Wool, Society and the Economy: A Case Study of the NSW Riverina

Isabella Bruckback

Australia ‘rode on the sheep’s back’ and produced more wool than any other country throughout the 1920s and 30s. The high levels of wool production depended on an allocation of resources including finance, land and labour. This research seeks to understand how resources were allocated in the wool industry during the inter war years. Patterns of economic development were shaped by these allocations. Scholars present an image of the wool industry where allocations were on the basis of international demand and the ‘power’ of the ‘big man’s frontier’. However, my thesis contends the role of demand declined in line with changing consumer preferences during the inter war years. On this basis the function of supply, and the role of both large and small scale wool producers, became the major influences over the development of wool industry. The influence was exerted through a network including wool growers, political parties, finance companies and industry organisations. This network operated by allocating major resources to achieve particular economic outcomes including higher levels of profit. Analysis of station records, manuscripts, and journals such as the Pastoral Review provides the basis for a supply side framework centred on the wool industry network. The Riverina provides a valuable focus for this study, as its wool growers have played an influential role in shaping the supply of Australian wool and the broader wool industry network. The interwar years provide insight into a time of unprecedented change, reflecting a period of both prosperity and economic stress. The events of this dynamic period shifted patterns of resource allocation, and the impact was felt well beyond the 1920s and 30s. The primary contribution of my thesis is to link social and cultural developments to broader patterns of resource allocation in the wool industry that underpinned economic development during the interwar years.
Dreaming History for the Pelican: the deep history of Aboriginal trade and exchange networks in the Top End of the Northern Territory

Rob Paton

Large parts of the landscape of the Top End of the Northern Territory are commonly viewed as being barren and almost devoid of human history. Spanning this landscape, however, is a vibrant, very old and largely undocumented network of Aboriginal trade and exchange that communicates goods, information and stories between places and people. My project takes up the challenge of revealing this hidden landscape by using archival, ethnographic, film and oral sources, to attach rich human stories to trade and exchange goods as diverse as stone blades, boomerangs, spears, cloth and videos.

I hypothesise that this communication network extends well beyond the historic/prehistoric boundary, several thousand years into the deep past. I will test this hypothesis against a detailed archaeological analysis of the remains of traded stone blades, arguing that a clear link can be made between these remains and the historic stories associated with them – resulting in a hybrid history incorporating methods and sources from history and archaeology. Establishing this link unsettles ideas about 1788 being a temporal boundary for the useful application of historical sources and methods. It also questions a central doctrine of mainstream archaeology in Australia that we can only know the prehistoric past through extrapolating from established testable scientific laws, while largely dismissing historic evidence.

Some of my sources, such as ethnologist Donald Thompson’s 1930’s archive, are well known. Others, like my own archive of ethnographic films, photographs, sound recordings and archaeological data from the early 1980’s, have never been fully examined and are of significance not only for my own research, but also for the descendants of the people I have worked with, whose history is the subject of my work.

Sarah Tooth

The Palestinian capture of eleven Israeli Olympic team members during the 1972 Munich Olympics ended with the killing of all hostages by their captors. Melani McAlister refers to the so-called Munich massacre as the moment in which Middle Eastern terrorism ‘profoundly’ entered US public life, and emphasises the impact of both the real-time reporting, and the sense of attack on the Olympic spirit. The hostage situation, its end, and the Israeli response of covertly executing those deemed involved, has been variously represented across US mass media over the 40 years since, suggesting a continuing significance. I plan to extend McAlister’s study of the initial US broadcast and print news, to a study of representations of the Munich massacre and its aftermath across US mass media between 1972 and 2012. I aim to establish how the events have been represented; and how the representations have shaped, and been shaped by, the cultural and political fields in which they were produced. I will approach my study through text analysis, and by situating the representations in the contexts of the media (television, press, radio, film, new media), the genre (news, documentary, docudrama, fiction), and the historical moment in which they were produced (for example, the affect of the Vietnam War, the Iranian hostage crisis, 9/11), thus enabling me to chart the historically contingent meaning-making shifts in the representations during the time period. I thus tentatively suggest the representations, produced at different points in time, offer a previously unexplored lens through which to examine the formation of, and shifts in, public ideas concerning terrorism and identity in the US between 1972 and 2012.
Aboriginal Whalers of Twofold Bay

Nola Errey

From the beginning of the whaling industry in Twofold Bay NSW there is evidence of significant Aboriginal involvement. These traces of the “historical existence and entanglement of settler and Aboriginal cultures’ have been appropriated for different purposes in the present; by the white community as part of a founding myth and by the Yuin people as a communal memory that provides a sense of continuity and belonging that creates a ‘local past’. Although primary sources and recent research hint at significant agency for the Aboriginal protagonists in shaping the nature and extent of the whaling industry, the narratives surrounding this history have been constructed within the reductionist discourses of local history, heritage tourism and archaeology. My question thus focuses on how these narratives have been constructed, how and when they became part of the collective local memory and what functions they serve in the present. Consequently, landscape, memorialisation, the scope of local history, oral history and the function of both collective and individual memory will constitute a significant part of my study. My research will aim to reveal the many and often conflicting voices that constitute these stories. It will show how the historical traces have been continually renegotiated through the localised accounts of both European and Aboriginal memory and become a particular, fragmented, local and cultural memory that is representative of the issues facing historians of indigenous history in Australia. The research will contribute to the discussion about how Australia’s Aboriginal past is remembered and represented. It not only raises issues surrounding memory and memorialisation but of agency and subjectivity and, most importantly, what is the relevance of history for contemporary Aboriginal communities?
The French mystique. Frenchness and the French in Australia, 1848-1914

Alexis Bergantz

Despite the small number of French nationals living in the country at the turn of the nineteenth-century, francophilia was a salient aspect of Australian cultural and social life. Taking this nexus between the French ‘presence’ and ‘influence’ as its point of departure, my thesis investigates the idea of Frenchness in order to consider the cultural representations of France in Australia and the history of the people whose lives intersected and engaged with those ideas. Accordingly, my guiding questions consider the particularities of the representations of France in Australia during a time of growing national consciousness. Were these simply a transfer from the ‘mother country’, how did they change over time? What were the impacts of regional and local circumstances? Further, I ask how Frenchness was lived and articulated, and by whom, in a British settler colonial society. Importantly, what does this reveal about Australia’s cultural relationship to Britain and the ideas of Britishness and Australianness? In recent years transnational history has opened up new venues to study the significance of the global flow of ideas and people in the shaping of discrete national cultures. Through the use of newspapers, consular archives and personal records, a transnational approach offers a framework of analysis that can turn the spotlight on the mutually constitutive relationship between historical actors and the broader canvas of the nation. My thesis will thus offer new insights into the transnational processes at play in the construction of nineteenth-century Australian culture, whilst also allowing for the retrieval of the life stories of a largely forgotten group of French and francophone people who called l’Australie home.

Lissa Coleman-Fraser

In 1919, the U.S. Division of Venereal Disease hired black doctor Roscoe C. Brown to work with black communities. At the time, medical services and programs were segregated, legal measures and social convention dictated who was ‘white’ and who was not, and attempted to regulate interaction between black and white Americans. The discourse was shaped by white fears of the idea of racial equality, often focussed upon sex, marriage and reproduction across the colour line. However, by 1950 there had been a significant ideological shift towards racial equality in American public health institutes. The Federal Public Health Service integrated its programs, dissolving specifically black-targeted programs.

Using the social hygiene movement as a lens my research traces this shift. It will analyse the multiple, sometimes conflicting, discourses surrounding issues of ‘race’, how they functioned in relation to one another, and how they shaped and were shaped by the social context. Integral to this analysis is an exploration of power dynamics within and between participating professional and lay groups.

While previous work on this subject has focussed on the events of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study – a now thoroughly embedded symbol of the legacy of racism and exploitation in American medicine – this research instead moves beyond characterisations of ‘victims’ and ‘villains.’ Instead it scrutinises the ways in which blacks and whites in the movement negotiated with each other, and their own communities, to achieve their desired outcomes.

Utilising the archival records of the U.S. Public Health Service, the American Social Hygiene Association, and various state, local and governmental organisations, I will bridge intellectual and social history to explore how the social hygiene movement undermined and reinforced dominant conceptions of race over time.
At Liberty: Australian Women in the United States, 1910-1960

Anne Rees

During the early decades of the twentieth century, hundreds of Australian women crossed the Pacific in quest of adventure and career opportunities in the United States. At a time when most of their contemporaries yearned for the ‘Mother Country’ or the cultural riches of Europe, these women pursued an unconventional and little-trodden path, trying their fortune among the skyscrapers of Manhattan or the film studios of Hollywood. These trans-Pacific journeys have received little attention from travel or gender historians, and have also been passed over by scholars of Australian-American relations. This thesis will therefore be the first extended study of Australian women who sojourned in the United States. I will employ biographical records and travel writings to trace the experiences and identities of Australian women who pursued professional and educational opportunities in America, focusing on the period between 1910 and 1960. This category encompasses students, actresses, diplomats, artists, interior decorators, librarians and many others, and extends from ill-educated women of obscure origins to the daughters of moneyed squatters.

This research has the objective of uncovering the causes and effects of America’s increasing prominence as a destination for women seeking wider horizons, and aims to offer a new perspective on a formative period in trans-Pacific relations. In particular, I hope to investigate whether interpersonal encounter and individual experience made a more significant contribution to the relationship between Australia and America than has previously been recognised. Not only did the decision to cross the Pacific reflect and reinforce an increased engagement with the United States, but the vast majority of these travellers returned to the antipodes, where many went on to advocate ideas, technologies or professional practices acquired in America. Australia’s reorientation towards its Pacific neighbour was therefore, I propose, enacted in part by the activities of female sojourners.
Tiddas’ Landscapes - Reinscribing identity and history through uncovering Aboriginal women’s histories of place in NSW

Barrina South

Aboriginal women’s knowledge of the Australian landscape and places of significance are too often overlooked, dismissed or ignored. Within this group, NSW Aboriginal women are further marginalised due to the wider notion and misconception that NSW Aboriginal knowledge and culture as a whole is nonexistent or has been lost through the devastating impact of colonisation, with the ‘real’ Aboriginal people with their ‘authentic’ culture living in other parts of the country. My key research question focuses on how uncovering Aboriginal women’s histories of place in New South Wales within a NSW gendered landscape can create a more complete picture of NSW history.

The state of NSW contains places within its cultural landscape which are gender specific. My research aim is to uncover Aboriginal women’s or Tiddas’ histories of place in NSW by recording and examining their histories as they relate to sites of significance within this landscape. The aim is to push past the usual approach to pre determine Aboriginal women’s sites as being either understood through archaeological or anthropological categorisation or being of a spiritual or sensitive/sacred nature thus allowing Aboriginal women themselves to discuss sites which are significant to them.

The questions I will be raising in my research include why are there fewer Aboriginal women’s sites being recorded compared to Aboriginal men’s sites? What impact has the under representation of women’s sites had on the understanding of NSW Aboriginal history? And how colonial tropes about Aboriginal culture and women in particular are projected onto mainstream understandings of NSW cultural heritage?

The approaches and methods adopted to achieve my research aim have been taken from landscape history, archaeology, women’s history, feminism, oral history, Foucault theory of power/knowledge and post-colonial history to promote Indigenist research agendas. With limited or non-existent NSW Aboriginal women’s histories on sites of significance, my research will be finding new sources, new stories to challenge existing literature, reinstating NSW Aboriginal women in to Australian history.