



Frontier violence and urban politics: were they really worlds apart in the 19th century?

Manning Clark House Honest History lecture, Monday, 22 September 2014

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Histories of the emergence of Responsible Government in the Australian colonies have often cast political struggles as between elite free settlers and the emancipated people they disdained; and between Tories and radicals. The political stage has commonly been limited to urban movements and the relations between Sydney and London.

Moreover, Australia's mythology of the stoic, egalitarian bushman and the ethos of mateship—so evocatively articulated by Russel Ward as *The Australian Legend* (1958)—has served to obscure the violence, especially the interracial violence, of frontier history.

But there is another, unacknowledged, Australian Legend that needs to be called into question—the legend that self-government in the Australian colonies was won by a progressive reform movement that operated in a purely political realm divorced from the messy realities of the frontier.



Thomas Murray-Prior (1819-1892), a leading Queensland pastoralist, plantation owner, civil servant and politician, affords us a case study to investigate how frontier violence was accepted within evolving definitions of manhood and hence political responsibility. The evidence of the Australian settler frontier has implications for the limited evolution of democracy, imperially and globally, in the period from the 1830s to the 1860s, including how manhood and political enfranchisement were mutually reconfigured.

*Angela Woollacott is the Manning Clark Professor of History at the Australian National University and President of the Australian Historical Association. Her book *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: Self-Government and Imperial Culture* will be published by Oxford University Press in March 2015. Recent publications include the high-school textbook series she edited, *History for the Australian Curriculum* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).*

Manning Clark House, 11 Tasmania Circle Forrest at 5:30pm.

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