

internal decolonization raises further matters relevant to current developments in New Zealand. She moves through the debate about 'appropriation' of indigenous histories, the different forms of historical writing by Aboriginal writers, particularly with their focus on kinship and family, the ways in which the different forms of narrative broaden and alter understandings, and the crucial role the historians have played, and will continue to play, in identifying the major issues of the past for contemporary generations. Her essay serves to show that, in both countries, large steps have been taken in the development of cross-cultural history in the last decade. McGrath writes also of a new fear of offending Aborigines, which has driven a number of younger, talented historians away from the field of indigenous history, together with a new puritanism, which shuts out aboriginal history from 'settler' history on the grounds that aboriginal history cannot be represented adequately by European historians. These are attitudes created by new sensitivities, and I have encountered them among students and colleagues; but they are dangerous attitudes, serving only to close off understanding and to 'segregate' history. This useful collection of essays airs problems and issues; but equally importantly it looks positively at the achievements of the recent historians who have turned to address the hidden stories of the Aborigines, and who, by so doing, have begun to change the way that Australians understand the impact of colonialism in their own land.

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Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation: Australia, Canada and New Zealand. By Andrew Armitage. University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 1995, 286pp. Canadian price: \$24.95. ISBN 0-7748-0459-9.

COMPARATIVE PROJECTS are a minefield of scholarly disasters waiting to happen. Perhaps the biggest danger is the risk of a book fragmenting into unrelated case studies of disparate phenomena. In *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation* Andrew Armitage imposes enough structure on his argument to avoid this pitfall, but in doing so he veers into an equally hazardous territory, that of bland over-generalization. Along the way there are also the expected outsider's errors: 'Van Diemens Land' is yet to be charted, 'Macquarie' a new addition to the ranks of New South Wales' Governors, Alan Ward, Claudia Orange and Jamie Belich curious omissions from the bibliography on New Zealand native policy, 'Nga Morenu' a book still unwritten; and Graham Butterworth has yet to change his name to George.

Armitage, an associate professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Victoria, has a background in the study of child and social welfare rather than in imperial history or the history of indigenous peoples. While his summaries of imperial and national native policies are adequate as schematics, they would not, on their own, inspire a reader to think more deeply about the competing interests and pressures that produced these policies. Nor is enough done to illustrate the variety of indigenous responses to efforts to assimilate native people. Few native voices are heard and most of those are quoted from well-worn published sources, not primary material. There is a curiously bloodless tone to the descriptions of policies which had tragic consequences. When Armitage wishes to

condemn destructive, and (albeit sometimes unwittingly) cruel, government methods he borrows other people's words and these words are the most memorable in the book. Quotations from Peter Read's *The Stolen Generations* do the work of damning Australian aboriginal policy,¹ while extracts from Basil Johnston's memoir, *Indian School Days*,² graphically convey the human costs of separating native Canadian children from their families.

Readers of this journal will be most interested in the chapters on Maori policy and in the comparative conclusions. Overall Armitage feels that policies in New Zealand were less destructive than those in Canada or Australia primarily because Maori children were not systematically removed from their parents. The complexities of British and later, New Zealand, government policies toward Maori are elided by Armitage's periodization. After acknowledging 'initial contact' (1769-1840) and 'the period of the Treaty of Waitangi' (1840-6), he ascribes the whole of the rest of the nineteenth century and more than half of the twentieth to 'the period of assimilation' (1847-1960). The three pages devoted to the policies of this period are superficial at best, and the account of the 'Pakeha Wars' and their aftermath *sans* Belich, Orange and Ward is decidedly not the best part of the book. The later sections on integration in the period after the Hunn report and Maori resurgence after 1975 are better synopses of events.

Armitage sorts his discussion of the similarities and differences among Australian, Canadian and New Zealand native policies into six categories. He argues that by examining the objectives/phases of social policy, bureaucratic categorizations of indigenous peoples, and the principal institutions of government administration, we can come to a comparative understanding of assimilationist policies. Despite the errors and over-generalizations, he manages to substantiate this claim. A second triumvirate of concerns, the separation of native children from their families for the purposes of coercive tutelage, the effects of regional and geographic differences and the 'recovery of Aboriginal, first Nations and Maori people', is less well handled and suffers from both a lack of discussion of the continuity of native resistance to assimilation, and a blandness of tone and sources. His final plea for 'intercultural relationships . . . conducted in a spirit of open-mindedness, tolerance, and self-criticism' is one few New Zealanders will argue with, while his finding that in the past 'high aspirations [led] to discrimination and oppression' will surprise few historians.

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1 *The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969*, Occasional Paper no. 1, Sydney, New South Wales Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, 1982.

2 Toronto, 1988.