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ARTICLE

WHAT IS HISTORY IN A SETTLER COLONIAL SOCIETY? MAPPING THE LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES OF ETHICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY USING AN AUSTRALIAN CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, the role of the history discipline as part of the architecture of colonization has become more visible and better understood. Such acknowledgement reflects foundational shifts in historical practice and theory prompted by transdisciplinary and transnational scholarship in fields such as postcolonial and settler-colonial studies, First Nations knowledges, and historical perspectives and practices contextualized by transatlantic slavery. Their intervention in turn prompted a vital question: How do we map settler-colonial historiography if the discipline has been complicit in the settler-colonial project? Using Australian historiography as a case study, this article explores how History has been part of the architecture of colonization, policing whose stories can be told and by whom. Drawing on the work of Indigenous history-makers and knowledge-holders, it also points to ways that researchers might reach outside the traditional scope of historiography to map and contemplate the range of history-making that comprises history in the settler colony.

Keywords: Australian history, First Nations history, historiography, "historyless," history discipline , settler colonial history, silence

When the Australian philosopher of history Marnie Hughes-Warrington published the second edition of her historiographical reference guide, *Fifty Key Thinkers on History*, in 2008, the shape of historiography had become less clear in the settler colonies. "For you, history may imply the chronological arrangement of phenomena; for an Aboriginal storyteller in Northern Australia, on the other hand, historical figures that lived hundreds of years apart may be brought together to stress the moral and social significance of a place," she explained.[1] "An important challenge for historiographers," according to Hughes-Warrington, "is to figure out how to respond to these differences. Are they superficial differences that mask an underlying, common, idea of history?"[2]

For those who study Australian historiography, this is a question that has increasingly pressed on our research and interpretation. Since the 1960s and 1970s, following waves of activist campaigns for Indigenous land rights and civil rights,

1. Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *Fifty Key Thinkers on History*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008), xi.
2. Ibid.

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the imperative to acknowledge Indigenous historical perspectives in Australia has become central to its history.[3] Yet that acknowledgement has not been uncomplicated. Indigenous histories of Country (encompassing land, sea, and sky) stretch into Deep Time—that is, long before a recognizable form of empirical history existed—and Indigenous histories are still largely produced outside the profession or academy, as Hughes-Warrington's quote intimates. Given that successive colonial and national histories excluded Indigenous perspectives for the better part of two centuries in Australia, their relatively recent inclusion has raised all sorts of historiographical questions: When does Australian history actually begin? What are the methodological boundaries of the discipline? And, crucially, *who* is a historian?

Moreover, the role of the history discipline as part of the architecture of colonization has become more visible and better understood. This disciplinary intervention and critique reflects foundational shifts in historical practice and theory prompted by transdisciplinary and transnational scholarship in fields such as postcolonial and settler-colonial studies, First Nations knowledges, and historical perspectives and practices contextualized by transatlantic slavery. Admittedly, these fields are diverse and capacious, reflecting research conducted over several decades from many continents and contexts. Bringing them together, however, is a shared recognition that the history discipline is far from neutral: archives built to record colonial pasts silence others; history renders only certain, authorized practitioners visible, excluding those who do not meet defined qualifications of expertise; and concepts of historical "truth" and "objectivity" can omit First Nations and subaltern historical perspectives.[4] History—that Western, empirical discipline based on rules of evidence and expertise—not only studied the past

3. I use the terms "Indigenous" and "Aboriginal" to refer to Australia's First Nations, but I do not use the terms interchangeably: taking a cue from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), I use "Aboriginal" to describe First Nations across mainland Australia, "Torres Strait Islander" to describe the unique peoples and cultures of that region, and "Indigenous" when describing them both—as in "Australia's Indigenous people." However, it's also important to note that some Aboriginal people prefer to use the term "Indigenous" or "First Nations" to describe themselves, while others resist that term. And in many communities, the use of more localized references (such as "Koorie," "Murrie," "Noongar," or "Palawa") or more specific Country or clan names (such as Dharug, Wurundjeri, or Yolŋu) is preferred.

4. Anna Clark, "Just a Matter of Time: Reviewing Temporality in Australian Historiography," *Rethinking History* 28, no. 1 (2024), 1–27. See also Philip J. Deloria, "Cold Business and the Hot Take," *American Historical Review* 125, no. 2 (2020), 537–41; Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London: Verso, 2016); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts," *Perspectives on History*, 1 November 1997, https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/november-1997/minority-histories-subaltern-pasts; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, "Archival Dis-Ease: Thinking through Colonial Ontologies," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7, no. 2 (2010), 215–19; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); LaGarrett J. King, "What Is Black Historical Consciousness?," in *Contemplating Historical Consciousness: Notes from the Field*, ed. Anna Clark and Carla L. Peck (New York: Berghahn Books, 2020), 163–74.

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but also *storied* settler colonies such as Australia with versions of the past that adhered to particular understandings of historical "progress," "authority," and "significance." Histories and historical perspectives that sat outside these conceptualizations were excluded from accounts of the past and from definitions of "history" itself.

Given that historiographical erasure, Hughes-Warrington's question is not simply an issue of definition, then, but an ethical challenge for historiographers in Australia and beyond. If "academic research has a long, shameful history of compounding the evils of colonialism," as First Nations historian Philip J. Deloria has noted, then the issue of responding to that erasure is vital for the field.[5] Yet responses vary from place to place and from history to history. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot suggested in his 1995 critical intervention, "any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly."[6]

Following from Trouillot, this article attempts to map that historiographical process of reckoning in Australia over the last fifty years. Using the Australian anthropologist W. E. H. Stanner's celebrated 1968 Boyer Lectures, where he coined the term "The Great Australian Silence," as a starting point, it traces the emergence of a disciplinary critique in Australian historiography.[7] That critique, which began as radical revision but has since become widely accepted and deployed, revealed the discipline's fraught complicity in the settler-colonial project for the way it excluded Indigenous histories and perspectives from the national story. Inseparable from that critique was the ethical demand to "fill in" Australia's historical silences—from within the discipline and without, by a chorus of Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers, knowledge holders, and historians. Their interventions can be seen in the context of wider, critical historiographical engagement (by Stanner and others) but were also grounded in long-standing Indigenous forms of protest, counternarrative, and history-making that extended back centuries to the earliest years of the settler colony's own histories. Finally, this article contemplates the implications of this historical revision. While huge disciplinary shifts have occurred and continue to play out, the consequences of these epistemological and ethical interventions into settler-colonial historiography are still very much unresolved in Australia.

It chooses this national frame for several reasons. First, as Trouillot indicated, each narrative has its own "particular bundle of silences." Australia's historical lacunae were perhaps no more exceptional than other settler-colonial contexts around the world, yet the concept of silence has become central to the way its historiography has come to be understood in recent decades. As in many settler-colonial states around the world, historians in Australia have increasingly grappled with acknowledging that their discipline has been foundational to the colonization of Indigenous peoples—policing whose histories can be told and how.

5. Deloria, "Cold Business and the Hot Take," 538.
6. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 27.
7. W. E. H. Stanner, "The Great Australian Silence," in *After the Dreaming: 1968 Boyer Lectures* (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1968), 18–29.

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Indigenous histories and historians were largely excluded from Australian historiography until the latter decades of the twentieth century. Since then, calls for their inclusion and recognition have radically shifted disciplinary understandings, pushing the timeline of Australian history into the deep past and challenging the profession to engage with Indigenous temporalities, knowledges, and forms of history-making. My intention is that consciously locating the article in this national frame facilitates analytical depth and focus rather than exacerbating any narrow historiographical exceptionalism.

This is because, at the same time, this national context has also been generated by international movements of ideas and historical approaches. The 2018 statement on decolonizing research by the *American Historical Review* makes clear that the urge to lean into the fraught space of settler-colonial historiography is not unique to Australia.[8] Indeed, the ethical demand to engage with, acknowledge, and include Indigenous ways of knowing has extended the discipline into new, albeit sometimes challenging, epistemological territory internationally.[9] Just as Western empirical historical practice was shipped around the world from the Enlightenment onward, re-storying places in Europe's vast empires, those same shipping lanes of ideas have facilitated vital transnational movements and passage of postcolonial and decolonizing narratives and methods.[10] Tracing this historiographical period of intervention and revision in Australia reveals important shifts—from a politics of inclusion to a growing acknowledgement that, as well as being central to overcoming its own silences, the history discipline is perhaps still part of the problem.

"THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN SILENCE"

In 1968, the Australian anthropologist W. E. H. Stanner gave his now renowned Boyer Lectures, an annual radio event hosted by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC). Every year, a distinguished Australian is invited to present on an aspect of their work, and the lecture series is an important occasion in the nation's public cultural calendar. Stanner's contribution, *After the Dreaming*, was more than simply a synthesis of his scholarship. His first lecture, "Looking Back," explored the settler-colonial origins of what had come to be known as "Aboriginal affairs" in Australia.[11] It traced the early years of colonial interactions with

8. A. C. L., "Decolonizing the *AHR*," *American Historical Review* 123, no. 1 (2018), xv: "I have come to believe that the *AHR* should take the risk of confronting its own potential complicity in the inability of the profession to divest itself fully of its past lack of openness to scholars and scholarship due to race, color, creed, gender, sexuality, nationality, and a host of other assigned characteristics."

9. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed. (London: Zed Books, 2012); Michael Marker, "The 'Realness' of Place in the Spiral of Time: Reflections on Indigenous Historical Consciousness from the Coast Salish Territory," in Clark and Peck, *Contemplating Historical Consciousness*, 185–99; Deloria, "Cold Business and the Hot Take"; Miranda Johnson, "Writing Indigenous Histories Now," *Australian Historical Studies* 45, no. 3 (2014), 317–30.

10. Tracey Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific: Indigenous Globalisation and the Ends of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Ravi de Costa, *A Higher Authority: Indigenous Transnationalism and Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006).

11. W. E. H. Stanner, "Looking Back," in *After the Dreaming*, 7–17.

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Aboriginal people and then contrasted that historical moment of encounter with the remote communities Stanner had himself encountered as an anthropologist in the Northern Territory in the 1930s. Almost every aspect of their lives was controlled and constrained, he observed, bringing an anthropological gaze onto the structures and ideologies that had created such misery.

Stanner's second lecture, "The Great Australian Silence," went even further.[12] Belying his characteristic, calm eloquence, he directly challenged Australia's collective historical consciousness, insisting that the national story of colonization, democratic progress, and prosperity had deliberately excluded Indigenous people. Stanner observed how, following an initial brief period of cross-cultural curiosity and ethnological interest, Indigenous history and culture were increasingly written out of Australia's settler-colonial narratives.

Stanner had previously described that historical trajectory of omission. "In the early years of settlement insensibility towards the Aborigines' human status hardened into contempt, derision and indifference," he wrote in 1962.[13] A year later, in an essay titled "The History of Indifference Thus Begins," he elaborated on that historiographical and cultural calcification: "The collapsed romanticism turned into violence, the realism into indifference, and the sardonicism into contempt. The ensemble of violence, indifference and contempt suited the mood and needs of a transplanted people."[14] Critically, Australians' disdain of Indigenous histories and cultures was not simply a consequence of colonization but part of the colonial project: "there was more than an accidental correspondence between the ruin of Aboriginal, and the making of European, life in Australia. There was, in fact, a functional concomitance."[15]

Stanner sharpened that historical critique in his Boyer Lectures. Australia's sense of its past, its collective historical consciousness, had been built on a pattern of forgetting that was more than mere accident: "It is a structural matter, a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape."[16] Stanner not only traced the outlines of that historical silence in Australian historiography; he also understood the discipline's contribution to Australia's colonization and articulated its disciplinary architecture of remembering and forgetting: "What may well have begun as a simple forgetting of other possible views turned under habit and over time into something like a cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale."[17]

Citing a series of general Australian historical texts and surveys, Stanner pointed out their superficial treatment, or even outright omission, of Indigenous history. Despite having been written after the 1930s, a decade that Stanner noted for its considerable activity and interest in Aboriginal policy, the histories he

12. Stanner, "The Great Australian Silence," 18–29.

13. W. E. H. Stanner, "Caliban Discovered," in *White Man Got No Dreaming: Essays, 1938–1973* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979), 145.

14. W. E. H. Stanner, "The History of Indifference Thus Begins," in *White Man Got No Dreaming*, 189.

15. Ibid., 188–89.

16. Stanner, "The Great Australian Silence," 25.

17. Ibid., 24–25.

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called out in his lectures were mute on Aboriginal policy and history. "In one sense, of course, the historians have been right," he asserted: "It is incontestable that few of the great affairs of the past took any sort of account of the continued aboriginal presence."[18] And yet, Stanner continued, "it is precisely this situation which calls for a less shallow, less ethnocentric social history."[19]

In R. M. Crawford's 1952 *Australia*, for example, Aboriginal people's place in Australian history is restricted to one chapter as a "primitive" sort of prehistory that prefaces European settlement. Furthermore, the sole appearance of Aboriginal people after contact is used to illustrate their inevitable decline in contrast to the nation's inexorable expansion.[20] Another of the texts cited in Stanner's second lecture, the 1955 textbook *Australia: A Social and Political History*, contains not a single reference to Indigenous people in its index. The book begins in 1788 with British colonization and makes no mention of the continent's history before that date. Its focus on colonization only includes a discussion of its effects on "the early settlers"; "sheep" receive more coverage than Australia's First Nations.[21] Meanwhile, Peter Coleman's 1962 edited book *Australian Civilization* brought together historians, writers, and critics to consider Australia's place in the world but maintained a "total silence on all matters aboriginal," Stanner observed.[22]

Critically reading history texts from the 1950s and 1960s hardly has the same potency today, given the increasing prominence of discourse analysis, Indigenous perspectives, and postcolonial theory in contemporary historiographical research and practice. Yet, at the time, the originality and power of Stanner's assessment was significant. His lectures reveal that an emerging, critical perspective on Australian historiography was apparent in 1968, but only just. Overwhelmingly, Australian historical writing simply overlooked the continent's Indigenous history.

That omission was in part disciplinary. From the late nineteenth century, history's increasingly scientific focus on evidence, objectivity, and source criticism meant that Indigenous modes of history-making—mostly nontextual, often in a language other than English, produced and archived in communities rather than by the profession, and without the temporality of a strict historical chronology—were excluded from the emerging field of Australian historiography. As Chris Lorenz has noted, scientific history's focus was aspirational and ideological, at once "an epistemic and an ethical ideal."[23] Yet the effects of this pursuit of "objectivity" meant that forms of history-making and historical archives outside the discipline's increasingly reified and prescribed modes of scholarship were excluded from its practice. Stanner had intimated that the silence of Indigenous

18. Ibid., 26.

19. Ibid.

20. R. M. Crawford, *Australia* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1952).

21. Gordon Greenwood, ed., *Australia: A Social and Political History* (New York: Frederic A. Praeger, 1955).

22. Stanner, "The Great Australian Silence," 24. See also Peter Coleman, ed., *Australian Civilization* (Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1962).

23. Chris Lorenz, "History and Theory," in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 5, *Historical Writing since 1945*, ed. Axel Schneider and Daniel Woolf (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 15. See also Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

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people in Australian history was structural—they simply did not fit the logic of historical "evidence" or "significance." This was hardly unique to Australia. The discipline's power to curate and control played out in settler colonies around the world, and Ian Tyrrell's description of historiography in the United States context similarly reveals how its historical narratives were edited based on those disciplinary prescriptions: "Using the canons of evidence and privileging written documents, Scientific History's allies in the local and state history societies silenced vernacular readings of white-Indian relations and denounced views of the Indian past based on oral sources, legends, and myths."[24]

Critically, it was the discipline's increasing alignment with nationalism and national identity that further relegated Indigenous peoples' experiences and perspectives outside official historical narratives in the settler colonies.[25] Persuasive forms of national exceptionalism that emerged during the nineteenth century, especially in Europe, the United Kingdom, and North America, Mark Bevir has explained, were intimately entwined with the professionalization of the history discipline: "A classic national history narrates the formation and progress of a nation-state as a reflection of principles such as national character, liberty, progress and statehood."[26] Just as "the nation" needed history to provide accounts of its progress and its innateness, the discipline benefited from national narratives that in turn verified its authority and indispensability as the national storyteller.

Nineteenth-century Australian historiography was framed at once by an imperial logic that saw the colonization as "providential" *and* by a growing nationalism as it moved toward independence through the federation of its six colonies in 1901. In the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, there was silence about pre- and post-contact Indigenous experience because it existed outside the Whiggish historical narrative of imperial and national progress. Colonization *brought* history to Australia. Before that, "the continent of Australia was a blank space" on a map, as Ernest Scott's 1916 *Short History of Australia* had described.[27] Notably, the relative silence of Indigenous Australia in its colonial and national histories was counterposed against descriptions of the busy, noisy

24. Ian Tyrrell, *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 230.

25. A. W. Martin, *The "Whig" View of Australian History, and Other Essays*, ed. J. R. Nethercote (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007). See also Stefan Berger, "Introduction: Towards a Global History of National Historiographies," in *Writing the Nation: A Global Perspective*, ed. Stefan Berger (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1–29; Stefan Berger, "Narrating the Nation: Historiography and Other Genres," in *Narrating the Nation: Representations in History, Media and the Arts*, ed. Stefan Berger, Linas Eriksonas, and Andrew Mycock (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 1–16; Daniel Woolf, *A Global History of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

26. Mark Bevir, "National Histories: Prospects for Critique and Narrative," in Berger, Eriksonas, and Mycock, *Narrating the Nation*, 56. See also E. J. Hobsbawm and David J. Kertzer, "Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today," *Anthropology Today* 8, no. 1 (1992), 3–8; Ian Tyrrell, "American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History," *American History Review* 96, no. 4 (1991), 1031–55; Peter Mandler, *History and National Life* (London: Profile Books, 2002); Kerwin Lee Klein, *Frontiers of Historical Imagination: Narrating the European Conquest of Native America, 1890–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1870: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

27. Ernest Scott, *A Short History of Australia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1916), 1.

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industriousness of the colonizers, who cut down trees, planted crops, explored deserts, and built railways (as well as writing the histories that cataloged it all).[28] The contents pages of these texts lay out very clearly how the logics of colonial/national and narrative progress were entangled, plotting out the sequence of "discovery" and "exploration," along with civil, democratic, and economic "expansion," as objective and inevitable. Historian Leigh Boucher has described the nineteenth century as "a moment of both high imperialism and disciplinary birth" in Australia that facilitated "a troubling accord between national historical writing, the temporalising logics of liberalism, and the 'sorting categories' that made colonial expropriation and exploitation possible."[29]

Given that historiographical background, then, Stanner's idea of "The Great Australian Silence" was a watershed intervention. Since their broadcast over fifty years ago, his Boyer Lectures have become a defining moment in Australian historiography for scholars and public alike. They were reprinted seven times and continue to frame the ways Australian historians describe the discipline's growing realization that it had been not simply a storyteller but an *agent* in the nation's settler-colonial history.[30] The endurance of his metaphor of silence has been so powerful because of the image he captured: for a discipline centered on diligent documentation, archiving, and storytelling, redrawing that practice around the idea of a structural, deliberate silence is captivating and indicated a profound reimagining of a national historiography by Stanner.

In turn, that *idea* of silence has become arguably as central a frame for Australian historiography as the actual structure of silence (the "quadrant") Stanner first described in 1968. In the wake of his lectures, influential Australian historians conceived of their own historical awakening in these same terms.[31] More than simply a clever conceit, the idea of silence was profound because of its moral dimension. Like Lorenz's analysis of historical "objectivity," Stanner's critique of historiographical silence was not simply an analytical tool but an ethical demand. The "Great Australian Silence" was something to be understood *and overcome* as part of a national centering of Indigenous self-determination and civil rights that was gaining increasing political and public prominence in the 1960s.

While some have rightly nudged the neat "before" and "after" periodization of this popular reading of Stanner's intervention, its enduring power has been

28. Ibid., 94.

29. Leigh Boucher, "Trans/National History and Disciplinary Amnesia: Historicising White Australia at Two *Fins de Siècles*," in *Creating White Australia*, ed. Jane Carey and Claire McLisky (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2009), 52.

30. Jeremy Beckett and Melinda Hinkson, "'Going More than Half Way to Meet Them': On the Life and Legacy of WEH Stanner," in *An Appreciation of Difference: WEH Stanner and Aboriginal Australia*, ed. Melinda Hinkson and Jeremy Beckett (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2008), 2.

31. See, for example, Marilyn Lake, "In and Out of Empire: Old Labels and New Histories," in *How Empire Shaped Us*, ed. Antoinette Burton and Dane Kennedy (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 83–94; Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told? A Personal Search for the Truth about Our History* (Ringwood: Viking, 1998); and Robert Manne, "W. E. H. Stanner: The Anthropologist as Humanist," in *The Dreaming and Other Essays*, by W. E. H. Stanner (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2011), 1–18.

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unquestionable. In a collection of essays celebrating Stanner's scholarly contribution, Ann Curthoys suggested the image of silence that he conjured did not entirely capture the range and depth of history-making in Australia across the twentieth century. "Too often" Stanner's striking metaphor of silence "is taken to imply a kind of historiographical periodisation where there was *no* Aboriginal history before Stanner's own lecture and an end to the silence after it," Curthoys explained.[32] "Neither half of this statement is quite true," according to Curthoys: "there was neither complete silence before 1968, nor was it completely ended afterwards."[33]

As Curthoys pointed out, Indigenous histories *were* produced following colonization right through the colonial period: significant historical narratives by Indigenous people were presented in petitions sent to the British Crown in the nineteenth century, and there were public protests, such as the 1938 Day of Mourning, as well as quotidian forms of resistance, refusal, and historical revision passed down orally in family and community histories.[34] Creative histories were also produced by activists and non-Indigenous allies in the form of historical fiction and poetry, attracting significant public interest and acclaim.[35] In other words, Indigenous histories were produced by communities alongside an exercised cohort of critics and activists, yet they remained stubbornly outside the formal history discipline until the latter decades of the twentieth century. Because of that exclusion, "Stanner's brilliant and now iconic phrase," as Curthoys has described it, has become a powerful marker in a longer, complex history of Australian historiography.[36]

32. Ann Curthoys, "WEH Stanner and the Historians," in Hinkson and Beckett, *An Appreciation of Difference*, 247.

33. Ibid.

34. Chiara Gamboz, "Australian Indigenous Petitions: Emergence and Negotiations of Indigenous Authorship and Writings" (PhD diss., University of New South Wales, 2012); Erin Walker, "Yirrkala Bark Petitions," *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 8, no. 7 (2013), 33–34; Jack Horner and Marcia Langton, "The Day of Mourning," in *Australians 1938*, ed. Bill Gammage and Peter Spearritt (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987), 29–36; Julian Thomas, "1938: Past and Present in an Elaborate Anniversary," *Australian Historical Studies* 23, no. 91 (1988), 77–89; Heather Goodall, "A History of Aboriginal Communities in New South Wales, 1909–1939" (PhD diss., University of Sydney, 1982).

35. See, for example, Arthur Vogan's 1890 novel *The Black Police: A Story of Modern Australia* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1890), which was set on the Queensland frontier and depicted the horrors of Native Police contingents that were directed by colonial pastoralists and governments. In 1934, Roy H. Goddard published an article in *Mankind*, the journal of the Anthropological Society of New South Wales, and recorded examples of Aboriginal poetry as historically vital ("Aboriginal Poets as Historians," *Mankind* 1, no. 10 [1934], 243–46). Meanwhile, Eleanor Dark reimagined the early days of the Sydney colony from the perspective of the Aboriginal man Bennelong in her 1941 novel *The Timeless Land*, 5th ed. (London: Collins, 1946); See also Xavier Herbert, *Capricornia* (London: Angus & Robertson, 1938) and Judith Wright, "N_____'s Leap New England," *Meanjin* 4, no. 2 (1945), 85. And in a letter to Stanner following the Boyer Lectures, the poet Ian Mudie gently suggested that his historical quadrant of "silence" "overlooked the so-called creative writers, among whom was to be found probably the most vocal group of the period on the subject of the treatment of aborigines" (Ian Mudie to W. E. H. Stanner, 7 November 1968, MS3752 [series 18, item 21], Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra). He cited the work of several Australian poets and authors, including Xavier Herbert and Eleanor Dark, as evidence of writers' interest and engagement with Indigenous history.

36. Curthoys, "WEH Stanner and the Historians," 235.

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"FILLING IN" THE SILENCES

In addition to defining patterns and structures of Australian historiographical omission in his Boyer Lectures, Stanner hinted that they would not continue indefinitely. Aboriginal people, "having been 'out' of history for a century and a half, are now coming back 'into' history with a vengeance."[37] "I hardly think that what I have called 'the great Australian silence' will survive the research that is now in course," he insisted.[38]

The research "now in course" was infilling the discipline's historical blanks with testimony, story, and experience. This was not simply a historical additive but pointed to shifting methods and approaches. "In aboriginal Australia there is an oral history which is providing these people with a coherent principle of explanation," Stanner explained: "It has a directness and a candour which cut like a knife through most of what we say and write. We would have to bring in this material . . . into the sweep of our history."[39]

It was a perceptive observation by Stanner, who sensed a growing body of Indigenous histories that took the form of life stories, shared as testimony and oral history, but were also expressed through creative writing. A cohort of Indigenous writers, such as Kevin Gilbert, Margaret Tucker, James Miller, Marnie Kennedy, and Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker), gave personal voice to that history-making.[40] Their works, at once intimate reflection and searing social commentary, increasingly pressed on the history discipline, pushing it to recognize Indigenous voices and Indigenous modes of history-making. "We were people before we were citizens," Noonuccal's poem "Civilization" marked out with typical, gracious defiance.[41]

At the same time, vocal Indigenous protests around the country for land, political, and civil rights from the 1960s and 1970s—such as the 1963 Yirrkala Bark Petitions, 1965 Freedom Ride, 1966 Wave Hill Walk-Off, and the 1967 referendum to recognize Indigenous people in the national census, along with the 1972 Larrakia Petition and creation of the Tent Embassy on the front lawns of Parliament House—generated significant public awareness and debate.[42] "The British

37. Stanner, "The Great Australian Silence," 17.

38. Ibid., 27.

39. Ibid., 25–26.

40. Kevin Gilbert, *Living Black: Blacks Talk to Kevin Gilbert* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1978); Margaret Tucker, *If Everyone Cared* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1977); James Miller, *Koori: A Will to Win* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1985); Marnie Kennedy, *Born a Half Caste* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985); Kath Walker (Oodgeroo Noonuccal), *The Dawn Is at Hand: Poems* (Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1966); Kath Walker (Oodgeroo Noonuccal), *My People: A Kath Walker Collection*, 2nd ed. (Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1981).

41. Kath Walker (Oodgeroo Noonuccal), "Civilization," in *The Dawn Is at Hand*, 12.

42. "Petition to HM The Queen from the Larakia/Larrakia People Regarding Land Rights for Presentation during HRH The Princess Margaret's Visit to Darwin," 1972–1973, NAA: A2354, 1973/86 ATTACHMENT 1, National Archives of Australia, https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/DetailsReports/ItemDetail.aspx?Barcode=8120201&isAv=N; Walker, "Yirrkala Bark Petitions"; Gary Foley, "Black Power, Land Rights and Academic History," *Griffith Law Review* 20, no. 3 (2011), 608–18; Hannah Robert, *Paved with Good Intentions: Terra Nullius, Aboriginal Land Rights*

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settlers took our land," the Larrakia petition articulated alongside the signatures and thumbprints of more than one thousand Aboriginal people: "No treaties were signed with the tribes. Today we are REFUGEES."[43] While the momentum for land rights was foremost a political movement for Indigenous self-determination, it also offered a powerful counternarrative of Australian history that played out in the public sphere and contributed to a broader groundswell of Indigenous perspectives challenging the nation's apparent "progress" and highlighting its appalling record in Indigenous rights. The hand-painted sign leaning against the shipping container that housed the Tent Embassy in 1972 was also emblematic of that eviscerating revision: "White invaders, you are living on stolen land."[44]

The academic fields of Aboriginal history, archaeology, anthropology, and linguistics, practiced by mostly non-Indigenous academics, emerged alongside that broader Indigenous historical revision and also drew on Indigenous interlocuters and knowledge holders, whose expertise helped reorient research and interpretation of Australia's past.[45] Works such as C. D. Rowley's three-volume history of Aboriginal policy and Geoffrey Blainey's *Triumph of the Nomads* were published alongside major works of archaeological and anthropological research that continued to push the occupation of the continent by Indigenous people into the deep past, in addition to foregrounding their lived experiences since colonization.[46] The emergence of radiocarbon dating, first used by D. J. Mulvaney in 1956, gave scientific veracity to Indigenous claims that they had been here since time immemorial.[47] Simultaneously, there was growing interest by archaeologists in the

and Settler-Colonial Law (Ultimo: Halstead Press, 2016); Heidi Norman, *"What Do We Want?": A Political History of Aboriginal Land Rights in New South Wales* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2015).

43. "Petition to HM The Queen from the Larakia/Larrakia People," 2.

44. "Demonstrations—Australian Capital Territory—Aboriginal Demonstration outside Parliament House," 14 March 1974, NAA: A6180, 14/3/74/338, National Archives of Australia, https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=11463330.

45. See, for example, Ronald M. Berndt, *Australian Aboriginal Religion* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974); Charles Campbell Macknight, "The Macassans: A Study of the Early Trepang Industry along the Northern Territory Coast" (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1969); Betty Meehan, "Shell Bed to Shell Midden" (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1975); R. H. W. Reece, *Aborigines and Colonists: Aborigines and Colonial Society in New South Wales in the 1830s and 1840s* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1974); D. J. Mulvaney, *The Prehistory of Australia* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1969); Rhys Jones, "The Tasmanian Paradox," in *Stone Tools as Cultural Markers: Change, Evolution and Complexity*, ed. R.V. S. Wright (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1977), 189–204; and Norman B. Tindale, "Stone Implement Making among the Nakako, Ngadadjara and Pitjandjara of the Great Western Desert,'" *Records of the South Australian Museum* 15 (1965), 131–64.

46. C. D. Rowley, *Aboriginal Policy and Practice*, vol. 1, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970); C. D. Rowley, *Aboriginal Policy and Practice*, vol. 2, *Outcasts in White Australia* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1971); C. D. Rowley, *Aboriginal Policy and Practice*, vol. 3, *The Remote Aborigines* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1971); Geoffrey Blainey, *Triumph of the Nomads: A History of Ancient Australia* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1975). See also Bain Attwood, "The Founding of *Aboriginal History* and the Forming of Aboriginal History," *Aboriginal History Journal* 36 (2012), 119–71, and Billy Griffiths, *Deep Time Dreaming: Uncovering Ancient Australia* (Carlton: Black Inc., 2018).

47. That figure is now widely acknowledged to be at least 65,000BP. See Griffiths, *Deep Time Dreaming* and Denis Byrne, "Deep Nation: Australia's Acquisition of an Indigenous Past," *Aboriginal History Journal* 20 (1996), 82–107.

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possibility that Indigenous Dreaming stories, told by Indigenous knowledge holders and archivists, might be used to tell the Deep Time history of the Australian continent.[48] "Filling in" the continent's Indigenous history stretched to pre- and post-colonization.

These texts, and the rapidly expanding research fields they represented, reflected a curiosity and inquisitiveness in Indigenous peoples and cultures that Stanner had identified in the very earliest colonial ethnological writings and that was re-emerging by the 1970s. Critically, they also demonstrated a scholarly determination to rewrite assumptions Australian history began with its European "discovery" or that the continent had been "blank" until then, since it had been walked, mapped, sung, *and historied* long before any history text had ever been published—in Australia or anywhere. The first sentence of Mulvaney's field-defining *Prehistory of Australia*, published in 1969, overturned the traditional opening chapter of Australian history and demonstrated how disciplinary shifts to include Indigenous histories were as much an ethical imperative as an empirical one: "The discoverers, explorers and colonists of the three million square miles which are Australia, were its Aborigines."[49]

By 1976, when historian Henry Reynolds wrote an article in *Historical Studies* that sought to reposition understandings of the colonial frontier to include its effects on Indigenous peoples, it was clear that history's revision of the Australian settler colony was becoming more widely accepted. "The investigation of the Aboriginal response to settlement is just beginning," Reynolds explained: "Yet already the inadequacies of traditional historiography are apparent."[50] That his article was just the first to engage with Aboriginal history and historiography in the Australian discipline's flagship journal following Stanner's Boyer Lectures more a decade earlier demonstrates the unevenness of Australian history's "infilling." Yet it is also an indication that the field of Aboriginal history was nonetheless expanding. In 1977, the establishment of the *Aboriginal History* journal at the Australian National University, and the publication of an important bibliography of Aboriginal research in its second issue, also confirmed that the history discipline was being increasingly influenced by the shifting politics of Indigenous rights and recognition.[51]

That growing clamor of Indigenous histories and voices was critical and influential in Australian historiography but hardly isolated. Such interventions were part of broader, global movements of disciplinary and social change. Demands for civil rights and women's rights, along with movements for decolonization

48. Laura Rademaker, "A History of Deep Time: Indigenous Knowledges and Deep Pasts in Settler-Colonial Presents," *History Australia* 18, no. 4 (2021), 658.

49. Mulvaney, *The Prehistory of Australia*, 15.

50. Henry Reynolds, "The Other Side of the Frontier: Early Aboriginal Reactions to Pastoral Settlement in Queensland and Northern New South Wales," *Historical Studies* 17, no. 66 (1976), 63. That article was expanded into an influential book of the same name: Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: An Interpretation of the Aboriginal Response to the Invasion and Settlement of Australia* (Townsville: History Dept., James Cook University, 1981).

51. Attwood, "The Founding of *Aboriginal History* and the Forming of Aboriginal History"; Diane Barwick, James Urry, and David Bennett, "A Select Bibliography of Aboriginal History and Social Change: Theses and Published Research to 1976," *Aboriginal History* 1, no. 2 (1977), 111–69.

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and anti-apartheid, prompted major re-readings of national histories around the world, especially the perspectives that had been left out. Historians drew on increasingly diverse methods to capture traditionally overlooked historical experiences, such as the working classes, women, children, queer people, the colonized, and the institutionalized—that is, historical subjects who made up history's "non-discursive," to use Judith Allen's memorable critique of the discipline.[52]

In an attempt to populate history with vernacular narratives and voices, these approaches included oral histories, journals, scrapbooks, and studies of folklore, protest, song, and poetry to help articulate the lives of classes and social groups that had previously been overlooked by conventional empirical national histories. Women's history, labor history, and subaltern history, along with histories of slavery, sexuality, and childhood, all contributed to this broader revision.[53]

Admittedly, aggregating these wide-ranging fields of research into a single historiographical movement risks collapsing nuances in their historical, cultural, and geographical contexts: the influence of labor history on subaltern studies and women's history, for example, was significant on those emerging fields; in turn, subaltern studies and women's history prompted important historiographical critiques of, and shifts in, labor history.[54] Furthermore, women's history was instrumental in the inclusion of Indigenous histories in Australian historiography, yet that alliance was also strongly critiqued by Indigenous historians, who argued forcefully that white feminists were also complicit in the subjugation of Indigenous people in Australia. "For Indigenous women all white feminists benefit from colonisation," as Goenpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson insisted.[55]

Pressing claims from Indigenous people and people of color rightly contended that white women could be perpetrators of body policing, injustice, and intervention as well as victims of it. Feminist history might have begun as a global fight for women's historical recognition and inclusion, but it was not immune to the discipline's own structures of authority, power, and exclusion. White women policed others as well as being controlled and surveilled themselves. They removed babies as well as bearing their own. They fought for voting rights and political

52. Judith Allen, "Evidence and Silence: Feminism and the Limits of History," in *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory*, ed. Carole Pateman and Elizabeth Grosz (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986), 184.

53. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963); E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* 38 (December 1967), 56–97; Ann Curthoys, "Historiography and Women's Liberation," *Arena* 22 (1970), 35–40; Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); Ranajit Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982).

54. See, for example, Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working-Class History: Bengal, 1890–1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Ann Curthoys, "Towards a Feminist Labour History," *Labour History* 29 (1975), 88–95.

55. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000), xxv. See also Pat O'Shane, "Is There Any Relevance in the Women's Movement for Aboriginal Women?," *Refractory Girl* 12 (September 1976), 31–34, and Jackie Huggins and Kay Saunders, "Defying the Ethnographic Ventriloquists: Race, Gender and the Legacies of Colonialism," *Lilith* 8 (January 1993), 60–70.

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representation by justifying the exclusion of others. And they wrote "history" while others were excluded from the discipline.[56]

In Australia, First Nations historical interventions also highlighted how Indigenous women's subjection and control was often at the hands of other (white) women—women who managed institutions, represented religious orders, regulated public spaces, and administered households where domestic work took place. As the magistrate and Aboriginal activist Pat O'Shane contended in 1976, sexism was not the system that subjugated Aboriginal women; in fact, it was racism.[57] The term "intersectionality" had not yet been coined, but it was playing out in real time in the 1970s.[58]

Histories produced in postcolonial and settler-colonial contexts also sought to expose and counter the discipline's contribution to the colonial project and its oppressive systems. And, like the imperial architecture that underpinned colonialism, these postcolonial critiques reverberated around the world, absorbing and sharing ideas in an encompassing transnationalism as well as being located and framed by particular geographical, cultural, and historical contexts.[59]

Despite the distinctiveness of these fields, together, they produced a moment of vibrant, vital historical revision in Australia. Furthermore, the methods they collectively refined fundamentally reoriented historical practice such that life-storying, oral history, and folklore became increasingly important in Australia historiography and were critical to the discipline's nascent acceptance of Indigenous oral historical culture.[60] Again, these were methods circulating around the world as part of a growing acceptance of "histories from below."[61] In Australia, faced with an intersection of social justice and historical revision, their impact was

56. Ann Curthoys, "Race and Gender in Recent Australian Historiography," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies* 1, no. 1 (1995), 1–9. See also Patricia Grimshaw "Gender, Race and American Frontiers: The Hawaiian Case," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 7, no. 1 (1988), 32–39; Vivian M. May "'Speaking into the Void'? Intersectionality Critiques and Epistemic Backlash," *Hypatia* 29, no. 1 (2014), 94–112; "Intersectionality, Resistance, and History-Making: A Conversation between Carolyn D'Cruz, Ruth DeSouza, Samia Khutan, and Crystal McKinnon," facilitated by Jordana Silverstein,'' *Lilith* 23 (2017), 15–22.

57. O'Shane, "Is There Any Relevance in the Women's Movement for Aboriginal Women?," 34.

58. Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991), 1241–99; Zora Simic, "Intersectionality, More or Less: A Review Essay," *Australian Humanities Review* 67 (November 2020), 17–31.

59. See, for example, Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific*; de Costa, *A Higher Authority*; Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Empire, Ethics, and the Calling of History: Knowledge in the Postcolony," in *Unsettling History: Archiving and Narrating in Historiography*, ed. Sebastian Jobs and Alf Lüdtke (Frankfurt: Campus, 2010), 63–88.

60. Ann Mozley, "Oral History," *Australian Historical Studies* 12, no. 48 (1967), 571–78; Lucy Taksa, "Defence Not Defiance: Social Protest and the NSW General Strike of 1917," *Labour History* 60 (May 1991), 16–33; John Murphy, "The Voice of Memory: History, Autobiography and Oral Memory," *Historical Studies* 22, no. 87 (1986), 157–75; Tom Griffiths, "The Debate about Oral History," *Melbourne Historical Journal* 13 (1981), 16–21; Heather Goodall, "Aboriginal History and the Politics of Information Control," *Oral History Association Journal* 9, no. 17 (1987), 17–33; Lorina Barker, "'Hangin' Out' and 'Yarnin'': Reflecting on the Experience of Collecting Oral Histories," *History Australia* 5, no. 1 (2008), 09.1–09.9; John Meredith and Hugh Anderson, *Folk Songs of Australia and the Men and Women Who Sang Them* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1968); J. Hagan, "Writing Australian Trade Union History," *Labour History* 14 (May 1968), 46–49.

61. See Carl Becker, *Everyman His Own Historian* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966); Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies I*; David Henige, *Oral Historiography* (London: Longman, 1982).

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fundamental and widespread. A collection edited by G. Osborne and W. F. Mandle, for example, auspiciously titled *New History*, included a chapter on "Aboriginal History" alongside contributions on "Women's History," "Labour History," and "Talking History: The Use of Oral Sources."[62]

All this is to say that Stanner's anticipation of radical disciplinary change in Australian historiography was prescient. Since the 1970s, in particular, there has been a significant merging of "Aboriginal memory and academic history . . . in demands for acknowledgement of Indigenous–settler relations," as historian Marilyn Lake has acknowledged.[63] That process constituted a "substantial historical revision," argued Miranda Johnson in a major survey of Indigenous historiography, that "was achieved through a shift in method and the weight given to evidence produced through the deployment of different historical methods."[64]

Critically, this historiographical "filling in" was framed as an ethical imperative in which the growing politics of inclusion extended to the nation's history. Historians had begun responding to what Bain Attwood has described as "the disturbing psychological, moral and political implications that this history was raising."[65] There was a sense that Australia's Indigenous past was exerting pressure on the national "conscience," as the historian Bob Reece described in a 1979 survey of Aboriginal history.[66] And, in turn, Reece noted the role of historians in sharing that growing consciousness with the broader public: "While historians inevitably reflect contemporary social attitudes, they can also belong to an intellectual community whose efforts may challenge and help to change those attitudes."[67]

INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING AND DOING HISTORY

Indigenous perspectives that increasingly swelled Australian histories from the 1970s produced significant historical content and pushed urgently at the accepted boundaries of method and practice. Those perspectives were often harrowing and revealed histories of frontier violence, of childhoods removed from families and communities, and of lives on missions and reserves where Indigenous culture and language were constantly regulated.[68] Critically, they also exposed the history discipline for being complicit in the curation of whose stories got told and who could tell them.[69]

62. G. Osborne and W. F. Mandle, eds., *New History: Studying Australia Today* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1982). See also Stuart Macintyre, "The Making of the Australian Working Class: An Historiographical Survey," *Historical Studies* 18, no. 71 (1978), 233–53, and Curthoys, "Historiography and Women's Liberation."

63. Lake, "In and Out of Empire," 86.

64. Johnson, "Writing Indigenous Histories Now," 321.

65. Bain Attwood, "Denial in a Settler Society: The Australian Case," *History Workshop Journal* 84 (Autumn 2017), 38.

66. R. H. W. Reece, "The Aborigines in Australian Historiography," in *Historical Disciplines and Culture in Australasia*, ed. John A. Moses (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1979), 263.

67. Ibid., 257.

68. Peter Read, "Making Aboriginal History," in *Australian History Now*, ed. Anna Clark and Paul Ashton (Sydney: New South, 2013), 24–39.

69. Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*; Foley, "Black Power, Land Rights and Academic History"; Huggins and Saunders, "Defying the Ethnographic Ventriloquists."

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Stanner had argued in his Boyer Lectures that silence was inseparable from colonization itself. Over time, historians mapped out that legacy of colonization and, increasingly, the agency of the history discipline's collusion with the colonial project. The undisputed, enduring presence of Indigenous people and their history-making exposed the structures that had colonized not only the continent but its past. History was more than simply a discipline that contained silences; it also enacted a "silencing" in which First Nations peoples in Australia were rendered "historyless," as Lorenzo Veracini and Jeanine Leane evocatively defined.[70]

That erasure and omission manifested in the occlusion of Indigenous perspectives, the insistence that Australian "history" began with colonization, and the frequently euphemistic descriptions of actual colonial violence in history texts. By the "middle decades of the twentieth history," Attwood outlined in a major essay on denial in Australian historiography, "the historical presence of Aboriginal people had been all but erased in national histories, including those authored by the growing number of professionally trained academic historians."[71] Australian history's forgetting was "a violent task of memory-work," the colonial historian and cultural theorist Chris Healy has contended.[72] In a forum published in *History and Theory*, Warwick Anderson similarly described the history discipline's complicity in the colonial project as an "epistemic violence."[73] If "invasion is a structure, not an event," as Patrick Wolfe famously articulated, then the history discipline was undeniably part of the architecture of colonization.[74]

Alongside this growing critical reading of history, Indigenous voices continued to push and prod at the methodological and temporal boundaries of the discipline as an ethical demand. These were hardly new historical registers; Indigenous forms of history-making had evolved over thousands of years. Yet their growing prominence within the discipline continued to prompt radical shifts in its practice by including concepts such as Deep Time, by employing archives and histories that are embodied and held on Country, and by insisting on new categories of evidence and authorship.[75] After all, "before [history] was written it was told and sung," Diana James reflected in her collaboration with Nganyinytja, a Pitjantjatjara woman who described her historical texts in those terms exactly.[76] "We have

70. Lorenzo Veracini, "Historylessness: Australia as a Settler Colonial Collective," *Postcolonial Studies* 10, no. 3 (2007), 271–85; Jeanine Leane, "Historyless People," in *Long History, Deep Time: Deepening Histories of Place*, ed. Ann McGrath and Mary Anne Jebb (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2015), 151–62.

71. Attwood, "Denial in a Settler Society," 34.

72. Chris Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as Social Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 44–45.

73. Warwick Anderson, "Decolonizing Histories in Theory and Practice: An Introduction," *History and Theory* 59, no. 3 (2020), 372.

74. Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 33.

75. Ann McGrath, Laura Rademaker, and Ben Silverstein, "Deep History and Deep Listening: Indigenous Knowledges and the Narration of Deep Pasts," *Rethinking History* 25, no. 3 (2021), 307–26; Ann McGrath, Laura Rademaker, and Jakelin Troy, *Everywhen: Australia and the Language of Deep History* (Sydney: New South Publishing, 2023); Minoru Hokari, *Gurindji Journey: A Japanese Historian in the Outback* (Sydney: New South Publishing, 2011), 92–93.

76. Diana James, "*Tjukurpa* Time," in *Long History, Deep Time: Deepening Histories of Place*, ed. Ann McGrath and Mary Anne Jebb (Canberra: ANU Press, 2015), 33.

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no books, our history was not written by people with pen and paper," Nganyinytja explained:

> It is in the land, the footprints of our Creation Ancestors are on the rocks. The hills and creek beds they created as they dwelled in this land surround us. We learned from our grandmothers and grandfathers as they showed us these sacred sites, told us the stories, sang and danced with us the *Tjukurpa* (the Dreaming Law). We remember it all; in our minds, our bodies and feet as we dance the stories. We continually recreate the *Tjukurpa*.[77]

Nganyinytja's description of history-making is about as far from empirical history as one might get; and yet, as James rightly suggests, *not* recognizing her historical practice or expertise in an Australian historiographical context risks further colonization.

Accounts of Indigenous history-making and temporality from other parts of the country, such as John Bradley's partnership with the Yanyuwa people and the Yolŋu-led Gay'wu Group of Women, similarly reveal the creative challenges and possibilities of Indigenous historical translation. Take the Gay'wu Group's explanation of "songspirals," for example, which describes a way of reading the Yolŋu world that is at once historical, cartographical, and cosmological. Songspirals "are infinite," they describe:

> They spiral, connecting and remaking. They twist and turn, they move and loop. This is like all our songs. Our songs are not a straight line. They do not move in one direction through time and space. They are a map we follow through Country as they connect to other clans. Everything is connected, layered with beauty.[78]

In other words, "academic historians are not the only ones producing and maintaining 'history,'" as Minoru Hokari contended.[79] During his research, where he spent time living with the Gurindji people in far northern Australia, Hokari was struck by modes of history-making that are perhaps impossible to translate into Western historical practice. And yet, he added, echoing Hughes-Warrington's contemplation of Aboriginal history-making that opened this article, historians nonetheless must urgently engage with them.

For Indigenous historians working at the intersection of disciplinary history and Indigenous Knowledges in Australia, that tension between history's ethical obligation to decolonize and the challenge of such a task is a constant, pressing theme. In a recent article on creative histories, Yuin historian and museum curator Mariko Smith admitted that "history and historians have . . . become a bit of a dirty word or dirty concept" in "the First Nation's context."[80] Work by Australian Indigenous historians, writers, and creative practitioners, such as Alison Whittaker,

77. Nganyinytja, quoted in James, "*Tjukurpa* Time," 33.

78. Gay'wu Group of Women, *Songspirals: Sharing Women's Wisdom of Country through Songlines* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2019), xvi. See also John Bradley and Yanyuwa families, *Singing Saltwater Country: Journeying to the Songlines of Carpentaria* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2010); li-Yanyuwa li-Wirdiwalangu, Liam Brady, John Bradley, and Amanda Kearney, *Jakarda wuka (Too Many Stories): Narratives of Rock Art from Yanyuwa Country in Northern Australia's Gulf of Carpentaria* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2023).

79. Hokari, *Gurindji Journey*, 31.

80. Mariko Smith, quoted in Kiera Lindsey et al., "'Creative Histories' and the Australian Context," *History Australia* 19, no. 2 (2022), 328.

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Larissa Behrendt, Tony Birch, and Jeanine Leane, offer important insight into how history might contemplate these challenges of disciplinary decolonization.[81] Their work—vibrant, creative, and critical—occupies an increasingly powerful, yet ill-defined, place in Australian historiography. "*History*," wrote Leane, occupies only "a slim layer in Aboriginal memory and time," and yet the discipline "made for the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples by removing us from Western historical time."[82]

Indigenous "hyphenated histories," as Johnson has called them, employ creative methods, life stories, and linguistic diversity. While they represent a radical disciplinary break from history—and even a repudiation of it—she has noted that they also have the capacity to extend the discipline into spaces and stories that were previously out of reach.[83] This is more than just "history," as Krim Bentarrak, Stephen Muecke, and Goolarabooloo elder Paddy Roe have insisted: "Within the issue of Aboriginal sovereignty there is more at stake than the use of lands; there is the right to control the production of Australia's mythologies."[84] Could Indigenous interventions in Australian history shift settler-colonial entitlement as well as its narratives?

That question, like much Indigenous historiography, is simultaneously grounded in place while also reflecting a dynamic transnational exchange of historical practice and ideas. First Nations scholars, creatives, and activists have impelled critiques of empirical history to the forefront of settler-colonial historiography and theory around the world. To be sure, this is a diverse cohort of researchers and research, one that has also been built from a shared frustration with the relegation of Indigenous pasts to "footnotes of the histories of empires," as Epeli Hau'ofa importantly noted.[85] This diverse body of First Nations historiography has created a new ways of doing history—"new choreographies," to borrow from Hau'ofa once more—that recenter Indigenous experience.[86]

That recentering of Indigenous history enabled vital "counter-histories," as Johnson has described them, to be produced and circulated in settler-colonial societies.[87] The work has been voluminous in every sense of the word—retrieving silenced voices and shifting the dial to recognize new ones—to overcome what Dipesh Chakrabarty has called history's "in-built inequalities."[88] Critically,

81. Tony Birch, "The Trouble with History," in Clark and Ashton, *Australian History Now*, 232–50; Leane, "Historyless People"; Alison Whittaker, ed., *Fire Front: First Nations Poetry and Power Today* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2020); Larissa Behrendt, *Finding Eliza: Power and Colonial Storytelling* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2016).

82. Leane, "Historyless People," 161, 156.

83. Johnson, "Writing Indigenous Histories Now."

84. Krim Benterrak, Stephen Muecke, and Paddy Roe, *Reading the Country: Introduction to Nomadology* (Melbourne: Re.Press, 2014), 144.

85. Epeli Hau'ofa, "Pasts to Remember," in *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 62.

86. Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Place Within: Foundations for a Creative Oceania," in *We Are the Ocean*, 93. See also Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Martin N. Nakata, *Disciplining the Savages, Savaging the Disciplines* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007); Deloria, "Cold Business and the Hot Take"; and Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific*.

87. Johnson, "Writing Indigenous Histories Now," 328.

88. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Politics and Possibility of Historical Knowledge: Continuing the Conversation," *Postcolonial Studies* 14, no. 2 (2011), 245.

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according to Birch (in a nod to Stanner's lectures from half a century earlier), the vital thing is the volume itself: "Fiction can be an empowering way of understanding the past. As can visual culture. As can academic history. The greatest threat to recognition, in this case the recognition of both Indigenous histories of Australia and the at times difficult terrain of colonial history, is silence, absence."[89]

This is because, for many Indigenous history-makers, the discipline's capacity to silence and exclude is still active in the present. Indigenous historians remain vastly underrepresented in university history departments. And while Indigenous perspectives have increasingly revised historical approaches, and are now unquestionably part of Australia's national narrative, they are still often described as "memoir," "story," "family history," "narratives of place," or "political protest" rather than acknowledged as a core of a disciplinary practice. Those hyphens might be generative, but they can still relegate: with the possible exception of oral history and the concept of Deep Time, there is still a marked absence of Indigenous Knowledges in Australia's historical "canon." In addition to that growing cohort of hyphenated histories, then, settler colonies such as Australia also need "hyphenated historiographies" that can listen to and contemplate diverse Indigenous voices *on their own terms*. That the recent Indigenous-led Uluru Statement from the Heart demanded a "truth-telling" about Australia's Indigenous history is evidence that the silences are still felt.[90]

CONCLUSION

When E. H. Carr famously asked "What is history?" in the title of his 1961 book, he determined the answer to be a constant dialogue between the present and the past. History depends on the historian's interpretation of it.[91] In Australia, a settler colony where history has been used to curate and narrate, that dialogue between past and present has changed significantly since the 1970s, becoming increasingly complex and fraught. Expanding Australian history to incorporate Indigenous perspectives not only shifts the boundaries of "Australian history" but also radically shifts historiography itself.

"Filling in" Australian history's silences was rightly framed as an moral obligation, but the addition of those histories also raised subsequent ethical and epistemological questions about the history discipline—namely, can a Western, empirical discipline that is based on written evidence and built archives, that uses a chronological temporal lens, and that is practiced by experts trained in those same educational and archival institutions capture the breadth of this continent's human history prior to colonization and since? However, these questions also bring creative, ethical opportunities for the discipline. Australian historiography

89. Birch, "The Trouble with History," 249.

90. Megan Davis, "The Long Road to Uluru," *Griffith Review* 60 (2018), https://www.griffithreview.com/articles/long-road-uluru-walking-together-truth-before-justice-megan-davis/; Gabrielle Appleby and Megan Davis, "The Uluru Statement and the Promises of Truth," *Australian Historical Studies* 49, no. 4 (2018), 501–9; *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, 2017 National Constitutional Convention, https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement/view-the-statement/.

91. E. H. Carr, *What Is History?* (Mitcham: Penguin, 1964).

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has radically shifted over the last sixty years such that Indigenous narratives constitute a vital perspective on the national story. By continuing to critique and expand its own practice, Australian historiography might be truly cacophonous.

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