

Connected Worlds
History in Transnational Perspective

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Co-edited by Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

E P R E S S



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Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake

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Routledge, 1992), and [with Eric Richards], *Speaking to Immigrants: Oral Testimony and the History of Australian Immigration* (Canberra, ACT : History Program and Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 2002). His current research focuses on the emigration of the British since World War II; the first volume to flow from this research, *'Ten Pound Poms': Australia's Invisible Migrants*, co-authored with Alistair Thomson, was published in 2005 by Manchester University Press.

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For John Docker and Sam Lake

1. Introduction

Ann Curthoys

Marilyn Lake

For some years, historians have been pointing to the significance and implications of history's complicity with the nation state. History as a professional discipline was constituted to serve the business of nation building, and has accordingly very often seen its task as providing an account of national experience, values and traditions, thus helping forge a national community. The question historians are now asking is: has history as handmaiden to the nation state distorted or limited our understanding of the past? And if so, can a transnational approach help develop new and more adequate forms of historical writing?¹

This collection of essays addresses these questions and also seeks to demonstrate in practice what transnational history looks like. It investigates with an enthusiastic, if critical eye the potential of transnational approaches to develop new understandings of the past by highlighting historical processes and relationships that transcend nation states and that connect apparently separate worlds. Our aim is both theoretical, for instance considering the claims of 'postcolonial', 'regional', or 'world history' approaches to illuminate historical analysis, and practical, presenting historical case studies that demonstrate how transnational approaches can produce new and exciting forms of historical knowledge. We particularly focus on ways in which expertise in 'Australian history' can contribute to and benefit from transnational histories, though a number of important essays in this collection do not touch on Australia at all.

Defining transnational history

So, what is transnational history? We can define it in a number of ways, but put simply, it is the study of the ways in which past lives and events have been shaped by processes and relationships that have transcended the borders of nation states. Transnational history seeks to understand ideas, things, people, and practices which have crossed national boundaries. It is generally in a complex relation with national history; it may seek to interrogate, situate, supersede, displace, or avoid it altogether. In their reaction against what they see as rigid and confining national histories, many of those enthusiastic about transnational

¹ See Ann Curthoys 2003, 'Cultural History and the Nation', in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White (eds), *Cultural History in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press), pp. 22-37; Marilyn Lake 2003, 'White Man's Country: The Trans-National History of a National Project', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 34, no. 122, pp. 346-63; Marilyn Lake c2003, 'History and Nation', in Robert Manne (ed.), *Whitewash* (Melbourne: Black Inc.), pp. 160-73.

history reach for metaphors of fluidity, as in talk of circulation and flows (of people, discourses, and commodities), alongside metaphors of connection and relationship.

How does transnational history differ, if at all, from other kinds of history which also transcend national boundaries: world, regional, and comparative history? World history seeks to understand the world as a whole; at its best, as Tony Ballantyne puts it in his chapter in this collection, it ‘pays close attention to “bundles of relationships” ... and is sensitive to the complex interplays between different layers of the analysis: the local, the regional, the inter-regional, the national, the continental, and the global’.² Regional histories, sometimes organised around oceanic formations – the Pacific Rim or the Atlantic World, whose historiography is discussed in this collection by Michael McDonnell – also insist on the necessity of locating nations in larger economic and political networks. Comparative history is a form of history which crosses national borders by taking two or more societies (cities, regions, nations) and comparing aspects of their history. Such approaches are valuable but they very often keep the idea of the nation both central and intact. Comparative histories are also notoriously difficult to execute well, so large is the sheer quantity of scholarship that is normally required, and so hard is it to translate the conceptual framework developed by and for one national or regional history into that of another.

Transnational histories, then, can take many forms. They may be studies of international organisations, taking as their subjects already constituted bodies such as the Pan-African Congress or the League of Nations, and charting their historical development. Or they may be individual biographies, as exemplified in a forthcoming collection called *Colonial Lives across the British Empire*.³ Transnational biographies are represented in this volume in Emma Christopher’s account of transported convict, Thomas Limpus; Desley Deacon’s discussion of film-maker, Walter Wanger; and Jill Matthews’s evocation of the varied career of film entrepreneur, J. D. Williams. Other forms of transnational history include imperial histories, and histories of land and maritime exploration, ideas, political movements, migration, voyaging, and environments.⁴

Transnational history has, then, many departure points and follows many lines of enquiry. Whatever form it takes, transnational history suggests that historical understanding often requires us to move beyond a national framework of

² Ballantyne, this volume, p. 23.

³ David Lambert and Alan Lester (eds) 2006, *Colonial Lives across the British Empire: Imperial Careerings in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

⁴ See, for example, Bernard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun (eds) 2004, *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (New York, NY: Routledge).

analysis, to explore connections between peoples, societies and events usually thought of as distinct and separate.

Transnational historiography

The interest in transnational history has grown rapidly during the 1990s and 2000s, and there is now a significant literature discussing what it is, why we need it, and how to do it. One major source of this enthusiasm has been from historians of the United States. Ian Tyrrell, one such scholar working in Australia, is an early and persistent advocate of transnational approaches. His target in 'American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History' (1991) was a form of American history writing which focused on the idea of the United States as "'outside" the normal patterns and laws of history', and especially as different from Europe.⁵ Despite an interest in relating the United States to the rest of the world and a strong tradition in comparative history, he argues, historians of the United States failed to 'transcend the boundaries of nationalist historiography'. As an alternative, he suggested that 'the possibilities of a transnational history must be considered'.⁶ Instead of assuming American exceptionalism, historians could ask *why* it has been such a focus for historians of the United States, and by way of contrast depict United States history 'as a variation on transnational themes'. He pointed out that there was another American historical tradition that offered an alternative to nationalist exceptionalism, one which saw the United States as a prime site for cosmopolitan exchange. Key advocates of American cosmopolitanism had included feminist Jane Addams in her *Newer Ideals of Peace* (1907) and Randolph Bourne in his neglected essay, 'Trans-National America' (1916), whose importance is noted by Desley Deacon in this volume, where she explores the hopes that the new American film industry in the 1920s and 1930s would become a major source of 'world acquaintanceship'. Tyrrell also noted other forms of transnational history: regional approaches on the model of the French *Annales* school, and global and world history informed by world systems theory and other approaches to conceptualising world history as a whole. Histories of the environment and of international movements and organisations were also subjects that clearly required the transcending of national boundaries.⁷

⁵ Ian Tyrrell 1991, 'American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History', *American Historical Review*, vol. 96, pp. 1031-55; these quotes on pp. 1031 and 1032.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 1033.

⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 1038-54. The movements he had in mind might be organised around class, race, gender, or religion, and examples he gave included the Woman Christian Temperance Union, the Industrial Workers of the World, the United Society for Christian Endeavor, and Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association.

The term 'transnational' caught on, and enthusiasm for it grew quickly in the United States. In a special issue of the *Journal of American History* on transnational history the following year, David Thelen suggested that a transnational approach could 'enrich historical understanding by providing other pasts and presents to compare with the American past and present'.⁸ Eight years after the appearance of his original article, Tyrrell developed his earlier argument further. He now demonstrated in greater detail that the national history he was criticising had become dominant in the United States only during and after World War I; before then, a transnational approach had coexisted with nation-centred professional history, and indeed had flourished. In particular, he noted, a broad transnational approach had been taken by women's historians such as Jane Addams and African American historians such as W. E. B. Du Bois and C. L. R. James.⁹

The latter point was expanded upon in the same issue of the *Journal of American History* by Robin Kelley, who argued that Black history in the United States had *always* been transnational. Early black historians had had a diasporic sensibility, shaped by their antiracist and anti-imperialist politics; they had consistently opposed the racist assumptions of their white counterparts, who constituted the mainstream historical profession in America, but in turn found their work generally dismissed by that profession as ideological rather than truly historical. In the Cold War context, black intellectuals had intensified their internationalism. In contrast to other kinds of history, Kelley argued, the transnationalism of African American intellectuals was born not in the academy but in 'social movements for freedom, justice, and self-determination'.¹⁰

During the 1990s, an interest in transnational history also came from quite another quarter – the revived interest in British imperial history. Although critical of the cultural emphasis of the new imperial history, A. G. Hopkins was important in calling for a reintegration of national postcolonial histories into a broader imperial framework. In the world of historiography, the response to decolonisation in the 1960s and after had been the separate development in each postcolonial nation of a professional, academic, national history. It was time, Hopkins argued in 1999, to bring these postcolonial histories back into

⁸ David Thelen 1992, 'Of Audiences, Borderlands and Comparisons: Toward the Internationalisation of American History', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 79, issue 2, pp. 432-62.

⁹ Ian Tyrrell 1999, 'Making Nations/Making States: American Historians in the Context of Empire', *The Journal of American History* (special issue entitled 'The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History'), vol. 86, issue 3, pp. 1015-44.

¹⁰ Robin D. G. Kelley 1999, "'But a Local Phase of a World Problem": Black History's Global Vision', *Journal of American History*, vol. 86, pp. 1054-77.

conversation with one another and with Britain, this time, 'without deference'.¹¹ Furthermore, as historians like Catherine Hall and Antoinette Burton pointed out, renewed attention to histories of imperialism considered not only the impact of 'Europe' on its colonial possessions, but also the impact of imperialism on metropolitan societies. Imperial powers not only had dramatic impact on the lives of the peoples they colonised, but were also themselves in important ways constituted by the colonising experience. As Burton put it, scholars like Edward Said, Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, and others had provoked 'a critical return to the connections between metropole and colony, race and nation'.¹²

Both the American and the British enthusiasm for new kinds of transnational history were consonant with a growing focus on comparative histories of white settler societies, those forms of colonial society which had displaced indigenous peoples from their land. This was a form of colonialism distinguished from others by its relative lack of interest in 'native' labour, and hence very often, in keeping the 'native' alive at all. Most of the European colonial empires included settler colonies; in the English-speaking world, the modern societies sharing this history include the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and in a limited sense, South Africa. There was a revived interest in comparing the histories of these societies in the 1990s; Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis's edited collection, *Unsettling Settler Societies* (1995), was important in re-popularising the term.¹³ Historians began once again to develop expertise in the history of more than one settler society: Alan Lester and Elizabeth Elbourne, for example, have demonstrated how settler societies were interconnected in the nineteenth century as a result of British imperial policy, especially on matters of Aboriginal policy and settler practice.¹⁴ Julie Evans, Patricia Grimshaw, David Phillips, and Shurlee Swain have provided a detailed comparison of the political rights and statuses of Indigenous peoples in settler societies of the British Empire: Australia, Canada,

¹¹ A. G. Hopkins (ed.) 2003, *Globalization in World History* (London: Pimlico).

¹² Antoinette Burton 2003, 'Introduction', in Antoinette Burton (ed.), *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), p. 2.

¹³ Deborah Montgomerie 1997, 'Beyond the Search for Good Imperialism: The Challenge of Comparative Ethnohistory', *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 153-68.

¹⁴ Alan Lester 2002, 'British Settler Discourse and the Circuits of Empire', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 54, p. 26; Alan Lester 2002, 'Colonial Settlers and the Metropole: Racial Discourse in the Early Nineteenth Century Cape Colony, Australia and New Zealand', *Landscape Research*, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 39-49; Elizabeth Elbourne 2003, 'The Sin of the Settler: The 1835-36 Select Committee on Aborigines and Debates over Virtue and Conquest in the Early Nineteenth Century British White Settler Empire', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, vol. 4, no. 3, accessed 10 November 2005, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history/v004/4.3elbourne.html

New Zealand, and South Africa.¹⁵ There has been a substantial contribution to this scholarship by Australian feminist historians such as Anne Keary, Kat Ellinghaus, and Ann McGrath, all of whom have compared aspects of Indigenous people's histories in Australia and the United States.¹⁶

American historians of the United States have been much less likely to include their country in this category than Australian or Canadian or New Zealand historians do, partly because the history of African slavery complicates and to some degree obscures the history of Native American displacement and erasure and partly because their achievement of political independence through revolution is seen to mark a sharp break from their history as a settler colony. Ian Tyrrell is among those who have argued strongly that the United States *should* be included in this analytical framework. Reorienting American history to transnational themes would be incomplete, he observed in 2002, if the focus remained on connections with Europe. Comparisons between the United States and the other British settler societies, he pointed out, were taken for granted by nineteenth century commentators such as Froude, Trollope, Dilke, Jebb, Seeley, and Bryce, but had fallen out of favour with the rise of nationalism during and after World War I. It was time, he suggested, for historical analysis to return to these connections.¹⁷

Gaining new insights: the transnational history of black political movements

The gains, then, seem very clear. As historians we all belong and have obligations to an international interpretative historical community as well as to our own societies. Taking a transnational approach enables us to take fuller advantage of the insights of this world of international professional scholarship. We can trace connections between people, ideas, and political movements that are lost

¹⁵ Julie Evans, Patricia Grimshaw, David Phillips, and Shurlee Swain 2003, *Equal Subjects Unequal Rights: Indigenous People in British Settler Colonies, 1830–1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

¹⁶ Patrick Wolfe 2001, 'Land, Labor, and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race', *American Historical Review*, vol. 106, no. 3, pp. 866-905; Anne Keary 2002, 'Translating Colonialism: Missionaries and Indigenous Peoples in Eastern Australia and Northwestern America', paper delivered to American Historical Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, 3-6 January; Katherine Ellinghaus 2002, 'Margins of Acceptability: Class, Education and Interracial Marriage in Australia and North America', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 55-75; Ann McGrath forthcoming, *Entangled Frontiers: Marriage and Sex Across Colonizing Frontiers in Australia and North America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).

¹⁷ Ian Tyrrell 2002, 'Beyond the View from Euro-America: Environment, Settler Societies, and the Internationalization of American History', in Thomas Bender (ed.), *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), pp. 168-92; these quotes on p. 169.

to vision when a firmly national framework is held in place. These possibilities seem to be especially important in the study of movements protesting against racial inequality and exploitation. John Maynard's chapter, for example, demonstrates hitherto little-known links between Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association and Aboriginal political struggles in New South Wales in the early decades of the twentieth century. In our own recent research, we have both independently found that connections between Black civil rights movements in the United States and campaigns for Aboriginal rights in Australia are important to understanding the latter's political dynamics. A transnational perspective offers insight into the interconnectedness of political movements and ideas.

In Marilyn's research for her biographical study of Faith Bandler, one of the leading campaigners for the 1967 Referendum on Aboriginal citizenship, it became clear that Faith's Pacific Islander family's strong identification with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and with cultural heroes, such as the singer Paul Robeson encouraged her to take a stand against racial discrimination and segregation in Australia. Inspiration came from many quarters. In 1951 as a delegate to the Youth Cultural Congress in Berlin and a member of the Margaret Walker Dance Company, Faith performed the lead part in 'The Dance of the Little Aboriginal Girl', a ballet which (despite its name) was based on a Black American poem, 'The Merry-Go Round', written by Harlem Renaissance poet, Langston Hughes, to combat racial prejudice in the playgrounds of the South. When Faith first spoke at a public meeting in Sydney in the early 1950s, it was in protest at the gaoling in the United States of the left-wing writer and suspected Communist Howard Fast, whose novel *Freedom Road*, a tribute to the Black freedom ushered in by Radical Reconstruction after the Civil War, was based on W. E. B. Du Bois' historical study, *Black Reconstruction*. Faith endorsed their ideal of Blacks and Whites living and working together and espoused it in subsequent life-long campaigns for Aboriginal rights in Australia, and in her work for the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, that culminated in the passage of the 1967 referendum.¹⁸

Ann's book on the Australian Freedom Ride of 1965, published in the same year, 2002, was initially conceived as a national, or even local, history project. Her aim was to explore a very specific political movement – its antecedents, multiple character, tensions, and effects. The Freedom Ride was a two week event in which university students, mainly non-Indigenous but with an Indigenous leader, Charles Perkins, travelled around country towns in New South Wales protesting against discrimination against Indigenous people. In the ensuing public debate, urban public knowledge of racial discrimination grew, some

¹⁸ Marilyn Lake 2002, *Faith: Faith Bandler, Gentle Activist* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin).

soul-searching went on in the country towns, racial segregation was challenged and in some cases ended, and alternative ideas of inclusion, equality, and full citizenship rights were much debated. Along with many other events and campaigns, the Freedom Ride contributed to the holding and passing of the referendum of 1967.

Freedom Ride was conceived around the time of the Bicentennial of the British colonisation of Australia, in 1988, that key moment when debate over Aboriginal history emerged as significant in national public discourse. It was researched in the 1990s as national public discourse dealt successively with a series of major issues concerning Indigenous people and Indigenous rights: the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Police Custody of 1991, the *Mabo* decision of 1992, Native Title legislation in 1993, the Wik decision of 1996, and the Stolen Generations report of 1997. It was written in 2001, in the contexts of the History Wars over frontier violence and the rapid growth of an anti-Aboriginal rights agenda within national politics and discourse.

But in the research and writing, the question of the international context of the Australian Freedom Ride was always an issue. In particular, Ann was aware, having been a participant, of the importance of the influence of the United States Civil Rights movement, and to a lesser extent of the context of worldwide adjustment to decolonisation in Africa and Asia. As she researched the book she delved further into the question of the influence of American developments, tracing the Australian students' awareness of the United States Freedom Rides of 1961, of Martin Luther King's ideas of non-violence, and so on. Research explored the Australian press coverage of the United States Civil Rights movement, and interviews with former Freedom Riders elicited further information. When asked what influenced their thinking on racial issues, a significant number mentioned African American influences – Paul Robeson's visit to Australia in 1960 when they were teenagers, the press images of dogs and hoses being directed at children in Birmingham, Alabama, Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream' speech in Washington, August 1963, and so forth.

But there was always a worry about stressing United States influence, about any suggestions that these movements were 'mere imitations', slavish copies of movements that originated elsewhere. There was also the fear of a radical nationalist response: in stressing United States influences you are demeaning what we did, you are reducing us to mere imitators of United States forms of activism. And indeed, if national political movements are understood purely in terms of overseas influences and connections, then it is true, one does lose the sense of the distinctiveness of the political movement in its particular Australian context. One reaches the point where one is asked, as Ann was recently by a visiting American historian, 'where did the idea for the Tent Embassy come from? I can't think of anything like that in the US'. Allied with this desire not

to drown Australian history in an ocean of overseas influence was the aim to write Australian history as a story important in itself, and not merely as an epiphenomenon of events elsewhere. This desire has been important in Australian historiography since the 1970s, as historians reacted against earlier views of Australian history as purely a product of British history, the transplantation of British people in a distant and alien land.

In thinking about ways in which to conceptualise outside influences on national histories, we found an article by Sean Scalmer to be especially helpful. Entitled 'Translating Contention: Culture, History, and the Circulation of Collective Action',¹⁹ it treats the Freedom Ride as an example of the active connection, translation, and circulation between local movements and societies. He replaces the idea of imitation with the concepts of networks and circulation. Borrowing is never mere imitation, he suggests, as local movements select only those actions from elsewhere that fit their own normative standards and which have been made meaningful in local discursive and political frameworks. This is a useful way of emphasising the power of the local as well as the importance of the global. And it is also helpful in making sense of the circulation of technologies such as the literacy test, used by self-styled white men's countries at the end of the nineteenth century as an instrument of racial exclusion, the subject of Marilyn's chapter in this volume. As it moved between the United States, South Africa and Australia, the literacy test changed its form from the requirement to write one's name, to fill out a form in English, to understanding the constitution, to writing out, at dictation, a passage of fifty words in a European language. The test changed as the people targeted for exclusion changed, from Blacks, to Italians, to Indians to Japanese.

The dangers of transnational history

It is clear, then, that historical understanding requires us to move beyond the national frames of analysis that so often blinker our view of the past. But in repudiating national stories history also risks losing relevance for a national audience. In response to Tyrrell's original article advocating transnational history, Michael McGerr worried that too strong a turn to the transnational might lead to 'estrangement from our audiences, which, at least in the United States, still seem intensely nationalistic'.²⁰ In this volume, Jill Matthews draws attention to this issue. Speaking of Australia specifically, but it could apply in many other societies as well, she writes:

¹⁹ Sean Scalmer 2000, 'Translating Contention: Culture, History, and the Circulation of Collective Action', *Alternatives*, vol. 25, pp. 491-514.

²⁰ Michael McGerr 1991, 'The Price of the "New Transnational History"', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 96, no. 4, pp. 1056-67; this quote on p. 1066.

There is something sacrosanct about certain aspects of culture ... that triggers the protective, exclusive, mutual embrace; that constitutes a settled 'us' against the nomadic hordes of 'them'. And film history as a genre has been seduced, or recruited, to tell that story.

In their cultural nationalism, film historians are expressing a much wider phenomenon, and Matthews concludes that a transnational approach will not be welcome 'until the larger political discourse changes'.

There is little sign that political discourse will, at least in the short to medium term, abandon cultural and other forms of nationalism in which history and historians play a significant part. In their recent collection, *Partisan Histories*, Max Paul Friedman and Padraic Kenney point to the role history plays in national contexts. In national politics, groups seek support 'by presenting themselves as the only true representatives of the nation through historical narratives that support that claim: the rationale for nationalism is always sought in history'.²¹ Indeed, history 'can influence such momentous decisions as whether or not to go to war'.²² This is as true in Australia as anywhere else; the importance of defining and mining national historical traditions for political purposes is clearly evident in Prime Minister John Howard's relentless espousal of the virtues of Australia's military tradition.²³

Given the intensely local and national relevance of history, then, it seems to us that there are dangers in transnational histories becoming disconnected from local audiences and by extension national political debates. The issue may not seem so pertinent for historians writing about societies other than the one in which they live and work, but for those who write histories about their own society, and who are thus used to dealing with questions of history's political relevance and sensitivity, the problem of losing relevance and readers can be quite acute. The temptation to write purely for an international scholarly audience can lead to histories which concentrate on showing local material only when it illuminates international scholarly concerns. It often also means publishing only in specialised journals or in expensive books which are little known and often of little interest to local audiences. As a result, there is the danger that the people whose history we write will know little of our work;

²¹ Max Paul Friedman and Padraic Kenney (eds) 2005, 'Introduction', in *Partisan Histories: The Past in Contemporary Global Politics* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 4.

²² *ibid.*, p. 1.

²³ Marilyn Lake 2005, 'The Howard History of Australia', *The Age*, 20 August.

even if they do know it, they recognise that we are not really talking to them. Our gaze has moved elsewhere.²⁴

The implications of the tension between national histories and transnational scholarship are especially evident in the example of the history of Indigenous peoples. Such histories provide an excellent illustration of both the promise and the problems that attend transnational approaches. The promise is an enhanced understanding of the interactions between Indigenous and settler peoples and specifically of Indigenous people's political struggles, as John Maynard's chapter here so ably demonstrates. The danger is disconnection from local audiences and politics, the very connections that have made Indigenous histories so important and vibrant in the first place. Historians of Indigenous peoples, whether we are Indigenous or not, can thus find ourselves pulled between engaging in a national debate, in which our professionalism and scholarship is directly connected to ongoing political issues concerning Indigenous rights and politics, and contributing to a worldwide historians' conversation concerning new ways of conceptualising historical processes such as colonialism.

Australian perspectives

The enthusiasm for transnational history often expresses something of the character of the national histories against which it is rebelling. If the United States interest was prompted by an objection to United States exceptionalism and the British interest by a return to the vexed question of the imperial past, the Australian version has been influenced by a desire to break out of historiographical marginality and isolation.

It is perhaps significant that this collection is edited by two historians who have both worked in the fields of Australian feminist history and race relations history, each of which has been a prime site for the development of more transnational approaches. Feminist history has long been more internationalist in its approach than many other fields of history, as the common project of studying women's history and developing gendered perspectives on the past generally has led feminist historians into international conversations even while structuring their own histories within fairly conventional national boundaries. The tri-annual Berkshire Conferences on Women's History and the International Federation of Research into Women's History have both been important sites for this international exchange. The practice of contributing national studies to multi-authored international collections of essays on a common theme, a kind of half-way house on the way to transnationalising history, is particularly evident

²⁴ Ann Curthoys 2003, 'We've Just Started Making National Histories, and You Want Us to Stop Already?', in Burton (ed.), *After the Imperial Turn*, pp. 70-89; Ann Curthoys 2002, 'Does Australian History have a Future?', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 33, no. 118, pp. 140-52.

in feminist historical scholarship.²⁵ Race relations history has also been in the forefront of new developments in transnational history.

Despite their inherent cross-cultural and crossing-borders character, studies of race relations have too often, however, been narrowly and nationally focused, as Mary Dudziak has observed for the United States.²⁶ There is a growing body of work which attempts to compare not only the race-based political movements discussed earlier, but also the transnational character of racial thinking and racial policies. Patrick Wolfe, for example, has explored racial thinking in Australia, the United States, and elsewhere, while Marilyn Lake is engaged in exploring the transnational dynamics of the formation of self-styled 'white men's countries'.²⁷

It isn't only feminist and race relations historians who have sought to go beyond national boundaries. In the case of Australian historiography, Donald Denoon, with various collaborators, has long sought to place Australian history within Pacific regional history.²⁸ Historians of convict transportation, exemplified in this volume by Emma Christopher, have begun to insist that their subjects cannot be understood within the narrow confines of an Australian historiography.²⁹

²⁵ See for just some examples, Ulla Wiklander, Alice Kessler-Harris and Jane Lewis (eds) 1995, *Protecting Women: Labor Legislation in Europe, the United States, and Australia, 1880–1920* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press); Marilyn Lake 1996, 'Female Desire: The Meaning of World War 2', reprinted in Joan Scott (ed.), *Feminism and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Marilyn Lake 1998, 'The Inviolable Woman: Feminist Theories of Citizenship, Australia 1900–1945', in Joan Landes (ed.), *Feminism, the Public and the Private* (Oxford University Press, Oxford) and 'Australian Frontier Feminism and the Marauding White Man', in Clare Midgley (ed.), *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press). See also Fiona Paisley 1999, "'Unnecessary Crimes and Tragedies": Race, Gender and Sexuality in Australian Policies of Aboriginal Child Removal', in Antoinette Burton (ed.), *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernity* (New York, NY: Routledge), pp. 134–47; Patricia Grimshaw, Katie Holmes, and Marilyn Lake (eds) 2001, *Women's Rights and Human Rights: International Historical Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave); special issue of *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 16, no. 36.

²⁶ Mary L. Dudziak 2000, *Cold War, Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

²⁷ Marilyn Lake 2004, 'The White Man under Siege: New Histories of Race in the Nineteenth Century', *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 58, no. 1, pp. 41–62.

²⁸ Donald Denoon and Philippa Mein-Smith, with Marivic Wyndham 2000, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific* (Oxford, U.K.; Maiden, Mass.; Blackwell); Donald Denoon, with Marivic Wyndham 2000, 'Australia and the Western Pacific', in Roger Louis and Alaine Low (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press).

²⁹ Hamish Maxwell-Stewart and Cassandra Pybus 2002, *American Citizens, British Slaves* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press); Cassandra Pybus 2002, 'The World is All of One Piece: The African

David Goodman has compared the gold rush experience in Victoria and California and Kirsten McKenzie the history of scandal in Sydney and Cape Town.³⁰ Ian Tyrrell has compared environmental reform movements in Australia and California while Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin have brought together environmental historians of a number of settler societies.³¹ This volume seeks to add significantly to this growing body of work, even as we recognise the continuing importance of engaging a local audience and joining local debates about Australian historical experience, values and traditions.

This volume

We hope to advance the historiographical debates of the last decade, and to that end the volume begins with three historiographical essays. The first, by Tony Ballantyne, places an examination of C. A. Bayly's *Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (2004) within the context of a brief and illuminating history of world history. He praises Bayly's breadth, his attention to the Islamic world and South Asia, his clarity on the connections between race, empire, and violence, but draws attention to his relatively thin treatment of subjectivity and colonial modernity. Michael McDonnell outlines the explosion of interest in the history of the Atlantic world, drawing attention to its continuing Anglo-American centrism and suggesting that, despite recognition of the Black Atlantic, Atlantic history 'is in danger of becoming a neo-imperial form of history; one dominated by the rise of the British Empire, and the birth of the United States'. In its place he advocates a more genuinely pan-Atlantic approach, comparing and combining studies of North and South America. He warns, though, of the danger that such approaches might become so encompassing and all-embracing that they end up with no audience, no clear narrative, and much confusion. Angela Woollacott concludes this section by defining the characteristics of postcolonial histories, and analysing Catherine Hall's *Civilizing Subjects* as a justly celebrated example of postcolonial history at its best. Her work, says Woollacott, 'stands out for its political commitment to drawing attention to the continuing negative consequences of imperialism and colonialism'. She argues, though, that the book does not take full advantage

Diaspora and Transportation to Australia', in Ruth Hamilton (ed.), *Routes of Passage: Rethinking the African Diaspora* (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press).

³⁰ Kirsten McKenzie 2004, *Scandal in the Colonies: Sydney and Cape Town, 1820–1850* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press); David Goodman 1994, *Gold-Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin).

³¹ Ian Tyrrell 1999, *True Gardens of the Gods: Californian-Australian Environmental Reform, 1860–1930* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press); Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (eds) 1997, *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies* (Keele: Keele University Press).

of postcolonial scholarship, such as that offered by the Subaltern Studies historians; nor does it sufficiently place its study within a broad imperial framework.

The second section explores voyages and migrations to and from Australia in a wide variety of places (Britain, China, the United States, and India) and periods (from the late eighteenth century to the present). Emma Christopher focuses on the larger context of convict transportation to New South Wales, tracing through the experiences of one man, Thomas Limpus, three different but connected voyages – to West Africa, to the slave city of Baltimore (though he mutinied and escaped before the ship arrived), and finally to Botany Bay. John Fitzgerald takes us on a wonderful journey between colonial New South Wales and China, as he explores the early history of the New South Wales branch of the international Hung League, or Chinese Masonic Society, attempting to sort intriguing history from fascinating legend. Margaret Allen contrasts the Australian missionary women who travelled freely to India in the first half of the twentieth century with the experiences of the growing number of middle class Indian travellers who sought to visit Australia. White Australian expectations of mobility are contrasted with the White Australia Policy's construction of Indians as having no rights to mobility. 'The mobility of modernity', she concludes, 'was reserved for those deemed white'. Finally, Jim Hammerton explores the migration of the 'Ten Pound Poms', the million British people who came to Australia in the two decades or so after World War II. He points out that many of them regarded their migration, initially at least, as a move 'simply "from one part of Britain to another"', and draws attention to the ease of movement the Empire and its aftermath brought to British citizens. Yet along with privilege went many painful personal experiences of migration, and he considers the changing ways in which family relationships were maintained, if weakened, over very long distances.

The mobility of white modernity evoked by Allen and Hammerton is also the theme for the third section, entitled 'Modernity, Film, and Romance'. Desley Deacon explores Walter Wanger's idea of film as fostering cosmopolitanism and transnationalism, film as a kind of 'foreign office' enabling one culture to understand another. In this spirit Paramount developed nature documentary on the one hand and bright sophisticated New York movies on the other. Jill Matthews traces the career of J. D. Williams, a film entrepreneur who worked in the emerging film industry in three continents. Starting in the United States, he was successful in developing the film industry in Australia, Britain, Canada, and again in the United States. She points out that although parts of this career are known to the national film historians of each country, the career as a whole – and its interconnections – has not been understood previously by any of them. Also focusing on modernity, Hsu-Ming Teo explores the ways in which particular ideas about and practices of romantic love have become increasingly transnational because of the global reach of Anglophone culture and the impact of American

advertising and marketing industries. In examining the transformation of Australian understandings of romance, she also points to the gendered time-lag in the embrace of commodified dating culture.

The questions of race introduced in parts one and two reappear in a different form in part four. John Maynard explores the hitherto little-known influence on the Australian Aboriginal activists of the 1920s of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, formed first in Jamaica and then spreading through the United States and carried across the world often by working seamen. He also points out that Aboriginal Australians, though closely attached to their own country and for many decades denied freedom of movement, have also travelled abroad, and in the process developed new insights into their situation at home. International travel made some of them aware that 'others around the globe had shared similar tragedy under the weight of colonisation'. Marilyn Lake points out that in their focus on nations as imagined communities, historians have too often forgotten the importance of transnational racial identifications. She draws attention to W. E. B. Du Bois' 1910 recognition of the 'new religion' of whiteness that was sweeping the world in the early twentieth century. She also argues that a key instrument of whiteness was the literacy or dictation test, and whereas previous studies of the White Australia Policy have recognised the influence of Natal in this regard, they have not noticed the American precedents in Mississippi in 1890 and the American Immigration Act of 1896. Such tests, she argues, worked to consolidate understandings of 'race' in terms of a dichotomy of whites and non-whites around the world.

The volume ends with an extended essay on Islamic India and its repression in nationalist Indian historiography. Given its origin and existence as an alternative to or critique of national history, transnational history as an idea and a practice has tended to be of particular interest to historians of the modern era, where the nation has been such an important organising principle, both intellectually and pedagogically. Yet, as Tony Ballantyne points out in his essay, it has also been important for historians of earlier periods in its stimulus to the study of large regions, most notably 'Eurasia', (including India, China, Central Asia and Europe), the Atlantic world (Africa, Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean) and the societies around the Indian Ocean (East Africa, South and Southeast Asia). The pre-modern aspect of transnational history is represented here in Patrick Wolfe's contribution, which emphasises the long historical connections between Europe, the Mediterranean Islamic world including Muslim Spain, and Islamic India. Transnational approaches, broadly conceived, he reflects, can help us be wary of false homogenised images of Europe, or Islam, or India. 'Europe', he argues, cannot be seen as entirely distinct from Hindu or Islamic culture – they were intricately connected and mutually influencing. As a result, when Europe in the nineteenth century confronted Muslim India, it was also 'returning to its own

repressed', a tradition of repression that has been perpetuated in both British and Indian nationalist historiography.

One final comment. This book is being published by ANU E Press, a new press focusing on online publication with print-on-demand book copies also available. Since the technology of access means many readers can read chapters singly, rather than in book form, we have endeavoured to ensure that each chapter can stand alone. What may be lost in the conversations *between* chapters will be made up, we hope, in the easy and open and inexpensive access to this work around the world. And that is transnational in spirit indeed.