

Rethinking the Racial Moment

Rethinking the Racial Moment:
Essays on the Colonial Encounter

Edited by

Alison Holland and Barbara Brookes

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SCHOLARS

P U B L I S H I N G

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—Alison Holland
Barbara Brookes

INTRODUCTION¹

ALISON HOLLAND

The 2000s witnessed almost simultaneous civil unrest in many parts of the globe. In England, across Europe, in America, Australia, Asia and South Asia mob violence and rioting erupted in hotspots from Yorkshire and Brussels, New York and Paris to Thailand, China and Sydney. While the causes of much of this discontent were social and economic, and related to youth unemployment and the impact of globalisation, they were also about identity, belonging and the “local”.² As 9/11 all too graphically revealed the anxious citizenry, identified by political scientists Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman as having been challenged by ethnocultural diversity, was not confined to Western liberal democracies.³ The moment that was 9/11 seemed to suggest a world spun out of control. At the close of the twentieth century, race⁴ and culture re-emerged as powerful sites of conflict in global politics, and if not the cause, often the fuel of the defiance, violence and discontent. If the twentieth century was the century of race, it arguably peaked at the *fin de siècle*.⁵

There was also a discursive dimension to these processes. In the last quarter of the twentieth century many nations were engaged in the difficult processes of dealing with the legacies of the past, which sparked fierce debates within and outside of the Academy. Talk of truth, reconciliation and reparations and the issuing of national apologies has occurred against

¹ The editors would like to thank Dr Adrian Carton who, while still lecturer in the Department of Modern History at Macquarie University, Sydney, made some early formative contributions to this project. Adrian’s insight and input was critical to the overall thrust and articulation of its central aims.

² Charles W.J. Withers, “Place and the “Spatial Turn” in Geography and History”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol.70, no.4, October, 2009, 637-658.

³ Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman (eds), *Citizenship in Diverse Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 31.

⁴ The Note at the end of this introduction discusses the use of the word race without quotation marks in the text.

⁵ John Docker and Gerhard Fischer (eds), *Race, Colour and Identity in Australia and New Zealand* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000).

the backdrop of intense history and culture wars. These have demonstrated the important connection between history and politics and just what is at stake in the stories we tell ourselves about who we are and where we've been.⁶ As several authors have noted they are ultimately about what it means to be French or South African or Australian—having a national identity—in the postcolonial and globalised present.⁷ Nor have the new and revised histories spawned from these processes always sat comfortably or provided succour. In Australia in late 2005, against an increasingly complex rendering of Australia's immigrant identity and migrant history, a confrontation between local residents from the Sydney beachside suburb of Cronulla and groups of Middle-Eastern youths resulted in racially motivated mob violence. During the unrest locals, predominantly Anglo-Celts, etched onto the white sands of the beach the epithet, "We grew here, you flew here." Such deep-rooted nativist sentiment was not confined to Australia.⁸

As this suggests, multiculturalism has been one cause of unease both in and out of the Academy. It sits within the broader discussions around citizenship being engaged in across the globe.⁹ In some ways debates about the *colonial* past have been far more fractious precisely because, among other things, they destabilise such nativism at its base: territorial legitimacy and sovereignty. Of course, the project of thinking through the colonial past is far from new but it has moved in dynamic new directions since the 1990s, particularly with the postcolonial and poststructural turn.

⁶ Bain Attwood, *Telling the Truth About Aboriginal History* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005); Priscilla Hayner, *Unspeakable Truth: Facing the Challenges of Truth Commissions* (New York: Routledge, 2002); JL Gibson, *Overcoming Apartheid: Can Truth Reconcile a Divided Nation?* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004); David Horowitz, *Uncivil Wars: The Controversy Over Reparations for Slavery* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002); Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark, *The History Wars* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003); Inga Clendinnen, "The History Question: Who Owns the Past?", *Quarterly Essay* 23, October, 2006.

⁷ Attwood, *Telling the Truth*; Herman Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

⁸ Murray Goot and Ian Watson, "Nativism as Citizenship: Immigration, Economic Hardship and the Politics of the Right", Martina Mollering and Christina Slade (eds), *From Migrant to Citizen: Testing Language Testing Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Joel S Fetzer, *Public Attitudes Towards Immigration in the US, France and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Sue Wright, "Citizenship Tests in Europe: Editorial Introduction", *International Journal of Multicultural Studies* 10, no.1, 2008, 1–9.

⁹ See, for example, Mollering and Slade (eds), *From Migrant to Citizen*.

Indeed, the discursive dimensions of the *fin de siècle* have both been constitutive of broader shifts in global politics and provided important critical interventions regarding them. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the fields of colonial and imperial history. Indeed, it is an interesting development in recent times that some of the key historians of colonialism have now gone global; Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton's *Rethinking the Colonial Encounter in World History* and Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper's *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* are two good examples of this trend.¹⁰

Of course, cross-cultural and colonial contacts have long been part of the stories world historians tell.¹¹ But, as Ballantyne has recently argued, with their emphasis on a materialist conception of the past and the mapping of big processes, these histories have frequently occluded the making, unmaking and remaking of subjectivities in particular locations and contexts. Indeed, as one such exponent in the field has argued, one of the aims of world history is to tell a single, coherent story rather than a collection of particular stories of different communities.¹² Although an important focus, it necessarily produces a partial picture of world contacts and interactions. While world history research which focuses on migration, empires and ideologies is producing a more complex rendering of the interwoven and overlapping processes driven by diverse peoples from a variety of locations, world history has not systematically examined particular questions of race, gender or sexuality.¹³

Indeed, according to Ballantyne, it was precisely because CA Bayly included the social and cultural domains in his *Birth of the Modern World* (2004) that it marked out new territory for world history research. Ballantyne applauds Bayly for his departure from other recent incursions into world history, through his recognition of race and violence as being

¹⁰ Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton (eds), *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

¹¹ William McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963); CA Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Comparisons and Connections* (Malden Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

¹² David Christian, "World History in Context", *Journal of World History*, vol.14, no.4, December, 2003, 1.

¹³ Tony Ballantyne, "Putting the Nation in its Place?: World History and C. A. Bayly's 'The Birth of the Modern World'", Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake (eds), *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2005), 34, 40.

fundamental to the processes of contact, convergence and conflict in the modern world. With an emphasis on global comparison Bayly also canvassed what world history, along with other important theoretical interventions such as transnational history, could bring to the study of colonialism. As Marilyn Lake and Ann Curthoys have shown, while transnational history has many lines of enquiry its influence has notably been felt in the new imperial histories and comparative histories of white settler societies both of which have called for more dynamic interpretations of the interrelationships between race, nation, colony and metropole.

Paul Spickard's *Race and Nation* is another world history of recent years to consider the salience of race in a comparative context. While essentially a series of case studies, it represented an attempt to think about the history of race and ethnic systems in a global and comparative frame, using an interdisciplinary approach. It also attempted to explore the big picture without sacrificing detail and the lived experience of race in human lives. While perhaps a little ambitious in its aims, it is nevertheless an important book for the time because it speaks directly to questions of race, nation, identity and power, so pressing in the contemporary world. While focused on nation, the book is more properly an attempt to think through the nexus between race and nation, in historical frames, and to consider systems of relationships in various places. Importantly, the book is an attempt to map what Spickard calls "the racial moment".

He defines that moment as being when different racial or ethnic groups, following contact and interaction, begin to see themselves as something more than simply ethnic or cultural groups and as fundamentally and irrevocably different from one another. This process of differentiation also involves power and a tendency to associate physical markers with difference. As Spickard puts it, "race is about power, and it is written on the body".¹⁴ It is in this way that his book finds resonance with many of the histories of colonialism to have emerged over the last two decades.¹⁵ As he says, the power dynamic that makes racial difference has

¹⁴ Paul Spickard (ed.), *Race and Nation: Ethnic Systems in the Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 2.

¹⁵ See, for example, Ballantyne and Burton (eds), *Bodies in Contact*; Anne McClintock, "Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest" (New York: Routledge, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, "Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th Century Colonial Cultures", in Jan Breman (ed.), *Imperial Monkey Business: Racial Supremacy in Social Darwinist Theory and Colonial Practice* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1990).

historically been tied to colonialism both in Europe and Asia.¹⁶ In contrast to world history, histories of colonialism, including the new imperial history and postcolonialism, have been overwhelmingly concerned with particular stories of different communities at particular times.¹⁷ While a hallmark of the new imperial history has been to disrupt the naturalised opposition of metropole and colony and complicate and dismantle the boundaries of national histories it nevertheless charts moments rather than epochs.

This book resonates with many of these historiographical trends; in particular, the thrust in recent years of *rethinking* colonial pasts.¹⁸ As Kathleen Wilson has noted there has been a burst of scholarship in recent times around rethinking the histories of empire as a key to comprehending the emergency of the present.¹⁹ On one level there has been much interest in legacies and memory.²⁰ On another, the spotlight has turned on the specific histories of white settler colonialism, particularly in places like Australia, Canada and New Zealand, where the Indigenous past and

¹⁶ Spickard, *Race and Nation*, 14.

¹⁷ Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830–67* (Oxford: Polity, 2002); Kathleen Wilson (ed.), *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁸ Ballantyne and Burton (eds), *Bodies in Contact*; Annie Coombes, *Rethinking Settler Colonialism: History and Memory in Australia, Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand and South Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Penny Edmonds and Samuel Furphy (eds), *Rethinking Colonial History: New and Alternative Approaches* (Melbourne: Department of History, University of Melbourne and RMIT Publishing, 2006); Harald Fischer-Tiné and Susanne Gehrman (eds), *Empires and Boundaries: Rethinking Race, Class and Gender in Colonial Settings* (New York/London: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁹ Kathleen Wilson, “Old Imperialisms and New Imperial Histories: Rethinking the History of the Present”, *Radical History Review* 95, Spring, 2006, 212.

²⁰ Robert Aldrich, *Vestiges of the Colonial Empire in France: Monuments, Museums and Colonial Memories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Caroline Elkins and Susan Pederson (eds), *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century: Projects, Practices and Legacies* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Chris Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as Social Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); AG Hargreaves, *Memory, Empire and Postcolonialism: Legacies of French Colonialism* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2005).

present has continued to haunt accounts of the national past and present.²¹ Indigenous history has itself represented an important critical intervention, deepening our understanding of the complex interactions between Aborigines and their colonisers.²² And there has also been the new imperial history, the debates over which seem strangely resonant with those engendered by Indigenous history in the settler colonies.²³ The contexts have largely been about the construction of history itself: where the emphasis should be and the relative import of politics, economics, race, class, gender, sexuality and so forth. Yet, as Wilson has observed, the new imperial history

...seems less to replace conventional narratives of politics, administration and policy than to reconfigure them by conceptually rethinking what empire meant from the point of view of their different partisans and opponents, the variegated logics of their divergent strategies and cultural technologies of rule, and the possibilities they offer for transnational and comparative scholarship.²⁴

This body of work shows how, in some respects, the ground has shifted quite significantly since Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler suggested a rethinking of colonial history in the early 1990s.²⁵ The questions then were, in Stoler's terms, the ways in which colonialism created both coloniser and colonised, how to explain these dichotomies as historically

²¹ Julie Evans et al, *Equal Subjects Unequal Rights: Indigenous People in British Settler Colonies 1830–1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Patricia Grimshaw and Russell McGregor (eds), *Collisions of Cultures and Identities: Settlers and Indigenous Peoples* (Melbourne: RMIT and the University of Melbourne, 2006); Daiva Statiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis (eds), *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

²² There is now a vast literature in this genre but a good example of its critical intervention is Mark Hannah and Ingereth Macfarlane (eds), *Transgressions: Critical Australian Indigenous Histories* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2007).

²³ For an account of these debates see James Thompson, "Modern Britain and the New Imperial History", *History Compass* 5/2, 2007, 455–62.

²⁴ Wilson, "Old Imperialisms", 212.

²⁵ Ann Stoler, "Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol.31, no.1, 1989, 134–61; Frederick Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History", *American Historical Review*, vol.99, no.5, December, 1994, 1516–45. See also Frederick Cooper and Anne Laura Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

shifting social categories and, in Cooper's words, how to tell a complex history that is a

simultaneous awareness of how colonial regimes exercised power and the limits of that power, an appreciation of the intensity with which that power was confronted and the diversity of futures that people sought for themselves, an understanding of how and why some of those futures were excluded from the realm of the politically feasible and an openness to possibilities for the future that can be imagined today.²⁶

Has the focus shifted from colonial regime to imperial power? This question presupposes historical context. Discursively deconstructing colonialism was an important concomitant of decolonisation itself while at the present time the imperialism of the West at the dawn of the new century makes the study of past empires and imperial processes even more urgent. But, as the studies involved in rethinking the colonial past show, colonial studies have continued to move in interesting new directions. In some ways they have shown how blurred the lines are between imperialism and colonialism. As Harald Fischer-Tiné and Susanne Gehrman argue in one such study, they might be considered two sides of the same coin, the former referring to the metropole and the latter to the periphery but fundamentally closely intertwined.²⁷

Indeed, the title of Fischer-Tiné and Gehrman's book, *Empires and Boundaries: Rethinking Race, Class and Gender in Colonial Settings*, suggests this possibility. One of their motivations in this volume was to problematise what they saw as the iteration of an unnecessary and simplistic internal boundary in imperial and colonial history, that between ruler and ruled. As they argue, the replication of this boundary is not helpful in understanding the complexities and subtleties that were colonial encounters where the agency of historical actors, changing character of colonial culture and internal stratifications along lines of race, gender, class and religion significantly blur these boundaries. Following Cooper, they want to acknowledge the precariousness of race and other taxonomies suggesting instead the study of the shifting, negotiable "politics of difference", rather than a racially based rule of difference. This may be overstating the "problem". Ever since Stoler emphasised the importance of the "tensions of empire" historians working on colonial histories, particularly those that focus on race, gender, sexuality and empire, have problematised

²⁶ Ann Stoler, "Rethinking Colonial Categories", 136, 155; Frederick Cooper, "Conflict and Connection", 1545.

²⁷ Fischer-Tiné and Gehrman, *Empires and Boundaries*, 18.

the notion of the colonial frontier as a clear line of demarcation.²⁸ Indigenous histories, as well as histories of interracial marriage, hybridity and Indigenous peoples and religion, have also been considerably complicating such boundaries.²⁹

The more pressing issue for us is the historicising of race, particularly in the light of its constancy and continuing relevance today. This is not in an effort to redraw any rule of difference but to show how race, as an internal stratification, was put to diverse use, particularly in colonial encounters. We ask why and how race was invested with its explanatory power. Critical race theorists have long talked about the distinctive yet interlocking structures of race, gender and class but they have been much less able to highlight these categories as historically contingent, dynamic and heterogeneous.³⁰ As Fischer-Tiné and Gehrman suggest, it has been in the process of rethinking the colonial past that the complex and historically contingent nature of colonialism has been emphasised. Nowhere is this more clearly the case than in recent incursions by historians into the field of whiteness studies. It is interesting that in their endeavour to reorient whiteness, Jane Carey, Leigh Boucher and Katherine Ellinghaus place the exigencies of the settler-colonial encounter at the heart of their

²⁸ Ann Stoler, "Rethinking Colonial Categories"; Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton (eds), *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Joanne Nagel, *Race, Ethnicity and Sexuality: Intimate Intersections, Forbidden Frontiers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); McClintock, *Imperial Leather*; Deborah Bird Rose and Richard Davis (eds), *Dislocating the Frontier: Essaying the Mystique of the Outback* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2005).

²⁹ Examples include Lynette Russell, *Colonial Frontiers: Indigenous-European Encounters in Settler Societies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); Philip Jones, *Ochre and Rust: Artefacts and Encounters on Australian Frontiers* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2007); Katherine Ellinghaus, *Taking Assimilation to Heart: Marriages of White Women and Indigenous Men in the United States and Australia, 1887-1937* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); Angela Wanhalla, *In/visible Sight: The Mixed-Descent Families of Southern New Zealand* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2009); Peggy Brock (ed.), *Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change* (Boston: Brill, 2005); Tiffany Shellam, *Shaking Hands on the Fringe: negotiating the Aboriginal world at King George Sound* (Western Australia: UWA Press, 2009); Grace Karskens, *The Colony, a history of early Sydney* (Crows Nest, N.S.W, Allen & Unwin, 2009).

³⁰ Patricia Hill Collins, "Toward a New Vision: Race, Class and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection", *Race, Sex and Class* 1(1), 1993, 26; Lynn Weber, *Understanding Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality: A Conceptual Framework* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

analytic project.³¹ The importance of their work is to bring race (including whiteness) back into the historical frame. They refer to the “rule of colonial difference”, which establishes race/whiteness as a fundamental sorting category for territorial entitlement. They also acknowledge that this is a dynamic, contingent and, most importantly, historically grounded process. Their book further acknowledges the continuing influences of such dynamics in the world today.

Indeed, as I suggested at the beginning of this essay, the re-emergence of race as a significant facet of global geo-politics invites more critical thinking about the imperial/colonial antecedents of globalisation. This book aims to return the social construction of racial difference to historical and cultural analysis but in ways that speak to recent developments in transnational feminism, postcolonial studies, Indigenous history and the new imperial history in a global frame. While taking a global approach, these essays consider the specific and localised formations by which notions of racial privilege and subordination were marked, transformed and appropriated on both sides of the colonial divide. They aim to demonstrate the various routes that analytical work on the construction of race in the colonial encounter are now taking at a crucial juncture in the scholarship where new critical interventions seem both invited and urgent. While the Fischer-Tiné and Gehrmann collection focused on European colonial contexts in South Asia, South-East Asia and Africa, this book focuses on those in Australia and New Zealand.

The essays in this collection are the result of a joint symposium held by members of the then Department of Modern History at Macquarie University, Sydney, and historians from the Department of History and Art History from Otago University in New Zealand.³² The purpose of the symposium was to bring together the cohort of established and emerging historians from Australia and New Zealand whose individual contributions in the fields of transnational feminism, postcolonial studies, Indigenous history and the new imperial history had already contributed to new historical understandings of race in their respective fields. These seemingly different approaches were nonetheless connected by scholarship which

³¹ Leigh Boucher et al (eds), *Re-Orienting Whiteness* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

³² While the symposium provided the initial stimulus for this project there were some modifications along the way. Three chapters in this collection, those of Boucher, Grieves and Rowse, were added to accommodate movements and changes in contributions as it came together. They were selected on the basis of the resonances of their subjects and their approaches to them with the themes and approaches of this collection as a whole.

focused, in varying ways, on the cultural politics and materiality of the colonial experience. To draw these lines of connection closer the symposium was concerned with the divergent ways in which race was made in historically specific colonial encounters. We set ourselves the task of considering the lived materiality of racial difference by charting its divergent and changing formations across colonial contexts including (at the time of the symposium) Australia, New Zealand, North America, India and the Middle East, regions that had been the foci of our previous work.

At the conclusion of the conference we established a set of questions that arose from our collaborative efforts. In what ways did racial difference emerge during the colonial encounter and how did notions of privilege, subordination and skin colour travel from metropole to colony, from colony to metropole and, indeed, across the colonial divide itself? How were they influenced by formations of gender and class? What role did religion play? What about popular culture? Importantly, how did colonised peoples appropriate European notions of race and status and how did they import them into their own self-perceptions? How did ideas about racial difference transform and transmute as a result of these physical and methodological travels? As David Theo Goldberg has famously argued, the process of racialisation has a history of travelling and transformation that needs to be unpacked.³³

While we had developed a useful methodological framework, we had no overarching theoretical one. Each of us was working from different theoretical contexts, be it transnational, feminist, postcolonial, Indigenous or the perspective of the new imperial history. Yet, in some ways, each of us was pushing new lines of enquiry. Indeed, the real strength of this collection is the insertion of the experience of race from the perspective of the non-white subject. What we had produced was a series of case studies which, in themselves, demonstrated the different modalities by which race had been central to the enquiry from the start: a reconsideration of the way race was made in historically specific, localised, colonial encounters. What we had was a series of cultural formations, where the notion of race emerged at historical moment/s of contestation, negotiation, contradiction, ambivalence, specificity and contingency in the colonial encounter between Europeans and non-white subjects.

This book, then, reconfigures Spickard's "racial moment" as "racialising moments". It is an attempt to find a space for the complexities of colonial

³³ David Theo Goldberg, "Racial Americanization", Karim Murji and John Solomos (eds), *Racialization: Studies in Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 87.

encounters in the historiography of race. It wishes to acknowledge the notion of the “racial moment” but not in a hegemonic or static manner. By arguing that the construction of racial difference is a dynamic and active process, it seeks to consider how various “racialising moments” (by adding a necessary plurality to Spickard’s formulation) emerged and how they were subsequently transformed during the colonial encounter in Australia, New Zealand and beyond. It also seeks to demonstrate how *divergent* moments of racialisation emerged in these locations and how they differed according to cultural specificity, colonial location and the political fabric of state formation. Localised articulations of racial difference underpinned by particular circumstances are at the heart of the authors’ concerns. Instead of one prototypal “racial moment” between coloniser and colonised, the authors in this collection argue that there are multiple and contested “racialising moments” that emerge in colonial situations where ideas about racial difference travelled not only from the metropole to the colony but also between colonies and between colonised and coloniser.

The emphasis on racialisation as a complex process, and on race’s contingency, finds resonance with the call for reinvestment in critical race theory.³⁴ More recently, Kay Anderson has argued for such ongoing reinvestment as a means of interrogating race’s “inexhaustible constancy”.³⁵ As she has framed it:

Racialization is a process of struggle, after all, involving contestation and contradiction: it is a complex process that for all its endurance and discursive mutation in institutions, laws and everyday life, calls out for situated accounts of its negotiations—accounts that is, of race’s specificity and contingency.³⁶

In this sense, the re-engagement with critical race theory is an implicitly interdisciplinary endeavour that aims to underscore both the specificity and location of racialisation. This collection moves in this direction by drawing lines of connection between the current preoccupation with the “racial moment” and an older appreciation of race as a particular marker of colonial power relations, but in a way that addresses the important role of transnational and feminist history, as well as the new imperial history, Indigenous history and postcolonial studies, in creating a new scholarly domain. It does so not by revisiting sociological debates

³⁴ Kay Anderson, “‘Race’ in Post-Universalist Perspective”, *Cultural Geographies* 15, 2008, 155–71.

³⁵ *ibid.*, 158.

³⁶ *ibid.*, 157.

about the inherent meaning of racial difference or joining in the chorus about the construction of whiteness, but by re-historicising the notion of race in a manner that reveals its contingent nature and explanatory power.

Indeed, in many ways, this book has been inspired by a growing sense that despite a decade of whiteness studies, there remains a gap between it and approaches to race that have come out of these new scholarly domains. Whiteness studies emerged in the 1990s, in part, to fill the analytical void left by the abandonment of racial and ethnic studies characteristic of the 1970s and 1980s. During this time historians no longer felt comfortable with a sociological language or, indeed, with a paradigm of racial difference that seemed static, essentialist and reified. Race itself became a “dirty word” under the weight of postcolonial and poststructural analysis. Interest in race relations and encounters continued but under the banner of a range of new scholarly fields such as gender and colonialism, postcolonial studies, the new imperialism, and more recently, transnational history. In the meantime, the project of whiteness studies was to turn the gaze back onto the construction of the European subject itself. Race was no longer considered the provenance of Asian and black identity politics in the West, as a growing and influential body of scholarly work now began to chart the shifting and contested boundaries of European identity in order to destabilise the centrality of the white subject.

Yet, for all its critical usefulness, the field of whiteness studies has recognisable limitations.³⁷ As Lake and Henry Reynolds argue in their recent collection on transnational histories of what they term “white men’s countries”, questions of whiteness often remain restricted to the national frameworks in which white identities were framed.³⁸ More critically, whiteness studies ultimately obscures ways in which knowledge about race and racial classification, perhaps even whiteness itself, is appropriated, adopted or adapted by non-white subjects. As a result, new developments in whiteness studies are calling for a radical reorientation of the concept.³⁹

This book is therefore poised to ask new questions about the meaning of race in colonial settings by considering the various ways in which questions of status and privilege were circulated across the colonial divide, in what American historian Richard White refers to as the “middle

³⁷ Damien W Riggs, “‘We don’t talk about race anymore’: power, privilege and critical whiteness studies”, *Borderlands e-journal*, vol.3, no.2, 2004, http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol3no2_2004/riggs_intro.htm.

³⁸ Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the Question of Racial Equality* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008), 4.

³⁹ Boucher et al, *Re-Orienting Whiteness*.

ground” of cultural interaction.⁴⁰ The questions are posed through the lens of a series of colonial encounters, styled “racialising moments”. In significant ways, these “racialising moments” demonstrate the historically contingent nature of racial difference and how race itself was invested with its explanatory power where the discourse of whiteness was often subverted, undermined or completely absent. In attempting to find a space for the complexities of colonial encounters in the historiography of race, this book will show how colonial interactions did not occur in a two-way vacuum. Rather colonies were connected as part of a broader, global web of exchange where ideas about race and identity were also being transmitted across different colonial locations in a horizontal manner and often outside the gaze of the European metropole.

In chapter one, Hsu-Ming Teo chooses an important site of cross-cultural colonial encounters: interracial sexual desire and romantic love. Influenced by the considerably rich and growing literature on the connection between empire, gender and sexuality, she traces the emergence of discourses about interracial sexual desire and romantic love in European literary representations of the Orient. Moving from the twelfth to the early twentieth century, she charts such representations from the French and English verse romances of the late middle ages to women’s popular romance novels of the 1920s. She finds the early nineteenth century to be an important “racialising moment”, one which saw the ground shift fundamentally in the way in which such relationships were and could be depicted. While the literary history of romantic and sexual union between Europeans and Muslims was centuries old, that discourse changed with European imperial expansion into Ottoman territory in North Africa and the Middle East from the 1830s. It was only when cross-cultural unions became increasingly possible for middle- and upper-class Europeans that such relationships became racialised and stigmatised, particularly for women. Before then, Teo argues, class and religious or cultural conversion accounted for much more than race in European tales of sexual desire and relations between Christians and Muslims.

In some ways, Ballantyne draws similar kinds of conclusions in chapter two about the significance of southern New Zealand’s colonial

⁴⁰ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). See also, Richard White, “Creative Misunderstandings and New Understandings”, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol.63, no.1, January, 2006, 9–14.

history. With colonisation of Maori lands by the British from the 1850s and 1860s came a reordering of cross-cultural relationships. Ballantyne tells the story of Te Anu, a South Asian lascar (a sailor employed on European ships), who was part of the cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic nature of the early nineteenth century maritime culture that was drawn into New Zealand waters from the late eighteenth century. Having jumped ship off the southern coast of New Zealand in 1814 he was named Te Anu by the Kai Tahu Whanui, the Maori *iwi* (tribe) of the region. Te Anu was absorbed into the Kai Tahu world as *takata pora*. While this term is often seen as an equivalent for the term Pakeha, a name given to all newcomers by Maori elsewhere, Ballantyne insists that it is a category that denotes a different way of making sense of cultural difference. He argues that while “Pakeha” stressed the fundamental otherness of the newcomers, *takata pora*, meaning “people of the ships”, in fact comprised a diverse array of men who made a significant impact on the Kai Tahu. Te Anu was one of several men who were incorporated into Kai Tahu through marriage. While intermarriage continued to shape the composition and culture of the *iwi* into the late nineteenth century, their way of ordering social relationships was fundamentally eclipsed under British colonisation. As Te Anu’s story shows, during the early nineteenth century Kai Tahu did not order their world via race: the cement of their social relationships was genealogy. But, as the polyglot maritime culture of southern New Zealand eroded with systematic colonisation, so did the economic and cultural significance of these mixed-descent families. As colonisation progressed racial anxieties increasingly earmarked such communities as problematic and nowhere was this clearer than in the perceived threat of non-white men, sexual fidelity of women and potential loss of sexual dominance in cross-cultural sexual interactions.

Angela Woollacott is also concerned with systematic colonisation and the social relations it produced in Australia and New Zealand in the early colonial period. To Ballantyne’s focus on religion and race she adds gender as a fundamentally important dynamic in the profound cultural shifts wrought by colonisation. Again the decades of the 1830s and 1840s resonate—in this case, as a key moment in the forging of the free white settler identity. As Woollacott shows, this identity was constructed against a multiple of “others”. It was also forged in the context of systematic colonisation and ideas about Responsible Government in the colony. In charting the career of Henry Chapman, leading advocate for Responsible Government in the white settler colonies, she shows how Responsible Government was constitutive of a cluster of structures, ideas, perceptions and practices about gender and, more especially, race and the privileges

and expectations of settler colonialism. According to these logics, the white settler colonies such as Australia and New Zealand were ready for Responsible Government and independence partly because of the particular circumstances and constitutions of their white men. It was argued that the circumstances of colonialism, particularly the violence it entailed, produced a particular kind of white man who was worthy of such territorial inheritance/entitlement. A further demonstration of his status was his capacity to employ non-white labour. Chapman's free white status was thus premised on the unfreedom of others and the mere fact of his *capacity* to employ non-white labour actually legitimised the practice.

Boucher's chapter also focuses on the life and thought of one leading white male settler colonial. As an explorer, magistrate, public servant, ethnologist, Protector of Aborigines and landowner, Alfred Howitt was a leading public figure in the Australian colony of Victoria in the second half of the nineteenth century. Like Woollacott's chapter, Boucher's shows the extraordinary amount of power individual white men accrued in the settler colonies. This fact is a forceful reminder of Spickard's notion of race as power written on the body. Boucher shows that it wasn't merely written on the body, it entered into every fibre and aspect of Howitt's life, including both the public and private worlds he inhabited which were at once separate and entirely enmeshed. Yet the neat summation of Howitt's "greatness", summed up in a list of his achievements published towards the end of his life, hides an aspect which is crucial to Boucher's re/appraisal of him. While Howitt's own life trajectory in many ways seems to mirror the linear progress of the colony itself from unruly child to sophisticated metropolitan and family man, in fact he exemplifies something far more important about the logics of settler colonialism. Central to Boucher's argument is the fact that settler colonialism was a process that unfolded in fragmented ways and in the very lived experience and materiality of people's lives. Howitt's "achievements" were underwritten by the enabling and nurturing relationships he shared with both the women in his life (his wife and sister) and the Indigenous people he displaced. Yet, the racialised identities constituted in the process of his "settling" left little space for Aboriginal people.

One way that they found space, according to Vicki Grieses, was in new family formations of their own, although often with devastating consequences. Focusing on the story of William McClymont and Annie Butler and their two sons, John and William, she picks up a theme touched on by Woollacott which is how Australian settler colonial identity was forged within an empire which was built, in large part, on slavery. Drawing on comparisons between Australia's settler colonial history and

the settlement of North America, Grieves finds the institution of slavery a useful analytical frame with which to understand the construction of race in Australia and the playing out of these constructions in the social and private domains of Aboriginal and mixed-descent families. McClymont was a white settler and squatter of Worimi land in the Manning Valley, northern New South Wales. Grieves is attempting to reconstruct the story and fate of McClymont's wife, Aboriginal woman, Annie, and their sons. As with Ballantyne's reconstruction of Te Anu, she admits this can only be a fragmentary and partial story not least because of the silence surrounding their mixed-descent union. Despite what seems a loving marriage Annie's life story is all but erased from the historical record. In contrast to the McClymonts' story of land ownership and inheritance, networks of marriage, power and social standing, we are left with a patchy tale of dispossession, de-identification and disinheritance. Central to Grieves' argument is that the practice of taking Aboriginal women as partners and the subsequent production of mixed-descent offspring was, as in America, a critical component of white men's property right: ensuring them a reliable workforce into the future. But, it was premised on the denial of the role of the (white) father. It also had the effect of marginalising Aboriginal men, whether as fathers, sons, brothers. While McClymont appeared to be different, attempting to be protective and paternal towards his sons in the face of their discrimination, like slave husbands, brothers and sons in the American South, they were totally disregarded; in this case, quite literally locked out of a share in the McClymont estate and so denied a future too.

One of the powerful messages of Ballantyne and Grieves is the difficulty of interpreting what Te Anu or Annie and her sons made of their situation. Grieves' unravelling of Annie's story is in itself testament to, in part, how Annie might have understood or felt about it. Much of Annie's story is told through the lens of family memory, which, as a descendant, Grieves is in a position to share. It is propelled by a sense of loss, even tragedy. And yet central to Grieves' rendering is the realisation that the story of Annie, McClymont, John and William jnr is part of a much bigger picture of transnational hegemonic ideas and practices around race and whiteness which rolled across the globe at the end of the nineteenth century. Barbara Brookes' chapter reveals something important about that hegemony: the way it was absorbed by Indigenous people themselves. She shows how in 1920s and 1930s New Zealand Maori leaders engaged in a conversation about the preservation of New Zealand's racial purity, understood to have been based on the Maori and Pakeha dyad. As she shows, this could produce a complicated mix. The Maori men who espoused concern about racial purity in the inter-war period were mostly

men of mixed marriages who had access to education and Pakeha politics. They were patriotic, proud and conservative politically and yet critical of colonisation and the treatment of Maori by Pakeha. Indeed, the renewed interest in racial purity was premised on their own strengthened race consciousness at this time.

Such consciousness was less to do with the Pakeha than the Chinese. In what seems to be a kind of inverse racial snobbery, Maori leaders were increasingly worried about the association of working class Maori and Chinese communities. This came about through economic and territorial losses for many, mostly rural, Maori communities which Chinese market gardeners were able to allay, particularly via their employment of women and girls. This was a moment steeped in anxiety for the male Maori elders, whose fears for the women were much less about their exploitation and right to work than the supposed immorality and doubtful cleanliness of Chinese men, the threat of racial loss through miscegenation, and their own masculinities which, as for their male Pakeha counterparts, rested on both territorial and bodily control. It is notable that Maori women leaders did not appear to share the anxieties of the men, suggesting a greater role for themselves in the protection and welfare of the girls. Meanwhile, for their part, white women's groups defended the right of Maori women to work while deploring sexual liaisons with Chinese men.

It was the fate of Aboriginal women, sexual and otherwise, that saw a leading group of white settler women in Australia promote their advancement in the 1940s via the establishment of an Aboriginal girls' club in Adelaide, South Australia. Like Brookes, in reconstructing the story of the Yurtookey Club, Alison Holland finds it an interesting racial moment precisely because race is being put to use in quite specific ways. The white women, members of feminist and Christian groups, who encouraged the development did so from a desire to direct Aboriginal women and girls' recreation into meaningful pursuits. They were thus acting within a long tradition of middle-class anxiety concerning the place of young women in urban environments. After the Second World War, there was a much greater movement of Aboriginal people off reserves and into urban areas for work and education. In the case of Aboriginal girls, there was racial anxiety too. By the 1940s they had been the subject of at least two decades of heightened concern and discourse about their sexuality, particularly in the context of a growing mixed-descent community. Much of this centred on concerns about purity of race but it was also about population, defence, the frontier and the demands of modernity itself.

But the story of the Yurtookey Club is more complex than this rendering of it suggests. Central to Holland's exploration is the contingency of the moment. With a fairly broad reading of "the moment"—it is what comes immediately before and after as well—she shows how the white women's involvement is only part of the story. In fact, the Club was an initiative of the Aboriginal women themselves. Once formed it became a broad-based Fellowship group sustained by the participants' clear sense of their own racialised identities. It was their haven, their refuge, their place, despite its strong Christian overtones and the maternalism of the white women. In fact, Holland is arguing that it was a precursor to the kinds of stirrings of Aboriginal people that would take effect globally from the 1960s and 1970s. But, even the white women's involvement was more than some form of soft cultural imperialism. By the 1940s and the time of the slow moves towards human rights standards and decolonisation elsewhere, it became a flagship, a space where Aboriginal people could *be* Aboriginal in a society and culture that denied them this opportunity. As Holland shows, the Club was born at the intersection of different conceptions—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal—of race.

It is assimilation that forms the backdrop to Kerin's chapter too. In tracing the fate of one Aboriginal boy, Sydney James Cook, in 1950s and 1960s Australia, she shows how permeable and hence, slippery, race was. Cook's entire life story is propelled, not by his humanity, but by perceptions about his identity as an Aboriginal boy. For a start, his identity was circumscribed by a political enactment, on the eve of the Second World War, which stipulated that all people of "full-blood" Aboriginal descent would essentially fade away. From the start Cook was different. Having been rescued from abandonment at birth he eventually found his way into the home of Charles and Phyllis Duguid, two prominent Christian reformers and Aboriginal rights advocates. Indeed, Phyllis had been instrumental in the formation of the Yurtookey Club. A well-to-do family and one that rejected racial discrimination, they treated Cook as one of their own, until things started to go awry in Cook's teenage years. At this time, in the context of trouble at school, including what was understood to be sexual indiscretion, Duguid sent Cook off to a mission in the Northern Territory believing that what he needed was contact with his "own people" and an Aboriginal identity. This, of course, caused friction with the bureaucracy because it flew in the face of assimilation. Cook's story beyond this time was quite fraught. He was moved around and was the subject of a war of words between bureaucrats and Duguid, which demonstrated how entirely racially determined all thinking was regarding Aborigines. As Cook came to terms with his Aboriginal identity, made

friends and sought marriage in the Aboriginal community, he was pushed, pulled, bullied and moved around like a pawn on a chess board. As Kerin concludes, Cook thus experienced multiple racialising moments when his identity was reconfigured by outsiders trying to make sense of his displacement, which was largely manufactured and sustained by their own anxieties about Aboriginality.

Holland and Kerin indicate the need to interrogate the post-war Aboriginal rights movement in more depth, particularly as a source of decolonisation and anti-colonialism. The Duguids clearly saw Aboriginality as counting for something. This represented a departure from the past in which it had been seen as a problem to be cast aside, ignored, silenced or absorbed and assimilated. But for the Duguids it carried specific meaning that demanded recognition. In the light of the last chapter in this collection we might ask whether their ideas were precursors to the development of what Rowse refers to in his chapter as “global indigenism”. In bringing us right up to the post-colonial present, he is interested in how the World Bank, as recently as 1991, came to issue directives on “the Indigenous” to guide its development projects. He argues that the directive that such projects needed to confer culturally compatible social and economic benefits speaks to a recognition that indigeneity represented a distinct form of human experience which might even be vulnerable to development itself. The Duguids might very well fit this thesis because in tracing the genealogy of this concept he places what he refers to as “stadial” and Christian theories about human differentiation to the fore and sees these as rivals to racial theories. While he traces the idea to organisations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), and particularly its 1989 Convention on “Indigenous and Tribal Peoples”, he also finds a much longer lineage in European thought, stemming in particular from the Enlightenment critique of European colonialism, concerning the relationship between development and Indigenous culture. He charts a fascinating story from the ideas emerging about the protections required for Indigenous people and workers in the League of Nations, to discussions in Latin American states about Indigenous labour, to an awareness of the forest dwellers of the Latin American jungles. It was in relation to the latter that a major shift occurred regarding the specificities of cultural difference. No longer perceived as a *backward* population which needed integrating, their *difference* required respect and institutional recognition. Such principles were eventually enshrined in the 1989 ILO Convention guaranteeing the social, economic and cultural rights of Indigenous people as political subjects. Importantly, for the purposes of this collection, Rowse makes a strong case for thinking about the influence

of alternative forms of thinking about, and responding to, human difference other than race and racial science. Nowhere is this clearer, Rowse suggests, than in the decline of empires and colonies where Western legacies of non-racial thought provided important staples for self-determination.

Note

Throughout the body of this introduction I use the word race without quotation marks. I thus depart from approaches to the use of the term in comparable histories. Quotation marks are often used to indicate authorial appreciation of the contingent and socially and culturally constructed nature of the term, so as to avoid essentialising and naturalising the concept. While I am using race in the same way, I have decided to leave the quotation marks out. My reason for doing so is for smoother textual effect but I do not endorse race as a natural, biological phenomenon in any way. I feel that the possibility of naturalising it via constant iteration is significantly lessened by the project's aim to reconsider the way race was made in historically specific, localised, colonial encounters. The purpose is to explore what gave race its explanatory power at particular moments of that encounter, in different contexts and timeframes.