



Empire and Asian Migration: Sovereignty, Immigration Restriction and Protest in the British Settler Colonies, 1888–1907

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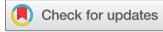
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Haebich acknowledges how writings in performance studies were useful to her in approaching performance as history; this history in turn will inspire new ways of seeing within performance studies.

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Empire and Asian Migration: Sovereignty, Immigration Restriction and Protest in the British Settler Colonies, 1888–1907

By Jeremy C. Martens. Perth: UWA Publishing, 2018. Pp. 228. A\$39.99 paper.

On 13 January 1897, Mahatma Gandhi disembarked from the ship *S.S. Courland* in the southern African port of Durban and walked into the midst of an anti-Asian race riot. He was recognised by a group of young boys who yelled ‘Gandhi’, ‘thrash him’, ‘surround him’. A crowd formed and he was ‘kicked, whipped, stale fish and other missiles were thrown at him, which hurt his eye and cut his ear’. Close to losing consciousness, Gandhi gripped the railing of a nearby house for support. The crowd chanted, ‘we’ll hang old Gandhi from the sour apple tree’ (84).

The Durban attack is but one example of the systemic anti-Asian violence explored by Jeremy Martens in his expansive study, *Empire and Asian Migration: Sovereignty, Immigration Restriction and Protest in the British Settler Colonies, 1888–1907*. As Martens explains, the Durban incident was part of a much larger movement across the settler colonial world in the late nineteenth century which called for a ban on Asian migration to these colonies. From Sydney to Wellington to Durban, settler colonials lashed out at resident Asian communities, targeting Asians as they disembarked on shore, burning property, attacking Asian businesses and mobbing prominent community leaders such as Gandhi. Making sense of this mob violence, and placing it in a larger imperial context, is one of the many strengths of Martens’ book.

Empire and Asian Migration interrogates the causal relationship between the mass protest

movements against Asian migration and Asian peoples at the turn of the century, and the immigration restriction regimes which appeared in their wake. As Martens explains, closely following outbreaks of violence such as the Durban attack, ‘draconian race-based anti-Asian measures were often hastily introduced’ (3). Martens argues that these popular protests were as much about settler demands for sovereignty and self-government as they were about racial hatred. For as soon as settler colonies tried to impose bans on immigration through legislative measures, they were shocked to discover a fundamental constitutional weakness common to all British colonial states. Settler states could manage their internal affairs but ‘remained subservient to the United Kingdom for external or international issues, such as Asian migration’ (2). Unwilling to anger Japan, then an emerging world power, the United Kingdom refused the demands of the colonies to block Asian migration. A compromise was reached, and settler colonial parliaments introduced ‘immigration restriction laws that did not explicitly mention race but were nevertheless squarely aimed at non-white migrants’ (2). In Australia these laws culminated, of course, in the White Australia Policy. Through this focus on sovereignty, Martens breaks original ground on what is well-trodden territory, noting that ‘[t]he implications of this limited sovereignty remain under-researched by historians’ (7).

As Martens acknowledges in his book’s carefully written introduction, transnational histories on this subject are far from new. From Charles Price’s *Great White Walls* to Adam McKeown’s *Melancholy Order* and Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds’ *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, historians have long noticed the striking similarities between the racial regimes and immigration laws that emerged in parallel in English-speaker settler colonies. These similarities are evidenced in the names that settler colonials gave to their immigration restriction polices: White Australia, White New Zealand, White Canada, Chinese Exclusion Act. It is not surprising that historians of this ‘racial moment’ have adopted transnational, global and comparative methodologies to explain the emergence of anti-Asian sentiment. Doing this work requires an in-depth knowledge of the national histories of multiple countries, the patience to wade through dense archival collections relating to

immigration laws in these different countries, and moreover, a clear understanding of how Asian peoples resisted these laws, combining their legal battles in colonial courts with other forms of resistance on the street and in the press. Martens has mastered this approach in *Empire and Asian Migration*.

Each chapter begins with a moment of mass protest against Asian migration and then traces the ripple effects of this protest through the law courts, the press, parliament, and finally, the larger imperial stage. Importantly, Martens acknowledges the agency of the many Asian litigants, diplomats and anti-colonial leaders who fought back against immigration restriction legislation. The book begins with the *Afghan* crisis of 1888 when a mob of six thousand marched on Sydney Harbour to stop Chinese passengers aboard the *Afghan* from landing, eventually storming the New South Wales Parliament. Martens then analyses legal challenges mounted by Chinese migrants in the wake of such protests, untangling what they reveal about limited sovereignty in the Australian colonies (the Chinese litigants often won their legal challenges against immigration restriction, the courts powerless to stop them within the law). Subsequent chapters trace the role of Japanese diplomats in watering down the racist language of the White Australia Policy, while the final chapters of the book argue that the birth of Gandhi's anti-colonial Satyagraha movement is in fact linked to this larger imperial moment, when settler colonials realised the lie of their independence, resorting to mob violence against Asians to assert their fragile sovereignty.

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Italians in Australia: History, Memory, Identity

By Francesco Ricatti. Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2018. Pp. 147. €51.99 cloth.

The continued vilification of asylum seekers, refugees and other minority groups in Australia, from mainstream media and from within

Parliament, makes Francesco Ricatti's *Italians in Australia* a prescient work. Debates spurred by Minister for Home Affairs Peter Dutton's erroneous comments about 'African gangs' in Melbourne indicate that we need to continue to challenge ideas about 'successful integration' and acceptable migrants, and tell deeper histories that reflect on evolving ideas about race and acceptability in different historical contexts. Ricatti's work accepts this challenge and provides histories that are multilayered and inclusive of experiences of difference and discrimination.

The history of Italians in Australia is often told in relation to socioeconomic success, postwar industrial boom, and the Italian contribution to the culinary and cultural life of the nation. Within the frame of celebratory state multiculturalism, and its reassuringly stereotypical ethnic identities, there remains the risk of glossing over the structural realities of migrant settlement, the familial implications of mobility, and ongoing issues over political representation and cultural recognition in a settler-colonial state. Ricatti's book adds complexity to that narrative, particularly by focusing on transcultural and transnational contexts.

But why might we need a new history of Italians in Australia: surely migration from Italy, in particular, has garnered extensive scholarly attention since the 1980s? It has, and Ricatti traces this literature on Italian mass migration (to the Americas) and Italian migration to Australia. But this book addresses new questions. It directly engages with contested memories, intimate histories of family and community, and unpacks the complex lineage of memories and emotions attached to 'platitudes, clichés, and ideological refrains' (viii) – those that are foisted on to minority communities, and those that are developed from within, in response to certain contexts. *Italians in Australia* is unique also because of its critical use of decolonial, transcultural, and intersectional frames, especially its careful and intertwined consideration of race, class, gender, sexuality and age.

Ricatti applies a decolonial frame to his study of racism in the Italian-Australian context, arguing that 'Italian migrants' complicity in settler colonialism is as relevant for the present as it is relevant for the past, although of course, racism and settler colonialism are mutant beasts whose biography is always hard to write coherently' (66). Nonetheless, the work provides a compelling account of Italian migrants' attempts