Men and Manliness on the Frontier: Queensland and British Columbia in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

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Except where acknowledged in the customary manner, the material presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge, original and has not been submitted in whole or in part for a degree from any University.

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Abstract

In mid-nineteenth century Britain there existed a dominant masculine ethos denoted by the term ‘manliness’. ‘Manliness’ encompassed the virtues of courage, stoicism, endurance, self-control, temperance, honesty and integrity. Above all the possession of ‘character’ and the achievement of ‘independence’ were regarded as the primary attributes of a man. While the ‘gentleman’ supposedly embodied all the manly virtues, the ethos of manliness pervaded all classes, although it was not necessarily uniformly practised. Britain’s imperial venture saw thousands of men of all classes leave Britain for colonies such as Queensland and British Columbia. British men imagined these frontiers as sites for the performance of manliness and the achievement of manly independence. Indeed, many men found ample opportunity for the exercise of courage, perseverance and stoicism. However, the performance of manliness on the frontier was problematic. Though zealously performed by many, the manly ideal was not successfully practised by all. Some aspects of the ideal – sobriety, sexual propriety, and the fulfillment of family responsibilities – were put under stress by frontier. Despite the pervasiveness of a well-defined and articulated ethos of manliness, the actuality was quite different. In practice, there was no absolute standard, no hard and fast line between manliness and unmanliness. The manly ethos was a driver on the frontier, influencing actions and determining responses to frontier conditions. The doctrine of manliness was discursively employed to marginalise and subordinate indigenous peoples and violence against indigenous people was often regarded as an expression of manly virtue.
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INTRODUCTION

We were a sunburnt, motley group, as camped together by the banks of the noisy river, we talked on many a diverse thing; of gold, of home, of murder, of love and enterprise; of bygone dangers braved, of fallen comrades and defiant foes. There was something, I thought, of the hungry beast of prey in the eager, yearning flash of each others [sic] restless eyes, in which the fire of hardened desperation and unflinching physical bravery ever glowed, and which seemed to feed upon continual excitement. There was something embodying all the wildness of the savage and all the ghastliness of civilization in the hair-grown swarthy faces of the men, as now and again the flickering blaze of the fire round which we sat was reflected upon them, giving a look of ferocity even to repose. (Kinahan Cornwallis, The New El Dorado or British Columbia.)

British adventurer Kinahan Cornwallis paints a frightening picture of the frontiersman of mid-nineteenth-century British Columbia. His camp fire companions were British men, lured from home to British Columbia by gold and the prospect of striking it rich. However, around the campfire, they scarcely seemed like men. The frontier wilderness had transformed them, erasing the lineaments of upbringing and education.

Ten years after Cornwallis met his frontier companions, Charles Kingsley, Rector of Eversley, author, Professor of History at Cambridge and stern advocate of what was derisively labelled ‘Muscular Christianity’, gave a sermon at Wimbledon to a largely military congregation. Taking as his text the Old Testament, Numbers, Chapter 24, Verse 9, ‘He crouched, he lay down as a lion; and as a great lion. Who dare rouse him up?’, he lectured the mostly male congregation on the virtues which made men and the nation great. The picture of British men which emerged was quite different to the one depicted by Cornwallis. The passage refers to the tribes of Israel which, according to Kingsley, through ‘moral obedience’ and loyalty to each other, saved themselves and ‘their race’, and made themselves ‘men’. An important part of their survival was their physical
training which had endowed them with ‘hardihood, endurance, and self help.’ However, this was insignificant compared to the moral training they had gained. Moral training had endowed them with ‘the habits of obedience, self-restraint, self-sacrifice, mutual trust, and mutual help; the inspiration of common patriotism, of a common national destiny.’

Kingsley proclaimed his confidence that through the soldiers’ military training, they had taught themselves the lessons ‘Israel had learnt in the wilderness’, and that they would be better men for it. There were also virtues which their military training ought to foster, and which were taught ‘thank God’ by ‘the stern education of our public schools’:

For the moral discipline which goes to make a good soldier or a successful competitor on this ground, the self restraint, the obedience, the diligence, the punctuality, the patience, the courtesy, the forbearance, the justice, the temperance, these virtues, needful for those who compete in the struggle which the idler and debauchee can take no share, all these go equally toward the making of a good man.

In this sermon Kingsley encapsulated the mid-Victorian masculine ethos, denoted then by the term ‘manliness’. Founded on Christian principles, this ethos simultaneously valued manly vigour and self-control. Manliness encompassed the virtues of Christianity, honesty and integrity, and the practice of endurance, temperance, diligence and self-restraint. It was regarded as universal, applying to all walks of life, in all places in a world driven by competitive struggle.

Would Kingsley have recognised Cornwallis’s companions as manly Britons? More than likely he would have been shocked by what they had become, lacking many of the qualities he extolled at Wimbledon. Cornwallis’s companions were probably brave, hardy but.

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1 Charles Kingsley, *Discipline and Other Sermons* (London: MacMillan, 1890, 5)
and strong, but would they have been courteous, temperate and self-restrained? One expects not. Although he visited the West Indies for three months in 1869-70, Kingsley had no experience of life on Britain’s colonial frontier, no opportunity to assess how the attributes he recommended to his Wimbledon congregation were practised outside of Britain.

This thesis focuses on Queensland and British Columbia in the mid-nineteenth century, examining how British men responded to the frontier and how they enacted their manhood there. It argues that men responded to frontier challenges in a number of ways. Some sought to replicate the social conditions of metropolitan Britain, in order to maintain their position at the top of the masculine and class hierarchy. The ‘muscular’ virtues came to the fore as the frontier provided a stage on which British men could ‘perform’ manliness, in particular by exercising courage, stoicism and perseverance. In a range of cultural productions the frontier was imagined as a place where men could put their manliness to good use, where they could fulfill their manly potential. The frontier could be tamed and civilised by British men who possessed the manly virtues. It was a place of opportunity where the social and economic constraints of the metropole were absent. This proved to be a persistent characterisation, forming the basis of frontier mythology in both Australia and Canada.

However, for many men, the reality of the frontier was quite different. The frontier could be a more complicated, unsettling and troubling place than popular fiction and travel writing portrayed it. Many men struggled to adapt to the frontier environment – for them
the pursuit of manliness was problematic. Though zealously performed by many, the 
manly ideal was not successfully practised by all. There are many stories Canadian and 
Australian frontier mythology neglects. By highlighting some of these stories and 
demonstrating the range of responses men had to the frontier, this thesis questions 
prominent frontier myths, offering a better sense of the reality of frontier life.

My aim is to reveal what it was like for men to live and work on the colonial frontier, and 
to analyse their experiences, in order to raise issues about the nature of mid-nineteenth-
century masculinity, how it was constructed, how it was practised and represented, and 
how masculinity interacted with, and was defined by, other social variables such as race 
and class. Race, class and gender are mutually constitutive, and on mid-nineteenth-
century British frontiers such as Queensland and British Columbia these social variables 
interacted and operated just as strongly as they did in the metropole to construct 
identities, relationships and status. British manliness had to be defended against 
alternative possibilities for frontier masculinities, which were marginalised and excluded, 
but never fully suppressed. The overarching questions this thesis addresses are how did 
men respond to the alien frontier environment? Did British manliness ‘stand in good 
stead’ in all places?

In considering the experiences of individual men, differences as well as similarities 
emerge, the sum of which comprise masculine life on the frontier. Men on the frontier 
could be gold miners, explorers, pastoralists, priests or policemen. Indeed, the rubric 
‘pioneer’ covers a multitude of occupational and social roles. I am interested in the
variations in men’s responses to the frontier as well as the commonalities. This is not a comparative study of Queensland and British Columbia. This thesis examines these places as frontier societies which presented British men with the opportunity to enact ‘manliness’ under alien conditions. It investigates the ways in which the dominant masculinity of the mid-nineteenth century was performed, and not performed, on the frontier by men in a variety of roles and circumstances. Fundamental to this investigation are the concepts of gender, masculinity and frontier.

Gender and gender relations, masculinity and femininity, have been explained in terms of biology, sex role theory, and psychoanalysis. In the biologically determinist view, masculine or feminine behaviour is the result of being genetically male or female. Sex role theorists hold that being a man or a woman is a function of behaving in prescribed and normalised ways which are considered appropriate for each sex. Masculinity or femininity is simply a matter of enacting certain character traits which are assumed to be either masculine or feminine. The psychoanalytical approach starts, of course, with Freud. Freud sees childhood as a process fraught with conflict and repression as children learn to moderate their desires to meet social expectations. What brings characteristically masculine or feminine identities into existence is the manner in which a child’s pleasure instincts are managed by its parents.

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While useful up to a point, such approaches have been rejected by sociologists and historians who argue that gender is a cultural construct, socially and historically engineered through a process of gender relations. In this view masculinity arises out of the social relations between men and women and the naturalisation or internalisation of these relations. Masculinity, like femininity, is a relational concept, relying on social demarcations and oppositions. It is not monolithic, nor fixed, but determined by society, culture and environment. R.W. Connell used the term ‘configurations of practice’ to denote that masculinity is not a passive characteristic. Rather, masculinities are performed or practised, manifested through the behaviour of men within the structure of gender relations. As Jeff Hearn puts it: ‘particular masculinities are not fixed formulae, but rather combinations of actions, part powerful, part arbitrary, performed in reaction and relation to complex material relations and emotional demands, and recognised by others as signifying that this is a man.’ Being a man is not merely a case of biology, of being male. In mid-Victorian Britain, the code or ethos of ‘manliness’ was the dominant configuration of practice – although unevenly distributed through class and region.

Connell further argues that it is necessary to recognise more than one type of masculinity and to examine the relationship between the different types. He recognises the existence

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8 R.W. Connell, Masculinities, (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1995), 44.
9 Connell, Masculinities, 44.
10 Hearn, “Research in Men and Masculinities”, 54.
of multiple masculinities which arise out of the interplay between gender, race and class. Hegemonic masculinity, according to Connell, is the masculinity which occupies the dominant and accepted position in a given pattern of gender relations. In Connell’s work, the emphasis is on the construction of a male hegemony over women. In this study I am interested in the formation and practise of a dominant or hegemonic ideal of what it meant to be ‘manly’. Being culturally constructed, hegemonic masculinities are fluid, dependent on the interests of the dominant class at a particular time. Martin Crotty, for example, has argued that in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Australia the ruling classes developed and exploited elite schooling, juvenile literature and youth groups in their attempt to preserve and further their own ideals of how men should think and behave.

Within the cultural dominance of hegemonic masculinity there are gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men. A clear example of this type in contemporary Western society is the dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men. Connell uses the term ‘marginalisation’ to refer ‘to the relations between the masculinities in dominant and subordinated classes or ethnic groups.’ It is important to understand that hegemonic and marginalised masculinities are not fixed categories or fixed character types, but ‘configurations of practice’ operating in particular circumstances in evolving environments. The frontier is no exception. The relational and contingent nature of masculinity, the potential for change

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11 Connell, *Masculinities*, 76.
dependent on environment, and the existence of multiple and alternative masculinities is apparent upon an investigation of men on frontiers.

As will be discussed in Chapter One, in the nineteenth century manliness was a construct made up by reference to both masculine and feminine attributes. The categories of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ are themselves culturally created. Once the essentialism of the biological perspective of gender is dismissed, there is no masculine or feminine ‘essence’ or referents which ground these terms.\(^\text{15}\) In other words, neither category consists of immutable, essential or exclusive characteristics. There is no particular reason why the qualities of piety, nurturance and virtue should be classified as feminine. Nor, on the other hand, is there any reason why qualities such as courage, stoicism and endurance should be identified as masculine.\(^\text{16}\) Manliness did not entail a rejection of everything that was feminine, nor did femininity involve a complete rejection of masculine qualities (for example, a minister of religion, or a husband and father, could be caring and pious, putatively feminine qualities). Hence the opposite of manliness is not femininity, but ‘unmanliness’.\(^\text{17}\)

Many researchers in the field of masculinity point out that scholarly and popular interest in men and masculinity appears to be at an all time high. Connell points out that from the early 1990s questions about men and boys have aroused remarkable media interest, public concern, and controversy. He points to a growing number of ethnographic studies,

\(^{16}\) Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 6.
\(^{17}\) Martin Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 6.
exploring masculinity in a wide range of societies and cultures. Lynne Segal has expressed the view that, until the 1990s, the idea of masculinity was reasonably straightforward and that it was only at the beginning of the decade that men and masculinity became ‘more mysterious, more perplexing and more worrying.’ The result has been a burgeoning of scholarship on gender and masculinity occurring across a range of disciplines including psychology, sociology and history.

Historians have heeded the arguments of Kay Saunders, Raymond Evans and John Tosh and sought to rectify a situation where the ubiquity of men as historical actors ensured a situation where they were the least understood sexual and gendered identities. In the words of John Tosh ‘in the historical record masculinity is everywhere and nowhere’. Among historians of colonialism and imperialism, gender has been a key variable in mapping the development of various colonial projects, significant for both colonisers and the colonised. Historians of gender such as Catherine Hall, Ann Laura Stoller, Anne McClintock and Mrinalini Sinha, drawing on post-structuralist and post-colonial perspectives, have shown that colonisation cannot be understood without examining the role of gender and that gender cannot be understood without considering the influence of race and colonialism. These authors have shown that gender is not an independent,

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18 Connell, Masculinities, ix.
19 Lynne Segal, Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities Changing Men (London: Virago, 1990), 60.
autonomous force, but arises from the interplay with other social structures such as race and class.\textsuperscript{22}

Other scholars, including literary scholars and geographers, have focused on representations of masculinity and colonialism. Notable works include Richard Phillips’s \textit{Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure}, Martin Green’s \textit{Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire} and Robert Dixon’s \textit{Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction, 1875-1914}. Phillips looks at how adventure stories, set in exotic frontier locations, construct social and cultural spaces in which both imperial geographies and masculinities are imagined.\textsuperscript{23} Martin Green argues that adventure tales were the ‘energising myth of British imperialism’, the ‘story England told itself when it went to sleep at night.’\textsuperscript{24} The male heroes of these tales possessed the manly virtues of courage, persistence, strength and leadership.\textsuperscript{25} Robert Dixon examines the relationship between imperialism, adventure, masculinity, Englishness and Australian nationhood. He argues that the ‘New Imperialism’ of the late-nineteenth century as an ideology, and the adventure novel as an ideological form, resolved the contradictions in the lived experience of imperialism, by inscribing the male reader in tales of regenerative violence on the colonial frontier.\textsuperscript{26} Many of the works on

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22}Connell, \textit{Masculinities}, 80.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Richard Phillips, \textit{Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure} (London: Routledge, 1997).
\item \textsuperscript{24} Martin Green, \textit{Dreams of Adventure, Deed of Empire} (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 3.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Martin Green, \textit{Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire}, 23.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Robert Dixon, \textit{Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction, 1875-1914} (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1.
\end{itemize}
Victorian masculinities use various literary representations of men as their primary material.27

Australian gender studies flows from the rise of feminist scholarship in the 1970s. Anne Summer’s *Damned Whores and God’s Police*, Miriam Dixson’s *The Real Matilda* and Beverly Kingston’s *My Wife, My Daughter, and Poor Mary Ann*, all published in the mid-1970s, instigated a major field of scholarly enquiry in Australia.28 Since that time, an increasing number of Australian historians have found that gender is a ‘useful category of historical analysis.’29 Many, such as Judith Godden and Susan Hunt, have written about women on the frontier, disrupting the stereotyped image of the bush as an exclusively masculine domain.30

Marilyn Lake was one of the first Australian historians to recognise masculinities in Australia as an historical problem.31 Lake’s “Frontier Feminism and the Marauding White Man” argues that it was the ‘marauding white man’ who, as a sexual threat to

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women, was the authentic representative of the frontier male.\(^{32}\) Since her groundbreaking work, interest in masculinity has been manifest in the emergence of a body of literature examining men in Australian society. Soldiers, convicts, lifesavers, sportsmen, and businessmen have been the subjects of historical survey and critical analysis from a gender/masculinity perspective.\(^{33}\)

Illustrating that it is erroneous to think of one, universal masculine type, the existence of multiple masculinities operating and sometimes overlapping has been revealed in studies on white working-class, homosexual, and suburban post-war masculinities.\(^{34}\) The emphasis in Australian studies of masculinities has been on the Australian male in virile, physical domains, concentrating on the bushman and the digger, or at least their late-twentieth-century incarnations. An exception to this is Martin Crotty’s *Making the Australian Male*. Crotty’s work explores the historical development of respectable urban middle-class ideals of masculinity in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Australia.\(^{35}\)

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\(^{35}\) Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 1.
Canadian historians too have recognised the utility of gender for historical analysis, including for frontier histories of British Columbia. Adele Perry has examined the connections between gender, race and the construction of colonial society in British Columbia, probing the homosocial culture and the attempts by authorities to create an orderly, ‘respectable’ white settler colony.  

36 Elizabeth Vibert in *Trader Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau*, has examined the journals of frontier men whose model of masculinity was significant, not only for their self-image, but also for their representations of indigenous people.

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The growing Australian and Canadian masculinities canon, together with gender histories emerging from the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand, comprises the corpus of research to which this thesis contributes. This body of work gives lie to the idea that gender is only about women and instead conceptualises gender as an active social formation shaping the identities and experiences of both men and women. Work by John Tosh, J.A Mangan, and Mary Poovey on British masculinities, Anthony E. Rotundo, Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen on masculinities in the United States, and Jock

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Phillips, Margot Fry and Miles Fairburn on New Zealand masculinities, demonstrates that masculinity is a construct worthy of analysis. 38

Frontiers have also attracted a great deal of scholarly attention. They are often understood as tangible physical entities that can be geographically defined. Fred Alexander defined a frontier as ‘not a political boundary between neighbouring states but the outer edge of settlement within a larger geographic area.’ 39 Allied to this conceptualisation is the idea that frontiers are landscapes which can be crossed; environments that can be tamed, made civilised and productive. The frontier is a tangible physical reality that moves backwards and forwards across the land (though mainly forwards), involving social and economic conditions different to those of the metropole. The seminal work in frontier literature is Frederick Jackson Turner’s “The Significance of the Frontier in American History”. First published in 1893, his thesis illustrates the concept of a continually advancing line: ‘The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development.’ 40 For Turner the frontier was also

a place of transformation, of initial regression followed by ‘rebirth’, fundamental to the
growth of American society and character:

Thus American development has exhibited not merely advance along a single line, but a return to
primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line, and a new development for that area. American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character.41

Sixty years on, Turner’s thesis continued to dominate American scholarship on the frontier. For Ray Allen Billington the Anglo-American frontier could best be understood by picturing it ‘as a migrating geographic area which moved westward from Atlantic to Pacific over the course of three centuries. Here was the outer edge of advancing settlement, the meeting point of savagery and civilisation, the zone where civilisation entered the wilderness.’42 Such a view is relevant here as the idea of the frontier it represents is one that has loomed large in Australian historiography, as an influence on national identity and on the Australian male character.43 Russel Ward’s The Australian Legend drew on Turner’s thesis in its exploration of the character of the Australian male and the promotion of this character type in poetry and song.44 John Hirst’s “The Pioneering Legend” – referring essentially to men who work the land and tame the environment – offered an alternative to the Australian legend as the Genesis myth of Australian identity, and analyses a view of the frontier as a tangible physical wilderness that can be tamed, civilised, and made economically productive.45 Ward’s and Hirst’s versions of the frontier have had an enduring effect on Australian culture. W.K. Hancock

41Cited in Alexander, Moving Frontiers, 5.
in *Australia* posited that the history of Australia is the story of British peoples ‘pressing forward to their economic frontiers’.46 Geoffrey Blainey’s *The Tyranny of Distance* focused on two characteristics of frontiers – isolation and distance – to argue that these factors were critical in shaping Australia’s history.47

More recent scholarship has conceptualised frontiers as much more complex entities, not only to be represented geographically, but also as intellectual and psychological constructs. The contributions in Lynette Russell’s *Colonial Frontiers: Indigenous European Encounters in Settler Societies* offer interpretations of frontiers which differ from those of earlier scholars in that they contemplate the frontier as an imagined zone mentally and psychically constructed by those who encounter it. Frontiers are hybrid spaces where disparate elements combine and for which control is usually contested between indigenous people and settlers.48 Elsewhere, Richard Nile points out the creative and transformative nature of frontiers, describing them as ‘cultural spaces, zones of interpretation, in which specific cultural identities are made and differences established between periphery and centre’.49 The frontier as a place where cultures collide is suggested by the conceptualisation of the frontier as a ‘cultural membrane’. In this analogy, the frontier is a membrane separating indigenous and European cultures. Each culture is influenced by the other, but the dominant pressure comes from the European

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side, with the two cultures competing for the frontier’s resources. Mary Louise Pratt’s analysis of the frontier as a moving ‘contact zone’ is applicable here. The concept of a ‘contact zone’ refers, in Pratt’s words, to ‘the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, racial inequality, and intractable conflict.’

In this thesis the frontier is perceived as a liminal zone, a place of transitions and transformation. Those who live on the frontier occupy a zone which is simultaneously at the margins of the metropole and constitutes the initial stages of a new society. Colonial frontiers are both contingent upon the metropole and independent of it. They are contingent because the individuals who go to a frontier do so carrying with them the ideologies, values and knowledge of their original society which, in part, determines the type of society which emerges. At the same time frontiers are independent, because they are remote and experimental places where conditions lend themselves to social, cultural and personal change, and old institutions do not necessarily serve as well as they did in the metropole. Queensland and British Columbia are models of this dualism.

Until the 1970s, much of Queensland frontier historiography was built on a number of enduring frontier myths. These included the pioneering myth, the exploits of individual heroes such as the explorers Kennedy and Leichhardt, and a denial of Aboriginal
resistance. In Queensland histories written in the mid-twentieth century two features stand out: the commitment of Europeans to control and exploit the environment and the enthusiasm of many historians for these endeavours. A.G.L. Shaw’s *The Story of Australia* and Sir Raphael Cilento and Clem Lack’s *Triumph in the Tropics: An Historical Sketch of Queensland* are typical examples of triumphalist historiography which celebrate European domination of the environment and indigenous people. Shaw set the scene for European triumph based on masculine assertion:

> Queensland: Its 688,000 square miles of vast territory – bigger than New South Wales and Victoria combined – was virtually unoccupied, save for the aborigines who have so rarely counted in Australian history. The first need was obviously men, and these Governor Sir George Bowen and Premier Herbert set about attracting.

Late-twentieth-century interpretations of the Queensland frontier have focused less on the economic advancement of Europeans and more on the nature of contact between Europeans and Aborigines and the ubiquity of violence as a tool employed by settlers as they advanced across the colony.

Much of British Columbia’s historiography, like Queensland’s, has portrayed the frontier as an advancing zone of economic exploitation and triumphal European conquest of the wilderness. Histories of the fur trade inevitably emphasise the productive qualities of the

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55 More will be said about racial violence and masculinity on the Queensland frontier below and in a later chapter.
General histories such as Margaret Ormsby’s 1958 *British Columbia: A History* tell a story of successful European settlement, development and exploitation of a new environment. Ormsby summarised the progress of European capitalism in British Columbia in the early nineteenth century:

> In a period of just thirty years, the magnetic pull of the overland beaver trade changed the economic orientation of the Pacific North West. Ties with Canton had weakened and the Lords of the Lakes and the Forests had discovered and opened the principal transportation routes between the mountains and the sea coast. Canadian enterprise had underwritten the expense of exploration; Canadian experience in the wilderness had triumphed over the obstacles of geography and topography. Montreal had supplied the capital, the organising ability and the techniques for commercial development.

More recent histories are sensitive to the cross-cultural and transformative nature of frontiers. Daniel W. Clayton in *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island* (2000), considers how both indigenous people and Europeans were changed by the latter’s projects of trade, exploration and imperial adventure. He argues that cultural contact, modes of representation and imperial strategies created new, and broke down existing, identities and social patterns. Cole Harris considers how Europeans remade British Columbia in their own terms, by mapping it, renaming it, and claiming possession of it. Sylvia van Kirk’s *Many Tender Ties* demonstrates firstly that the fur frontier was

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socially and culturally complex. The prevalence of marriage à la façon du pays (in the custom of the country), demonstrates how, on the frontier, the traditions and conventions of disparate cultures were made and remade.\textsuperscript{62} Secondly, she demonstrates that the Canadian frontier was not entirely a masculine domain. There were women on the fur frontier of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most of them indigenous. Without the support and comfort of indigenous women, men would have found frontier life even more difficult.

As in Australia, Canadian historians have argued for the primacy of the frontier as a foundation of Canadian culture. Using Richard Slotkin’s notion of ‘frontier myth’, Elizabeth Furniss explores how white identity in rural British Columbia is sustained by the idea of ‘frontier’. According to Furniss, frontier was something ‘out there’ and ‘empty’ until the pioneers arrived from ‘somewhere else, braved the unknown to eventually settle and put down roots in a new land and succeeded in creating a new life and a new society.\textsuperscript{63} This process was based on the values of individualism, self-sufficiency freedom from external constraints, capped by rural common sense.\textsuperscript{64} This was a process that ‘affirms the unquestioned legitimacy and morality of the process of colonization.\textsuperscript{65} Gerald Friesen points out that a number of Canadian historians writing in

\textsuperscript{64} Furniss, \textit{The Burden of History}, 87, 205.
\textsuperscript{65} Furniss, \textit{The Burden of History}, 189.
the mid-twentieth century, such as Arthur Lower and S.D. Clark argued that the frontier was Canada’s defining experience.66

The desire to possess and conquer the frontier is apparent in the gendering of the physical environment in literature and frontier narratives. The depiction of frontier landscapes as female has been explored by a number of scholars and writers including Kay Schaffer, Anne McClintock and Margaret Atwood.67 Whether it is the explicitly sexualised African landscape of *King Solomon’s Mines* or the ‘virgin’ plains of Queensland and western Canada described in the journals of explorers and pastoralists, frontier lands are feminine places and desirable possessions. Schaffer discusses the way in which ‘the bush becomes a place of the feminine through metaphoric representation.’68 In Schaffer’s analysis, the feminine is present in the bush tradition in the way men respond to the land: ‘The landscape provides a feminine other against which the bushman as hero is constructed.’69 Margaret Atwood has noted that in Canadian literature the wilderness is often constructed as a ‘frigid femme fatale … who entices and hypnotises male protagonists and leads them to their doom.’70 The frontier is a woman, and a fickle one at that, at once inviting men to settle with her and make her fertile and reproductive, and, should they fail, emasculating them by exposing their lack of manliness.

This recent scholarship demonstrates that engagement with a frontier is a two-way process. The outcome of a frontier experience may be a transformation not only of the physical environment, but also of the people who go there and the original inhabitants. Frontiers are liminal spaces where disparate elements combine and opportunities exist for transformation. Put simply, frontiers were places where people could change. Frontiers were places where people do things they would not otherwise do, and live in ways they would not normally live. As Ann Laura Stoler puts it, the frontier was ‘transformative of cultural essence, social disposition, and personhood itself.’71 On the frontier, men of the old world with old world ideas were relocated to a new environment. There were new landscapes, new challenges, new peoples and new imperatives to survive. Men were removed from the old sources of stability and security, and forced into contact with new peoples. Taking advantage of geographic and psychic distance they constructed new identities, and began and lost new careers.72

While masculinity and frontier are the foci of this thesis, race constitutes a third influential variable in the response of men to the frontier, and the performance of their masculinity. Race, like gender, is a cultural construction which has worked to naturalise difference and power relationships, to depict them as immutable categories when in fact race is historically contingent and variable.73 The cultural constructedness of race means

71 Stoler, Race and the Education of Desire, 104.
72 Kirsten McKenzie’s Scandal in the Colonies (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004), offers an excellent account of how colonial societies offered settlers the chance to create new identities, embark on new careers, and re-invent themselves in positions far removed from those they occupied in the metropole.
that scholars need to examine closely situations in which race was a factor in power structures so as to identify the elements that were important to defining racial difference. A number of scholars have realised that this entails not only considering definitions of what it was to be black or non-white, but of considering constructions of whiteness as well.74

The European invasions of Queensland and British Columbia confronted and overwhelmed indigenous populations. While the pattern of interaction between Europeans and the indigenous people differed – Queensland Aborigines neither traded with Europeans nor intermarried to any significant extent, and the indigenous people of British Columbia were not subject to the same level of raw violence suffered by Queensland Aborigines – neither Queensland or British Columbia were racially harmonious places. Of north Queensland in particular it has been said that race is an ‘inescapable theme’.75 The rest of Queensland was scarcely any different. This has been ably demonstrated by Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders and Kathryn Cronin.76

Racial violence has been the chief, if not exclusive, focus of much recent Australian race historiography. Australian frontiers as the site of conflict between Europeans and indigenous peoples were, until the 1970s, largely ignored by Australian historians. After

being rebuked by W.H. Stanner scholars have been prolific in this area.\textsuperscript{77} C.D. Rowley’s 
\textit{The Destruction of Aboriginal Society} is seminal in this field. Rowley revealed the tragic 
effects of colonisation on Aboriginal Australians, offering a colony by colony account of 
their dispossession, incarceration and extermination.\textsuperscript{78} Rowley’s work was followed by 
the influential Henry Reynolds, and Raymond Evans, Noel Loos, Bill Thorpe and others 
have demonstrated that on the Queensland frontier violence between whites and 
Aborigines was endemic.\textsuperscript{79}

The centrality of race in colonial British Columbia has been demonstrated in a number of 
studies. Robin Fisher, Tina Loo, Sylvia Van Kirk, Wilson Duff and Jean Barman have 
explored the operation of social dynamics and the intersections between race, commerce, 
law and sexuality.\textsuperscript{80} The sum of this research indicates that on the frontier race permeated 
all social relations. Frontier manliness was constructed against racial, class and national 
‘others’. Mrinalini Sinha, has argued that the construction of the ideal of colonial 
masculinity ‘demonstrates that masculinity has as much to do with racial, class, religious 
and national differences as with sex difference’,\textsuperscript{81} Aborigines, other non-whites and some 
white men were considered ‘unmanly’.

\textsuperscript{81} Sinha, \textit{Colonial Masculinity}, 182.
Queensland and British Columbia had much in common in the mid-nineteenth century. On 2 September 1864, Vancouver Island’s *British Colonist* published an editorial headed ‘Queensland and Vancouver Island’. The *Colonist* was ‘amused’ by Queensland’s political problems and their similarity to Vancouver Island’s a few years previously. Both colonial governments had spent money they did not have, misappropriated the money they did, had run up debts and granted favours to friendly commercial interests and ‘a thousand other things damaging to the best interests of the place.’

Nevertheless, Queensland had a few things going for it: immigration numbers were healthy, revenue was up, and public works were numerous. Despite these advantages, Queensland, in the eyes of the *Colonist*, did not seem entirely attractive when compared to Vancouver Island. Brisbane lacked the ‘energy’ and ‘general business habits’ of Victoria. However, Victoria’s schools, libraries and museums were a ‘hundred years behind the town of Brisbane.’

If the *Colonist* had been less concerned for Vancouver Island’s status in the imperial hierarchy, it would have noticed that the two colonies had a great deal in common which outweighed the differences in public services: colonial origins, primary resources and similar population demographics. Both are located on the on the Pacific Rim, and the coastlines of both were charted by James Cook. Each had a period of initially limited settlement and exploitation followed by a larger influx of population in the mid-nineteenth century. Each had gold rushes. Settlers extracted resources to provide staples for export to the British market; wool, gold and sugar were the main products provided.

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82 *British Colonist*, 2 September 1864.  
83 *British Colonist*, 2 September 1864.
by Queensland, and timber, gold and salmon were the foremost in British Columbia. The climate of both colonies was attractive to Europeans, or, in the case of Queensland, at least not a deterrent. Each had significant indigenous populations and both were integral parts of the British Empire governed by men sent out from the Colonial Office.

From the 1840s to the 1870s, both Queensland and British Columbia attracted large numbers of British male migrants. When Queensland was separated from NSW in 1859 it contained 23,520 predominantly British settlers and around 60,000 Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Over the next twelve years the immigrant population increased rapidly. In 1861 the general white population stood at 30,059, doubled in the next three years, and doubled again by 1871 to 120,104. Queensland had a more heterogeneous population than Australia’s southern colonies, with significant numbers of Pacific Islanders, Chinese and other Asians.

In British Columbia in 1855 there were an estimated 774 colonists on Vancouver Island, two-thirds of whom were male. The Cariboo gold rush of 1862-64 attracted large numbers of colonists. In 1863 there were 7,338 whites on Vancouver Island and the mainland combined, 95 percent of whom were male. This population was concentrated in a small number of towns such as Victoria, New Westminster and Nanaimo, although

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84 This is not true in all cases. For a number of decades it was believed that whites could not cope well in the tropics. See Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002).

miners were scattered along the Fraser River and the Cariboo. In 1870 the total white population was 8,576, two-thirds of whom were male, the decline of the gold rushes and a concerted effort to bring women to the colony accounting for the changed male-to-female ratio since 1863. In 1871 the indigenous population was estimated at 45,000. As in Queensland, diversity was a feature of the population.

Both places constituted a ‘colonial project’ in the words of Nicholas Thomas; that is, ‘a socially transformative endeavour that is localised, politicised, and partial, yet also engendered by larger historical developments and ways of narrating them.’ In Thomas’s view, imperialism and colonialism involved numerous actors motivated by their own interests and objectives in diverse environments. Hence the histories of Queensland and British Columbia are simultaneously histories of empire and imperialism, and of the individuals, colonisers and colonised, who inhabited both colonies. If, as a secretary of the Hudson’s Bay Company observed, the object of colonisation was to transfer to the new society what was best in the old, then such an endeavour was fraught with challenges as the bush and the backwoods defied imperial dreams and transformed them into an amalgam of the traditional metropolitan and unfamiliar local influences, resulting in new social forms.

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87 See Perry’s *On the Edge of Empire* regarding immigration programs to bring women to British Columbia.
89 Ormsby, *British Columbia*, 118.
My approach in this thesis is historical and biographical. My sources include unpublished manuscripts, autobiographical writings, diaries, letters, and published accounts of travel and exploration. The diaries, memoirs and letters of British men on the Queensland and British Columbia frontiers tell similar stories of adventure, physical hardship, hard work, risk, remoteness, fraternity, loneliness, alcoholism, perseverance, and endurance. They are written by the scions of aristocracy, middle-class adventurers, and ministers of religion: embodiments of the Victorian masculine ideal. On the frontier these men became pastoralists, shepherds, gold miners and labourers. While this group provides the bulk of the material underpinning this thesis, the stories of shopkeepers, bakers and men of no particular occupation in search of one, provide a window onto the experiences of the lower middle and working classes. Regardless of their background, these men dug for gold, washed sheep, crossed rivers and mountain ranges, herded cattle, and shot deer. In Queensland they pushed the indigenous people off their land in order to graze sheep and cattle. In British Columbia the indigenous population was diminished by smallpox and dispossessed through legal trickery. There were few women in these men’s stories – certainly few white women, and non-white women feature only incidentally. These authors write about the land, its exploitation and other men.

The reader of these memoirs is soon struck by their similarities. One could swap the titles or authors of texts such as W.S.S. Tyrwhit’s *A New Chum in the Queensland Bush* with A.W. Stirling’s *A Ride in the Never Never* or Charles Eden’s *My Wife and I in Queensland* (in which his wife is barely mentioned), and one would scarcely know the
difference. Similarly, British Columbian narratives such as the journal of W.B. Cheadle, the reminiscences of Reginald Pidcock or the diary of Henry Guillod tell such similar stories that a sense of déjà vu on the part of the reader is inescapable. Similarities are also apparent when one compares accounts from British Columbia with those from Queensland. Robert Harkness’s evocative letters from the Cariboo to his wife in eastern Canada convey the same sense of loneliness and isolation as does R. Henderson’s barely literate diary of his year in western Queensland. These similarities suggest a common masculine experience, and essential similarities in Queensland and British Columbian frontier life. A sense of adventure and opportunity is common, as is physical hardship and risk. These similarities also indicate the pervasiveness and ubiquity of the mid-Victorian masculine ethos. Taking as its principal evidence the letters, diaries and memoirs of men who lived on the frontier, this study draws on the ‘lived experiences’ of frontier men and events of which they were a part. By placing their ‘manliness’ at the centre of their experiences and demonstrating the complexities of men’s responses to the frontier, this thesis seeks to enrich our understanding of frontier men and frontier life.

The manner in which men expressed their frontier experiences was shaped by ideological, social and economic forces. Their view of the frontier was coloured by ideas and assumptions based on their personal histories and experiences. Many of them would

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92 Robert Harkness, Correspondence Outward: personal letters to his wife, 1812-1865, British Columbia Archives, EBH22; Diary of R. Henderson 1862-1863, Fryer Library, F1517.
be changed by their frontier experience as the frontier modified the views and assumptions they brought to it. However, no one could entirely escape the cultural beliefs taken to the frontier, and these beliefs influenced how men perceived and recorded their experiences. Therefore, to the extent that such preconceptions influenced perceptions, the reminiscences, letters, and diaries considered here are to be regarded as constructions of historical actuality, written with an intention of veracity, but inescapably shaped by the authors’ background and predilections and, in the case of some, commercial and potential readership considerations. While somewhat wary of the nomenclature, I draw from post-colonial literature the recognition that race, gender, and imperialism are fundamentally important to the social experience of both white imperialists and non-white subjects of imperial ventures. Following the ‘linguistic turn’, which argues that the narrative forms in which men recorded their impressions shaped their records, I recognise the discursive nature of sources and the historically constructed nature of social relations.

States, nations and colonies are ways of organising political space and are, like gender and race, changeable social constructions. Therefore, to keep the discussion clear, I refer throughout this thesis to Queensland, even to the pre-1859 period when the region was part of New South Wales. Similarly, unless the distinction is important, I refer to British Columbia as embracing both Vancouver Island and the mainland part of that province. Where the term Aborigine or Aboriginal is used, I am referring to the indigenous people of Queensland, notwithstanding the modern use of those terms in Canada. When referring to the indigenous people of British Columbia, I simply use the terms ‘indigenous’ or ‘native’ British Columbians.
Against this background, this study proceeds to examine the response of British men to the Queensland and British Columbia frontiers and the performance of manliness on those frontiers. Chapter One looks at how gender and masculinity were constructed in mid-nineteenth-century Britain. It argues that masculinity as a central middle-class concern dates from the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, with the emergence of those middle classes. This period saw the consolidation of a gender order which had its genesis in the previous century and which normalised and naturalised separate social, domestic, and economic roles for men and women. Over the course of the nineteenth century, several versions of manliness evolved, each enjoying dominant status at certain times.

In Chapter Two the thesis moves from the metropole to the frontier, following the gentleman emigrant to Queensland and British Columbia. The chapter demonstrates the way in which the mid-nineteenth-century manly ideal was exemplified by the ‘gentleman’. On both frontiers expatriate gentlemen responded to the frontier by carving out a social, political and economic niche for themselves, and by employing a range of tactics to maintain their status and the masculine codes they brought with them from Britain.

Chapter Three argues that the colonial frontier was a stage on which British men were able to perform ‘manliness’. While many gentlemen maintained their status, the frontier nevertheless demanded attributes that life in Britain did not. On the frontier men were exposed to hardships and physical demands which required the full performance of the
muscular virtues. Far from being daunted and defeated by the frontier, many men revelled in the challenge.

Chapter Four examines men’s experiences of remoteness and isolation on the frontier and finds that frontier conditions tested the manly ethos in a number of ways, trying men’s perseverance and fortitude, and revealing underlying anxieties and weaknesses. Not all men responded successfully these challenges. For these men the frontier was not an hospitable place. Loneliness and isolation extracted a toll, both physical and psychological.

Chapter Five recognises that there was more than one type of masculinity on the frontier. It argues that, in constructing non-white, non-British masculinities as inferior and ‘uncivilised’, British men were defending and affirming their own version of masculinity. White colonists constructed indigenous and other non-white masculinities as the antithesis of their own ideal, and in doing so defended and affirmed the dominant British version of manliness. This chapter also considers the position of British men who did not live up to the frontier masculine ideal.

Chapter Six explores frontier violence and the part the ethos of manliness played in making the frontier a violent place. It argues that mid-nineteenth-century manliness had within it the potential for violence and, when transferred to the frontier, this potential became manifest. On the colonial frontier manly attributes such as courage, strength, and rationality could be distorted and become manifestations of subjugation and violence.
This thesis concludes that on the Queensland and British Columbia frontiers ‘manliness’ was an important ideal but a problematic practice. The frontier was a place where masculine ideals were tested, and re-worked. There were ample opportunities for men to enact their ‘manliness’. Many men responded to frontier challenges with courage, fortitude, and strength. The frontier offered the enterprising man the chance to gain his independence and the harsh physical conditions called for stoicism, perseverance and self-reliance. These characteristics were affirmed and recycled to the metropole in the form of journals, memoirs, letters and fiction, which were consumed by friends, family and the general public, and which fed the discourse of manliness. British manliness could not be taken for granted, and British men responded to challenges to their ideal with various strategies aimed at defending and maintaining this ideal against alternatives. However, not all men responded to the frontier in the same fashion. Some responded to the isolation and loneliness with despair and some resorted to alcohol to relieve that despair. On the frontier self-restraint, sobriety and sexual propriety often fell by the wayside. In many ways the discourse of British manliness refused to admit the realities of frontier life. The diversity of men’s frontier experiences challenges popular national myths about the frontier, which are predicated on the manly deeds of British men.