing the Colonized: Ontario Native Women Confront the Criminal Justice System, 1920-60," *Canadian Historical Review* 80:1 (March 1999) 32-60. Mary-Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Helath and Helain in British Columbia, 1900-1950* (Vancouver UBC Press, 1998).

<sup>50</sup> Milloy 1999, 305.

incorporating new sources like oral narrative, and employing critical theory has allowed scholars of Aboriginal history to break from a cooperative framework to examine relationships of colonisation which disempower and marginalize.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Australian historiography: Confrontation & Controversy**

Aboriginal history in Australia has been built on a similar trajectory as other fields of social history in the Western world; in the past three decades it has grown out of obscurity into a respected and important scholarship. Often informed by social justice and legal advocacy, working in this field of Australian history is a political action. The public and politicized nature of Aboriginal historiography can be attributed to the controversial nature of colonial relations in Australia. Tensions between constructions of the Aboriginal victim and resistor, influenced by shifting 20<sup>th</sup> century legal, political, and academic ideologies, have shaped the understanding of Aboriginal history in Australia and its historiographical traditions.

Conflict, dispossession, and disempowerment are the major themes evident in this analysis, which tend to shift between interpretations emphasising the victimisation of Aboriginal actors and maintaining frameworks which highlight Aboriginal resistance. Historical coverage of Australian colonisation shows only minor variation. Despite changes in location, Aboriginal historiography tends to focus on the “frontier” in its various stages through region and time. During 19<sup>th</sup> century contact, Aboriginal peoples and Euro-Australian “invaders” (in various forms: settler, pastoralist, missionary, miner) engaged in warfare, initiated by invaders but equally sustained by Aboriginal resisters. Many hypotheses are proposed regarding issues around land appropriation, cultural misunderstanding, sexual predation, and violent racism. A language of conflict has also been embedded in Aboriginal historiography in Australia, most significantly in the identification of “invasion history”. The conflict framework, realized by this focus on

early colonisation, violence, and dispossession, creates and maintains a historiographical tradition which prioritizes violence and leads to a confrontational discourse.

### **Colonial History and the Aboriginal Victim**

A framework of violence grew out of a scholarly foundation of silence, indifference and ethnocentrism. The placement of Aboriginal peoples on the periphery of mid-century Australian national history texts further diminished their relevance in modern society. The single volume national historical narrative was a popular format of Australian historiography which established the metanarrative of a quiet colonisation, nation-building, and egalitarian mateship on the harsh frontier. Parallel to other mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century “new world” histories, Australian national history celebrated modern progress, the victory of the civilized over the savage, and forecasted a rosy future for the nation-state. Any inclusion of Aboriginal peoples was peripheral to the ‘real’ story – they were portrayed as primitive savages. A disappearing race, Aboriginal Australians were victims of progress. According to Social Darwinist interpretation, aborigines were people of the past; essentialized definitions of race, culture, and progress prevented their inclusion in evaluation of the nation and historical narratives.

Single-volume history texts written in the mid twentieth century represent a spectrum of colonial interpretation, including quiet colonisation, Social Darwinism, and some romanticized guilt. One popular text from 1955 was *Australia: a social and political history* by Gordon Greenwood.<sup>1</sup> Greenwood’s celebration of nation, sponsored by the 1951 Federation Jubilee committee, clearly illustrates the depths of Australian

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon Greenwood, *Australia: a social and political history* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1955).



forgetting of colonization.<sup>2</sup> The marginal existence of aborigines in his text is represented by brief statements about insignificant, primitive peoples. The idealized notion of quiet colonisation was most evident in the title of Douglas Pike's 1962 monograph, *Australia: A Quiet Continent*.<sup>3</sup> Entrenched mythology supported the historiographical tendency to celebrate the nation rather than explore a shameful past.

Ernest Scott's imperialist interpretations in *A Short History of Australia* provided a typical political and economic history of Australia which perpetrates the myth of quiet colonisation. Scott dismisses the advanced nature of Aboriginal society in the face of European settlement:

The rapid and successful development of Australia has been facilitated by the fact that the aboriginals who occupied it before the advent of the white race were not an organized, warlike people. They did, it is true, cause some annoyance when population was sparse, but they never were at any time a serious menace, . . . They committed murders, but were incapable of anything like military aggression.<sup>4</sup>

Beyond his erasure of Aboriginal history, he also predicted the extinction of Aboriginal peoples in Victoria and New South Wales as "the back (sic) population is fading out of existence very rapidly, and within the present generation will probably cease to exist."<sup>5</sup> For historians like Scott, the dying race was a sad indicator of the progress of civilization in Australia.

The influence of Social Darwinism is most clearly illustrated in Marjorie Barnard's 1962 monograph, *A history of Australia*. In the final pages of her text, she dedicates one chapter to Aboriginal history and current social issues. Barnard minimizes

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told?: A Personal Search for the Truth About our History* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1999) 82.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Pike, *Australia: The Quiet Continent*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1962).

<sup>4</sup> Ernest Scott, *A Short History of Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1947) 188.

<sup>5</sup> Scott 191.

the importance of frontier relations between colonists and Aboriginal peoples, suggesting: "Little is to be gained by recounting all the recorded black and white incidents. The relationship of the two peoples was incidental. Authority had no policy except a general humanitarian gesture, the aborigines put up no organized opposition."<sup>6</sup> She prefers to focus on contemporary social problems, including advocacy for the child removal policy: "With the diminution and segregation of full-bloods the half-castes cannot fail to progress steadily towards assimilation. The aboriginal-white cross is, biologically speaking, an eminently successful one. The mixing of bloods and that alone can bridge the gap between the Stone Age and the present."<sup>7</sup> Greenwood, Pike, Barnard, and Scott are representative of a pattern of denial; their historical narratives deny the violent realities of the frontier, the organized resistance by Aboriginal peoples and their survival and resilience despite a history of systemic violence and dispossession.

An examination of Australian national historiography would be incomplete without consideration of the iconic Manning Clark. As G.P. Shaw suggests, Manning Clark "stands astride Australian history like a colossus, or an evil genius, depending on the reader's predilections."<sup>8</sup> Carl Bridge describes the reactions to Clark as "violent" by supporters and opponents alike.<sup>9</sup> Although his approach to national history may not be representative of the whole of Australian historical scholarship, Clark's work has had enormous impact on the discipline.

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<sup>6</sup> Marjorie Barnard, A history of Australia (London : Angus & Robertson, 1978, c1962) 653.

<sup>7</sup> Barnard 662.

<sup>8</sup> G.P. Shaw, "A counter Revolution in Australian Historiography?" Historical Disciplines and Culture in Australasia: An Assessment, ed. John A. Moses (St. Lucia, Qld: Uof Qld Press, 1979), 106.

<sup>9</sup> Carl Bridge, "Preface" Manning Clark: Essays on his Place in History, ed. Carl Bridge (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne UP, 1994) vii.

A brief examination of Clark's six volume *A History of Australia* indicates a predilection for a nationalist, progress-oriented narrative; each of his volumes end chronological periods which emphasize his overall themes of morality (Catholicism, Protestantism, enlightenment), class struggle, democracy, nationalism, and the influence of place on social development. According to Clark, Australia was built on the backs of convicts and gold miners who had few political rights, little economic wealth and low social standing. Australian labour history is quite strong, and Clark maintains this narrative by demonizing the bourgeois and celebrating the struggling working poor – the “real” Australians. Clark emphasizes that “Despite the prestige of mateship and egalitarianism, preoccupation with class differences pervaded all walks of life from the highest to the lowest.”<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, out of the working classes, developed a form of nationalism – the bushworkers were “mates”. Equal opportunity and comradeship held them together, but was also quite dangerous. Xenophobia informed many actions of violence and exclusion on the frontier and in the goldfields, and based on Clark's interpretation, Aborigines, Chinese and Melanesians were not part of the proletariat ideal of an egalitarian nation.

Because Clark carefully prefaces his six volume epic describing it as a history of European Australia, one has few expectations in regards to the history of Aboriginal peoples in his work, and in fact, Aboriginal peoples are marginal to the main themes of his narrative. Clark's treatment of Aboriginal history is, at times, paradoxical – perhaps evidence of his changing ideals and approaches over the two and a half decades he wrote *A History of Australia*. In Clark's work, the aborigine is often romanticized and made out to be the victim – a gross generalization. However, at times he introduces ideas

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<sup>10</sup> Clark, 1981, 361.

regarding resistance to colonialism and briefly refers to Aboriginal peoples out of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century contact context.

Unlike many other national historians, Clark prefaces the instant of contact with a short anthropological note on Aboriginal culture. This discussion contextualizes his approach to history and Aboriginal peoples – contact was “tragic”, a “prophecy of doom”. Clark describes Captain James Cook’s landing at Botany Bay on 29 April 1770 upon the ship the *Endeavour*:

On 29 April, just after one of the aborigines threw a stone at the small boat as a mark of their resolution to oppose a landing, Cook replied with light musket shot, while the wives and children of the aborigines on the beaches set up a most horrid howl. In this way the European began his tragic association with the aborigines on the east coast.<sup>11</sup>

With further reference to Cook’s notes, Clark draws a romantic picture of the aborigine as a happy “primitive” race without the conveniences or materiality of European civilization. However, it was their inability to value material goods and adapt to the invaders which led to their downfall.<sup>12</sup> He creates a dichotomous image of the evil bourgeois colonizer and the backwards aboriginal victim:

All of them bore the taint of supercilious intolerance towards all other forms of civilization. They bore too that other taint of European civilization – its destructive effect on all primitive cultures with which it came into contact. Not one of the faiths sustaining these men – neither the Christian religion, the enlightenment, nor romantic notions about noble savages – could restrain the rapacity and greed of the white man, nor afford him a workable explanation for the backwardness and material weakness of the aborigine.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Clark, 1962, 49.

<sup>12</sup> Clark, 1962, 51, 110.

<sup>13</sup> Clark, 1962, 110.

Clark's treatment of Aboriginal history has been criticized.<sup>14</sup> His tendency is to keep Aboriginal peoples on the margins of the metanarrative; they are romanticized incidental victims of the Australian project of colonisation and civilization. In the first two volumes, his inclusion of anthropological notes and his sense of guilt for past injustice was representative of a growing perspective in the Australian academy. However, his final volume, published in 1985, was no longer reflective of the innovations and developments in Australian historiography of the period.

Early contributions to Aboriginal history reflected national historiographical trends of the time. Informed by anthropological research and current socio-political notions about race and nation, the aborigine is treated as a helpless victim of colonisation and civilisation. Historiographer Peter Biskup suggests the influence of anthropological scholarship was significant to the development of early Aboriginal historiography.

"(V)irtually all of its practitioners saw Australia as a 'museum of primitive humanity and a storehouse of primitive culture' and the Aborigines as a stagnant and miserable archetype of primitive man, to be studied not for his own sake but for the evidence he could provide to confirm already formulated evolutionary laws."<sup>15</sup> This framework provided rationale for the contemporary social and political status of Aboriginal peoples; before the 1960s Aboriginal peoples were regulated by various state and territorial bodies and had no legal or political rights. Just as they were on the margins of historical consciousness, they were on the margins of contemporary society.

<sup>14</sup> Carl Bridge, "Introduction," pp. 1-9 and Jo Woolmington "'I'm sorry, very sorry . . .'" Manning Clark: Essays on his Place in History, ed. C. Bridge (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne UP, 1994) 104-112. Also see Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told?: A Personal Search for the Truth About our History*, (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1999).

<sup>15</sup> Peter Biskup, "Aboriginal History," New History: Studying Australia Today, eds. G. Osborne & W.F. Mandle (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin Australia Ltd, 1982) 16. With reference to D.J. Mulvaney, "The Australian Aborigines 1606-1929: Opinion and Fieldwork. Part I: 1605-1858" and "Part II: 1859-1929." Historical Studies. 8:29-32 (1957-59) 131-151; 297-314.

Pre-1960 Aboriginal historiography contributed very little to current historiography; its contributors tended to focus on Euro-Australian policy and its impact on Aboriginal society. Focus on models of social evolution, fears of the “half-caste problem” and unwavering certainty of the fate of the “disappearing race” led to ethnocentric and shallow examinations of frontier relations between colonists and aborigines.

Despite their ethnocentricity and focus on Euro-Australian characters, these contributions are significant for their consideration of Aboriginal history at a time when contemporaries were writing about the Eurocentric egalitarian foundations of the nation. Evidence exists to suggest that all were politically motivated and had a sense of engaging social justice through their scholarship. In the case of Paul Hasluck, he was perhaps motivated by desire to attain political office. In the preface to his second edition, Hasluck wrote about his position and influence in government: “In the post-war years considerable change has taken place and, without mock modesty, I can say that, because of the opportunities that political office gave to me, I was able to do a great deal myself – perhaps more than any other individual – to restore the status of the Aborigines . . .”<sup>16</sup> Clive Turnbull, Edmund Foxcroft and Hasluck all position their texts around the necessity of improved native policy for the present and future. Their publications present clear images of the Aboriginal victim – a victim of cultural conflict, disease, the vices of civilization, and the development of a mixed race. Turnbull’s work is an indication of an early scholarly foundation of guilt for colonial brutality, as he refers to “needless slaughterings” and the corruption of Aboriginal traditions through the adoption of

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<sup>16</sup> Paul Hasluck was Governor-General of Australia from 1969-1974. See his work, *Black Australians: A survey of Native Policy in Western Australia, 1829-1897*, 2nd ed. (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne UP, 1970; 1<sup>st</sup> ed. c. 1942) 4-5.

European vices like alcohol and prostitution.<sup>17</sup> Improved policy and further protectionism, they argued, could be the only ways to protect a race doomed by their forefathers' colonial legacy.

The disappearing race is a common theme amongst these publications. Aborigines were defined as primitive peoples, and although Turnbull, Foxcroft, and Hasluck refer to anthropological works to demonstrate the complexity of Aboriginal culture, they lament the aborigines' inability to adapt to European civilization, to survive European diseases, and to resist the temptation of alcohol, tobacco and sex.<sup>18</sup> Foxcroft further develops this argument by suggesting that "primitive does not necessarily mean uncivilized" and that Australian aborigines were able to adapt through time within their own worldview.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, it was the strength of European civilization – which all three scholars imply was a gift – which destroyed the aborigine, described within the dichotomous rhetoric of civilization and savagery, industry and idleness, morality and depravity, and hygiene and squalor. Hasluck's framing of colonization alludes to notions of old imperialism and "the white man's burden":

The idea of 'civilizing' primitive people, though it smells in some nostrils, may not be wholly bad. In spite of numerous occasions for doubt . . . there is still substantial ground for believing that civilized man has something to teach to primitive man, and that he has the ability to teach it. . . . In practical terms, when a blackfellow does not adapt himself quickly enough from the 'lazy' life of a huntsman to the industrious habit of 'working for a living,' it is the white man who can shape the easier terms on which he can still receive food, or who can [force] him off the earth because he remains a savage and hunts cattle and sheep in the same way as he once hunted his game.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Clive Turnbull, *Black War: The Extermination of the Tasmanian Aborigines*, (Melbourne, Lansdowne Press Pty. Ltd., 1966) 237.

<sup>18</sup> Turnbull, 237.

<sup>19</sup> Edmund J. Foxcroft, *Australian Native Policy: Its History Especially in Victoria*, (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1941) 12.

<sup>20</sup> Hasluck, 10-11. This is an interesting quotation because it illustrates Hasluck's critical analysis surrounding socio-economic imbalance dictated by colonisation; however, it also indicates his acceptance

Early historical texts tended to idealize the aborigine as pictured in anthropological studies; aboriginality was generally essentialized to include only traditional peoples. Attempts to modernize or adapt to European culture muddled traditional culture; again, Hasluck, Foxcroft and Turnbull suggest protectionist policies must be put into place to maintain aboriginal traditions. Métissage was another significant theme in these works; the “problem” of the half-castes is discussed within the context of declining population figures, weakening cultural ties, and policy issues. The outrage presented in these works is for what Hasluck, Foxcroft and Turnbull perceive to be a lost culture, one which they have romanticized but devalued, an essentialized image of a traditional, full-blooded aborigine who lived off of the land. Again, their message is simple: new policies needed to be introduced to prevent further destruction of Aboriginal culture. Foxcroft argued that ‘the native problem’ was founded on identity issues as larger numbers of assimilated and detribalized aborigines returned to the bush without a sense of aboriginal or western culture.<sup>21</sup>

Overall, it is evident that the authors of early works on Aboriginal history were focused upon contemporary social issues and policy development. It is unclear how much attention their works garnered at mid-century, but they provide fascinating insights into early understandings of Aboriginal history which was built upon an image of the belligerent Euro-Australian and the Aboriginal victim, best illustrated by a concluding quotation by Turnbull: “The aborigines of Tasmania have gone; the aborigines of

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of racial subjugation and acculturation. Overall, this may be a shrewd attempt by Hasluck to shed some guilt for the state of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Aboriginal society, as his interpretation diverges from that of Turnbull and Foxcroft regarding racial purity and the loss of the traditional aborigine.

<sup>21</sup> Foxcroft, 100.



Victoria are going, and for the miserable remnant there is from the community at large neither interest nor pity.”<sup>22</sup>

Although Social Darwinist interpretations faded by the 1970s, traces of guilt remained in Aboriginal historiography. The legacy of Australian guilt was fed by the construction of the Aboriginal victim and reinforced by links to contemporary social disadvantage of Aboriginal peoples. Sparked by significant political action in the 1960s and 1970s, Aboriginal historiography developed beyond its anthropological roots. Despite the challenge it presented to the traditional historical narrative of Australia, Aboriginal history grew into a serious field of scholarship in the 1970s.

### **Social History & Political Movement: the development of Aboriginal History**

The fundamental change in Australian historiography was reflective of change in most Western historical scholarship; sparked by unparalleled youth populations, political uprisings, and demands for social equality, social history was born in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>23</sup> A shift in content focus was matched by shifting methodologies, including the adoption of ethnohistory.<sup>24</sup> Attention was drawn from a nationalist focus to peripheral social groups, including Aboriginal peoples – drawing academics into a “‘new ideological cult’ anti-racism.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Turnbull, 237.

<sup>23</sup> G. Osborne and W.F. Mandle, “Introduction,” New History: Studying Australia Today, eds. G. Osborne & W.F. Mandle (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin Australia Ltd, 1982) 8. Stuart Macintyre, “Australia and the Empire,” The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol V: Historiography, ed. Robin W. Winks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 178.

<sup>24</sup> Which was discussed in its early stages by Peter Corris in “Ethnohistory in Australia,” Ethnohistory 16:3 (Summer 1969) 201-210.

<sup>25</sup> Biskup 21.

Biskup suggests the boom of the 1970s was led by C.D. Rowley's 1971 trilogy *Aboriginal Policy and Practice*.<sup>26</sup> Rowley called attention to the past and present social injustice in Australian Aboriginal society:

It is not so surprising that the obliteration of the tribes from the most valuable land areas should be bowdlerised in the school history books, though this has quite serious implications. The power of government to deal with a social problem depends largely on the electorate's understanding what that problem is; and what it is cannot be stated without some indication of how it arose. In the absence of clear light shed upon the past, racial prejudice is free to make its own interpretations. And by far the great majority of us interpret history, to suit our prejudices, from the stories we remember from the school history book.<sup>27</sup>

Rowley's interpretation merges the disciplines of geography, history and anthropology as he analyses demography, policy, and historiography in his three volume study. In *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, Rowley examines the impact of Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal contact in Australia through frontier settlement and colonial legislation. Aboriginal resistance was evident in sporadic guerrilla activity, but ultimately unsuccessful against the European colonisers who claimed the land under *terra nullius*; Aboriginal resilience is evident in their survival.<sup>28</sup>

Increased attention from anthropologists and historians gained academic response but Aboriginal history had little public recognition until anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner's 1968 lectures were broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Historiographer Peter Biskup suggests the Boyer lectures of 1968 marked a fundamental shift in Australian historiography.<sup>29</sup> Stanner's lectures were significant; he addressed both the academic community and the public-at-large: "(M)ore recent history suggests

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<sup>26</sup> Biskup 21.

<sup>27</sup> C.D. Rowley, *Aboriginal policy and practice: the Destruction of Aboriginal Society* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970-71) 6.

<sup>28</sup> Rowley, *Destruction*, 1971, 139.

<sup>29</sup> Biskup 25.

that the native question is rising into great importance, the melancholy footnote is turning into a whole chapter of Australian history, and the codicil is becoming a major theme in the Australian story.”<sup>30</sup>

In fact, it was Stanner who set the tone for the impressive first issue of *Aboriginal History* in 1977 and put the field in motion. Building upon earlier research, including that presented in the Boyer Lectures, Stanner traced colonial policies and their changes to the initial contact and development of Port Phillip in 1788. He argues that the “history of indifference” was established from the earliest of colonial actions and policies – demonstrated by the lack of regard or enforcement of colonial contact guidelines by Capt. Phillip or his contemporaries.<sup>31</sup> This article marked an important turning point for the field, as traditional historical methodology was adopted to discuss Aboriginal history. His focus on politics was also significant, as it reflected the shape of scholarship in the proceeding decades.

Political and social movements of the 1970s sparked the field of Aboriginal history and the birth of its dedicated refereed journal. Isabel MacBryde provides an interesting analysis of the impact and direction of *Aboriginal History* in her 1996 introduction to a collection from the journal. She suggests the journal’s founders were motivated by historical neglect and political action like the “Embassy movement”.<sup>32</sup> The journal grew to recognize Aboriginal history outside of contact history; it was a forum for interpretative and methodological experimentation. At the time of her essay, concerns

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<sup>30</sup> W.E.H. Stanner, *After the Dreaming: Black and White Australians – An Anthropologist’s View. The Boyer Lectures, 1968* (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1969) 11.

<sup>31</sup> W.E.H. Stanner, “The history of indifference thus begins,” *Aboriginal History*, 1:1 (1977).

<sup>32</sup> Isabel McBryde, “Perspectives of the past: an introduction,” *Terrible Hard Biscuits: A Reader in aboriginal history*, eds. Valerie Chapman and Peter Read (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, Journal of Aboriginal History, 1996) 3.

were growing over authorship, authenticity and voice; however, rather than dismiss non-Aboriginal scholarship, she suggests both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal contributions are significant for the field: "What needs recognition and respect is the existence of two traditions, each capable of making major contributions in its own terms, each with its own 'set of truths'." <sup>33</sup>

In a study of the journal *Aboriginal History*, between 1977-2003, several patterns can be identified. In the 26 refereed volumes, a total of 314 articles were published. Approximately ten percent of the articles were anthropological in nature, examining cultural history and linguistics. The remaining articles were informed by historical methods and sources. The general focus of the articles and it may be suggested, the journal, is frontier history of invasion, conflict and dispossession. Themes explored include warfare, models of resistance, land use policy, and the relationship between dispossession and disempowerment. Further attention is paid to government regulation and policy development, which often overlap examinations of conflict. Historiographical analyses are also quite important – debate about interpretative frameworks and methodological approaches are significant to Australian scholarship; it is indicative of the vitality and strength of field. <sup>34</sup>

This data may be compared to the foremost academic historical journal in Australia: *Australian Historical Studies*. Over a twenty-six year period, twelve percent of articles examined Aboriginal history, and only six percent of books reviewed were monographs of Aboriginal historiography. Historiography continued to be strong in *AHS*, which indicates its significance in academic dialogue. It is interesting to note that the

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<sup>33</sup> McBryde 10.

<sup>34</sup> Refer to Appendix B.

focus of articles in *AHS* diverges from the conflict-oriented focus of *Aboriginal History*. Themes of non-Aboriginal power and dominance are evident; however, they are realized more so in analyses of political and social structures of the Australian nation.<sup>35</sup>

### **Invasion History: Aggression, Resistance and Dispossession**

The impact of the resistor interpretation is made clear in the examination of *Aboriginal History*; as it informs many of the articles about frontier conflict, dispossession and government policy. This revisionist approach was a significant departure from the imagery of the Aboriginal victim in texts predating W.E.H. Stanner, C.D. Rowley, and Henry Reynolds.

Reynolds may not have been the first to introduce this interpretation to the Australian academy, but his work has had significant impact upon the development of Aboriginal history and the field's larger audience. Reynolds' bibliography is extensive and award-winning. The impact of his work is evident by his presence in virtually every reference list in Aboriginal history texts published since 1982. In particular, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, Reynolds' first monograph, fundamentally changed the view of Australian history by reversing the gaze and seeing the frontier conflict as a multiple-party action.<sup>36</sup> It no longer was accepted that Aboriginal peoples on the frontier cowered in the face of colonisation and conflict; indeed, they participated by protecting themselves when attacked and initiating new hostilities for revenge.

In *The Other Side*, Reynolds brought the frontier conflict to the forefront by re-reading traditional historical documents like newspaper articles, government documents, and personal and official communications. These records frankly discussed the violent

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<sup>35</sup> Refer to Appendix B.

<sup>36</sup> Henry Reynolds, *The other side of the frontier : aboriginal resistance to the European invasion of Australia* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books, 1982). Winner of Ernest Scott Prize.

interactions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people on the frontier.<sup>37</sup> By changing historical perspective, Reynolds examined Aboriginal resistance to the colonial invasion. Resistance came in “large pitched battles and small, secret revenge expeditions,” but also in attacks on the economic foundations of European colonisation. Reynolds suggests that the cunning of Aboriginal resistors led to large-scale destruction of pastoralists’ property; outbuildings, livestock and horses were targeted by fire.<sup>38</sup> As the duration of the frontier invasion increased and as both European and Aboriginal rivals became familiar with the others’ technology and strategy, warfare became more sophisticated.

But while guns were used by Aboriginal groups in various parts of the country they were never adopted on a large enough scale seriously to alter the balance of power between the white and black and in fact did not compensate for European co-option of Aboriginal bushcraft.<sup>39</sup>

With this publication, Reynolds broke the silence about frontier violence and incorporated Aboriginal agency to ensure that Aboriginal peoples were no longer portrayed as passive victims of colonial invasion. Reynolds’ body of work, particularly *The Other Side*, has been heralded as the impetus for change in Australian history.<sup>40</sup>

Reynolds’ works sparked a series of texts documenting episodes of violence by region and date, including western and south-western Victoria, northern Queensland, and Tasmania. The episodic nature of scholarship does not indicate sporadic or intermittent frontier violence, but its systemic nature in the colonial history of Australia. Noel Loos, who has worked alongside both Reynolds and Eddie Koiki Mabo, examines

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<sup>37</sup> Reynolds, 1982, 222-232; see bibliographic listing of primary sources.

<sup>38</sup> Reynolds, 1982, 96, 106-08.

<sup>39</sup> Reynolds, 1982, 105-06.

<sup>40</sup> Bain Attwood, Bain. “Introduction The past as future: Aborigines, Australia and the (dis)course of History,” *In the age of Mabo : history, aborigines and Australia*, ed. B. Attwood (St. Leonard’s, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996) xviii. Peggy Brock, “Skirmishes in Aboriginal History,” *Aboriginal History*, 28 (2004) 212.

Queensland's multiple colonial frontiers – pastoral, mining, timbering, and fishing – in the 1982 publication of his doctoral thesis. He suggests that the violent nature of the northern Queensland frontier originated from the colonial approach from the south and their desire to dispossess the Aboriginal peoples. "Although there was often spirited Aboriginal resistance to such threatening and often clumsy intrusions, the [particularly devastating] conflict better reflected the attitudes and intentions of the intruders than the nature of aboriginal society."<sup>41</sup> Violence was routinized on the frontier – it was transferred between regions as Loos suggests, but was also ingrained within regions, particularly by place names. Ian Clark notes that his research in Victoria was somewhat limited by the "code of silence" settlers shared on the frontier; however, he expanded his sources to include geographic data and discovered that "Although many massacres are never mentioned in local histories, that they occurred is strongly suggested in place names [both Euro-Australian and Aboriginal] which refer to some kind of massacre or killing having taken place."<sup>42</sup> The "Convincing Ground" in southwestern Victoria memorializes a conflict between whalers and the Kilcarer clan and "Murdering Gulley" is a site of a notorious conflict between the station manager and the Tarnbeere clan, which resulted in the death of 35-40 men, women, and children in south-central Victoria.<sup>43</sup>

Jan Critchett suggests that the Convincing Ground was extended through the district as a regime of murder and fear ensured Aboriginal acceptance of a new order in Australia.<sup>44</sup> In *'A Distant Field of Murder'* Critchett indicates that the violence and

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<sup>41</sup> Noel Loos, Invasion and Resistance: Aboriginal-European relations on the North Queensland frontier, 1861-1897 (Canberra: Australian National UP, 1982) 8.

<sup>42</sup> Ian D. Clark, Scars in the Landscape: a register of massacre sites in western Victoria, 1803-1859 (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1995) 2.

<sup>43</sup> I.D. Clark, 1996, 17, 105.

<sup>44</sup> Jan Critchett, A Distant Field of Murder: Western District Frontiers, 1834-1848, (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1990) 190.

conflict for territory was initiated by Europeans in response to generally non-violent Aboriginal resistance to colonisation. "There were no great wars or battles but there was certainly 'war' in the sense of men of one race being forced to take up arms against those of another. To Europeans who would have preferred an unoccupied country, the aborigines were 'a nuisance', 'troublesome', a cause of anxiety which at times seems to have become so strong that to take up the weapons of war seemed the only solution."<sup>45</sup> Loos, Clark, and Critchett illustrate the nature of contact and conflict on the frontiers of 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial Australia. This focus on the frontier, particularly incidences of conflict, characterises these studies and further entrenches the narrative of hostility and treachery in Australia.

Survival, argues Tasmanian historian Lyndall Ryan, is a significant theme of Aboriginal resistance and 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial violence. Ryan disputes the common belief that indigenous Tasmanians became extinct in the last quarter of the 1800s and illustrates the existent complexity of the Tasmanian peoples in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Despite the institutionalisation of violence and acculturation by the government, the survival of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture, whether full-blooded or not, is evidence of their resiliency. She examines Aboriginal agency in wide-ranging cases, mostly of systemic violence, but also of economic cooperation and reminds her readers that her

intention is not to single out Tasmanian society, past or present, as an aberrant case in the Australian context but rather as a mirror that reveals the real nature of those "other" Australians across Bass Strait whose brutal march to "progress" at the expense of the Aborigines was in many cases far more destructive than the Tasmanian precedent. The indigenous population on the mainland was far greater than in Tasmania, and the loss of life was correspondingly greater – on both sides.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Critchett 186. See further discussion of Aboriginal action in Chapter 6, pgs 90, 96.

<sup>46</sup> Lyndall Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1981) 259. The use of the term "genocide" has sparked great debate in the academy. Reynolds is critical of Ryan's



Ryan's focus remains on the crime perpetrated by the colonists of Australia. In the early 1980s, she drew attention toward the treachery of the mainland frontier by paralleling it with the devastation of Tasmanian conflict, which was an accepted part of colonial history.

Language, Aboriginal historians have discovered, is a powerful weapon in this ideological debate about violent frontier historiography. Ryan was one of the first scholars to suggest that Aboriginal Australians had been targeted by imperial genocide. The Australian narrative felt comfortable with Tasmanian extinction of aboriginal peoples because "It is still much easier for white Tasmanians to regard Tasmanian Aborigines as a dead people rather than confront the problems of an existing community of Aborigines who are victims of the conscious policy of genocide."<sup>47</sup> Interpretations of invasion can be attributed to Reynolds who introduced "aboriginal resistance to the European invasion of Australia" in *The Other Side of the Frontier*.<sup>48</sup> "Indifference" and the "cult of forgetfulness" were instrumental concepts for Stanner's analysis of the cultural and social disempowerment of Aboriginal peoples in Australia. The language of violence became common – in academic texts, museum exhibits, elementary school texts, political vocabulary, and daily news headlines. Invaders, warfare, and genocide became keywords to the debate. The narrative of colonisation forever changed.

In contrast, archaeological historian D.J. Mulvaney and economic historian Geoffrey Blainey, directed some of the attention away from the violence of the frontier.

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interpretation and suggests that intent is the key to understanding the nature of warfare on the frontier; he argues that Governor Phillips did not intend to exterminate the Aboriginal peoples of Tasmania, and thus the action cannot be described as "genocide". Henry Reynolds, *An Indelible Stain? The question of genocide in Australia's history*, (Ringwood, Vic: Viking, Penguin Books Australia Ltd., 2001) 75-76.

<sup>47</sup> Ryan 1981, 255.

<sup>48</sup> As indicated by the subtitle of *Other Side of the Frontier*.

Mulvaney's 1989 *Encounters* addressed Aboriginal agency in an ethnohistorical survey of contact points on the frontier. His study highlighted points of resistance, passivity, and cooperation, from Wybalenna and Oyster Cove in Tasmania where Aboriginal communities were "civilized off the face of the earth" to the "social tragedy" at Coranderrk in Victoria where the "spirit and initiative of the [Aboriginal] people conflicted both with the heavy-handed paternalism and evolutionary ideology of the times and with the economic interests of local settlers."<sup>49</sup> In *A Land Half Won*, Blainey tells the colonial story of Australia from both European and Aboriginal perspectives. He suggests that initial meetings were shaped by Aboriginal beliefs that the colonists were white "spirits of their own dead relatives"<sup>50</sup> but, he argues, goodwill quickly shifted to guerrilla warfare as pastoralists pushed further onto the frontier.<sup>51</sup> Into the 1990s, Blainey joined the movement against the overtly violent model of Australian colonial history. He joined Liberal P.M. John Howard and neo-conservative critic Keith Windschuttle in opposition to "black armband" history – the history of violence and guilt. As demonstrated by Blainey's opposition, Mulvaney's attempt to balance violence with resistance and adaptation, and the commitment of historians like Reynolds, frontier history is clearly a confrontational subject which has initiated significant debate.

Beyond brutality and violence, the history of the frontier is marked by political disempowerment and dispossession of land. *Terra nullius* shaped European colonisation and law. As Reynolds suggests, *terra nullius* indicated that the land had no owners upon invasion; the colonists saw no evidence of improvement or development of the land,

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<sup>49</sup> D.J. Mulvaney, *Encounters in place : outsiders and aboriginal Australians, 1606-1985* (St. Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1989) pgs?.

<sup>50</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *A land half won* (South Melbourne, Vic.: Macmillan, 1982) 65.

<sup>51</sup> Blainey 74.

which indicated it was empty.<sup>52</sup> The installation of pastoral stations and mission stations displaced Aboriginal peoples from their traditional lands and forever changed their ways of life. Hunting and gathering patterns changed, disease and warfare decimated populations, and traditional power structures shifted as the invaders encroached on the frontier. However, the loss of property and economic production paled in the face of social and moral regulation by shifting colonial legislation, defined by geography and time. The dispossession of sovereignty and power fundamentally transformed Aboriginal lives, as Euro-Christian forms of rule regulated definitions of identity, personal autonomy, personal property, and political organization.<sup>53</sup>

Resistance extended beyond hostilities in frontier Australia, as evident in the Mabo's successful land claim and numerous reparation hearings for the Stolen Generations. Eddie Koiki Mabo recalls the confusion of and resentment for the moral and social regulation by Department of Native Affairs in *Edward Koiki Mabo: His life and struggle for land rights*, co-authored by Noel Loos. The DNA's protectionist policies extended over alcohol consumption, marriage, and economic production. DNA control "more or less demoralised the whole pearling industry. . . . [I]f you worked on the Company boat, you could not sell your catch to the white companies."<sup>54</sup> Legislative control over activities in the Torres Strait Islands, and all of Queensland, sparked Mabo's

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<sup>52</sup> See further discussion of this concept in Henry Reynolds, *The law of the land* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books, 1992) 12-16. Reynolds has recently been critiqued for his indiscriminate use of a term – *terra nullius* – may be ideologically correct, but was certainly not used by colonial officials or familiar in British law. See further in Michael Connor, *The Invention of Terra Nullius: Historical and Legal Fictions on the Foundation of Australia* (Macleay Press, 2005) and response from Lorenzo Veracini, "Terra nullius and the 'history wars'," *Online Opinion – Australia's e-journal of social and political debate*, (Feb 10, 2006) retrieved March 14, 2006 from <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/print.asp?article=4141>.

<sup>53</sup> Ann McGrath and Winona Stevenson, "Gender, Race, and Policy: Aboriginal Women and the State in Canada and Australia," *Labour/Le Travail* 38 (Fall 1996) 37-53.

<sup>54</sup> Noel Loos and Koiki Mabo, *Edward Koiki Mabo: His life and struggle for land rights*, (St. Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1996) 71.

desire for change. Loos suggests it was Mabo's ability to become "master of two cultures" which led to his extraordinary life of activism and his perseverance through major court battles to nullify *terra nullius* on Murray Island.<sup>55</sup> Mabo is an iconic figure in Aboriginal history, as his actions and his narrative transformed the political structures which subjugated Aboriginal peoples and restricted their land rights in Australia. However, the effects of the Aboriginal child removal policy remain significant in the shape of current Aboriginal – non Aboriginal relations. Although the success of the Stolen Generations hearings has been limited, historians and victims continue their uphill battle for reparation and recognition.<sup>56</sup> It is important to recognize Aboriginal agency and resistance beyond the violence of the 19<sup>th</sup> century frontier, as it indicates willingness for change and a survival of spirit, which is representative of modern Aboriginal historiography.

Although divergent from the controversial model of Australian Aboriginal historiography, interpretations of adaptation and compromise are significant to complete scholarship. In 1982, Peter Biskup feared that Aboriginal historians would be unable to abandon the framework of "conscience history";<sup>57</sup> however, during the same year, Reynolds established the centrality of Aboriginal agency within the contexts of resistance and adaptation.

Aborigines were neither apathetic in face of the European invasion nor incurious about the newcomer's lifestyle. The historical record indicates that they were not locked into a rigid unchanging culture. They showed themselves just as capable of adapting to altered circumstances as the European pioneers who were learning to strike their own balance between continuity and innovation in the new world. . . . Traditional society was,

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<sup>55</sup> Loos and Mabo 5.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Read, "The Stolen Generations, the historian and the court room," *Aboriginal History* 26 (2002) 51-61.

<sup>57</sup> Biskup 30.

therefore, both more conservative and more innovative than standard accounts have suggested with their picture of a culture too rigid to bend collapsing suddenly and completely under the pressure of European invasion.<sup>58</sup>

Resistance appears to garner more attention from scholars and public alike, perhaps because of its inherent controversy. But Aboriginal survival can be attributed as much to resistance as adaptation, as indicated by examinations of Aboriginal labourers, the Black Police, and inter-marriage. Ann McGrath presents a counter-argument to traditional assumption of Aboriginal victimhood and the loss of primitive culture in her examination of Aboriginal labour in the cattle industry:

White historians have tended to assume that Aboriginal culture was destroyed by all forms of white contact and thus acceptance of the cattle station lifestyle was a product of their humiliation, a cultural 'sell-out' to the white man, where they became near-slaves under a totally mean and oppressive system. Rather, Aborigines used the cattle station for their own purposes; they managed to secure European goods, as well as maintain links with their land and follow the precepts of Aboriginal law.<sup>59</sup>

In fact, Aboriginal ranch hands were significant to the shape of the industry, which was successful as a combination of European agricultural technology and Aboriginal strategies for sustainability in the bush.<sup>60</sup>

Survival motivated Aboriginal peoples to adapt to the new Euro-Australian structures of law, religion, and family. This is evident in Marie Fel's examination of the Native Police in Victoria and Katherine Ellinghaus' analysis of intermarriage and

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<sup>58</sup> Reynolds 1982, 59.

<sup>59</sup> Ann McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle': Aborigines in Cattle Country* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987) 145.

<sup>60</sup> McGrath 1987, 153. See further exploration of Aboriginal labour in Ann McGrath, "Modern Stone-Age Slavery: Images of Aboriginal Labour and Sexuality," *Labour History* 69 (November 1995) 30-51 and Ann Curthoys and Clive Moore, "Working for the White People: an Historiographic Essay on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Labour," *Labour History* 69 (November 1995) 1-29.

miscegenation in Australia and North America.<sup>61</sup> In *Outback Ghettos*, Peggy Brock suggests that mission stations were initiated for survival; however, this connection was problematic as the mission limited Aboriginal social and economic independence.<sup>62</sup> Adaptation and compromise may not dominate Aboriginal historiography in Australia, but it was a necessity of survival and resistance within Australian colonisation.

Themes of violence and conflict dominate Aboriginal historiographical tradition in Australia. Within the metanarrative and early anthropological studies, the Aborigine was constructed as the passive victim of well-intentioned European civilization. Later contributions highlighted the power structures which shaped Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relations and incorporated interpretations of Aboriginal agency, adaptation, and resistance to European invasion and oppression. The tensions between the constructions of victim and resistor are evidence of the controversial nature of Aboriginal historiography in Australia. Each stage of historiography – characterised by silence, victimization, resistance, and genocide – confronted the previous model and challenged the hegemonic interpretation of Australian colonisation and relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Confrontation and controversy have engaged both the public and academics and laid the groundwork for important change within the national mythology of Australia.

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<sup>61</sup> Fels examines both the motivations for joining the police and enforcing colonial law and how this further perpetuated violence on the frontier. Marie Hansen Fels, *Good Men and True: The aboriginal Police of the Port Phillip District, 1837-1853*, (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1988). Ellinghaus notes that acceptability of intermarriage was based on gender and class in North America, while Australian intermarriage, regardless of gender or class, was condemned. Katherine Ellinghaus, "Margins of Acceptability: Class, Education, and Interracial Marriage in Australia and North America," *Frontiers* 23:3 (2002) 55-75.

<sup>62</sup> Peggy Brock, *Outback Ghettos: Aborigines, institutionalization, and survival* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge UP, 1993) 165.

## Chapter Five

### Aboriginal and National Historiography: New Narrative(s)

It is easy to polarize Canadian and Australian scholarship – the former tells a story of the disintegration of a cooperative relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal by assimilation, exploitation and dispossession, while the latter is a confrontational narrative of violence and warfare between races, which has been silenced and challenged to suppress social shame, political guilt, and economic reparation. One story is bad, the other is much worse. However, these differences extend beyond historical differences – history may indeed influence historiography, but historiographical debate is also shaped by the place of national history in the public's consciousness.

Australian historian Bain Attwood suggests that "History was not only the colonisers' discourse; it was also a colonising one."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, history has the power to develop the archetypes of a nation – the noble savage, the primitive relic, the lazy Indian, the extinct Aborigine – which shape the perspective of colonial conquest and narratives of progress. In Australia, the myth of quiet colonisation and the egalitarian frontier became part of the nationalist mythology which informed Australian identity and differentiated the nation from its British origins – this mythology, and hence Australian identity - is challenged by current Aboriginal historiography. The confrontational integration and innovation of Australian Aboriginal historiography has engaged a public attracted to controversy. However, it has also led to questions about the legitimacy of the field, its methods, and interpretation. Revisionist interpretations challenge the sanctity of the entrenched mythology in Australia, but in Canada, Aboriginal historiography has

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<sup>1</sup> Bain Attwood, "Introduction. The past as future: Aborigines, Australia and the (dis)course of History," In the age of Mabo : history, aborigines and Australia, ed. B. Attwood (St. Leonard's, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996) viii.

grown within social history narratives which complement diverse Canadian historiography. In Canada, Aboriginal historiography grew alongside women's history, labour history, and regional history – representing post-modern interpretations of Canada's diverse historical experiences. As part of a larger movement to upset the national narrative, Aboriginal historiography influenced Canadian historiography by adding to the narratives rather than challenging them. All in all, the natures of the divergent Aboriginal historiographical debates are rooted in the strength of nationalist mythology and its significance to national identity.

As Canadian historiographer Carl Berger suggests, any challenge to the hegemonic myths of the nation, or any attempt to introduce multiple narratives of the nation's history, led to a "loss of coherence" in the field.<sup>2</sup> It is exactly this loss of coherence, this shift from the status quo, which has framed the dynamics of Aboriginal historiography in Canada and Australia. History no longer follows the pre-determined structure and morals of nationalist metanarratives; Canadians have acknowledged their colonial legacy of exploitation and disempowerment as one of the many narratives of the nation and Australians have re-imagined and redefined national historiography to include the brutal reality of the colonial frontier and the Aborigine as an active participant.

### **Canadian Narratives**

A brief survey of recent historiographical publication in Canada indicates the minimal interest in a Canadian metanarrative for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Rather, monographs cover topics which represent the diverse nature of Canadian historiography and cohesive

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<sup>2</sup> Carl Berger, The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Writing since 1900, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986) 259.



narratives of First Nations, women, and regions work together to represent the multiplicity of the Canadian experience.<sup>3</sup>

Framed within economic history, early treatments of Aboriginal fur trade history blended into the academic landscape, which opened the doors for social and political analyses of assimilation and regulation. The shift from economic to political and social examinations was significant; it created opportunity for critical revisionist approaches which questioned the benevolence of the colonial and federal governments. Changes in the academy are evident in the shift from cooperative fur trade history to examinations of acculturative policy. Aboriginal narratives no longer focused on cooperative economic and military relationships; rather, they highlighted the changing nature of Aboriginal - non-Aboriginal relationships and its impact on the socio-political climate of Canada.

One of the earliest contributions was made by Olive Dickason – now in its third edition. First published in 1992, Dickason provides a comprehensive history of Aboriginal peoples from earliest pre-contact times to current socio-political conflicts and concord. She concludes:

If any one theme can be traced throughout the history of Canada's Amerindians, it is the persistence of their identity. . . . Indians are more prominent in the collective conscience of the nation than they have ever been . . . Adaptability has always been the key to their survival; it is the strongest of Amerindian traditions. Just as the dominant society has learned from the Indians, so the Indians have absorbed much from the dominant society, but they have done it in their own way."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Bryan D. Palmer (ed.), Labouring the Canadian millennium: writings on work and workers, history and historiography, (St. John's, Nfld.: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 2000); Veronica Strong-Boag,; Mona Gleason, and Adele Perry, Rethinking Canada: the promise of women's history, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Gerald Friesen, The West: regional ambitions, national debates, global age, (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Olive Patricia Dickason, Canada's first nations: a history of founding peoples from earliest times, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992) 419.

Evidence of adaptation exists throughout Dickason's monograph – from her coverage of early colonial relationships in the fur trade to constitutional dialogue in the 1980s and 1990s. Within analyses of Aboriginal participation – both cooperative and resistant – in European trade, religious institutions, legislation and regulation, and political traditions, Dickason notes that adaptation may have led to inequity, but it was also the key to survival.<sup>5</sup> This theme allows her to create a cohesive narrative spanning centuries, regions, and nations; Dickason's text is significant because she maintains a central focus on Aboriginal peoples, not just their relationships with non-Aboriginal peoples.

Arthur Ray, who draws on his years as an academic historian and regular legal consultant, presents an illustrated history of Aboriginal peoples in Canada in his 1996 text *I have Lived Here since the World Began*.<sup>6</sup> In his introductory chapter, Ray juxtaposes his narrative with traditional historiography by positioning Aboriginal peoples as “Canada's First Explorers and Settlers.” Rather than focus solely on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century trading relationships, Ray balances his narrative by providing a considerable description of regionally distinct peoples and their interactions prior to European arrival. He also draws attention to late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century economic interaction of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities – extending the frontier of the fur trade northwards, uncovering the inadequacies of federal agricultural legislation, and examining the inequities entrenched in the Pacific fishing industry. Ray devotes a significant section of his text to 20<sup>th</sup> century political organization and action, including treaty rights, land claims, and constitutional reformation. He argues,

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<sup>5</sup> Dickason, 246.

<sup>6</sup> In the preface, Ray notes the necessity of a comprehensive history of Canada's First Nations because of the diversity of regional cultures and experiences. Arthur J. Ray, *I have lived here since the world began : an illustrated history of Canada's native people*, (Toronto : Lester Publishing, c1996) xiii.

Canada's Native people have struggled doggedly to survive as distinct societies in the land of their ancestors. It has been a Herculean struggle against overwhelming odds. However, they have not only endured but have forced non-Native Canadians to redefine their concept of Canada. This is probably best symbolized by the recent public acceptance of the idea that Aboriginal people were Canada's 'First Nations.'<sup>7</sup>

As Ray suggests, the strength of Aboriginal identity and political organization is significant in the development of Aboriginal historiography and the three founding nations model of Canadian historiography. Both Ray and Dickason's texts accomplish an important and difficult task – they integrate the many narratives of Aboriginal history into a cohesive, compelling account of the history Canada's First Nations.

The multiple narratives of Canadian scholarship recognize the diversity of Canadian historical experiences. Historiographer Carl Berger claims this mars the cohesive national narrative, which is apparent in the episodic format of a popular undergraduate history text, *Canada: A National History*.<sup>8</sup> The text is structured to accommodate Canada's multiple historical narratives, including small sections titled "Female Suffrage", "Trade Unions and Hard Times", "Asian-Canadian Communities", and "Indian treaties". The chronological organization of the text tends to confine Aboriginal peoples to the pre-colonial and colonial periods, up to Confederation, but Margaret Conrad and Alvin Finkel also provide some discussion of race and racism to encourage critical thinking about Aboriginal history within contexts of legislative development and World War. Their tendency to frame Aboriginal history within economic and political partnerships with non-Aboriginal settlers and traders does detract from the integration of critical analysis and tools which encourage students to question

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<sup>7</sup> Ray 1996, 368.

<sup>8</sup> Margaret Conrad and Alvin Finkel, *Canada: A National History*, (Toronto: Pearson Education Canada Ltd., 2003).

historiographical representations of traditionally marginalized populations. The fur trade is a significant component of their narrative, where they recognize both colonial success and tension:

The Natives were partners in the fur trade. As long as competition among the Europeans and good markets for furs prevailed, First Nations significantly influenced the terms of trade. They also retained control over their own territories and maintained traditional religious and cultural practices. After 1821, however, the fur-trade monopoly, declining supplies of furs, and increasing European interest in the West as an area of settlement would all threaten the Natives' dominance in their homelands.<sup>9</sup>

Some acknowledgement of systemic subjugation is evident in their discussion of the Indian Act, but they fail to address residential schools and restrictions on cultural celebrations like the potlatch, and only briefly address legal issues like land claims and traditional hunting and fishing rights. The brief nature of these discussions may be attributed to Conrad and Finkel's attention to so many Canadian experiences, which they rationalize by arguing that "there cannot be and never was an official version of Canada's history."<sup>10</sup>

In Canada, colonial reality was edited for national myth of "peaceful penetration" which focused on cooperative socio-economic partnerships and benevolent government. Current Aboriginal historical scholarship breaks from this myth to examine relationships of assimilation, disempowerment, and dispossession. Academic analyses of aboriginality, resistance, and colonial institutions of power are significant to the current shape of Aboriginal historiography; examinations of race have displaced safe and acceptable arguments about cooperative economic partnerships and unparalleled political compromise. These powerful narratives are important contributions to the diverse

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<sup>9</sup> Conrad and Finkel 165.

<sup>10</sup> Conrad and Finkel xxi.

collection of narratives which inform 21<sup>st</sup>-century Canadian scholarship. They have become part of Canadian historiographical tradition which values shared multiple histories over the metanarrative.

### **The New Australian Metanarrative**

Both the content and practice of Australian Aboriginal historiography are confrontational. The details of invasion history create an image of a land saturated by blood, which challenges traditional perceptions of the quiet frontier. The controversial nature of the public discourse around “black armband” history suggests that Australians are no longer comfortable with the myths of the dying race and *terra nullius*, and they are now enraged and engaged by Aboriginal historiography.

The myth of quiet colonisation is most evident in Douglas Pike’s single-volume narrative, *Australia: The Quiet Continent*.<sup>11</sup> Founded on narratives of progress and development, Pike’s history focuses on politics, economics, and the growth of civilization out of an unforgiving environment. He suggests Australia history was so quiet because “[n]o enemies invaded these shores to quicken fervent nationalism. No colonizing crusade ever left this land to conquer and rule other countries. No local battles or revolution disturbed this peaceful isolation.”<sup>12</sup> Pike’s narrow vision of Australian history maintains the dangerous misconception that Australian isolation prevented warfare and conflict in the colony.

Geography, and its effect on colonisation, appears to be the framework for interpretations of national history and identity. Russel Ward’s examination of *The Australian Legend* also cites the influence of the harsh frontier on the nature of

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<sup>11</sup> Douglas Pike, *Australia: The Quiet Continent*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962).

<sup>12</sup> Pike 223.

colonisation, and the development of Australian characteristics like egalitarianism and fortitude. His analysis of representations of Australian character indicates that “[m]ost writers seem to have felt strongly that the ‘Australian spirit’ is somehow intimately connected with the bush and that it derives rather from the common folk than from the more respectable and cultivated sections of society.”<sup>13</sup> Although Ward recognizes racism as “the most discreditable and dangerous component of the legend”,<sup>14</sup> he proposes “[i]f, as has been argued, the bushman’s *esprit de corps* sprang largely from his adaptation to, and mastery of, the outback environment, then the Aborigine was his master and mentor.”<sup>15</sup>

The problems with Pike’s myth and Ward’s legends, as noted by Henry Reynolds, “was [their] avoidance of the pervasive violence.”<sup>16</sup> The national narrative is directly challenged by revisionist interpretations which frame Australian colonisation within its violent past on the frontier. Major changes characterise Australian historiography, from the quiet frontier to the Aboriginal victim, to resistance and genocide, each stage challenges the perceptions of the last. Both the controversial and political qualities of this scholarship have led to critiques of its validity. Within frameworks of victimization and resistance, Aboriginal historiography prioritizes racial conflict; critics of the invasion model of history oppose the narrative, the methodology, and the politics of shame and reparation with which it is associated. Reynolds identifies an anomaly in the public recognition of Aboriginal historiography, as 19<sup>th</sup> century contemporaries openly discussed the warfare between settlers and Aborigines:

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<sup>13</sup> Russel Ward, The Australian Legend (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1958) 1.

<sup>14</sup> Ward 239.

<sup>15</sup> Ward 186.

<sup>16</sup> Henry Reynolds, Why weren’t we told?: A personal search for the truth about our history. (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin Books, 1999) 130.

It is strange, then, that today's conservatives are so upset and defensive when terms like invasion and warfare are used. They seem unable to accept the objective facts of the past. What is more, their stance diminishes the desperate struggle of the Aborigines and implicitly changes the character of what they were doing. For if Australia was, indeed, peacefully settled, then their guerrilla campaign cannot be considered warfare, merely as insurgency or rebellion. Aboriginal warriors thus lose the status of patriots accorded them by observers of the time, and become, by definition, outlaws and criminals.<sup>17</sup>

The trade-off is simple: colonial innocence for Aboriginal guilt. However, this is an unacceptable fate for scholars like Reynolds, Bain Attwood, and Ann McGrath, who continue to debate this matter within and outside the academy.

The myth of Aboriginal victimhood, often transparently cloaked in marginal treatments of Aboriginal history or fabricated narratives of colonial silence, is directly challenged by Aboriginal historiography and new approaches to the Australian metanarrative. Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marian Quartly present a revised national history in *Creating a Nation*, which they suggest "challenges the conventional view of Australia's past as a creation of white men of British descent."<sup>18</sup> These historians fundamentally changed the structure of national historical narrative, presenting an innovative and inclusive text which represents each scholar's specialization. Grimshaw, Lake, McGrath, and Quartly engage in conceptual deliberations within their text:

It is debatable whether we call white 'invaders', 'intruders' or the more neutral 'newcomers'. To Aborigines, the British fitted each of these categories. They were usually armed, and intent on invading Aboriginal lands and territories. The British saw themselves as a sort of official forward party sent from England or the settled areas; their colonising mission was approved by Christian dogma, by the state and by contemporary scientific ideology. To the Aborigines the whites were

<sup>17</sup> Henry Reynolds, *Fate of a free people*, (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books, 1995) 207.

<sup>18</sup> Patricia Grimshaw; Marilyn Lake; Ann McGrath; and Marian Quartly, *Creating a Nation*, (Ringwood, Vic: McPhee Gribble, 1994) cover.

trespassers on the land, lacking the permission of its custodians, potentially angering both people and spirits.<sup>19</sup>

Their willingness to question traditional knowledge and consider alternative interpretations indicates the innovation of their approach to nationalist narrative.

This initiative is not a one-off. Rather, the redefinition of the Australian narrative is evident in the whole of Aboriginal historiography because of the historical centrality of Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relations on the colonial frontier and because of the significance placed upon the relationship between history and Australian identity. David Day presents a revised interpretation of Australian history in his 1996 monograph, *Claiming a Continent*. Veracini's evaluation of Day's work indicates that "[i]n Day's overview, the themes of conquest, dispossession and race relations outweigh any other concerns, and Aboriginal history becomes a paradigm for the whole interpretation of Australian history."<sup>20</sup> An earlier text by Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders and Kathryn Cronin set a foundation for these narratives, as they centralized examinations of race relations within their study on colonisation in Queensland.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, evidence from public dialogue about Australian historiography – its representation in museums, schools, and in public consciousness – tends to focus on the depictions of Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal peoples and the nature of their relationship on the frontier.<sup>22</sup> The centrality of Aboriginal peoples in Australian historiography is a significant shift in national scholarship generated by the united push by Aboriginal historians to challenge and revise national scholarship.

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<sup>19</sup> Grimshaw et.al. 132.

<sup>20</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, "Of a 'contested ground' and an 'indelible stain': a difficult reconciliation between Australia and its Aboriginal history during the 1990s and 2000s," *Aboriginal History*, 27 (2003) 233. See also David Day, *Claiming a Continent: A History of Australia*, (Angus & Robertson, 1996).

<sup>21</sup> Raymond Evans; Kay Saunders; Kathryn Cronin, *Race relations in colonial Queensland : a history of exclusion, exploitation and extermination*, 3rd ed. (St. Lucia ; University of Queensland Press, 1993).

<sup>22</sup> Refer to discussion in Chapter 2.



In Australia, national mythology developed in spite of colonial reality. Myth did not include Aboriginal peoples; current scholarship breaks from this myth and is a direct challenge to fundamental ideas of Australian nationhood. The creators of new national history have approached the metanarrative with creativity and a new framework, which is as controversial as it is innovative.

The power of nationalist mythology is significant; its influence is evident in both the content and approach of Australian and Canadian Aboriginal historiography. The relative absence of the Aborigine in Australian mythology provided opportunity for scholars to fundamentally re-imagine the shape of the national narrative. A new focus on race and the brutal reality of the frontier engaged Australians in post-colonial study, which was both innovative and interesting. Canadian mythology, characterised by cooperation and partnership, is more difficult for the public to dismiss. Academics have had to break from the structures of benign Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal history to evaluate the colonial realities of dispossession and devastation, and have found success as they contribute to the diverse collective of narratives in Canadian historiography.

The interaction of Aboriginal historiography with the national narrative is a determinant for the nature of historiographical debate and determines the interpretative framework which dominates new scholarship. Canadians, no longer tied to the single narrative of the nation, work in relative academic isolation to contribute to the growing body of work on Aboriginal history which informs one aspect of national historiography. In contrast, Australian scholars have united and engaged with the public to challenge and redefine the Australian national narrative, maintaining a single-narrative approach to scholarship. In both academies there is cooperation and controversy; they are not

mutually exclusive. However, it is apparent that the Australian controversy surrounding Aboriginal historiography is founded in its hostility toward the national narrative, and Canadian cooperation is determined by its rejection of a singular metanarrative.

## Conclusion(s)

No longer marginal to national historiography, Aboriginal historiography is an important and innovative field of scholarship in Australia and Canada. They may share academic traditions and methodology, but their narratives diverge significantly. The realities of the Australian frontier were brutal; the meeting of European and Aboriginal peoples was bloody and belligerent. The integration of this narrative into Australian scholarship has been publicly challenged, and Aboriginal historians have responded in kind. In Canada, economic and military alliances framed early relations between some Aboriginal nations and European colonists, but with increasing settlement and stronger government regulation, the alliances were broken and a new pattern of acculturation and disempowerment was formed. This historiography is characterized by its open framework, which includes complementary and conflicting narratives of Aboriginal historiography. Thus, influenced by their relationships with national historiographies, the tone of most Australian scholarship remains unified, hostile and hard-edged, while Canadian historiography is an amalgam of multiple adaptive narratives.

Both are stories of exploitation and dispossession, but only Australian historiography is characterized by the controversy of colonial conflict. Of course, this can be attributed to the reality of violent colonization in Australia, but it is also determined by the nature of national historiography and its relationship with Aboriginal historiography. In Australia, the traditional metanarrative marginalizes Aboriginal peoples and fails to recognize the brutality of Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relations on the frontier. This omission triggered a unified, confrontational Aboriginal

historiography, which began with Stanner's condemnation of the "cult of forgetfulness".<sup>1</sup> The ensuing historiographical debate engaged academic and public interests, and it continues on with new publications by Bain Attwood and Michael Connor.<sup>2</sup> Aboriginal historians unified to challenge the denial of a violent past and to provide a powerful corrective to Australian historiography. Integrated into the work of Reynolds, Ryan, Critchett, and Curthoys is not just strong methodology, but political advocacy, a desire to educate the Australian public and question the mythos of an egalitarian nation.

The collision of historiography – national and Aboriginal – has determined the framework of scholarly methodology and interpretation in Australia. In Canada, diverse historiographies are part of the cooperative program of national scholarship. Rather than challenge a national narrative, Aboriginal historiography in Canada is one of many narratives which informs national historiography. There is no united front against a hegemonic myth which builds a singular national identity, and therefore, there is little controversy surrounding Aboriginal historiography and its place in national historical consciousness.

This comparative analysis provides insight into the different historiographical debates which exist in Canada and Australia. The dynamics of the confrontational and controversial Australian debates become clearer within the context of comparative examinations. Based upon this analysis, and evidence which supports an interpretation of cooperative Canadian historiography, it is evident that Aboriginal historiography is not

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<sup>1</sup> W.E.H. Stanner, After the Dreaming: Black and White Australians – An Anthropologist's View, The Boyer Lectures, 1968 (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1969)

<sup>2</sup> Bain Attwood, Telling the Truth about Aboriginal History, (St. Leonard's, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2005). Michael Connor, The Invention of Terra Nullius: Historical and Legal Fictions on the Foundation of Australia, (Paddington, NSW: Macleay Press, 2005).

innately controversial or confrontational. Rather, it appears that controversy is sparked by national historiography, issues of identity, and the integration of Aboriginal historiography into national historical consciousness.

Based upon these conclusions, it may be proposed that Australian scholarship implement lessons from Canada's diverse historiographical tradition. The integration of multiple narratives and multiple perspectives would broaden the scope of Australian historiography and ease the criticism of Aboriginal historiography and its legitimacy. The relatively singular nature of Australian Aboriginal historiography would be corrected by a multiple-perspective approach. No longer would Aboriginal historiography be confined to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century frontier; analyses beyond frontier conflict – like McGrath's *Born in the Cattle* and Attwood's *The Making of the Aborigines* – could gain a more prominent place in scholarship. Within the frontier, the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their colonial experiences could be integrated into a larger body of work, building on regional studies like Critchett's *A Distant Field of Murder* and Loos' *Invasion and Resistance*. This is a necessary corrective, suggests Jennifer Sabbioni, as earlier research on Aboriginal history by scholars like W.E.H. Stanner and Bob Reece constructed Aboriginal identity through the singular imagery of the aborigine.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, as Attwood argues in his new book *Telling the Truth about Aboriginal History*, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation's "project of 'shared history' was flawed in several respects. Its premise that there could be a reconciled

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<sup>3</sup> Jennifer Sabbioni, "Aboriginal Women's Narratives: Reconstructing Identities," *Australian Historical Studies* 27: 106 (April 1996) 72-4. Current scholarship has abandoned the term "aborigine" in favour of "Aboriginal peoples" or regional and cultural identifiers.

history was unduly optimistic, even naïve. It did not allow enough for difference.”<sup>4</sup>

Attwood’s critique indicates the problems with the integration of Aboriginal historiography into an adapted Australian narrative – there are limits to the truths (perspectives) one story can tell.

However, it is the engagement with one narrative – one singular, constant focus – which has drawn a stronger interest in history. Rather than changing the structure of Australian historiography, new themes and interpretations of Aboriginal historiography are integrated into the singular narrative. This has caused concern and conflict for a nation who had little memory of its violent colonial past and has since engaged public academics in historiographical debate. Although the Australian controversy may be inflated, it does illustrate the importance of debate, particularly in the public.

It is apparent that Canadian scholarship is missing this dynamic. Where the academy may see diversity, wider audiences may perceive ambiguity. Canadian historiography is a compilation of complementary – and, at times, competing – narratives about region, class, gender, ethnicity, and other multiple identities. Without one singular focus, it is difficult to inspire engagement with a fragmented narrative. Sylvia VanKirk suggests that “competing visions” are problematic in Canadian historiography, and Canadians should look to the Australian model where an Aboriginal dynamic runs consistently through historiography.<sup>5</sup> She argues it is important for Canadian historians to integrate Aboriginal history into the national narrative because, as VanKirk claims, its erasure from larger public consciousness is a major social problem.

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<sup>4</sup> Bain Attwood, “Telling the Truth About Aboriginal History,” Excerpt published by [NewMatilda.com](http://www.newmatilda.com/home/articledetail.asp?ArticleID=991) October 5, 2005; Retrieved from <http://www.newmatilda.com/home/articledetail.asp?ArticleID=991>.

<sup>5</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, “Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal Relations: Competing Visions.” Presentation to Frost Centre for Canadian Studies and Native Studies, Trent University, 18 Oct 2001.

Although VanKirk may overstate her case, she does present a valid point. An integrated national narrative may not be a corrective to the nations' social inequities, but it would present a unified narrative which could garner attention outside the academy. To date, relatively few history texts or interpretations have gained popular attention. Exceptions, like John Milloy's *A National Crime*, demonstrate that interest exists – it's just dormant. Milloy's work challenges common conceptions of Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relations in Canada and supports reconciliation for the systemic abuse of the public and religious institutions.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, both Arthur Ray and Jennifer Brown demonstrate alternative approaches to public engagement with historiography. Ray's examination of the historian's role in the courtroom provides a clear but cautionary directive for balancing public engagement, advocacy, and scholarship.<sup>7</sup> Brown's survey of Aboriginal historiography in Canada highlights the necessity of attracting the public's interest – in particular, by engaging First Nations communities in the creation of Aboriginal historiography.<sup>8</sup> It is important for historians, like Brown, Ray and Milloy, to draw wider public attention to the historical foundations of current socio-political issues. The current approach allows for multiple perspectives and speaks to diverse interests in historiography. Perhaps Canadians can adapt their approach for broader appeal and engagement by referring to the Australian model of integration. This model is valuable because it has addressed historians' concerns about Aboriginal absence in Australian

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<sup>6</sup> John Milloy, *A National Crime: the Canadian government and the residential school system, 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999). Note that the Literary Review of Canada has listed *A National Crime* as one of the most important Canadian books ever written. "LRC unveils the 100 most important books ever written." Literary Review of Canada. November 17, 2005. Retrieved April 2, 2006 <http://www.reviewcanada.ca/hundredbooks.html>

<sup>7</sup> Arthur J. Ray, "Native History on Trial: Confessions of an Expert Witness," CHR Forum in *Canadian Historical Review*, 84:2 (June 2003) 253-273.

<sup>8</sup> Jennifer Brown, "Doing Aboriginal History: A View from Winnipeg," *Canadian Historical Review*, 84:4 (December 2003) 613-635.

historiography and has allowed Reynolds to come to grips with his essential question “why weren’t we told?”<sup>9</sup>

The comparative framework of this analysis has created the opportunity to evaluate and apply practical lessons from Canadian and Australian historiographical traditions. The Australian challenge to national historiography is full-frontal, sparked both by historians and the public – some defensive of traditional identity and understanding of the past, some ridden with guilt for the atrocities of the past, and some actively searching justice through historical debate. The unified confrontation of Australian mythology has led to unparalleled public engagement with Aboriginal historiography and innovative rewriting of Australian history to recognize the realities of settlement and colonization. The Australian debates are intriguing for Canadian historians who contribute to wide-ranging scholarship with few restrictions and minimal public discourse. The multiple perspectives present in Aboriginal historiography have built an open forum for a diverse interpretation of Canadian historiography, which may be attractive to Australian historians. Perhaps, with time, Canadians will enter into historiographical debate sparked by a national controversy and Australian historians will collaborate on the development of multiple perspectives.

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<sup>9</sup> Henry Reynolds, Why Weren’t We Told?: A Personal Search for the Truth About our History (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1999).



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## Appendix A: Bibliographic Analysis

Table 1: Bibliographic Listing & Break-down

Total No. Sources	No. Sources of Aboriginal History	Canadian Sources, Aboriginal History	Australian Sources, Aboriginal History	Comparative Aboriginal History	North American Aboriginal History
260	184	84	85	7	8
100%	70.8% of total bibliography	45.7% of Aboriginal historiography	46.2% of Aboriginal historiography	3.8% of Aboriginal historiography	4.3% of Aboriginal historiography

Table 2: Australian Sources, Aboriginal History

	1900-1949	1950-1959	1960-1969	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2006	Total
Articles	0	2	1	2	6	21	14	46
Monographs	2	0	2	3	11	14	5	37
Collections	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 interview	1
Total	2	2	3	5	17	36	20	85

Table 3: Canadian Sources, Aboriginal History

	1900-1949	1950-1959	1960-1969	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2006	Total
Articles	0	1	1	2	8	20	9	41
Monographs	2	0	3	4	5	17	3	34
Collections	0	0	0	0	3	4	1	8
Other	0	0	0	1 thesis	0	0	0	1
Total	2	1	4	7	16	41	13	84

## Appendix B: Journal Analysis, 1977-2003

Table 1: Journal Content Analysis, 1977-2003

	Date Range	No. Issues	No. Articles	No. Articles Aboriginal History	% Articles Aboriginal History	Leading Aboriginal History Themes <sup>1</sup>
Australian Historical Studies <sup>2</sup>	1977-2003	57	441	55	12.5%	Governance & Politics: 22.5% Conflict & Dispossession: 15.7% Historiography: 14.6% Race & Identity: 13.5%
Aboriginal History <sup>3</sup>	1977-2003	54	314	282	89.8%	Historiography: 15% Conflict & Dispossession: 11.7% Governance & Politics: 10.2%
Canadian Historical Review <sup>4</sup>	1977-2003	108	350	30	9.0%	Governance & Politics: 21.1% Historiography: 19.3% Race & Identity: 14% Economy: 8.8%
Native Studies Review <sup>5</sup>	1984-2003	28	126	62	49.2%	Governance & Politics: 28.2% Dispossession & Claims: 18.4% Historiography: 18.4% Race & Identity: 14.6%

<sup>1</sup> Other themes include Class & Labour, Gender, and Culture & Society.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Historical Studies is published by Melbourne University. See further <http://www.mup.unimelb.edu.au/ahs/>.

<sup>3</sup> Aboriginal History is published by Aboriginal History Inc. See further <http://www.aboriginalhistory.org/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Historical Review is published by University of Toronto Press. See further <http://www.utpjournals.com/jour.ihtml?lp=chr/chre.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Native Studies Review is published by University of Saskatchewan. See further <http://publications.usask.ca/nativestudiesreview/>.

**Appendix C: Interview with Henry Reynolds (University of Tasmania)**  
 Native-Newcomer Relations: Comparative Perspectives  
 University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon

Friday May 9, 2003, 1:00 pm

Interviewer: Erin Stewart Eves (M.A. Candidate, Trent University)

*Note: tape recorder would not function, interview notes taken short-hand and verified by Henry Reynolds via email in May 2003.*

ESE: I'd like to start with a discussion regarding the current debate in Australia – I've had the opportunity to read the Windschuttle article published in the September 2001 issue of the *New Criterion* – I've many reactions and concerns and have developed some questions based upon these concerns. I'm confused about Windschuttle's methodology – are you reading the same sources but interpreting them differently or is he selective in his choice of documentation?

HR: My impression is what he's done is work from footnotes . . . detailed work. The appearance of detailed scholarship is, I think, a largely false impression. He is highly selective in the way he uses sources in almost every major point in developing his argument. Not knowing the source and his deliberate selectivity, a story is told which leaves out many of most important sources that could be used. It is an extremely biased and tendentious book which creates the impression of being based on detailed work. He says he's finding the truth, but his is a highly idiosyncratic and prejudiced view.

ESE: Windschuttle seems to link politics with the "infiltration" of subjectivity and postmodernism but ignores the influence of conservative politics on scholarship – in contrast to your comments regarding historical study and the citizen – is history successful in the absence of politics?

HR: He endeavours to give impression that he has no political objective, that he is simply pursuing truth and exposing politically inspired distortions of conventional history. He creates an idea of conventional history written by a single group when they range along a wide spectrum. He has created a single orthodox view that he is working against but there is a wide range of political opinion represented by the group. But his most successful strategy is that he began by going to the media and claiming there was a conspiracy, fraud, malpractice, scandal. Had he simply written the book, it would've received minor attention . . . if he had pointed out in the footnotes where historians made mistakes. Instead he created a media scandal of distortion and that became the story. (Notes he has a background in media studies and journalism.) He has used the media skillfully.

ESE: I think this discussion links to a question I was going to ask later regarding the difference in intensity of the Canadian and Australian debates regarding Aboriginal history – do you believe this can be attributed to the individual or the nature of Australian historical scholarship or the social and political tensions in Australia?

HR: He claims not to have political objectives, but his view is one that is highly conservative to protect civilization against forces that threaten to fragment the state with ethnic nationalism by questioning legitimacy of Western society one, by romanticizing European societies and two, by exaggerating the degree of violence that accompanied European expansion and delegitimated the project of Western civilization. The tactic of uncovering shock-horror scandal and the appearance of an exposé of intellectual corruption have made it an important publication.

ESE: His denial of Aboriginal voice and agency is so explicit – is this still a common phenomenon in most of Australian history?

HR: Tasmania has no historical memory. Aborigines have little memory or historical traditions about dispossession. They were removed in 1834 and not on mainland Tasmania for over a century. All traces of language and knowledge of their past is gone. One needs documents. However, outside Tasmania, he suggests oral history is worthless as historical source material.

ESE: I'll change the subject from this debate and turn toward my research interests. Historiographers generally note a "transition" or change from national to social history or from anthropology to Aboriginal history at the 1960s-70s – do you believe we have or need a standard definition of Aboriginal history? Is that definition the same now as it was in the 1970s?

HR: I don't think we do and I think the practice has become in dealing with Aboriginal history one should make as much use of Aboriginal oral tradition as possible. Expect any researcher in the north of Australia to incorporate Aboriginal history into the narrative, but some work to extreme. There's an interesting thesis by young Japanese scholar who worked with the Gurindji who had a famous strike in the 1960s. He lived with the community, learned to speak the language and spoke with the old people. He wrote a history regarding the perception of local people. In a sense much of it had already become myth . . . reasons for the strike, there's a story . . . in the 1960s a large American plane landed in city and President John F Kennedy told them not to put up with conditions any more. How do you incorporate that? It indicates they were aware of civil rights movement in America – there had been an airplane landing. You must use whatever is available – recorded, documented, anthropology, which is often difficult. We're aware that those books that just relate Aboriginal stories, like Deborah Bird Rose, don't make sense to us. One of the stories about Mr. Captain James Cook – Mr. Captain James Cook is represented as bad European, Ned Kelly as good European. Simply, the narratives themselves are confusing used as such. There should be a parallel history – a whitefella history and blackfella history.

But there is much more work on Aborigines in north in the cattle industry where you can get more guidance to what is being related – rounding up cattle, relations with the white boss. Questions can be whitefella questions with black answers; ask questions directly related to white history, the structure is directed by researcher.

ESE: What do you think sparked this change in the 1970s – was it social, political, or academic? Individual or collective?

HR: Obviously it was related to currents and thought and events not related to one history or one country. In its broader history, it must be seen as part of decolonisation. That all over the world 19<sup>th</sup> century decolonisation has seen reduction by nationalist history as decline of empire. All start to write history of nation, including monuments and museums, which is a form of cultural nationalism which is indeed part of a powerful movement of nation versus empire which began, arguably, with the American Revolution and continued to today. It spread to the Afro-Asian world in 1920s-30s and peaked in the 1950s-60s – visible in national viewpoints in music, history. This also, late in the day, not surprisingly had spread to the nation within with Black Americans and Dubois in 1903 *The Soul of Negroes*. Inevitably, particularly in the 1960s, there was a culmination of independent movements and great era of decolonisation – the final thrust. A little bit left . . . Africa was a great place of decolonisation and civil rights in the U.S. Indigenous peoples of North America, Australia, New Zealand became part of a wider global movement. It wasn't necessarily them who took this up – it was more young white Australians. Aboriginal expression more particularly in arts – autobiography, poetry, painting, plays. There was an efflorescence of black culture. White historians were fellow travelers with this. This was a combination of anti-racism movement in America, Britain, South Africa – all obviously part of it – all of these things are there. It leads to the rewriting of national history; particularly because white settler history needed white hero history as it was struggling for nationhood. The paradox in Canada, Australia, New Zealand was that they were given right to govern themselves before they developed a sense of nation; they needed nationalist historiography, it is not surprising it was challenged.

ESE: How would you describe the relationship between non-Aboriginal historians and Aboriginal peoples in Australia – has there been an increase in the number of Aboriginal historians in the academy?

HR: Increasing number of Aboriginal graduates and peoples having some form of post-secondary training, but disproportionately small number becoming historians. History is an important part of their consciousness, but by and large, there are better job prospects – areas that seem more immediately important are health, education, law. The number of historians is disappointingly small and most common form in which history is written in family history or autobiography. You can still hear “what are you writing our story for us – you are occupying intellectual space that should be ours” – this is said more by white radicals than Aborigines. Most say “thank you for telling our story.” There is a considerable difference of opinion. Most educated Aborigines have used and benefited from what white people have written. My view is that there is fundamental inequality in an intellectual sense – totally opposed people should stop writing in advance, they criticize what should be written rather than what has been written. What I think would be a great change if Aboriginal historians would write about Europeans, rather than thinking they can only write about themselves; there is a shared history and it is hard to unravel interrelationships