

Urbanizing Frontiers

**Urbanizing Frontiers:
Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in
19th-Century Pacific Rim Cities**

Penelope Edmonds



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Urbanizing Frontiers

Introduction

IN 1886 THE AMERICAN ethnologist Franz Boas visited Victoria, the provincial capital of British Columbia, on the Northwest Coast of Canada. Founded in 1843 on the territory of Lekwammen peoples as a fort for the Hudson's Bay Company, by the late nineteenth century Victoria was heralded as one of the future lights of the British Empire on the Pacific Rim. Boas described the streetscape as follows: "The stranger coming for the first time to Victoria is startled by the great number of Indians living in this town ... we met them everywhere. They dress mostly in European fashion. The men are dock workers, craftsmen or fish vendors; the women are washerwomen or working women ... certain Indian tribes have become indispensable to the labour market and without them the province would suffer great economic damage."¹ Across the Pacific Ocean sat another edge of empire, Port Phillip, later called the Colony of Victoria, in the southeastern region of Australia. Its premier city, Melbourne, was founded in 1837 and built on the lands of the Wurundjeri peoples. For several decades Wurundjeri peoples and other groups of the Kulin Nation were present in the streets of early Melbourne, as many had been pushed off their traditional lands.² Later, however, town officials repeatedly attempted to segregate Aboriginal people from the developing town space. Town Council minutes note on several occasions the "inconvenience and immorality of the Blacks being in the town."³ By 1850 immigrants such as Johann and Carl Graf would write home to Germany with descriptions of Aboriginal people in Melbourne such as the following: "Certainly one sees very few in the district of 15 to 20 miles around the town and those who occasionally come into the town, come only to beg some food and they are more polite in this than many civilised persons."⁴ By 1888, only two years after Boas remarked on the many First Nations people in the streetscape of Victoria, British Columbia, there were apparently so few Aboriginal people in Melbourne that the director of the Melbourne Zoological Gardens placed Aboriginal people from distant Coranderk Station on display in an ethnographic village as part of the Centennial Exhibition. Thomas Avoca, his wife Rose, and two children not related to them were chosen for a staged demonstration of the habits of the passing Aboriginal race, "whose mode of life are being forgotten" reported *The Age* (see Figure 1). On display as a living diorama, with their weapons carefully arranged around them, Thomas and



Figure 1 “Native Camp at Melbourne Zoo,” 1888 Centennial Exhibition, Melbourne. Museum Victoria.

Rose were to be viewed by local and international tourists to “marvellous Melbourne.” *The Age* continued, this “party of blacks,” selected from Coranderk Station, was to “throw the boomerang in the presence of strangers” and would be “especially interesting to people from the old world.”⁵

By the late nineteenth century in the rapidly growing and increasingly industrialized cities of Europe and the colonies alike, residents craved the spectacle of touring troupes of “primitive” peoples and displays of “savagery” in museums, zoos, circuses, and Wild West shows. Urbanizing modernity hungered for the telling of its own past. As Tony Bennett has observed, ethnographic villages were “sacrificial offerings to the processes of colonization and modernization which, it was envisaged, would eventually remove them entirely from view.”⁶ It was presumed that the exhibition of colonized Indigenous peoples was the final rite that would signal their removal from the stage of world history. The spectacle of an ethnographic village – a display of supposedly pre-contact Indigenous

authenticity in Melbourne, an increasingly industrialized city of empire that was described at the time as “London reproduced” – was therefore compelling.⁷ This was especially so when contrasted with the mixed city space of Victoria, British Columbia, which was filled with seemingly assimilated First Nations in European dress whose clear value as labourers fascinated Boas. By 1911, however, after increases in white settlement, many decades of land dispossessions, and multiple strategies for their removal by Victoria city officials, the Lekwammen were paid to leave their city reserve.

Despite different historical circumstances, the overriding commonality for Indigenous peoples in both of these Pacific settler cities was, ultimately, dispossession and displacement. How should we understand the story of urban dispossession in these settler colonies, which were marked by differing but related sequences of change? And how should we understand the shifting constructions of race and segregation in these two urbanizing port cities at the far reaches of Britain’s empire?

Colonial frontiers did not exist only in the bush, backwoods, or borderlands; they clearly sat at the heart of early town and city building, a process crucial to the settler-colonial project. Building on this central proposition, *Urbanizing Frontiers* takes a close look at race, segregation, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous lives in these two Pacific Rim cities, which were fashioned by British settler colonialism between the years 1835 and 1871, a period that began with the first European settlement at Port Phillip and ended with British Columbia becoming a province of the Dominion of Canada. Bringing a postcolonial perspective to urbanizing colonial environments, this book explores the racialized politics of these two settler-colonial landscapes at the spatial, imaginative, social, and legal levels and in a comparative context. More importantly, it examines the racialized transformations of these developing cities and proposes that these urbanizing colonial precincts can be viewed as formative sites on the Pacific Rim, where bodies and spaces were rapidly transformed and mutually imbricated in sometimes violent ways, reflecting the making of plural settler-colonial modernities. In the chapters that follow, I explore the powerful narratives of British imperial city building, the willful shaping of white settler-colonial polities, and the unmooring of these narratives at the unruly edges of empire.

Reimagining the Colonial Frontier

Settler colonialism’s nineteenth-century frontier has been routinely conceptualized as a distinctly non-urban geographical space that sits somewhere out in the country or borderlands. The frontier is frequently portrayed as a liminal zone without rules, a zone that was characterized by violence, forced removal, and dispossession for Indigenous peoples. The frontier has also been inaccurately

conceptualized by some historians as a linear phenomenon that marked civilization from savagery, as a site where they can record “official,” martial-style engagements between males as a reflection of colonial relations. Instead, I wondered about early cities and towns as developing frontiers, as equally charged and often-violent sites of racialized spatial contestations. These frontiers were mosaic-like – mercurial, transactional, and, importantly, intimate and gendered.⁸ For too long historians of Canada and Australia have imagined the colonial frontier as a problem of the backwoods, prairie, or bush, and ignored the early development of towns and cities as vital sites of contestation. The frontier must be reimagined. This book, therefore, considers another terrain: settler colonialism’s urbanizing frontier from the mid- to the late nineteenth century and the lives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in these settler-colonial cities of the Pacific Rim.

The presence of Indigenous peoples in settler-colonial cities at the edges of Britain’s empire has often been erased from historical consciousness. Today, tourist brochures continue to tout Victoria, British Columbia, as more English than the English. This belies the great number of First Nations who lived (and still live) and worked in the city and the city’s history of racialized, often violent spatial contestations. Many previous studies, especially in Australia, have ignored the dynamic interactive contact histories of the colonial cityscape, as if Indigeneity stopped at the urban. Alternatively, as in the case of Victoria, when the presence of First Nations was recorded in nineteenth-century records, the language often evoked savagery, violence, and fear.

Astoundingly, in her study *Urban Aborigines*, which was published in 1972, Faye Gale describes Aboriginal people in the Australian cityscape as virtual newcomers, as urban immigrants.⁹ Although it is true that many Aboriginal people in southeastern Australia were partitioned in remote mission stations from the mid-nineteenth century and began to re-enter cities only with the project of assimilation in the interwar period, many studies have overlooked a long and complex history of Indigenous people in early Australian towns and cities that stretches back into the nineteenth and late eighteenth centuries. There has been a pervasive amnesia in Australia regarding the contested and racialized nature of cities and towns that persists well into the present. Yet Aboriginal people have not forgotten. As historian Gary Foley recalled of the 1950s and 1960s, “There was segregation in my town ... the theatre was segregated, the bars were segregated ... it was done through convention.”¹⁰

Much scholarship in Canada on the historical development of towns and cities has also failed to include First Nations. As Jordan Stanger-Ross notes, Canadian historians have been slow to examine the significance of the urban Aboriginal experience.¹¹ Evelyn J. Peters observes that many researchers have

explored the ways in which the Western city is seen as a gendered, racialized, and heterosexual space, yet little work has examined how the city in postcolonial settler societies excludes Indigenous peoples and cultures. Peters comments on the lack of geographic research on Canadian Aboriginal people and their relative absence from the discipline of historical geography itself. For decades in Canada, writes Peters, “policies responding to Aboriginal urbanization have been informed by a discourse that defines Aboriginal and urban cultural life as incompatible.”¹²

Indigenous peoples may have been dispossessed, but they have not been entirely displaced from cities.¹³ Today, large proportions of Aboriginal people live in urban centres. In Canada, according to the 2001 census, almost half of the people who identify themselves as Aboriginal (Indian, Métis, or Inuit) reside in urban areas. Projections show that this proportion will increase. In British Columbia around 4.4 percent of the population identifies as Aboriginal, and in Victoria, the provincial capital, around 3 percent identifies as Aboriginal. In Australia, many Aboriginal people live in major metropolitan areas. In the state of New South Wales, almost half of the Indigenous population lives in the greater Sydney region. In Melbourne, which represents the majority of people in the state of Victoria, 0.4 percent of the population identifies as Indigenous, compared to 0.6 percent of people in the state as a whole.¹⁴

Commenting on the lack of scholarly attention to Indigenous people in early colonial cities, Nicholas Blomley observes suggestively of Vancouver that “the issue of native title was easy to imagine as something outside the city,” but the “visible presence of many native people in the city seemed to complicate things in important ways.”¹⁵ Although many Aboriginal people live in our postcolonial cities, they remain places of the most thoroughgoing extinguishment of Native title.¹⁶ It is little wonder that there has been a striking absence of historical work on Indigenous people in developing settler-colonial cities; to put it plainly, issues of sovereignty are at stake here, and recognition of Indigenous people’s historical presence would be an admission that Indigenous peoples are not newly arrived immigrants to cities – they owned and occupied the land well before settler cities were established and were implicitly part of their physical and imaginative creation.

Much of the international literature on colonial cities has regularly privileged franchise-colonial over settler-colonial formations. Metropolitan perspectives are usually placed in the foreground, largely omitting the lived realities and gendered and racialized contours of settler cities, as well as the dynamic histories of intimate and mixed relations between Indigenous peoples and newcomers at the local level. Yet early towns and cities were often the greatest sites of contestation, as many newspapers and settler reports of the time attested. The

nineteenth century's urbanizing frontier is now a hidden history. This is strange, because the presence of Aboriginal people in and around colonial towns and cities created much anxiety, as evinced in colonial reportage, artwork, and cartoons, where fear of mimicry, mendicancy, and cross-contamination of cultures prevailed. Despite a lack of critical scholarship on nineteenth-century towns and cities as crucial frontier sites, sources relating to Melbourne and Victoria between 1835 and 1871 reveal a rich and diverse body of material in letters, diaries, newspapers, Aboriginal Protectorate records, municipal and legal records, colonial dispatches, and town council minutes, to name only a few sources, that attests to the racialized socio-spatial politics of these cities. Indigenous-European interactions in urbanizing Canadian and Australian colonial landscapes have not been studied sufficiently, and this book seeks some redress to what is more than mere oversight – it is a form of collective amnesia that has had, and continues to have, political effects.

Scholars have routinely conceptualized the frontier as the remote bush, backwoods, or borderlands and ignored towns and city spaces as vital contact zones, as if urbanizing zones were not also part of the settler-colonial project. Furthermore, the field of urban space has been dominated either by traditional geography or an (at times) apolitical cultural geography, approaches that have been somewhat deficient. As one scholar observed, the urban planning and environment field is a mainstream discourse that is often pre-theoretical and landscape-focused and tends to repeat familiar topics such as land-use zoning, development control, garden suburbs, and new towns. The reviewer argued that works in this traditional vein have offered only “glimpses of the Indigenous peoples whose lives were unalterably changed, cultural practices ... compromised and destroyed, and land rights extinguished for the good of the British empire.”¹⁷ In accounts of urban settlement in both North America and Australia, Indigenous dispossession is routinely written out of the story. And much traditional and historical geography has largely failed to examine settler cities through the interpretive lens of settler colonialism.

This pervasive trend of privileging city planning and infrastructure over culture and identities, of focusing on colonial cities without attention to the dispossessed and displaced Indigenous peoples on whose land these cities were built, as well as the wider issues of settler colonialism and race, represents a methodological schism between the disciplines of history and urban studies. This is at first glance characterized by a failure to synthesize urban and municipal records with Indigenous archives and is more broadly indicative of an incomplete encounter between urban studies and postcolonial approaches. Upon deeper inspection, however, as I trace in Chapter 2, this schism is also a glaringly ideological and, thus, historiographical problem that reflects settler-colonial

hegemonies themselves – that is, the promotion of “New World” cities as being built upon *tabula rasa* and the representation of Indigenous peoples as being either absent or anomalous to urbanizing colonial environments. *Urbanizing Frontiers* seeks to redress this scholarly gap by conceptualizing the nascent urban towns and cities of the Pacific Rim as dynamic settler-colonial frontier zones. The book seeks to indigenize, or indeed, re-indigenize historical understandings of the settler-colonial city by focusing on human stories and individual lives transformed in the context of British colonizing structures and urbanization in the Pacific Rim. Some may find my use of the term *indigenize* problematic. I use this term in a dual sense. First, as a non-Indigenous writer, it is not possible for me to proffer an Indigenous perspective. I do use *indigenize*, however, to capture a sense of historical reclamation as I attend to the everyday lives of Indigenous peoples in the city as they are suggested by the historical sources. Second, I use *indigenize* to suggest the presence and agency of Indigenous peoples and their cultures within the history of settler-colonial urbanism in these two sites. The term acknowledges the transactional, mixed nature of these early settlements at the edge of the Pacific, places that were double sites of negotiation. Just as Indigenous peoples were colonized, so too were newcomers and new spaces indigenized, albeit in highly uneven ways and within asymmetrical relations of power.¹⁸

There has been a general reluctance to see city space as postcolonial space. During the last two decades, however, a growing body of research has begun to examine the racialized politics of Australia’s and Canada’s postcolonial cities, that is, the cities of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.¹⁹ The postcolonial city has been conceptualized as a place in which identity is constituted through race, space, and the law. Yet postcolonial cities frequently hide their histories and the conditions of their own production. Scholars have often privileged the postcolonial city without looking at the antecedent structures and processes upon which it was formed. It is my contention that postcolonial cities have syncretic pasts with extended genealogies of segregation and partition. I eschew any suggestion of a break between the present and the past, which is suggested by the term *postcolonial*, and instead read the city as a continuing and vital structure of settler colonialism. Today’s cities may, therefore, be understood through a close examination of the socio-spatial histories of race found in the nineteenth century’s developing urban landscape.

Colonial Cities, Postcolonial Cities: The Production of Space and Race

As recent historical scholarship attests, there has been intense concern in the last few decades with the spatiality of empire and with articulating the diverse relations of place, race, and empire. More than ever, historians are looking to

other disciplines and incorporating the spatial models of cultural and critical geographies, postcolonialism, and law to analyze power, place, and formations of race in colonial settings.²⁰

Race and urban space have one overwhelming and pervasive commonality: they have each been conceived as natural, given, and elemental. Space has been viewed conveniently as empty, geometric, passive, and elemental, while race is (still) conceived as being ostensibly anchored deeply in human biology.²¹ In the last few decades, however, new and vital fields of inquiry – including post-colonial and critical race theory, historical geography, and critical legal and urban histories – have emanated from the imperial and spatial turns. Cultural theorists and others have rejected the notion that urban “spaces, and the arrangement of bodies in them, emerge naturally over time,” and on this premise they have attempted to strip away the apparently naturalized evolution of change in cities to show that the development of social space is a process of uneven power inscription that reproduces itself and creates oppressive spatial categories.²² Although it is often unacknowledged, the formative historical materialist work of Henri Lefebvre, who in *The Production of Space* (1974) proposed the idea of social space as a process, has informed much of this thinking.²³ Lefebvre asked, “Is the city a work or a product?” and “what or whom does it signify?” Crucially, Lefebvre asserted that space, so often deemed passive and natural, is never void of political meaning. As he argued, space is a process – that is, each present space is “the outcome of a process with many aspects and many contributing currents.”²⁴

Lefebvre’s proposition, that space itself is a dynamic social product, was radical. Significantly, Lefebvre highlighted the ways in which the unequal distribution of power in social space becomes naturalized and its operations forgotten. That is, spaces obscure the conditions of their own production.²⁵ The classed, gendered, and racialized relations of city space became naturalized, or conventional, and it is difficult to understand how they came to be that way. Thus, settler-colonial cities themselves became somehow natural and inevitable, and we do not see the constitutive relationships of Indigenous dispossession and displacement that inhere in their present space. There is something distinctive about settler-colonial cities. As Jane Jacobs notes, they possess a “very specific local politics deeply marked by the historical legacy of the colonial dispossession of Indigenous peoples.”²⁶ Accordingly, unless the broader processes of settler colonialism are revealed, we will not see what is particular about the operations of urban settler-colonial space and how subjects and spaces are produced with all their local and historical specificities. Few scholars have adequately charted the deep symbolic and economic genealogies of how settler cities and their inhabitants came to be weighted with particular meanings.

In this book urbanizing frontiers are defined as contested and highly transactional spaces in which rapidly developing settler-colonial settlements and towns were formed on expropriated Indigenous land. I use the term *urbanizing* to indicate an active spatial and cultural process, as well as to signal a nascent stage of town and city development in these nineteenth-century settler colonies. Although the early existence and structure of these cities differed from more modern twentieth-century urban spaces, in the chapters that follow I show that these places were in fact formative sites of an embryonic urban settler-colonial modernity, which would later become fully realized and in which the governance of spaces would become more formalized and bureaucratized.

Just as the city and notions of social space have been reconfigured, so too has the notion of race been radically rethought in the last three decades. Accordingly, growth in theorizations on the construction of race and moves to de-centre race in concert with ideas about the racialization of social relations have led scholars to pay more attention to the city and the processes that reproduce racial divisions in time and space.²⁷ Scholars working in this broad field of concern seek to expose hierarchies that emerge from and in turn produce oppressive spatial categories.²⁸ Yet historians still grapple with identifying the specific processes through which race is materialized and mediated through space and place. Lefebvre, however, proposed a solution to overcome the masking effect of the operations of power. He suggested that one must track generative processes. The way to understand the nature of space, Lefebvre asserted, is to “re-constitute the process of its genesis and the development of its meaning.”²⁹ I take Lefebvre’s injunction to mean an examination of the specific historical conditions and transformations that produced settler-colonial spaces. Without attending to the broader processes of settler colonialism and its multivalent strategies, the distinctive spatial commerce of settler cities and how the lives and subjectivities of its inhabitants were shaped cannot be made apparent. Historical inquiry can bring the local and particularized nature of a syncretic space such as the city and its relations into focus.

What is the political and spatial character of the settler-colonial city? Settler cities are crucial aspects of the settler-colonial process, and many urbanists and historians of colonialism have failed to fully identify that they have spatial and political features that make them distinctive from other colonial formations. The towns and cities of Britain’s imperial Pacific Rim were, symbolically and economically, vital sites of colonial endeavour. The formation of the settler-colonial city marked an unprecedented space in the New World and signified a key moment in both empire and colonial modernity. Settler-colonial cities were crucial transitional sites in which Indigenous lands were rapidly converted to property. When outlying areas were seen to be unruly and outside the reach

of the law, the colonial order was often first established at the municipal level. Around the Pacific Rim, these towns and cities became nodes in active transimperial networks through which bodies, ideas, and capital increasingly flowed in the circuits of empire. The settler-colonial city has been represented in much triumphalist European literary and visual culture of the nineteenth century as the most potent symbol of progress, as the highest stage of commerce and civilization, and as the consummation of empire.³⁰

The physical features of settler-colonial cities in the New World were (and remain) distinctive. They were often gridded, expansive entities that rolled out over apparently empty lands. With their outer limits frequently existing only in the imaginary realm of maps, they pointed to a future of settler progress and prosperity. The rapid increase of immigrant populations to these colonial towns and the growth of industrialization over the latter part of the nineteenth century drove a continually developing set of regulations to govern how Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples could inhabit city spaces. As Elizabeth Grosz notes, bodies and cities are mutually defining entities whose relations are regulated and mediated by the state.³¹ Crucial to these transformations were the eventual regulation, partition, and sequestration of Aboriginal peoples and attempts to control so-called mixed-race relationships. The anxious development of these cities reflected the uneasiness of the colonial polity itself; who would and would not be considered full members of this ideally white polity was mirrored in exclusions in the streetscape. Bodies and spaces were rapidly reconfigured, and racial partitions were only amplified in the colonial townscape. The settler-colonial city was a site in which the appropriation of Indigenous land was coupled with aggressive allotment and property speculation, a site in which property relations were constructed quickly through rhetorical celebrations of making a white, civilized British space.³²

Despite differing local histories, some colonial features repeat themselves with an uncanny persistence in these two cities on the Pacific Rim. As I show in later chapters, close attention to the micro-geographies of the streetscape reveals that Indigenous peoples were often depicted as inconvenient wanderers – as nuisance, vagrant, or prostitute – constructed identities that tell us much about the deeper structures of settler colonialism and its manifestations in urban environments, both in the past and the present. In the nineteenth century, these cities became charged sites in which issues of civilization and savagery; race, gender, and miscegenation; and law and sovereignty were played out, and these contests indeed had global ramifications as colonial outposts emerged uneasily as settler states connected through powerful British transimperial networks.

Urbanizing Frontiers reflects on how these urbanizing histories as antecedent forces have shaped the postcolonial present in terms of land rights, treaties, and ongoing Native title negotiations in British Columbia and southeastern Australia. The outcomes for each site have been similar in their trajectory of Indigenous dispossession, but they have also differed. In Victoria, British Columbia, one former city-based land treaty has been honoured, and reparations have been paid to local Indigenous peoples. In Melbourne, the lack of treaty, land rights, and reparation was controversially highlighted at a sit-in held by the Black GST group (stop genocide, recognize sovereignty, and make treaty) at the Kings Domain during the 2006 Commonwealth Games. Early city histories therefore have vital implications for cities that are nominally postcolonial, cities in which Indigenous peoples continue to assert their sovereign rights in urban environments.

Comparative and Transnational Approaches to Pacific Rim Cities

The study of nineteenth-century cities such as Melbourne and Victoria is necessarily a study of British colonialism and the particular economic and discursive features of the colonies that built them. To understand the broader imperial processes that shaped these places and the cultural and legal frameworks that came to bear particularly on Indigenous peoples and the construction of white and non-white identities in the cityscape, this study also looks, at times, to their metropolitan counterpart, London, since ideas concerning Melbourne and Victoria were frequently formed in relation to the Empire's centre. Patricia Nelson Limerick has observed that the potential of comparative history is its promise to help us avoid provinciality and stay unsettled. We may begin studying what seems to be a local colonial frontier and soon find ourselves considering global processes.³³ We gain new insight into the making of Indigenous, white, and other identities in local cityscapes when they are placed in tension with the often broader and countervailing global and imperial metanarratives of race and Britishness. It is important to mark out the complex interplay between localized, on-the-ground cultures and transimperial narratives of British colonial expansion and city building that prevailed throughout the nineteenth century.

Over the last decade there have been calls for more comparative and transnational studies of British settler societies and a greater integration of the parallel scholarship on Australia, Canada, and Aotearoa New Zealand and their respective settler-Indigenous relations. As Chapter 1 outlines, Victoria, British Columbia, and Melbourne, Australia, are ideally suited for comparative study. Melbourne and Victoria were each planted on Aboriginal lands, amidst groups of peoples

whose cultures were rich and diverse. Europeans imagined both places at the periphery of Britain's empire as Edens. They were understood as gifts of Divine Providence for the Anglo-Saxon races and were thus drawn into racialized, transimperial narratives of settlement. Europeans utilized Indigenous knowledge and labour, whether through surveying and fencing the landscape or building towns and cities, to establish themselves, map the territory, claim it epistemologically, and fashion it into a European cognate space. Each colony was directed largely from the Colonial Office in London, however partial and attenuated this direction was at times. By the 1850s these cities and their colonies were each transformed by the Pacific gold rushes and the rapid influx of immigrants and wealth associated with them – developments that, in turn, marked a further loss of land and control for Indigenous groups.

A comparative study promises to reveal the particularity of the colonial urban encounter, while throwing the specificity of each site into relief and tracing key aspects of the global system of British colonialism in the emerging nineteenth-century city. Although there are many similarities between these two British settler-colonial cities, crucial departures lie in disparities between the economic and discursive formations that came to structure the respective colonies: the fur trade versus pastoralism and differing formations of industrial economy, treaty making or its absence, varying degrees of immigration, and attitudes to intermarriage and mixed-race relationships. Thus, by answering the call of scholars such as Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler to look not only at metropole-periphery relations but also at hierarchies between related colonies, this book examines the development of settler-colonial British spaces of settlement and traces structures with “distinct but related sequences of change.”³⁴ Despite diverse histories and circumstances, the overriding commonality for Indigenous peoples in both sites of the Pacific was dispossession, eventual segregation, and displacement.

Urbanizing Frontiers locates these settler colonies within the rich cultural and political sphere of the Pacific Rim, which I view as a trans-Pacific world, a vital site of inquiry. This wider focus offers an innovative perspective to understand the vast interconnected world of Pacific settler societies and their contact histories.³⁵ There are several caveats, however. Comparative history is challenging, and in an effort to contextualize and explain what historian Marc Bloch once described as local pseudo-causes, care must be taken not to use hindsight to promote an easy positivism, as if all colonial formations were magically related. Likewise, Indigenous peoples in each site were highly diverse and had distinct and unique cultures; therefore, any notion of a monolithic Indigeneity is avoided. More importantly, these colonies were shaped as much by their relations with

local places and peoples as they were by British interests and policies.³⁶ Consequently, I trace the experiences of the diverse Indigenous groups whose lands were settled to reveal the unique ways they refashioned or refuted the social categories of colonizers and confronted colonization in the streetscape.

The Imagined City and Its Dislocations: Transactional Spaces and the Intimate, Urbanizing Frontier

Mary Louise Pratt's idea of the contact zone augments the notion of the settler-colonial city as an urbanizing frontier.³⁷ This concept and associated ideas of mutual cultural transformations and mixed, shared spaces and identities have become highly resonant in colonial studies. Furthermore, several decades of scholarship in the field of urban history have promulgated the notion that instead of the "hard" city of planning, built form, infrastructure, and external economic processes, a "softer" city may be tracked to reveal the flow of information, relationships, and identities and give insight into the lived experiences of city dwellers themselves. Consequently, the streetscape can be considered as both a contact zone and a fundamental dimension of social power.³⁸ I look closely at the daily lives of Indigenous peoples and newcomers in the developing streetscapes, where racialized subjectivities and racialized spaces were co-fashioned.

In line with postcolonial scholarship, this book traces disjunctures and fissures in the colonial city-building project. This study charts both shared and indigenized spaces and moments when imaginings of segregations, partitions, and a white, imperial spatial hegemony were resisted and subverted by Indigenous peoples. In Melbourne, Aboriginal peoples resisted official efforts to move their camps from the town perimeter. They jumped fences and burned them down; they engaged in acts of resistance against the imposed cadastre of newly enclosed Indigenous lands. In the First Nations reserve in Victoria on Vancouver Island, residents threw rocks at police who intruded into their space and fought well into the early twentieth century to keep their city reserve lands. Locating these acts of agency and spatial alterity in the colonial streetscape illuminates a history of dynamic exchange between Indigenous peoples and newcomers that is often absent in traditional colonial histories. It is also important to mark out stark ruptures between the Anglo-Saxon expectations, morals, and aspirations of bourgeois metropolitans and local settlers who defied partitions by brokering diverse relations with Indigenous peoples. This approach counters scholarship that posits colonialism as a unilinear projection from the metropole by denying the interactivity and subversions of the urbanizing frontier. This book seeks new visions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous city dwellers who lived

at the edge of empire, often a far cry from the mores and ideas of British metropolitan elites and city builders who occupied the civilized spaces of a fictive racial purity.

In response to Cooper and Stoler's call for an examination of the "stretch between the public institutions of the colonial state and the intimate reaches of people's lives," the chapters explore intimate encounters between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the city.³⁹ The urbanizing frontier was an intimate frontier, a place of shared domestic and collaborative moments as well as sexual violence between Indigenous women and non-Indigenous men. If there is a striking absence of historiography on Indigenous peoples in the colonial cityscape, then studies of Indigenous women and the many instances of mixed-race relations in colonial towns and cities are even more scant, especially in Australia. Yet, as scholars such as Adele Perry have shown, these new settler-colonial polities were made through the bodies of Aboriginal and white women. Contact zones are typically conceived of as spatial sites, but women's raced and classed bodies were also vital contact zones.⁴⁰ Yet in many urban histories, women are given small walk-on parts – if they have any role at all. Significantly, Chapters 3 through 8 of this book also examine the lives of Indigenous women and issues of gender and mixed-race relationships in colonial towns and cities, subjects that have been doubly neglected by scholars but were of intense concern for many nineteenth-century writers and city dwellers. Several decades of feminist and postcolonial scholarship have shown the constitutive nature of gender in imperial relations, and this is particularly true in the city, where social relations were writ large.⁴¹ Building on Judith Butler's and feminist geographers' premise that the fashioning of bodies and spaces are interrelated, it is clear that bodies and spaces in the colonial cityscape were mutually imbricated and co-produced.⁴² Paying attention to Indigenous women's bodies as particular sites of anxiety in the streetscape can tell us much about imagined colonial orders that were both imposed and defied. As Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton maintain, the body can be read like a transcript that reveals the gender assumptions that underpin empires in all their complexity.⁴³ I have attempted to incorporate – or to write in, as it was so often written out – an examination of Indigenous women and the implications of gender in the settler-colonial cityscape. There is nothing soft, however, about the gendered dynamics of these urban settler cities: they were frequently characterized by the hard exigencies of sexual abuse and the potency of mixed and at times affectionate relations. The study of sex, race, and fears of miscegenation provides an essential contour, and at times a violent fault line, of the urbanizing settler project that cannot be overlooked. Indeed, these relations, as Stoler reminds us, were formative in the

“making of racial categories and in the management of imperial rule.”⁴⁴ As I became interested in the gendered contours of the developing streetscape and the lives of Indigenous and white women, these settler-colonial cities revealed much about the racial imperatives of empire.

The (Dis)locations of Empire: Where Was Empire? Whose City Was White?

Indigenous people in many historical studies have been typically isolated as the raced subject. This study, in line with critical race theory and whiteness studies, maintains that the category of whiteness is also a racialized condition and that city spaces were imagined and constructed legally and socially as white or, initially, Anglo-Saxon spaces. Whiteness has been the subject of intense international scholarly concern over the past decade and has been conceptualized as a marker of identity – indeed, not as a colour but rather as a strategy of power or a set of political relations.⁴⁵ Whiteness, too, can be authorized through space and environments. Just as Indigenous identity was constructed and litigated in the cityscape, so too were the often frustratingly fugitive parameters of whiteness and its entitlements. As much as whiteness was concerned with bodies, sex, and fictive ideas of racial purity, the notion of whiteness as property, which in turn directed the segregation of bodies, was also paramount in rapidly urbanizing settler landscapes.⁴⁶ This book therefore attends to the racialized exigencies of both bodies and spaces in the colonial cityscape. In Chapters 3 to 8, I examine the making and unmaking of these racialized bodies and spaces.

Victoria and Melbourne were imagined as white cities of empire. British Columbia was to be the England of the Pacific and a white man’s province, and according to one writer, the Colony of Victoria, southeastern Australia, was another England.⁴⁷ Yet where was empire, and whose city was white? These colonial cities were not as white as many wished and imagined. They were instead new transcultural sites in which Britain’s narrative identity was confounded and subverted. In line with renewed concerns regarding the spatiality of empire, this book interrogates the British imperial vision of a contiguous cartographic, legal, and white urban space, offset and at times destabilized by the particular unruly refractions and subversions of colonialism at the local level. It is a story of British settler-colonial cities built on Indigenous land and their co-production with local Indigenous people and their cultures.

In seeking to bring colonized and colonizer into one analytic frame, I have employed archival collections that are often treated disparately, such as legal archives and criminal records; municipal, legislative, and urban-planning archives; and Indigenous and missionary archives. Archive collections, of course, differed for each city, and they must be considered within their own context.

Although early missionary archives for Melbourne were important to this study, a similar body of material was not available for Victoria, British Columbia. Likewise, crime records for Victoria were more complete than for Melbourne; consequently, newspaper reports of crime in Melbourne had to be relied upon. I have accounted for the varying biases in each set of records.

In writing about Victoria and Melbourne, I faced a methodological challenge that all historians encounter when writing about colonialism. If all of the written sources have been created by colonizers, the available information on Indigenous peoples will always be partial and biased. This asymmetry inevitably constructs Europeans as initiators and Indigenous peoples as mere reactors. Charting Indigenous people's presence and agency in the nineteenth-century settler-colonial city is a challenging task. When European accounts of Aboriginal people appear in letters, diaries, and newspapers, they are often stereotypical and derogatory, and this necessitates continuous counter-readings. Finding accounts that moved beyond tired constructions was challenging. I sought them out and located moments that are illuminating, notwithstanding the important caveats in postcolonial debates on the authenticity of the Indigenous voice as constructed in imperial records.⁴⁸ It is not possible for me to know or to be able to thoroughly interpret Indigenous people's experiences in nineteenth-century Melbourne and Victoria. Instead, as a way forward, and in line with Lefebvre, I chart the generative historical and social processes through which social spaces and geographies of exclusion were created. Through this process of reclamation, I seek to *re-Indigenize* historical understandings of the settler-colonial city. Nihal Perera has suggested that such acts of political indigenization can be viewed as resistance to colonialism.⁴⁹ Such efforts are especially important since settler colonies such as Canada and Australia have not decolonized: settlers and descendants did not return to their place of origin, and the colonies over the generations have become "home."

Through critical counter-colonial readings of traditional archives, however, and by incorporating neglected Indigenous archives and listening to Indigenous voices, we may reclaim the histories of settler cities and, thus, reimagine the frontier. This historical endeavor has crucial political implications for the assertion of Indigenous rights and sovereignties in urban and rural landscapes today and may go some way towards an intervention in settler colonialism's ongoing project of re-territorialization and the formation of modern settler-colonial states. To reflect on the postcolonial city we must understand its syncretic past. An exploration of the antecedent relations of race and public space in these colonial cities, and the shifting sites of Indigenous oppression and ongoing acts of cultural assertion, helps us to understand uneven relations of power in the frontiers of our postcolonial cities today.

A Note on Terminology

Nomenclature, like racialization, is a shifting and complex practice. When addressing Australian material, I use the term *Aboriginal* to refer in general to Aboriginal people of the Port Phillip region, and I use *Kulin Nation* when speaking of the confederation of five cultural-linguistic groups in the Port Phillip region. When historical detail permits, I identify specific groups such as Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung, and I use the terms *Native* or *black* as they are used in the historical material. In the chapters on British Columbia, to avert any suggestion of cultural equivalence or any suggestion of a monolithic Indigeneity between two very distinct and diverse populations on opposite sides of the Pacific Ocean, I use the term *First Nations*. I use the terms *Indian* or *Native* when this appears appropriate within the context of the British Columbian historical or archival material addressed. More generally, I use the commonly accepted term *Indigenous* for both the British Columbian and southeastern Australian contexts.

The term *mixed-race*, as used in the nineteenth century and today, has connotations of a fictive biological and racial purity. The term is always inadequate, yet I like many authors have not found a more adequate term. I use the terms *mixed-race* and *miscegenation* in their nineteenth-century historical contexts. The term *white* is often used as shorthand for a diverse range of ethnicities that originated in western Europe and Britain. *White* like the term *black* is often read as a monolithic category and is weighted with an array of connotations. In both case studies, I use the term *white* in cases where it is found in the historical material and particularly when I want to emphasize the theme of whiteness and the idea of a white race. In general, however, I use the terms *European* or *new-comer* to denote recently arrived Europeans, mostly Anglo-Saxons, who sought to create new British imperial spaces at the edges of empire.

Finally, nineteenth-century images of Indigenous peoples must be approached with sensitivity, and I have sought permission to use them from institutions and descendants where possible.

Extremities of Empire: Two Settler-Colonial Cities in Comparative Perspective

THE SETTLEMENTS OF MELBOURNE and Victoria were planted on land amid the diverse cultures of Indigenous peoples. Melbourne began in 1835 as a small settlement built on the banks of the Yarra River in the region of Port Phillip by overstraiters from Van Diemen's Land who sought to open up new country for pastoralism. Victoria, Vancouver Island, formerly Fort Victoria, was selected as a key fur-trading fort by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1843 (see Figure 2). Both cities have temporal parity: they were each transformed radically when gold was discovered in southeastern Australia in 1851 and on the Fraser River in British Columbia in 1858. Following in the footsteps of San Francisco and the 1849 gold rush, these two British imperial cities were imagined as hubs of empire, as lights of civilization and Britishness on the Pacific Ocean.¹ This type of racialized anticipatory geography grew with the gold rushes and only increased with the rise of the British Empire and the upturn in wealth that accompanied industrialization in these colonies in the late nineteenth century.²

Port Phillip (which became the Colony of Victoria in 1851) and its premier port city, Melbourne, and British Columbia (which was formed from the amalgamation of the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia in 1866) and its port city, Victoria, soon took their place in the aspirations of colony builders as new fields of colonization and industry for the Anglo-Saxon races. By the 1860s each city and its territory was configured in transcontinental terms as part of the grand narrative of British empire and race. In 1848 the *Illustrated London News* had no doubt about the expansive powers of empire when it lauded the transformative and spatial vigour of the Anglo-Saxon race in an opinion piece titled "Emigration and Colonisation":

With a rapidly increasing population, and with the prospect before us that other civilised nations, who cannot now compete with us in commerce or manufacture, will, at no distant period be able to do so, the question of the subsistence of our people becomes the utmost urgency. As a people it may truly be said that we are pre-eminent amongst the nations of the earth. Our spirit rules the world. Our wisdom enters into the composition of the everyday life of half of the globe. Our physical as well as our intellectual presence is manifest in every climate under the sun. Our sailing ships and steam vessels cover the seas and rivers. Wherever we

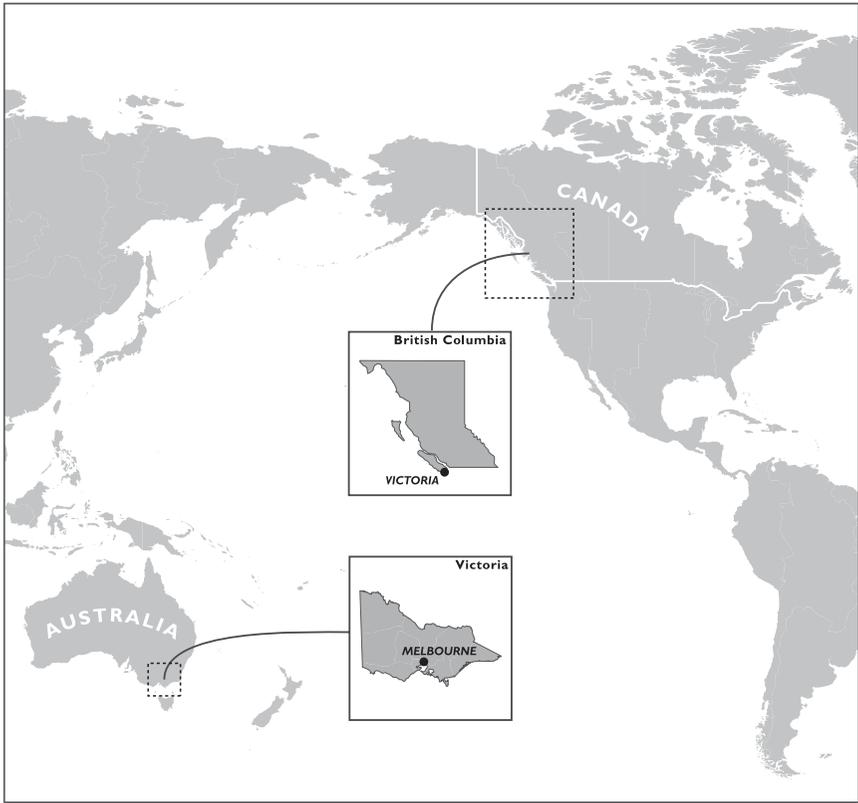


Figure 2 Melbourne (Victoria) and Victoria (Vancouver Island).
Cartography by Paul de Leur.

conquer, we civilise and refine ... No place is too remote for our enterprise or our curiosity ... We have spread ourselves over all regions. We have peopled North America, civilised India, taken possession of Australia, and scattered the Anglo-Saxon name and fame in language, literature, religion and laws, ideas and habits, over the fairest portion of the globe.³

Nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxon claims – which mobilized the appropriation of new territories for gold seeking, settlement, and industry and stamped them with the imprimatur of Divine Providence – clearly transcended individual colonies and were far greater than, and indeed prefigured, any discrete or localized ideas of nation. Britain’s territorial claims in these distant edges of empire must, therefore, be viewed properly in global, transnational terms and in the context of late nineteenth-century imperial narratives of race and empire. However, Anglo-Saxon expansionist aspirations were often overstated, and their

partiality comes to light when we look at these colonial sites as they really were. In the middle years of the nineteenth century, British control was often partial and unstable, and notions of Anglo-Saxon unity resided far more in the imagination than in reality.

Imagining the Antipodes and the West beyond the West

In the mid-nineteenth century, British Columbia sat tenuously on the margins of European colonial control; it hung “precariously at the edge of Britain’s literal and symbolic empire,” writes Adele Perry. In its transformation from a culturally diverse Indigenous territory to a conjunction of two colonies built on protocolonial mercantile expansion underwritten by the British Empire, British Columbia was the “awkward and disappointing child of the fur trade and British imperial expansion.”⁴ Before the heady gold rush days of the 1850s would transform it into the wealthy Colony of Victoria, with “marvellous Melbourne” as its premier city, the early colonial district of Port Phillip sat rather uncertainly at the edge of Britain’s control and largesse. Melbourne’s low status as the southernmost periphery of the Colony of New South Wales extended to its earliest European residents, many of whom would become pastoralists. They were described by the *Sydney Gazette* in 1837 as persons of ill-repute, as “a drunken and worthless set.” The *Gazette* noted that many residents came from the penal colony of Van Diemen’s Land because of “various causes which would not make them desirable in any community.” Edward Curr opined in 1839 that many of the labourers were “old gaol birds and expirée convicts.” Others, clearly of the lower orders, had come over on an adventure and would “take advantage of the absence of power to behave in a lawless and intimidatory manner.”⁵ Often lacking funds and in fear of becoming another of Britain’s antipodean convict repositories, Port Phillip would appeal to Britain to send immigrant labour to help it to become a free settler society.

Studying these sites comparatively not only offers avenues to trace the commonalities and dissonances of two settler-colonial locales, it also illuminates these edges of empire in new and compelling ways. For an analysis of the global system of British colonialism not only necessitates an examination of the co-production of the edges of empire and the metropole but also requires an exploration of the hierarchy of colonial spaces throughout the British Empire.

Longstanding European economic and cultural discourses on the two regions shaped the way these imperial spaces were imagined before Europeans ever set foot on their shores. Although Europeans had partial knowledge of the Australian continent’s coastline by the 1780s, and even though various explorations had refuted the idea of a great southern supercontinent, the myth of *terra*

australis incognita persisted in the popular imagination. Deep European cultural lineages had represented Australia, the great southern land, as a world turned upside down, as an empty, inverted, and perversely antipodal continent.⁶ The area that would come to be known as British Columbia was the enigmatic West beyond the West. Until the introduction of rail in 1885, which traversed the Rocky Mountains, an overland journey to British Columbia was an arduous haul and the stuff of heroic travelogue for non-Aboriginal writers.⁷

The particular European imaginings of these two distinct regions, separated by the Pacific Ocean, would collude in the formative and specific ways that Indigenous peoples would be represented, in the way that European appropriation of Indigenous lands would be rationalized, and in the way that these new settler-colonial spaces would be called into being. Exploration and the exercise of mapping – the semiotic practice of inscribing British imperial destiny onto Aboriginal space, with all of its connotations of colonial possession and erasure of Indigenous presence – meant that imperial spatial constructs of these new edges of empire often preceded actual physical invasion. The physical appropriation of Indigenous land and the imposition of European settler-colonial spatial disciplines followed, with the eventual surveying, division, and commodification of land. As will be shown, at the edges of the Pacific Ocean, a new imperial geography created distinct and, indeed, unprecedented settler-colonial spaces at the great expense of the traditional Indigenous owners.

European Expansionism, Geopolitical Tensions, and the Imperial Contest

Over three decades ago, the historian K.M. Dallas emphasized the formative transimperial and organizing role of mercantilist, sea-based trade and observed that the actions of settling and persisting in extended settlement should be understood in relation to geopolitical circumstances and events in Europe, America, Southeast Asia, and other lands in the Pacific Ocean.⁸ Accordingly, and as many scholars now argue, British colonialism must be understood as part of a great contest among the European empires. New World spaces were ultimately reorganized not only through European imaginings but also through European transimperial networks of trade and commerce and the resultant movement of ideas, capital, and bodies reconfigured with local Indigenous cultures.

James Cook's three voyages between 1768 and 1779 unlocked the Pacific for Europeans. On his first voyage, made between 1768 and 1771, Cook and his crew circumnavigated New Zealand, charted over eight thousand kilometres of the Australian coastline, made contact with Aboriginal peoples on its eastern shores, and, without their agreement, claimed the eastern seaboard for Britain. During Cook's third voyage, made between 1776 and 1780, he revisited Hawaii and

mapped the Pacific Northwest Coast, sojourned at what would come to be known as Nootka Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island to trade with First Nations people, and then journeyed further north to Alaska. Cook's expeditions ushered in a period of extensive and enduring contact between Europeans and the peoples of the Pacific and opened the area for exploitation. Within several decades European expeditions to this region were commonplace.⁹ The European search for goods and trade with Pacific peoples only intensified, and it was Cook who first recognized the commercial viability of tapping into existing fur trade networks.

By the late eighteenth century, the increasing profitability of furs in the Orient caused the Pacific Northwest Coast to become a site of intense geopolitical interest and tension. Nootka Sound became an international hotspot. Amidst the presence of ships from many European nations, Spain, having built a fort on the site, formally took possession of Nootka Sound on 24 June 1789.¹⁰ This seemingly audacious act of imperial assertion spurred the British to claim the area for the King of England and led to confrontation. In July the Spanish navy seized several English trading ships by claiming that the English had contravened Spanish sovereignty, and it forcibly dispersed First Nations with whom the British were trading.¹¹ Diplomatic claims and counter-claims over this distant bay ensued between the European powers, and political tensions increased for Britain. The British demanded restitution and Spain's renunciation of its traditional claims to sovereignty in the unoccupied territories of America. However, in that same year, the French Revolution began, and the possibility of Britain engaging in war with France and Spain was great. Not only did the prospect of an Anglo-Spanish war seem imminent, but also the French, weakened by revolution, were threatened by this expansionist act and perceived it as an attempt to break the Franco-Spanish alliance. In defence of Spain, the French debated posting fourteen vessels to Nootka Sound, but in effect the crisis served only to plunge France, in a time of revolution, into lengthy debates about foreign policy, national interests, and the people versus the king.¹²

In the southern Pacific Ocean, the British and French also tested each other. In 1788 the British established a penal colony at Port Jackson (now Sydney) on Australia's southeastern coast. Around the same time, the French naval officer and explorer Jean-François de Galoup, Comte de La Pérouse, who had also mapped the west coast of North America, was sent on a scientific voyage to chart the great southern continent, although it is claimed that he had secret orders to investigate the trade possibilities that Cook had identified. La Pérouse arrived at the settlement of Port Jackson only a few days after it was founded by the British.¹³

Back on the other side of the Pacific, at Nootka Sound, the British, knowing that the revolution had weakened the French, continued to make their claim against Spanish interests.¹⁴ When the possibility of war between Spain and Britain increased, a settlement was made. British ships and prisoners taken by the Spanish were released, and a period of Spanish exploration and mapping followed. In 1792 George Vancouver, on behalf of the British, also made serious explorations of the San Juan archipelago and Puget Sound, during which he named the Gulf of Georgia and Point Grey, the site of present-day Vancouver. British possession of Nootka Sound was confirmed by the Nootka agreement of 1794, a settlement between the British and Spanish governments.¹⁵

By this time, too, Britain and France were at war; in its midst a dramatic and yet diplomatic meeting between Matthew Flinders and Nicholas Baudin occurred in 1802 on the southern coastline of Australia as the two passed each other during their circumnavigations. Flinders and Baudin met on successive days on *Le Geograph* outside what would become Encounter Bay. Flinders cordially proffered the copy of a map he had made to Baudin. In an act of imperial possession at the edge of the Pacific, Flinders had inscribed hundreds of place names connected with his own life on the map of Australia.¹⁶ Baudin also reconceptualized the land through French eyes by charting the southeastern coast line of Australia and Tasmania, transposing the landscape onto maps, and naming the various straits, channel islands, and promontories after a panoply of royals and figures such as Napoleon and Josephine.

A year later, in 1803, the creation of the first settlement in Port Phillip Bay at Sorrento was prompted by British fears that French vessels would attempt to claim part of the southern shore. Urgent messages had been sent to London to warn that French vessels were probing the coastline. Britain was determined to stop republican France from imperial expansion. It quickly dispatched a small fleet, headed by Lieutenant Colonel David Collins as lieutenant-governor, that carried three hundred convicts and military and civil forces. When the fleet arrived, writes Michael Cannon, officers “mounted their cannon to sweep the bay, drilled their men, flogged their convicts ... and waited for the French invasion which never came.”¹⁷ Baudin’s ships had been called back to France. The French were so weakened by their military engagements in Europe that they withdrew from the contest for territory in the southern Pacific Ocean.¹⁸

The French, the Spanish, and the British would imagine new lands on these edges of the Pacific Ocean. Parts of the Pacific Northwest Coast are inscribed with Spanish names, with remnants of a possessive imperial imagining, to this day. Likewise, the French left their mark on Australia’s southern shores in acts of anticipatory geography. At both edges of the Pacific, Britain’s expansionist

ambitions prevailed as Britons sought to inscribe Indigenous lands with their own worldview.

Dallas has likened the Pacific Ocean at this time to a vast new oilfield. In his view Britain's mercantilist maritime and geopolitical interests in forestalling the French far outweigh the conventional historical explanation for the settlement of Australia. Dallas argues persuasively that Australia was more than a mere New World repository for Britain's criminals and that its appropriation was motivated by more than the need to offset the loss of the American colonies after the American Revolution.¹⁹ Without entering into these debates at length, there is clear value in looking synchronically at global trade relations between European powers and at the geopolitical tensions that ensued throughout the trans-Pacific world. From the mid-seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, the British Committee for Trade and Plantations was powerful and highly active. Each edge of empire had its origins in mercantilist economics and European imperial expansion – the organized fur trade on the Pacific Northwest Coast and the sealing and whaling industry (smaller and less organized than the fur trade) in Australia, which circulated across the Tasman Sea to New Zealand. European settlement came slowly to Vancouver Island, and it was directed largely by the interests of the Hudson's Bay Company. In contrast, the coastal mercantilism of the Port Phillip region was short-lived and quickly gave way to a rapacious pastoralism, a very different form of economy that would drastically alter the lives of Aboriginal peoples in southeastern Australia. The Colony of New South Wales' origins as a penal colony ensured that state rather than private interests quickly dominated.

Impact on Indigenous Peoples: Disease and Transformation

The net effect of mercantilist and colonizing endeavours would be devastating for the Kulin Nation and the Coast Salish. As was the case in many regions of the Pacific, the Indigenous peoples of Vancouver Island and the Port Phillip region suffered large population losses because of smallpox epidemics that preceded actual invasion.²⁰ Before Fort Victoria was built on Lekwammen territory in 1843, the geopolitical manoeuvres of European powers seeking territorial control in the Pacific Northwest – their dispatches, their cartography, and their bickering in parliaments – may have occurred initially and largely outside of the awareness of First Nations. Yet a range of forces had altered social and cultural life for the Lekwammen prior to this event. The physical incursion into Indigenous space was preceded by epidemic disease, which caused great population loss and had a brutal impact on social structures. For at least a century following contact with traders in the 1770s, the Lekwammen suffered the effects of bacterial and viral diseases, including smallpox, malaria, influenza, dysentery,

whooping cough, typhoid fever, typhus, tuberculosis, and syphilis.²¹ Although it is difficult for historians to accurately determine the size of the population on the Northwest Coast prior to these epidemics, current scholarship estimates that it was between two hundred thousand and four hundred thousand people.²²

Sea traders brought venereal and respiratory diseases, which no doubt produced misery and population loss, to First Nations communities in the late eighteenth century. However, several more waves of epidemic disease swept the Northwest Coast and devastated populations. The smallpox epidemic of 1775 near present-day Vancouver “probably hit the Songhees before they even met a European,” writes John Lutz.²³ Smallpox came to the Lekwammen’s territory again in 1801, and the epidemic was followed by measles in 1824.²⁴ Another smallpox epidemic that broke out at Victoria in the summer of 1862 caused profound disruption to First Nations societies along the Coast. Entire villages were lost, with perhaps only a few survivors. In sum, First Nations settlement patterns were altered because of devastating population losses; remnant groups were forced to unite to form new mixed groups; cultural practices were transformed; and food-gathering and -processing systems, which had formerly relied on large numbers of people, were disrupted.²⁵ The Hudson’s Bay Company employees who arrived on Vancouver Island to trade furs encountered peoples already changed by several disease epidemics. The period from the 1850s to the 1880s was one of rapid population decline for the Lekwammen.

Turning to the southeastern coast of Australia, the weight of evidence shows that smallpox epidemics probably spread southward via river systems from the Sydney area on the east coast to the Port Phillip region. These epidemics possibly explain Australia’s relatively small Aboriginal population on contact with Europeans.²⁶ The smallpox epidemics of 1790 and 1830, which occurred in central New South Wales, may have moved into the Port Phillip region, and many European witnesses certainly noticed the pockmarked faces of some older Aboriginal people during the late 1830s and 1840s. Since similar diseases in North America had killed from 40 to 60 percent of the Indigenous population, some scholars estimate that the pre-smallpox population of Victoria could have been between thirty thousand and fifty thousand; however, fifteen thousand is the figure most often cited.²⁷

Coast Salish peoples and the peoples of the Kulin Nation eventually suffered the loss of their land and were pushed into reserves and systems of missionization, where pernicious assimilative trajectories resulted in transformations and the loss of language and culture, the effects of which are still present today.²⁸ The Kulin Nation and the Coast Salish, highly diverse cultures located on opposing edges of the Pacific Ocean, experienced similar patterns of disease, land expropriation, and missionization through British colonization throughout the

late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Apart from implicitly distinct Indigenous cultures, which came to shape colonial patterns, crucial differences and departures also lay in key economic, legal, and demographic disparities: the fur trade versus pastoralism; treaties or their absence; differing levels of industrialization, which demanded different terms of engagement with colonial labour systems; and variable attitudes towards intermarriage, miscegenation, and assimilation. Importantly, Indigeneity in both places was made and remade over time by these European colonial structures. Shifting constructions of race, or racializations, in these two edges of empire were profoundly more different than is often acknowledged.

The Fur Trade versus Pastoralism: Economics and Labour

Varying colonial economic and discursive formations came to frame particular Indigenous subjectivities and their representations in markedly different ways in Port Phillip and British Columbia. Because British Columbia was dominated initially by the Hudson's Bay Company – and later by huge fisheries and forestry industries that required large pools of capital and wage labour – colonial interests had shaped Indigenous peoples as labourers by the late nineteenth century. British Columbia, with its long-term mercantile and industrial systems, would later be dubbed the “company province.” First Nations workers were crucial to the fisheries and forestry industries, and these workers came to form the backbone of the colonial economy by the late nineteenth century.²⁹

By contrast, in southeastern Australia the Port Phillip region's early contact with maritime mercantile systems of sealing and whaling had, by the late 1830s, given over to a boom in pastoralism and an influx of European settler-colonists. Pastoralism was yet another form of industrialization in which markets were also created in the metropole. Yet, unlike the fisheries and forestry industries of British Columbia, the pastoral industry of Port Phillip did not require many Aboriginal people as labourers. Despite some southeastern Aboriginal people being used opportunistically by colonists as an itinerant labour force, mainly in the growing pastoralist industry and for seasonal harvesting, Aboriginal people would in general be constructed as a silently vanishing and economically redundant population.³⁰ Both industrial systems on each side of the Pacific Ocean would eventually restructure the environment in such a way as to remove Indigenous people from their lands. The influx of thousands of immigrants in search of gold only exacerbated the strain on Aboriginal cultures. Despite varying economic and political formations, the Kulin Nation and the Coast Salish would both suffer a thoroughgoing dispossession of land by the close of the nineteenth century, when both regions emerged as full-fledged British settler

colonies with land as their key object. It is also important, however, to acknowledge the diverse cultural formations that were shaped in these two sites, including widely varying racializations and markedly different attitudes towards mixed-race relations and miscegenation. As Victoria Freeman points out in relation to Pacific Rim settler colonies, various attitudes towards sexuality, class, race, and gender and histories of cross-cultural contact influenced policies towards racial mixing, and it is these particular historical circumstances that must be traced.³¹

British Columbia: The Land-Based Fur Trade and the Hudson's Bay Company

The sea- and land-based fur trades, which operated in Canada long before the building of Fort Victoria, shaped the lives of the Lekwammen. The early trade in furs began inland and increased markedly when European craftsmen found that the underfur of the beaver matted to make a high-quality felt suited for hat making. French, English, Scottish, and American traders sought to profit from the inland fur trade, and the Hudson's Bay Company, managed from London, was chartered in 1670 to take advantage of the trade.³²

The peak years of the maritime fur trade were between 1792 and 1812.³³ On the Northwest Coast, James Cook, during his third voyage, observed that fur-bearing animals such as the sea otter were being traded. By 1785 the first trading vessel, the *Sea Otter*, had arrived in Nootka Sound. The profitability of the trade in sea otter pelts with new trading partners such as China bolstered a long period of mercantile trade between the diverse First Nations of the Northwest Coast and Europeans.³⁴ After 1785 an extensive mercantilist sea- and land-based fur-trading culture developed and co-joined with pre-existing Indigenous trade. The land-based fur trade had come west from Montreal, with the North West Company controlling the majority of trade. The first forts were built west of the Rocky Mountains in the first decade of the nineteenth century, although various European and American trading vessels continued to visit the Northwest Coast until the 1820s.³⁵ In 1805 Simon Fraser, a representative of the North West Company, set up the first permanent fur-trading fort at McLeod Lake.³⁶ In 1821 the Hudson's Bay Company, which had an organized bureaucratic style and a policy to stay close to waterways, amalgamated with the North West Company. Restructuring of the trade led to the formation of a systematic mercantilist operation dedicated to exploiting the resources of the area known as New Caledonia.³⁷

Although the sea- and land-based fur trades were both mercantilist systems, the impact of the land-based fur trade on First Nations was greater. As Jean Barman and Cole Harris have observed, with the land-based fur trade came

sustained ties that replaced the fleeting contact that characterized relations between ship-based Europeans and Aboriginal peoples.³⁸ If the locus of trade in the maritime operation was the ship, on land it was the fort – described as a node in a system of trade embedded in Indigenous territory – that ultimately formed a power base for the development of a British presence and British capital.³⁹

How did the land-based fur trade affect First Nations? How do the themes of force, coercion, and consent that run through contact histories present themselves in British Columbian colonial history? Some of the chief historiographical debates regarding this period of contact and mercantilism are worth considering. Although many writers have contributed to this debate, the approaches of two key authors, Robin Fisher and Cole Harris, provide a sense of the anatomy of the debates on the fur trade and its consequences for First Nations.

In the late 1970s, Robin Fisher's publication *Contact and Conflict* represented the beginning of a body of new historical work that reconsidered the history of First Nations in British Columbia. Fisher observed that the field was dominated by anthropologists.⁴⁰ His central argument was that it was crucial to make a distinction between the mercantilist culture of the maritime and land-based fur trade and the period of settlement and white domination that followed. The settlement period, Fisher argued, could be dated roughly from the beginning of the gold rush in 1858, which led to the demise of the fur trade and the degradation of Indigenous cultures. Crucially, Fisher proposed that rather than being an unmitigated disaster for Indigenous peoples, as some authors had maintained, the fur trade had ushered in a period of reciprocal relationships between First Nations and Europeans, a period during which First Nations culture was simultaneously disrupted and invigorated by contact with Europe. Furthermore, Fisher proposed that Native people played only a small role in the new settler economy and that by the end of the 1880s the "process of establishing white domination was complete."⁴¹

This cultural enrichment thesis has since been contested vigorously in more recent historical studies.⁴² These studies have presented the argument that in attempting to move away from the "fatal impact" theories that prevailed in colonial histories that eradicated First Nations agency, Fisher instead privileged notions of First Nations cultural autonomy and the reciprocity of exchanges between European and First Nations. Furthermore, many now claim that the brutality and violence of the Hudson's Bay Company and traders who kept First Nations in check has been understated. These critics also note that the devastating effects of disease and the impact of environmental change on First Nations has likewise been given scant attention. Since then, as Harris notes, "Native

voices have repoliticized issues of land and cultural appropriation.”⁴³ In the last three decades, a new intellectual climate and accompanying scholarship have come to the fore, and the latter crucially considers the nexus of imperial geopolitics, violence, colonial law, and the dominance of commercial capital that altered the lives of First Nations.⁴⁴

Harris, writing within the genre of new scholarship on the fur trade, emphasizes the strategic nature of the expansion of European power and makes use of themes from Foucauldian-inspired work and the thinking of cultural geographers to argue that the aim of traders was to “reconfigure an alien territory and discipline people so that an ordered, profitable, trade was possible therein.”⁴⁵ It is important to note that this genre, which emerged in the early 1990s, has a spatial and global emphasis and seeks to locate European-Aboriginal contact within the context of the various imperial and geopolitical contestations of the eighteenth and nineteenth century and the movement of capital that mobilized these processes.

Fisher, by contrast, asserted Indigenous autonomy and argued that Aboriginal peoples “to a large extent controlled both the trade and their culture.” He argued that trade had been mutually beneficial and offered the “continuous absence of major interracial conflict” as proof.⁴⁶ More recent work, however, has starkly revealed the harsh and retaliatory violence used by maritime and land-based fur traders.⁴⁷ On land, fort operations were run in a military fashion, and displays of organized violence were used to intimidate or discipline First Nations. As Harris and others argue, and as the historical record clearly attests, gun boats, muskets, cannons, and floggings were part of the repertoire in the performance of violence used to underscore trader might, at least until a fur trade culture was established and other techniques of coercion and control were developed.⁴⁸ Fort Victoria was no exception. The elaborate shows of violence by the Hudson’s Bay Company at trader forts was partly a product of the forts’ acute vulnerability since they were small fortified enclaves placed amidst large First Nations populations. Harris argues that these displays of violence, which could not be backed up with manpower, provided lessons in might and terror that were often used in concert with other stratagems of control or coercion.⁴⁹

In seeking to depart from totalizing Foucauldian analyses that understate Indigenous agency, several authors, including Fisher and John Lutz, maintain that First Nations allowed forts to exist in their own territory for their own economic benefit.⁵⁰ First Nations accepted the forts “out of self interest rather than fear,” writes Fisher, and they “can hardly be described as a conquered people.”⁵¹ First Nations economies, with their culture of gift-giving and established trade routes, existed prior to European contact. As Lutz contends, the Lekwammen economy was well suited to join with a European-style economy,

with each subsidizing the other for its own gain. Lutz outlines this process well in his account of the Lekwammen's encounter with Europeans. The links between European and First Nations economies that Fisher and Lutz (and indeed Harris) suggest (although neither overtly identifies the theoretical basis of such thinking) have been interpreted by historical materialists as the "articulation of modes of production," a feature that is notable in colonial formations in which the Indigenous economy at times subsidizes the imposed European economic system.⁵²

In short, Northwest Coast Aboriginal peoples were very experienced in the business of trade – not only among themselves but also with newcomers. The Hudson's Bay Company operated its coastal enterprise among peoples who had several generations of experience in maritime trade with Europeans. Competition was vigorous up and down the Coast as Aboriginal groups played different European and American traders against one another.⁵³ The strategy of monopolizing trade extended to the land-based trade, in which First Nations groups would congregate around a particular fort and act as middlemen to prevent other groups from trading directly with the fort. As trading intermediaries, they dealt furs between the Hudson's Bay Company and other Aboriginal groups that hunted and trapped furs in the Interior. It is little wonder then that forts held strong economic value for First Nations groups and were jealously coveted. In the case of Fort Victoria, as we shall see, the Lekwammen moved their villages to the fort's immediate vicinity soon after it was built, and Chief Factor James Douglas wrote that they "considered themselves to be specifically attached to the establishment."⁵⁴ Clearly, both First Nations and Hudson's Bay Company fur traders were strategic players in the complex world of trade relations.

Unlike the situation in southeastern Australian, where a short-lived mercantilism based on trans-Tasman sealing and whaling was followed by a swift move to pastoralism (which required not trade with Aboriginal peoples but their removal from the land), the culture of at least fifty years of maritime and land-based fur trade created entirely different social relations in the Pacific Northwest. Whereas maritime traders along the Coast were itinerant, culturally detached, and never really imbricated in local First Nations cultures, Europeans who formed the land-based trade were, like their Indigenous counterparts, changed through ties of marriage and culture. The system of land-based fur trade relied on cross-cultural relations that created a distinctive culture. Traders, who were representatives of the Hudson's Bay Company, married First Nations women or women of mixed decent. Many of the traders themselves were of mixed ancestry and spoke Chinook, a pidgin trader language.

Fisher was correct to assert Indigenous autonomy and to bring into focus the interdependence of the trade relationship, and other scholars have since also

correctly detailed violence and coercion in the trade and the strategic nature of the fur traders' intent. For a time, a balance may have existed between First Nations and traders, with each group benefitting in socio-economic terms, and with First Nations being largely in control of their land and resources. Gradually, however, changes in the trade, the accumulated effects of disease, the onset of settlement, and a reduction in available resources tipped the balance in favour of Europeans. The articulation of First Nations and European fur-trading economies became less favourable to First Nations as settlement proceeded. This disadvantage was coupled in the mid- to late nineteenth century with a reserve system that ultimately anchored First Nations to small areas of land and to a legal system that increasingly sought to define and control them.

Fisher's statement that Native people played only a small part in the new settlement economy has also been thoroughly contested by the work of scholars such as Lutz and Rolf Knight, who have shown that First Nations in fact engaged in multiple forms of wage labour throughout the century and, indeed, formed the backbone of the settler economy. It was only in the late nineteenth century that First Nations were pushed out of the labour force by legislation passed to ensure jobs for an increasingly white population.⁵⁵

Although the extent of coercion and consent for First Nations and the changes and dislocations that they incurred in the face of the fur trade may be debated, a defining feature that separated the fur trade from the settlement period was the ownership of land. During the fur trade, there was great violence, but land was largely under the control of First Nations, because mercantilism left Aboriginal peoples on their land. Settler colonialism, by contrast, sought to remove Indigenous peoples from their land and denied or extinguished Native title. In the Australian pastoral frontier, land, not labour, was the primary object. It was an object that was pursued with rapidity and violence.

Harris argues that traders were not interested in altering Native cultures and that they did not want Native land. Beyond their palisaded forts and few farms, traders "did not claim Native space. They were not colonizers."⁵⁶ This may be true of the earliest period of the fur trade; however, by the mid-1840s the Hudson's Bay Company's fur-trading culture had clearly laid the groundwork for settlement. By the late 1840s, the building of settlements and towns was an explicitly stated object imposed by the Crown on the company, and the eventual shift from mercantilism to an industrialized settler economy would radically alter the lives of First Nations.

The Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes and the Port Phillip Protectorate

British colonizing efforts in Australia began when a convict colony was formed in New South Wales in 1788 and followed by European settlement in Van Diemen's

Land, now Tasmania, in 1803. Aboriginal peoples rapidly lost their lands as settlement ensued. The years between 1824 and 1831 are known in the history of Van Diemen's Land as the Black War, a time of violent contestation and Aboriginal resistance to the appropriation of their land by Europeans. By the 1830s the lives of Aboriginal people in the Colony of New South Wales and in Van Diemen's Land had been brutally interrupted by invasion. In 1835 mercantilists and pastoralists, overstraiters from Van Diemen's Land, sought new lands at the opposite coast, the southeastern edge of Australia, for commercial gain.⁵⁷ This district, nominally part of the Colony of New South Wales, would come to be known as Port Phillip and was highly sought out for pastoralism and settlement.

At this time, humanitarian interest in the welfare of colonized peoples in the British settlements, particularly Africa's Cape Colony and Australia, became intense. After the abolition of the slave trade in 1833, the Aborigines Protection Society, seeking to capitalize on its humanitarian and political successes, turned its attention to the condition of the colonized peoples in the outlying realms of the British Empire.⁵⁸ In 1837 a select committee convened to inquire into the condition of the Indigenous populations of all the British colonies produced a two-volume report titled *Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Aboriginal Tribes (British Settlements)*.⁵⁹ The development of the report was driven by Thomas Foxwell Buxton, a well-known abolitionist, and it was written by members of Buxton's evangelical abolitionist circle, including Anna Gurney, the final author of the report.⁶⁰ The report detailed in its Preface the corruption of Britain's empire: "In an age distinguished for its liberality, its enlightened sentiment, and its Christian zeal, atrocities, the most daring and dreadful in their character ... have passed unnoticed and unreprieved."⁶¹ Seeking to draw attention to the real operations of Britain's expansionist endeavours, the committee noted that "comparatively little of what was passing on our colonies has been published at home."⁶² Drawing on transnational evangelical networks to gather its evidence, committee members sought to appeal to the metropolitan religious public, a strategy used by abolitionists, to force social change, for they believed that a "virtuous public would rebel against such atrocities."⁶³ The report painted the far reaches of Britain's empire not as new lands or Edens but as the dark places of the earth. Eden had turned sour. The report stated: "Through successive generations the work of spoliation and death has been carried on, until the colonial possessions of the most religious nation in the world" had become the "the dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty."⁶⁴

Those who have summarized the report have noted that it was characterized by noble idealism but a lack of appreciation for the realities of frontier life.⁶⁵ It did, however, lead Great Britain's House of Lords to instigate a protectorate

system in Port Phillip, which was implemented by Colonial Secretary Lord Glenelg to “protect” Indigenous peoples in southeastern Australia from overstraiters from Van Diemen’s Land and others who had created an outlaw settlement outside the limits of location.⁶⁶ It was hoped that the Aboriginal Protectorate would avert the violent clashes that had marked the history of the earlier colonies. Although the report was directed primarily at the Cape Colony and Australia, it also addressed Canada, and its conclusion regarding the “Indian” situation in British North America was damning.⁶⁷ The report, of course, predated the establishment of the Colony of Vancouver Island. In general, however, the report’s recommendations were minimal compared to its scope of investigation, and over the next century of British expansionism its recommendations regarding the recognition of Indigenous peoples’ legal rights were largely ignored.⁶⁸

By 1838 George Augustus Robinson, who had the dubious reputation of having “conciliated” the Aborigines in Van Diemen’s Land, had been selected, along with four assistants, as the chief protector of Port Phillip. Lord Glenelg stipulated that the protectors were to “promote the well-being of Aborigines and to represent their interests to the colonial executive or the British government.” In addition to physically protecting the Aborigines, they were to civilize them, educate them, convert them to Christianity, and instruct them in agriculture and the building of houses.⁶⁹

The Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate lasted from 1839 to 1849 and was generally considered a failure. Although various missions to First Nations peoples on the Northwest Coast were founded throughout the nineteenth century, a protectorate system was never declared. Indeed, possibly because of bitter and violent conflicts over the expropriation of Indigenous land in Australia and the perceived failure of the Port Phillip protectorate, the Colonial Office explicitly avoided the creation of such an institution when the new Colony of British Columbia was created after the gold rush of 1858. For example, in 1858 Colonial Secretary Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton clearly stipulated in a colonial dispatch that “*no nominal protector of the aborigines – no annuity to a petted chief, – no elevation of one chief above another, will answer the purpose.*”⁷⁰ This stance, which was a refutation of the select committee’s report, reflected a change in the times. By the 1850s humanitarian sentiments had begun to wane, and less radical and more reactionary views that did not privilege Aboriginal peoples over settlers prevailed.

Gold Rushes at the Extremities of Empire

If the fur trade from British Columbia’s interior to Europe was the lifeline of empire,⁷¹ the produce transported to the metropole from Australia Felix (bullion

and wool, for example) and, in turn, the goods and immigrants it imported from the Empire's centre formed another vital economic and cultural circuit of the imperial economy. Early Melbourne was primarily a port in the service of squatters and those associated with the pastoral industry. Later, although various industries developed, the production and sale of wool was the economic mainstay until the gold rush.⁷²

By the 1850s and 1860s, these two extremities of empire were imagined in powerful ways. The town of Victoria was envisaged as an English village and British Columbia as the white man's province, despite that First Nations represented an overwhelming majority. Melbourne, too, imagined itself as an antipodean London, as a city of white, imperial classicism and as a new seat of empire in the far south.

The Colony of Victoria and Vancouver Island gestured towards each other in newspapers with reportage of imperial milestones and the growth of each colony. Boosted by the fervour of the gold rushes, and speaking to the Royal Geographical Society in London on 12 December 1859, W.C. Grant observed that the Colony of Vancouver Island, if properly developed, "might be made extremely profitable ... the fish if caught and cured under European superintendence ... might be exported profitably to Australia, where salmon and herring are both in demand, and the two distant extremities of the British Empire might thus be made to join hands, with mutual benefit to each other."⁷³ Mutual enthusiasm did not stop at the prospect of trade. Gold rushes in California (1848–49), southeastern Australia (1851), British Columbia (1858), and New Zealand (1861–63) were deemed to be proof of the imperial destiny of the Anglo-Saxon races; they were events that proved "the finger of Providence was manifest."⁷⁴ Rhetorical gesturing between the colonies was common throughout the late 1850s and 1860s. At the time of the Fraser River gold rush in British Columbia, its potential size and impact was projected to be as great as those of California and southeastern Australia. Many hoped that like the centres of San Francisco and Melbourne, the settlement of Victoria, a supply centre for the gold rush, would be made prosperous by gold and immigration. But it was not to be. In 1852, 435 Europeans lived in the Colony of Victoria Island. The 1858 gold rush, while drawing many immigrants and miners to Victoria and the Coast, never drew the tens of thousands of immigrants that swelled the population of California and the Colony of Victoria. As Jean Barman notes, around thirty thousand men and women headed for the mainland of British Columbia in 1858, but three times that number had reached California by 1849, the first year of the gold rush, and that number rose to a hundred thousand the following year. At its peak, the number of people drawn by the gold rush to Victoria was about six thousand.⁷⁵ By contrast, in 1851 the population of Melbourne was estimated to

be between 23,000 and 29,000. By 1861 that number had increased to between 125,000 and 140,000 people.⁷⁶

The gold rushes radically altered the demographic, economic, and political balance of the regions they affected. Although the Fraser River gold rush was relatively small on a world scale, it shifted the focus of early newcomer settlement from a place directed by the Hudson's Bay Company to one with a relatively independent colonial government. As Barman writes, the handover of authority from the Hudson's Bay Company ended a distinct chapter in British Columbia's history.⁷⁷ The gold rush in southeastern Australia prompted the separation of Port Phillip from the colony of New South Wales to form the colony of Victoria. The influx of newcomers to British Columbia and southeastern Australia in the 1850s reorganized bodies and spaces, and new racial tensions emerged as immigrant groups such as Chinese made these places their home. Victoria would remain relatively small. By the 1880s it was eclipsed by growth on the mainland of Vancouver, whose population flourished when it became the terminal point of the transcontinental railway. By 1888 Sydney and Melbourne were two of the largest cities in the British Empire. Rivalling Birmingham and Liverpool, they were port cities with firm ties in an imperial network of trade.

Spatial Strategies of Invasion: Treaties Compared

In general Canada has had a long history of brokering treaties with First Nations, whereas Australia has not. Treaty making or its absence in regard to land is a vital point of departure and debate in the development of Port Phillip and Vancouver Island. Land treaties framed understandings of Indigenous and European rights in land for the future. In Canada, treaty making between the Crown and First Nations began in the seventeenth century. The formation of the territory of Nunavut in 1999 was a partial settlement of the Inuit claim against Canada, and the conclusion of the Nisga'a Final Agreement in 2000 in British Columbia shows that, compared to Australia, a different attitude presides in Canada. Canadians have a long-standing commitment to negotiating difference that has much to do with the political and cultural presence of the Québécois.⁷⁸ Historically, however, British Columbia's treaty record was much different from the rest of Canada. As Stuart Banner notes, British Columbia was the only part of Canada that the British treated as *terra nullius* (the notion of land belonging to no one). Apart from fourteen instances on Vancouver Island, Europeans did not acquire land from First Nations by treaty.⁷⁹

In his study of the acquisition of Indigenous land by British and American settlers throughout the Pacific, Banner observes that no two places followed the same process of land acquisition. In tracing this Pacific world, it is clear that in some places Indigenous peoples own much more land than in others, and some

Indigenous people possess treaty rights while others do not. The notion of *terra nullius* was, however, common to British Columbia and most of Australia. Banner describes the process of land expropriation in Australia as “*terra nullius* by design” and in British Columbia as “*terra nullius* as kindness.” In the case of the latter, rights in land were at first recognized and then taken away for the “good” of First Nations.⁸⁰

The key object of the settler-colonial project, to expropriate land from its Indigenous owners, ensured that Indigenous space would be remade in these two edges of empire. In Port Phillip one treaty was brokered between Aboriginal peoples and the Port Phillip Association. It was quickly declared null and void by Governor Richard Bourke. On Vancouver Island fourteen land-based agreements, known as the Douglas treaties, were made between Governor James Douglas and First Nations. But these treaties were, in general terms, not honoured. Apart from the Douglas treaties, British Columbia stands in stark contrast to the rest of the country. In sum, these two sites had something in common – the fiction of *terra nullius* and the very material consequences of Indigenous dispossession.

To date, Native title and Aboriginal land justice continues to cause concern in the State of Victoria. The *Yorta Yorta* Native title case was struck down in 1998 after lengthy litigation that involved infamous debates about matters of history and set a new low for Indigenous land rights claims. In his ruling, Federal Court Justice Olney privileged the uncertain written evidence of pastoralist Edward Curr over the oral testimony of *Yorta Yorta* claimants. Two more recent claims (the *Wotjobaluk* and the *Gunditjmarra*) have ended in successful determinations of Native title over small areas and ancillary agreements that give the claimants some say in land-management issues. The Native title won by the *Gunditjmarra* is non-exclusive, that is, they enjoy access, camping, and fishing rights, but these do not affect non-Indigenous rights in the same territory.⁸¹

A closer look at historical treaties that were either rendered void or dishonoured in Port Phillip and Vancouver Island provides insight into Aboriginal entitlements in urbanizing environments. These agreements tended to prescribe approaches towards Indigenous peoples in settler cities and set the legal conditions for land contestation throughout the nineteenth century, and they continue to profoundly shape land rights negotiations today.

Failed Treaty in Port Phillip

The only “treaty” made in Australia is known as Batman’s Treaty of 1835. In this dubious agreement, John Batman, on behalf of the Port Phillip Association from Van Diemen’s Land, claimed that the Kulin Nation had exchanged two tracts of land around the Port Phillip Bay area that amounted to six hundred

thousand acres in return for goods such as blankets, axes, flour, mirrors, scissors, and handkerchiefs and the promise of an annual rent or tribute.⁸² The treaty was in fact two land deeds, or deeds of conveyance, that covered most of present-day greater Melbourne and Geelong. The Port Phillip Association's central aim, motivated by entrepreneurial and humanitarian sentiment, was to make a treaty with Indigenous peoples and then present it immediately to the British government. Land in Van Diemen's Land was becoming scarce, and the association planned to quickly move livestock to Port Phillip as the government and the Colonial Office "ruminated on the merits or otherwise of the Association's claims."⁸³ By 1834 George Arthur, lieutenant-governor of Van Diemen's Land, was well aware of the association's private plans to settle across the Bass Strait. In fact, his nephew Henry Arthur was one of its members. Arthur had made no secret of his interest in the opposite coast and his desire to bring it under his jurisdiction, although this was not to be. In 1832, after violence had peaked in Van Diemen's Land, he lamented that "a treaty was not entered into with the Natives" and stated that the results of such devastation and loss of Aboriginal life "must ever remain a stain upon the colonisation of Van Diemen's Land."⁸⁴ Arthur encouraged the association to broker a treaty with the headmen or *ngurungaeta* of the Kulin Nation, partly for humanitarian reasons and partly to avoid the calamity that had occurred in Van Diemen's Land. Later, in 1837, just after the suppression of the rebellion against British rule, Arthur was appointed lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada (present-day Ontario). He sought to make an example of captured rebels: some were sentenced to hang and others were eventually transported to Port Arthur, the notorious penal establishment set up by Arthur when he was governor of Van Diemen's Land. Canadian-Australian connections such as these reveal the circuits of colonial personnel that linked various colonies.⁸⁵

Therefore, in 1835 the Port Phillip Association was careful to locate its treaty claims within a humanitarian framework. Since the abolition of slavery in 1833, attention had shifted to the Colonial Office and its treatment of Aboriginal peoples in Britain's far-flung colonies. The association described its intentions to the government as that of establishing "a free and useful colony, founded on the principle of conciliation, of philanthropy, morality and temperance ... calculated to ensure the comfort and well being of the natives."⁸⁶

Batman's claim of a treaty with the Kulin peoples of the Port Phillip district and the increased movement of private settlers to the area caused serious challenges to the Crown on several fronts. First, private entrepreneurs treating with Indigenous peoples undermined the Crown's central claim that it owned all land, which was later underpinned by the proposition of *terra nullius*. Second, by treating, however dishonestly, with Kulin peoples, Batman had implicitly

acknowledged Aboriginal rights in land, which the Crown sought to disavow. Batman's Treaty, which claimed that he had gained rights to six hundred thousand acres and subsequent settlement in the area, was thus a radical manoeuvre, and officials in Hobart, Sydney, and London were "determined that the basic sovereignty of the Crown should not vanish by default."⁸⁷ A small entrepreneurial group treating with Indigenous peoples without the Crown's imprimatur was seen as a dangerous development by London and the colonial governments, for it signified an acknowledgment of Indigenous rights in land. The Port Phillip Association's treaty was a highly calculated and strategic bid for a vast swath of land, and although issues of sovereignty were hotly debated in the 1830s and were by no means settled, the bid in fact served to consolidate the Colony of New South Wales' position on sovereignty and thus shored up the legal fiction of *terra nullius*.⁸⁸ Authorities were also "troubled by the spread of costly settlements beyond their control," and the treaty was quickly voided on the grounds that the Crown alone had an exclusive right of pre-emption.⁸⁹ By contrast, in the early expansionist phases of colonialism in North America and New Zealand, small and relatively weak groups operated largely outside the reach of government. In the United States, the entire land-owning system was based on individual title purchases from Native Americans; in New Zealand, British settlers purchased much of the land from Maori.⁹⁰ In Australia, state rather than private interests prevailed. Representatives of the Crown arrived on the shores of southeastern Australia in 1788 to set up a penal colony, and the state centrally administered land, labour, and the market. From the very outset, the southeastern coast of Australia was dominated by the Crown and its perceived entitlement to all lands and land negotiations.

Fast on the heels of Batman's treaty claim and the illegal occupation of land around Melbourne and present-day Geelong, Francis Forbes, chief justice of the Colony of New South Wales, wrote to Governor Bourke. He advised the governor to prevent settlers, operating under the erroneous belief that they had legal title to the land, from purchasing land from Aborigines. The chief justice's letter reveals the hardening position of the colonial government on issues of sovereignty. Forbes urged Bourke to issue a proclamation "defining the true limits of the Colony within your Commission as Governor, declaring that all settlements made on any land within such limits, without the permission of the local government, is illegal and cautioning persons against purchasing any portion of such land from the aboriginal inhabitants under an impression that such purchases will be respected as conferring legal title." Forbes concluded his advice by declaring: "I deem such a measure of the more importance, as the example of Messrs Batman & Gellibrand will be surely followed by other persons nearer home and much trouble may be occasioned if the Crown seems tacitly

to assent to the right of the Savage to sell, and of His Majesty's subjects to buy the land of the Colony."⁹¹ The chief justice of the colony thus disavowed outright the "right of the Savage to sell." Described as a "pretence," the treaty was declared null and void on 26 August 1835 in a formal proclamation issued by Governor Bourke. The settlement was declared illegal. The proclamation stated that "every such treaty, bargain, and contract with the Aboriginal natives ... for the possession title, or claim to any lands lying and being within the limits of the Governments of the Colony of New South Wales ... is void and shall be of no effect against the rights of the Crown." Any persons "in possession of any such land" were to be deemed "trespassers" and were "liable to be dealt with in like manner as other intruders upon the vacant lands of the Crown."⁹² In early September the proclamation was published in the *Van Diemen's Land* press, no doubt to deter other eager overstraiters from attempting such a journey. There has since been much debate about the authenticity of the treaty documents themselves, particularly the "signatures" or sacred inscriptions of eight Aboriginal *ngurrengaeta* who represented what is now referred to as the Kulin Nation.

Despite this proclamation to deter land grabbing, it was impossible to stem the tide of settlers to these new pastoral lands. Colonists who were deemed trespassers on the Crown's land were also viewed by the colonial government as potentially valuable speculators, as "good" colonists who would cause the expansion of the wool industry. By 13 April 1836, Lord Glenelg approved Bourke's actions to bow to the inevitable and authorized the unleashing of the "spirit of adventure and speculation" while maintaining the Crown's basic authority over the land, the law, and the Native inhabitants. This was the beginning the great expansionist phase of the wool industry, which would shape southeastern Australia well into the future.⁹³

Vancouver Island: Fourteen Treaties

In the early 1850s, James Douglas, as the newly appointed governor of the Colony of Vancouver Island, negotiated fourteen land-based treaties, including several treaties that formed Native reserves in and around the town of Victoria. These reserves and the terms of the treaties that created them became the subject of intense, long-standing legal debates that have carried into the present. The Crown had conveyed title of Vancouver Island to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1849 in fee. As historian Hamar Foster has noted, little mention was made of Native peoples, and it appears that the company had been required to extinguish Native title.⁹⁴ By establishing the Colony of Vancouver Island, the Colonial Office had largely left the direction of land policy to Douglas. Douglas sought to treat with Native peoples, and he considered the transactions to be genuine and solemn obligations.⁹⁵

To open up land for settlement, in 1850 Douglas made eleven purchases of land from First Nations near Fort Victoria and west along the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The Hudson's Bay Company had provided Douglas with copies of land cessation agreements, described as deeds of conveyance, which included verbatim copies of agreements between Maori and the British Crown in New Zealand.⁹⁶ The contracts, in Company Secretary Archibald Barclay's words, were "a copy with hardly any alteration of the Agreement adopted by the New Zealand Company, in their transactions of a similar kind with the natives there."⁹⁷ Foster explains that Barclay had access to the report of a House of Commons Select Committee on New Zealand (1844), which had inquired into Native title in that colony. The select committee concurred with the views of the New Zealand Company and, indeed, with the theories of Emer de Vattel, who upheld only Indigenous occupancy rights, not property rights.⁹⁸ Barclay therefore modelled his advice to Douglas on the select committee's finding that Indigenous peoples had the right of occupancy but not property, that is, First Nations claims extended only to their cultivated fields and building sites or villages. Regarding this highly delimited versions of Native title, Barclay advised Douglas that "the uncivilized inhabitants of any country ... have a right of occupancy only, and ... until they establish among themselves a settled form of government and subjugate the ground to their own uses by the cultivation of it ... they have not any individual property in it." This "qualified Dominion," as Barclay termed it, encompassed only land that First Nations had "occupied by cultivation, or had houses built on." All other land, he stated, "is to be regarded as waste and applicable to the purpose of colonisation." Barclay did not tell Douglas that the Colonial Office did not approve of the select committee's report.⁹⁹

Two more "arrangements" were made in Fort Rupert to settle the title to coal deposits. Douglas then purchased land near Nanaimo in 1854, which brought the total number of treaties to fourteen. The purchases represented less than 3 percent of the total area of Vancouver Island.¹⁰⁰ It is unlikely that First Nations actually signed anything; rather, as Sydney Haring notes, they placed an *x* on blank pages, which over a year later were written out in boilerplate treaty language.¹⁰¹ The so-called treaties were loose and full of discrepancies. The definitions were based on occupation not property, and the deeds of conveyance, writes Harris, were vague documents open to many interpretations.¹⁰² There was confusion about the definition and demarcations of villages. As Harris observes, if *village* meant winter lodges, then which sites counted? Thirteen winter villages have since been located around Fort Victoria in Lekwammen territory.¹⁰³ In addition, the term *enclosed fields* did not include camas fields that Coast Salish peoples had cultivated for hundreds of years, and the issue of First Nations mariculture was left undecided. There has also been some suggestion

that Native people thought they were signing peace treaties, with *x* representing the sign of the cross.¹⁰⁴ The Douglas treaties, which were actually deeds of conveyance, simultaneously extinguished Native title and asserted it in partial and qualified ways.¹⁰⁵ The deeds effectively acted as a kind of statute of limitations. Native peoples were entitled only to small parcels of land, villages, fields, and sustenance rights, while the remainder of was deemed Crown land.

Treating with First Nations was initially viewed as being warranted and convenient; it was, as Harris surmises, a “ritual in which whites secured what they wanted for little cost.”¹⁰⁶ Yet after 1854 Douglas stopped making treaties as farmland and coal-mining sites were secured by the government. Douglas’ views on Native title had also altered by this time, and the termination of treaty making was a *de facto* denial of Native title. As Banner argues, a new and convenient humanitarian sentiment had emerged that purchasing land from First Nations actually harmed them, because transactions tended to be misunderstood, unfair, or forced. Douglas, as a witness to First Nations impoverishment and distress, concurred with this sentiment. The development of the US reservation system had amply shown that land purchases from First Nations were counter to humanitarian opinion, and on advice from the Colonial Office, Douglas embraced this stance, ostensibly for the good of First Nations.¹⁰⁷ It is also possible that Native people had become suspicious of the treaty process on Vancouver Island by this time. As Foster notes, they had experienced the unjust outcomes of the treaties and had seen the tide of settlement that had followed.¹⁰⁸

In summary, while the Colony of Victoria in southeastern Australia ultimately had no treaty, British Columbia formulated fourteen treaties, including two within the precinct of the city of Victoria. In 1835, and for several years afterwards, the Port Phillip Association attempted to have the Batman Treaty legitimated by the Colony of New South Wales and the Colonial Office in London, but the treaty was never ratified. Fourteen years later in British Columbia, James Douglas treated with First Nations by utilizing the deeds of conveyance of the New Zealand Company and its very limited notion of Native title. By the late nineteenth century, many settlers viewed the Batman Treaty as a foolhardy anomaly, while the very existence of the Douglas treaties in British Columbia largely faded from the public mind.

Why did the legal fiction of *terra nullius* prevail in Australia and British Columbia? This is a complex question. It is not simply that questions of Indigenous and British sovereignty were in flux and the subject of fierce debate during the early nineteenth century or that the British did not respect varying forms of Indigenous political organization or agriculture in both places, although these were certainly contributing factors. As Banner notes, because the British Crown arrived on Australia’s shores before settlers, state interests

dominated.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, on Vancouver Island, the Hudson's Bay Company, as proxy for the Crown, was the premier authority. Unlike much of North America, Vancouver Island was settled late and very slowly, and there were no treaties or purchases between individuals or groups and Native peoples. When the Colony of Vancouver Island was formed in 1849, Douglas, as governor, brokered land policy. In other words, the state dominated. Douglas' desire to uphold some rights for Native peoples explains the treaties' existence. Although the Douglas treaties were largely dishonoured, the very existence of treaties has meant that later negotiations over land in British Columbia could occur within a discourse of sovereignty, something that has not occurred in that same way in the State of Victoria. These differences and the presence of a First Nations reserve within the limits of Victoria would shape racialized dynamics in the two cities and the spatial commerce of the urbanizing frontier in distinct and important ways throughout the nineteenth century.

Intimate Frontiers: Intermarriage and Miscegenation

Studying racialized space in the colonial city requires paying careful attention to intermarriage, miscegenation, and mixed-race peoples in the cityscape and to the issues of domestic and everyday life, because these urbanizing frontiers were also intimate frontiers, places of shared, collaborative moments between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Writers such as Ann Stoler and Jorge de Alva have noted a profound shift from a structural focus on economics and politics to the cultural and discursive aspects of power formation in everyday life in analyses of colonialism since the late 1970s. Indeed, economic and political structures are *transformed* in these intimate power relations of everyday life.¹¹⁰

Commenting on the increased attention that has been paid to the intimacies of empire, Stoler describes them as vital political sites. The imperial politics of intimacy clearly have global scope. Stoler directs us to the work of feminist scholars who have attempted to trace the intertwined sexual and racial patterns of dominance that move across historical fields and asks us to consider the gendered dimensions of colonial governance.¹¹¹ Attention to intimate relations and gender – as Sylvia Van Kirk, Adele Perry, Ann Stoler, and many other scholars have shown – is crucial. Perry writes that, in the settler colony, “Gender is where the abiding bonds between dispossession and colonization become most clear since settler colonies function on a mutual discourse (often studied separately) of colonization and immigration.”¹¹²

Aboriginal people in Australia were presented in nineteenth-century racial-scientific rhetoric as being the lowest order among all of the races of humankind. While gross and systematic sexual abuse on the colonial frontier was often taken for granted, marriage between Aboriginal women and European men, though

not illegal, was often deemed unacceptable and was only grudgingly acknowledged as an activity of the “lower orders.”¹¹³ In Port Phillip, unlike British Columbia, there was no long-standing tradition of publicly accepted unions between Aboriginal women and European men. Unions between First Nations or Métis women of high rank and European fur traders, which were known as country marriages or marrying *à la façon du pays*, set in train very different social dynamics in British Columbia.¹¹⁴ These unions profoundly affected the socio-spatial politics of the cityscape and the development of social demographics, particularly in the period before the gold rush, and radically threatened and redefined metropolitan ideas of whiteness and white privilege.

Shoring up a white settler population became a priority in both sites, especially after the 1860s. During the mid- to late nineteenth century, each colony encouraged and engineered immigration schemes to bring white women to their shores to fortify and expand the white settler population. Prevailing ideas of white women as the civilizing sex, class and gender mores, and ideas of family and domesticity ensured that white women were crucially required in British colonies. As government officials increasingly feared miscegenation and the supposedly degenerative effects of mixed populations, mixed unions became increasingly unpopular. As Lisa Chilton points out, government officials promoted the civilizing and settling effects of white women’s integration into male-dominated, frontier communities. Their domestic labour was also highly valued.¹¹⁵ By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an overt and vigorous transnational discourse of whiteness, of “white man’s land” and “white labour,” had formed throughout the British settler colonies.¹¹⁶ Immigration policy was crafted to keep out those deemed a threat to the maintenance of white settler society. British Columbia, for instance, borrowed Australia’s colonial immigration laws, which were racially encoded to enforce notions of white labour and white man’s lands. As we shall see, these tensions of intimacy, race, and idealized politics played out at the level of everyday life in urbanizing colonial cities.