

Settler Colonial Biopolitics and Indigenous Resistance: The Refusal of Australian's First Peoples "to fade away or assimilate or just die." [ABSTRACT]

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During the first century of Australia's colonization, settler thanatopolitics meant both casual killing of individual Natives and organized massacres of Aboriginal clans. From the mid-nineteenth century, however, Aboriginal Protection Boards sought to disappear their charges by more covert means. Thus, biopolitics of biological absorption, cultural assimilation, and child removal, designed to bring about the destruction of Aboriginal peoples, came to be represented as being in the victims' best interests. Even today, coercive assimilation is framed in the now-threadbare terms of welfare discourse. Yet, Australia's Indigenous peoples have survived the genocidal practices of the frontier era and continue to resist the relentless succession of normative policies deployed to eradicate their "recalcitrant" lifeways. This essay presents a brief historical overview of settler Australia's biopolitics and analyzes the sociocultural factors enabling Aboriginal Australians both to survive the devastating impact of settler biopower and to resist the siren call of assimilationist rhetoric. Drawing on Kim Scott's *Benang* and Alexis Wright's *Plains of Promise*, I discuss how that resistance is reflected in contemporary Indigenous life-writing and fiction.

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