Book Reviews

Which Justice and Which Politics?


Rethinking Social Justice is a significant book not because its arguments always convince but because it can promote constructive debate. Three proposals are central to the work. The first one is that, since the 1950s, the Australian discourse regarding Indigenous issues has been structured by two ideas of social justice embodied in the notion of ‘a people’ and ‘a population’. The latter term refers to an aggregate of individuals; the former to a nation or ethnic group though Rowse proposes to understand ‘a people’ not so much in cultural terms but more in terms of a political and institutional project. At first glance the book may appear to be a play on two aspects of justice pertaining on the one hand to self-determination and, on the other, to a range of capabilities that people require to be self-determining in the modern state. Yet this would be a mistake. The first hint comes in the book’s subtitle, From ‘Peoples’ to ‘Populations’. Rowse sees the former mode of social justice under attack and by the book’s end it is hard to see the latter mode, addressed to various disadvantages, as a part of justice at all. A communal, political course is privileged over capabilities and also over other dimensions of sociality that bear on both gendered and generational relations. Such a position may not be what Rowse intended but part of this review will address this bent in his argument.

The book has a second and related theme. Rowse argues that the terms in which an Australian Aboriginal people are defined should not be cultural ones – especially connoting a baseline of tradition or custom – but rather historical and political ones, calling on the manifold experience of an Aboriginal people in the Australian state. This people is a ‘collective’ and ‘lasting interlocutor of and within the nation’, and ‘of government’. This interlocutor has a ‘distinct identity, heritage, institutions and land base’ (pp. 5, 77). I for one could not but endorse Rowse’s proposal to understand an Aboriginal people as a historically evolving subject rather than one of essentialised tradition. Given Aboriginal people’s encapsulation in the state and its capitalist economy, this people’s identity cannot but be both political to a degree, and rendered through experience. Yet Rowse does not explore much the richness or complexity of this subject. He elaborates on just one dimension of an Aboriginal people: that people as manifest in an Indigenous sector of Aboriginal corporations. Moreover, although this sector is ‘embedded in the apparatuses of Australian government’ (p. 126), he sees it still as the collective, and singular, voice of self-determination.

A third proposal is that quantitative data concerning disadvantage can be used to undermine self-determination. These data are ostensibly transparent and quickly
understood. Nonetheless, they are also subject to political uses. Qualitative data can seem less transparent and more difficult to grasp. Yet they are significant. These different types of data bear on the standing of the Indigenous sector. Self-determination is a long-term project involving the salience of Aboriginal experience and the tenor of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Qualitative gains that this project brings do not always register in ways that lend themselves to measurement. Therefore health, education and employment ‘gaps’, measurable in some form, also can be used to mask other types of incremental achievement among Indigenous organisations. A focus on the Aboriginal population can subvert, both intentionally and unintentionally, the project of a people’s voice. Rowse is warning here that an Indigenous sector undermined could leave Aboriginal people as isolated advocates for their interests; their rights as a first people obscured or washed away. This view has great merit but also needs careful scrutiny.

These three themes are pursued more or less intently through a variety of chapters that reflect some of Rowse’s passions: one is the biography of Australian liberal intellectuals of various hues. Six chapters in the book discuss particular figures: Paul Hasluck, Theodore Strehlow, Helen Hughes, Noel Pearson, Peter Sutton and especially HC ‘Nugget’ Coombs. Another of Rowse’s passions is public administration and, in particular, that of remote Aboriginal communities. A third is the social movement for Indigenous self-determination, for the self-governance of a people. Rowse’s earlier writing on this issue came in the context of the Mabo decision and in his work on Coombs. In this book, the agency identified with land rights and native title is extended to an Indigenous sector and its organising role, especially in remote communities. A further four chapters elaborate in one way or another Rowse’s concern with the people/population distinction and the concomitant issue of qualitative versus quantitative data. Rowse’s discussion of the initial South Australian land rights legislation, the New South Wales Stolen Generations and the Australian Reconciliation Barometer are all interesting.\footnote{The latter involved a nationwide survey on responses to Reconciliation.}

Here I focus on just two issues among a number of notable ones. The first concerns self-determination and the Indigenous sector. The second concerns the issue of qualitative and quantitative data. As one dimension of self-determination, land rights and native title are unique. Both have been intertwined with the impacts of mining and the fight by Aboriginal people for a voice concerning their land. Both have carried the capacity to distribute widely a specific Indigenous resource – land and the engagement with it that reflects customary sovereignty. Albeit in very limited ways, this status is acknowledged now in non-Indigenous law. Land councils have been a central institutional and organisational expression of these rights, providing a political voice in state and territory politics. At their best these councils reflect both centrifugal and centripetal dynamics, empowering
individuals and small groups as well as regional peoples. Moreover many have an income stream, including royalties, which derive from corporate mining agreements. These features make at least some land councils less susceptible than some other Indigenous ‘corporates’ to governmental routinisation.

Still Rowse argues rightly that an emphasis on ‘custom’ in these corporations can become a ‘traditionalist straitjacket’ (p. 27). Aboriginal people now desire not only land rights but also forms of appropriate development that rest on a monetised economy, and service provisions that rest on public administration. One reason why small groups register under an Aboriginal corporations act is to be a legally-defined recipient of an enterprise grant – for an art co-operative on country, a mustering project, or a rehabilitation centre. As these projects wax and wane, Indigenous corporations come and go. Yet these small proliferating corporations are not Rowse’s focus. He is more concerned with the larger organisations that deliver services to communities and outstation groups. Often these involve a community or shire council with its organisational links to one or more health clinics, school boards or, if it still exists, an outstation centre. Together these different types of corporation seem to match both the centrifugal and the centripetal thrust of land council institutions. Yet, it is difficult to find an equivalent as such. Most of these other types of corporation are heavily dependent on government funds. Moreover, the relation between the large service organisations, often controlled by a particular group, and small enterprise ones is unclear. The nature and locus of one collective voice is more difficult to discern.

Periodically, the resource concentration in large councils can create cultural strains as kin groups compete for control. The issue may not be services as such but rather the paid employment, transport, telecommunications and the like that are attached to an administrative hub. Rowse notes correctly that the Indigenous sector’s major challenge comes not from these local strains but rather from policy change in government. Yet this challenge comes not simply in the guise of neoliberal ‘reforms’. The fact that governments of any ilk remain a very major source of funds for Aboriginal communities makes them vulnerable. Moreover, these resources often come as transfers rather than as capital earnings. Lack of employment opportunity and capital, especially in remote Australia, mean that communities remain largely resource clients of the state. The explosion of corporations that Rowse and others note is in part a reflection of the administrative dynamic involved in defining legal individuals for governments to deal with. This development has an upside. It reflects Aboriginal people engaging the state and organising at a local level. It also has a downside reflected in extensive reliance on public funds. Inevitably, governments have the upper hand and local initiatives are far too exposed to shifts in the political mood of non-Indigenous Australians.

Patrick Sullivan observes that effective public administration for remote Aboriginal communities is likely to come only with integration at regional levels rather than at state or national ones. (His implication may be that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission model was misconceived or at least
overly ambitious.) In Sullivan’s view, community administration will be done in an able and stable way mainly by Indigenous people committed to a particular locale. He suggests that this newly conceived Indigenous sector is in fact the basis for an Aboriginal civil society. Rowse sees more. He portrays employees in these corporations as a ‘new class’ of Aboriginal people in the ‘tutelary regime’ of the ‘state’. Moreover, this emerging class can become the collective voice of self-determination (pp. 105, 107, 126, 127).

This view of the Indigenous sector suggests at least three caveats. Firstly, without a greater range of resource sources, including earnings from the private and public sectors and private philanthropy, marked reliance on government remains. Is this truly self-determination? Second, without the capacity-building that this resource diversification entails, an incipient class dynamic must gather pace in remote communities – even in the absence of local labour markets. This dynamic will be propelled by the undoubted power of the state to persuade public servants, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to its frame of reference. Third, and notwithstanding the acknowledged ‘tutelary’ nature of the state, Rowse seems to assume that economic development can and should occur only beneath the carapace of community governance. Numerous examples of small business enterprise past and present in rural and remote communities make this an unhelpful stance. It acts to constrict thinking about the types of capability that remote Aboriginal people need today.

For example, Rowse cites as a resounding success a community resource centre, Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC). Yet in November 2012, BAC was placed in administration due to the incompetence of a non-Indigenous CEO. The latter had replaced a previous non-Indigenous CEO of longstanding. The rapid fall from grace, in just three years, suggests a management board that lacked the enterprise experience, the knowledge and perhaps the confidence to check a rogue CEO (pp. 112–113). In an apparently similar context, I have seen a corporation in central Australia reduced to a shadow of its former self. Faced with increasing impersonalism and generational change, traditional owners lacked the relevant capabilities to safeguard their centre from ‘fly-by-night’, incompetent whites. By contrast, a recent report on the top 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations cites as its case study in success an organisation in the Pilbara. Fortunate enough to be able to diversify across both public and private sector sites, its Aboriginal owner-staff are well paid and amply equipped to maintain their enterprise – founded over 40 years ago.

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3 Note also that Rowse barely mentions the role of electoral politics and the influence of Aboriginal public intellectuals in his account of self-determination.
4 In this regard it is important to keep in mind that many Indigenous public servants are recruited from outside the rural and remote communities in which they work.
5 See, for example, Keen 2010.
6 For a description of Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation see Altman 2005.
7 See also Dingle 2012.
8 Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations 2012.
Rowse’s focus on an Indigenous sector privileges politics over economics with some cost to the coherence of his argument. It seems that, in the case of economy, culture is a permanent obstruction whereas this is not the case for governance (pp. 173–174). There is no systematic account of the local and regional economies that Aboriginal people might engage now, or in the future with more capabilities and sources of capital. Ultimately, self-determination needs a rethink that involves both governance and development, the latter addressed in diverse and experimental ways but not simply as a highly vulnerable cost on government. This is possible without a mere capitulation to the mining industry or other like conglomerates. The rethink is required especially for those communities neither involved in mining’s milieu nor so small and remote that the carapace of government seems inevitable. Some of these at least can be a site for new forms of self-determination.¹⁰

Let me turn now to a second issue concerning the use of quantitative data on disadvantage. Rowse argues that constant reference to ‘the gap’ between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people represents the former not as different or resilient but as the embodiment of mere lack. Inevitably, this undermines the standing of a people and thereby the Indigenous sector. Rowse also observes that questions in the Reconciliation Barometer invoke ‘Indigenous disadvantage’ in ways that suggest a ‘not so likeable’ feature of Aboriginal people: ‘their widely attributed failure to take responsibility for themselves’ (p. 216). In sum, not only do these data misrepresent when they are presented alone, they also promote a ‘blame the victim’ position.

The data that Rowse is referring to comes from sources including the Productivity Commission, Families, Housing, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs, Council of Australian Governments Reform Council, state/territory Departments of Health, Education and the like. Presented in isolation these data can misrepresent. Yet this does not make disadvantage inconsequential or imaginary. Rather, these data should be balanced by others, both qualitative and quantitative, that speak to the reasons why Aboriginal people wish to retain their particular lives. Such juxtapositions help to elucidate Indigenous dilemmas including ones that possibly only individuals and their immediate kin can resolve. In addition, data on disadvantage should be contextualised – both historically and comparatively. Is Aboriginal disadvantage more or less than some time ago? What criteria inform such a judgment? How do regions in Australia compare? How does current disadvantage and responses to it compare with that of other indigenous and non-indigenous peoples? What is ‘too expensive’ or a ‘waste’ in relation to justice for Australia’s first peoples? Deployed in a proper way, quantitative data establish the structural nature of disadvantage and its patterning through space and time.¹⁰ This type of observation serves social justice more than it undermines it.

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There is another distortion though. In the course of the last decade, Aboriginal disadvantage was ushered into public consciousness by dramatic portraits of pathology among people who were described as being alcoholic, child abusers, violent and criminal. In 2009, with the Western Arrernte in mind, I asked how any such Aboriginal people could ‘accept such words as their descriptors’? This type of reduction, of disadvantage to pathology, refused Aboriginal people as interlocutors of the larger society.\(^{11}\) These accounts often implied that personal pathology is an invariable component of social disadvantage in health, education, employment and the like when in fact they are different phenomena only sometimes related and in complex and partial ways. How to respond to this type of denigration?

A first step involves understanding the ideology behind these accounts of disadvantage that become portraits of pathology. The writer whose work presents this reduction most clearly is the late Helen Hughes. Although her writing follows some conventions of social science, it is also interspersed with dramatic accounts of pathology; descriptions of a people whose life is not constructive on any front.\(^{12}\) The coalescence of an academic and a populist style produces a view of Aboriginal people as spent and in need of total reclamation. Why? Because they are the product of a ‘failed experiment’ in HC Coombs’s purported socialism (pp. 176–177).

‘Socialism’ here refers to Australian governments’ (the public sectors’) interventions with regard to Indigenous employment, education, housing or health where there are no easy market (or private sector) solutions. If it is assumed that by definition there always will be market solutions, or that the only solutions are market ones, this social democratic response to needs and rights becomes misguided, even illegitimate. According to this latter view, with its naturalised notion of market efficiency, any public sector intervention is doomed to fail with a concomitant devastating impact on the citizens involved. Hughes did not need to learn very much about quotidian Aboriginal lives. Their comprehensive pathology is an entailment of her position.

Too often the response from academics has been to accept this reduction and to avoid talk of disadvantage altogether in the name of ‘not pathologising’ Aboriginal people. Similarly, because the attacks of Hughes and others have promoted totalising market ‘solutions’ over government strategies, a common response has been to brand economic policy generally as simply ‘neo-liberal’. Yet this sloppy usage and negative view of economy per se is an ill-wrought strategy that has the air of denialism. In fact the issue should be how to identify the structural disadvantage – for which Aboriginal people are not responsible – that undermines the local potential of not all but still too many individuals.

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12 See Hughes 2007. For my discussions of other instances in which Hughes pathologises Aboriginal people see Austin-Broos 2009.
In sum, I am sceptical of the view that social justice conceived as a fight against disadvantage undermines rather than augments social justice for a people. Nor am I convinced that an Indigenous sector now or soon can be the collective and autonomous voice of a people. At minimum, Aboriginal people need more regional consolidations, more diverse capabilities and genuinely human economies along with alliances that extend into other types of politics. Indeed, the very nature of self-determination for a people encapsulated in a larger sovereign state requires continuing innovation.\(^{13}\) I am also of the view that quantitative data can be used constructively as well as destructively. Notwithstanding differences with Rowse, I strongly endorse a historical view of an Aboriginal people – a basic tenet of my anthropology. Tim Rowse is a seasoned writer on Indigenous issues. His book deserves a wide readership.

References


Diane Austin-Broos

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Rick Farley’s premature death on 13 May 2006 after an aneurism some six months earlier was sad, sudden and, somewhat like Rick himself, strangely mysterious.

Nicholas Brown and Susan Boden tell the story of the young man working at Balmain Hospital who helped the ‘elderly man’ in a wheelchair up a ramp:

(He) checked carefully that the wheelchair wouldn’t roll. ‘Are you right, mate’ he asked. Farley nodded. The young man walked away, turning to see that the wheelchair was stable. But as he went back to his job, he heard the sirens.

Rick Farley was just 53 years old. At nearly the same age, his father Dick, one day short of 26 years earlier, had shot and killed himself at Kajabbi near Cloncurry. Rick’s father was considerate; taking his life in a washhouse at the back of the house where he was staying as a labourer, long separated from his wife and children. Brown and Boden manage a fine balance to let the reader make up her own mind on stories such as this final one. The authors roll out the known facts, lace the account with the views of friends and colleagues, but leave judgement to the reader.

Played out at the centre of Australia’s major political stages in the 1980s and 1990s Rick Farley’s relatively short life was crowded with action. The biography could be on the shelves of students of Australia’s modern policy transformations in agriculture, trade and the environment as much as in Indigenous affairs. The political and policy analysis and narrative drive (primarily by historian Nicholas Brown it is suggested), is thorough, informative and authoritative. In conjunction with his partner, landscape architect Susan Boden, the stage is carefully set for the Rick Farley act to perform.

And what a performance! Likened by Patrick Dodson in the frontispiece to a cross between Spencer Tracy and James Cagney, Farley played a bewildering number of roles in Brisbane student theatre, in journalism, in pastoral unionism, in agricultural policy, in environmental policy and programs, in native title and in reconciliation. Brown and Boden, in shedding a spotlight on these public roles, highlight the fact that for many close watchers, Rick Farley’s character was enigmatic. The character he brought to a given role or stage was changeable; shifting shape and unable to be pinned by the political soap opera labels of left and right. His one formal quixotic tilt at parliamentary representation was an unsuccessful one for the Democrats in the Australian Capital Territory, also label free. At various times in his career, however, such a tilt could have been under the banner of the Nationals, Liberals or Labor.

The biography is informative and interesting in revealing his early life, including his schooling in Toowong, Brisbane, where Farley attended the ‘muscular Calvinist’ Brisbane Boys’ College, notable for its insistence on straw boaters as
head gear in the Brisbane sun. I remember such boaters as objects of attempted capture by boys from other, less prestigious schools on the same bus route. He then jumped across one suburb to the University of Queensland, joining the heady scene of the early 1970s. At the University of Queensland he took part in ‘a floating party’ of several years duration which emphasised cultural change over political struggle. Rick dabbled pragmatically in the protests of the Bjelke-Petersen era, such as against the Springboks, but also attended the games as a spectator. He was a self-confessed ‘trendy … taking up every cause but committing to none’ (p. 33).

Rick Farley’s hasty exit to Rockhampton in late 1973 ‘with someone else’s wife and someone else’s car’, provided a new stage and new roles, firstly as a journalist for the *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin*. His emerging interest in the engagement of politics and ‘the search for connection that drove him’ (p. 44) led to a job as a Ministerial officer for Dr Doug Everingham. Everingham was the eccentric local member, and the Whitlam Government’s Minister for Health. The role saw Farley energetically learning the arts of representation, negotiation and political judgement that he carried into future roles. It came to a sudden end when Everingham lost the seat by a slender margin in the 1975 election; only Bill Hayden kept his seat in Queensland in that unprecedented and as yet unrepeated rout.

Surprisingly, the Rockhampton based breakaway Cattlemen’s Union offered the ex-Labor staffer a new stage to perform on, hiring him as their public relations officer. Farley took to the role with gusto, even though he played it as ‘an inside-outsider’. Brown and Boden point out that this would not be the first or the last time he took that stance. It was from his decade long base in the Cattlemen’s Union that Rick Farley began to build a significant and lasting engagement in rural politics, leading to his eventual appointment as the Executive Director of the National Farmers’ Federation (NFF).

The policy stage in Canberra in the second half of the 1980s was tumultuous. Farley found his role at the NFF enabled him to get involved and engaged in significant change processes. While the NFF remained traditionally locked into a National Party base, Farley opened up dynamic relationships with Hawke Government Ministers and their advisers. His appetite for negotiating win-win outcomes, especially to benefit people on the land was always sharp. Often his changing policy role required rapid costume changes, out of the denim and into the suit and vice versa.

Boden and Brown do a careful, thorough job of the policy issues of the period, canvassing archive files, meeting minutes and interviewing protagonists. The chapters on agricultural policy, land care and support for people doing it tough on the land are worthwhile contributions to that significant policy history in their own right.

It was the advent of the reconciliation process in 1991 that brought Rick Farley into Indigenous issues for the first time. The issues were to become a lasting
passion. The authors give a good summary account of the work of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, chaired by Patrick Dodson, and illustrate the challenges faced by the Council. The description of the first meeting of the Council is informative, insightful and accurate. The work of Rick Farley in bringing Aboriginal land council leaders and pastoralists together to fashion joint approaches to common issues was innovative and led to lasting relationships; mutually valued by the protagonists for decades to come.

Before the Council could step out its careful work however, the High Court *Mabo* decision changed the landscape. Rick Farley found himself with the challenging role of containing the visceral reactions of the pastoralists (especially in Western Australia), and seeking to negotiate a lasting solution that would ensure pastoral lease security and recognise Aboriginal title rights. This was not an easy line to prosecute and he burned much of his political capital inside the farmers’ organisation in the process. Many of the members of the NFF, viewing the decision as apocalyptic, regarded Farley’s role in trying to weld a workable compromise as treacherous. He certainly found himself out of step with the majority view in the organisation. The disjunction became more pronounced when a new NFF President, Donald McGauchie, was elected in 1994. It is illuminating that the hosts for Rick’s farewell from the NFF in 1995 were not the officials of the NFF but the representatives of the sectors Rick had courted in the last decade: Paul Lyneham from the media, John Kerin from the Labor Party, Pat Dodson from Indigenous Australia and Philip Toyne from the environmentalists. While he could claim that his work ensured that ‘farmers were no longer being regarded as rednecks in the national debate’, the farmers and their representatives were mostly happy to see him go.

The authors cover the next decade of Farley’s life with attention and care. They maintain a circumspect, non-judgemental attitude on the break-up of Rick’s marriage to Cathy and his new relationship with Linda Burney. They cover thoroughly the complexities of his work with the National Native Title Tribunal on issues such as the Century Mine and the landmark Cape York Heads of Agreement. They show how Farley changed his place on the stage; from the central national spotlight to the regional and local. The issues were equally complex but resolution seemed perhaps more visible and achievable. In Bathurst in 2001, he gave a blunt message:

> At the end of the day, when everyone has packed up and gone home, it is the people in the community who have to live next door to each other and deal with each other.

Nicholas Brown and Susan Boden have given us an insightful and thoughtful biography of an important and influential Australian.

Kevin Keefe

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The first part of the book, now 30 years old, shows signs of age. Broome quotes Memmi and Fanon; Aboriginal warriors are ‘brave’ while Army officers merely ‘ape’ the gentry of England in building villas and estates. Aboriginal women are not given much credit for initiating or continuing love matches with the settlers, mere ‘targets for the men’s libidos’. When squatters were infuriated by Aboriginal sheep theft, we are reminded that this was the same emotion felt by Indigenous owners when pushed off their land.

All these are interesting facets of changing Indigenous historiography rather than an approach to be condemned: most of us wrote like this in the 1980s, with, I hope, good reason. But later research has revealed many local differences, or other aspects of well known events, which can now be explored. Fred Cahir in his Black Gold (ANU E Press, 2012) found that one of the most significant aspects of the Victorian goldrushes was the way in which the dispossessed people took economic advantage of the many thousands of not necessarily hostile whites in the clan lands. Rachel Perkins’ first instalment of the SBS series First Australians stressed the ongoing constructive relationship between the Suttor family and Windradyne, and later Wiradjuri people, to juxtapose beside the Bathurst massacres of 1824. Of course, Broome is often attentive to these changing attitudes as well as to the new research findings. On page 17 he notes that the Bass Strait sealers ‘generally mistreated’ their women. On page 71, in what may have been a paragraph inserted later, he writes ‘However, it was never that simple. Some women forged a life with the men to whom they bore children and they refused to be rescued. … When sealing became unsustainable … they showed the white sealer men how to live off the land, and to fashion a new industry of catching mutton birds’. Indeed. A fair judgement of the northern pastoral industry from 2013 would be that uncontrolled, sporadic and deadly violence was very much more common that most Australian realise, but also that the safe havens where fugitives from murdering pastoralists could rush to were also more common.

It is true that we have not, by any means, heard the last word on frontier killings, mission and reserve administrative violence, or the numbers of stolen children (all still, to a greater or lesser extent, underestimated) but rather than continue to revise old editions, I think it would better now to start again. Any new approach surely will have to be comparative, not just to the old war-horses of Canada and New Zealand, but will consider colonisation in South America and the Pacific. Conversely, there will be greater reference to local area studies like Goodall and Cazdow’s powerful Rivers and Resilience (UNSW Press, 2009), in making allowance for the idea that most Aboriginal people were everywhere, and all the time, though generally unobserved: not resisters, not victims, not agents, not heroes, not turncoats – just people getting on with their lives as best they could. Thirdly, a new history will confront urban history. Most Aborigines now live in the big cities. More than historians realised, they never left, rather, numbers

began to increase since at least the 1920s. We need to see the changes historically: the Redfern riots of the 1970s can be said to parallel the disturbances in country towns for most of the twentieth century as thousands of the homeless, jobless or evicted moved from unsafe towns to what they thought were safe towns. Swelling numbers of town campers ensured that the new havens quickly became unsafe, and the moves continued. By 1960 welfare rations were becoming scarce, jobs evaporating and rural health declining. The capital cities were the last hope: Aboriginal numbers in favoured suburbs skyrocketed, and state governments and police reacted in the way that the town councils had always done. The urban populations were here to stay.

Since the 1970s self-identification and its implications have become critical in the suburbs as much to other Aborigines as to everyone else. The last times when Aboriginal people could identify with each other in a friendly fashion irrespective, or ignorant, of clan affiliations while keeping their identity secret from urban whites, was about 1980. The last time in the schools was perhaps 1969, when the Aboriginal Study Grants Scheme began to identify Aboriginal children, often with adverse consequences from other students and staff. Today, who identifies and on what basis, and from what time and from which family, is the central urban question upon which all other historical discussion turns. And the cities are where most Aboriginal people live.

Nevertheless Broome’s study will remain important. He is right not to pull any punches when he writes ‘Life under Aborigines Protection Boards could be like a police state, although most Boards never had sufficient resources to achieve their full power.’ He traces the foundations of the Legal, Housing and Health Services and is not afraid to spell out where Aboriginal greed, as well as inexperience sometimes brought individual associations to ruin. The 1976 Land Rights Act (NT), and the Mabo, Yorta Yorta and Wik cases are dealt with extensively and fairly and will be an excellent starting point for further study. Sometimes his enthusiasms get the better of him: while Sir William Deane is ‘that great Australian’, his greatest invective is reserved for John Howard. This is distracting, given that presumably one aim of the book is to win over the doubters. Howard himself confessed to being ‘an artefact of who I am and the time in which I grew up’; moreover Broome constantly stresses, and rightly, the long and ineradicable years of physical and mental colonisation from which nobody, on either side, could easily escape.

There are a few issues that I take issue with. I do not agree with Broome’s summation of the cattle industry as not one of slavery (according to a definition of an African American scholar) but arguably ‘colonised labour’. He quotes the Berndts’ End of an Era (Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1987), without coming to what seems to me to be the necessary conclusion that on some of the Vestey stations at least, life was worse than slavery: it was virtually unendurable both physically and emotionally. That some retired ringers may still look back at ‘cattle times’ with affection is beside the point – so do some East Germans long for the old days; moreover, women who did not work with cattle (and in the Northern Territory there were many) had a very much rougher time of it.
when confined to the stations. Describing Noel Pearson as on the Left on land rights, but on the Right when claiming that welfare dependency had reached ‘genocidal proportions’, illustrates how the old left-right dichotomy can be a decidedly unhelpful tool of analysis in Indigenous affairs, though ideologues of every persuasion try to make it so. The book, completed a year after Rudd’s apology, ends on what has turned out to be an unwarrantedly hopeful note. The abuse that Aboriginal children, as well as tens of thousands of others, suffered as revealed in the ‘Forgotten Australians’ report only makes more painful the absence of financial compensation. ‘We’re stuck with each other and we’re stuck with our history’ writes Bunurong historian Bruce Pascoe. That seems to be a better summary from the viewpoint of 2013.

The book, rather than simply, in parts, showing its age, reveals the changing times and circumstances in which Indigenous history is interpreted. Broome, one of the country’s foremost historians of Aboriginal Australia, has produced an important and enduring work.

Peter Read

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The front cover of The Archaeology of Australia’s Deserts gives a view across open spinifex country in the Gibson Desert. Rocks dominate the foreground of a lush deep green plain. The sky has dark clouds, harbingers of a coming storm. This image immediately shifts the mind’s eye away from the expected. It is not the typical image of an Australian desert: where are the deep red denuded dunes and salt pans baking beneath cloudless skies? The book’s title, with the word ‘Deserts’ in plural, further hints that Mike Smith’s work may be no ordinary volume about the archaeology of Australia’s desert interior, a place more commonly imagined as a single expanse of hot, timeless and arid land.

By choosing this cover and title, Mike sets an expectation that readers will be taken on an intellectual journey into countries less travelled. For those prepared for this journey, you will not be disappointed. In 350 pages of text we are given a tour de force of Australia’s deserts and the vibrant cultures that have inhabited them for some 50,000 years. The book brings together sources from archaeology, environmental history, ethnography and anthropology into an impressive and symphonic human history of half a continent.

Mike is able to successfully orchestrate these detailed sources in his book because he treats the deserts very much like the way he treats archaeological sites. His approach to excavating Puritjarra Rockshelter, where his dates tripled the age of human habitation in the interior, was to see the site as having a morphing character. He saw it as a living piece of landscape sculptured over time by humans and nature. And this is how he has approached his synthesis of Australia’s deserts.

For Mike the desert is alive. It has a symbiotic relationship with humans, as well as having its own natural history. For him, the impacts of both of these processes are left behind as stratigraphic traces in the landscape. It is these traces that are then given life by people, like himself, who now live and work in the deserts. In this sense, Mike’s book is as much a history of ideas about the deserts as it is an archaeology or natural history of these landscapes. By giving eminence to the impact of ideas to our understanding of deserts, Mike seamlessly binds the diverse sources, intimately engaging the reader with the deserts’ deep past. One can, for instance, feel the crushing impact of heat, flies, sandstorms and thirst on the South Australian Museum team who struggled in appalling conditions at Lake Mulligan to uncover vast numbers of unknown megafauna fossils, demonstrating in one field season the past richness of this now bleak landscape. These insights draw us into understanding how the deep past of the desert is an entangled history of people, past and present, of the sweeping forces of nature, and of great archaeological discoveries.

The early chapters (Chapters 1–3) place the Australian deserts in a national and international context, while challenging the notion of there being one
unchanging desert environment. He slowly draws us closer to this view by introducing the Australian deserts as living and changing sets of landscapes. Engaging with these landscapes are researchers and explorers as diverse and often unfathomable as the deserts themselves. Mike sees these people as having shaped how we see the desert landscapes as much as the wind and aridity. These early chapters are the setting for the heart of the volume, which is a more or less a chronological account of human habitation from the Late Pleistocene to the present.

In Chapter 4 Mike brings together information from some 40 archaeological sites spread across the continent from the Pilbara to the Nullarbor Plain to tell us about life in the deserts in the period from 50,000 to 30,000 years ago. He gives a prodigiously detailed account of the known material for this period. While much of this chapter is naturally concerned with the movement and spread of people into the deserts, the chapter also analyses the evidence in terms of important themes like stone tool technology and subsistence economy. Chapter 5 deals with one of the most interesting and debated periods of occupation in the deserts from about 30,000 to 12,000 years ago. This includes Last Glacial Maximum (LGM), from about 30,000 to 18,000 years ago, a period of extreme aridity for which various models of human adaptation of the deserts have been proposed. The book deals with these very important models in a fair and even handed way, testing the theories against the known data and showing where gaps exist for further research. Chapter 6 deals with the final phase of prehistoric occupation, from about 12,000 years ago to European colonisation, again giving a thorough and lively review of the known archaeology. Several themes are discussed in this chapter, many broadly centering on ideas of cultural intensification, including the uptake of significant grindstone technology and the introduction of new flaked stone artefacts into the desert toolkits.

Chapters 7 and 8 diverge from the chronological narrative and deal with rock art and place, and trade and exchange. These subjects dovetail quite neatly with the ideas of intense social change alluded to at the end of Chapter 6. The rock art chapter (Chapter 7) is a broad and sweeping endeavour to characterise and analyse rock art of very large regions. It runs the risk of not satisfying experts in that field. Certainly, the approach is different to many contemporary rock art projects that are more focused on detailed subjects or confined geographic areas. Nevertheless, Mike’s approach gave me, a rock art novice, a good understanding of the subject and the broad types of analysis attempted by researchers. The chapter on trade and exchange (Chapter 8) is a wonderful summary of what we know about trade and exchange across wide areas of the continent. It looks at the different approaches to research in this area and highlights the importance of trade and exchange in contemporary societies.

The final chapter (Chapter 9) looks at archaeology and the classic desert ethnographies. By leaving this chapter till last Mike is able to bring the force of summary to general statements about the archaeology and link these to a historic narrative about redefining Aboriginal desert cultures. There has been a recent move away from this sort of historic discourse in Australian archaeology.
Mike’s elegant re-engagement with both historic questions and sources will hopefully reopen and widen this interesting debate. In this final chapter I would have liked to have seen a bit more on the connection between concepts of the Aboriginal Dreamtime and Western ideas about the deep past, but perhaps that is for another book.

Archaeology books are usually weighty technical works of interest mostly for professionals. The Archaeology of Australia’s Deserts is certainly suited to an academic audience. The ideas and data in the book are able to be tested, dismantled and built on. This was in fact one of the core aims of the book, and Mike hoped this would happen after what he calls a ‘polite interval’. But The Archaeology of Australia’s Deserts, as I suggested earlier, has different and unexpected qualities. It is much more than just another fine tertiary text.

Like the unexpected view of the Gibson Desert on the books cover, I think this volume will have an appeal to wider audiences unintended (at least consciously) by its author. It is in many ways a story of imagined past landscapes. After my first read of the book, it brought to mind a time in 1986 when I worked on Mike’s crew excavating on the Lake Woods lunette in the central Northern Territory. I recall witnessing his remarkable ability to think ‘with’ the landscape, to imagine its past. Around our campfire at night he talked with us and the Aboriginal Traditional Owners about how he saw the stratigraphic layers in the trenches and how these related to each other and to the living landscape. My good friend Nugget Collins Jarpata later told me the creation stories about the lunette, and remarked to me that Mike also ‘knew’ how the country came to be. This was one of those very rare occasions when an Aboriginal person of high degree acknowledges a kindred soul from a very different culture. For me, this synchronicity of imagining the deep past exemplifies the wide appeal of Mike’s work as much as his formidable scientific achievements.

Rob Paton

Australian National University

As this review goes to press Shino Konishi’s masterly book is shortlisted for the New South Wales Premier’s History Award and I for one would not be surprised if it is successful, marking a wonderful achievement for a first book. Whether or not this happens, this is a landmark work that illustrates perfectly the sometimes elusive paradigm of ‘good history’; that work that is marked only by a perfect rendition of the sources, untainted by theory. The scope of this book is a remarkable feat for an early career researcher. Certainly its inclusion as the eighth book in the prestigious Pickering & Chatto, Body, Gender and Culture Series is indicative of its intrinsic value as history. It is wonderful to see a publisher that values such fine scholarship and allows and values such a rich lode of endnotes in this volume.

This book illuminates the earliest of the encounters of European explorers with Aboriginal people on the coast of Australia in such a way that the unguarded humanity of the players is foregrounded. In fact, as Konishi explains, it is the bodies of each that were of the greatest interest to each other. They were interested to explore the extent and the limits of their admittedly culture-bound ideas of humanity, from the bodily functions of eating and drinking, speaking, eliminating, to the preference for adornments, communications, physical prowess including in battle and in sexual activity. They went so far as to be ‘touching, scrutinizing, grooming and adorning one another’s bodies’ and of course as Konishi reminds us, contact itself means to touch. The order of chapters into ‘Skin’, ‘Hair’, ‘Face’, ‘Carnal Bodies’, ‘Martial Bodies’, ‘Communicating Bodies’, ‘Indolent Bodies’ and ‘Testing Bodies’ reflects this and also suggests very close reading, organisation and documentation of the records.

Embodied encounters in the Enlightenment world are influenced too by the ideas of the superiority of man in the state of nature, perhaps a trifle threatening to the European male of the time who emerged from an urban world. These early expeditions were interested to establish how the native man was measuring up, by concentrating on documenting everything possible about the people they came across and making critical assessments and comparisons of them in the context of their social and cultural milieu.

The encounters of the explorers and Aboriginal men are described in such a way as to become snapshots in time, made possible by the careful observations and records of the eighteenth century expeditions that Konishi has researched. These are more leisurely encounters than those of earlier explorers and qualitatively and quantitatively different from those that followed in the intensity of colonisation. The ideology of the Enlightenment and the interest in man in a state of nature, was importantly a product of the extreme wealth generated by slavery and colonisation whereby wealthy patrons sought to support a wholesale quest
for knowledge. Further opportunities for investment were also welcomed of course. In the 33 years between 1770 and 1803 the coast of Australia was like the proverbial Pitt Street Sydney; more than 20 European expeditions landed here.

Accounts by the Englishmen Joseph Banks, James Cook, Tobias Furneaux, Watkin Tench, David Collins, Matthew Flinders, the limited accounts of the Spaniard Alejandro Malaspina, and the more extensive accounts of the French Nicolas Baudin, Marc-Joseph Marion-Defresne, Antoine-Raymond-Joseph Bruny d’Entrecasteaux, Jacques-Julien Houtou de Labillardière, Jean-François de Galaup de La Perouse, and especially those of François Péron are examined for this volume. These are the men on expeditions that met Aboriginal people and were able to engage with them for some time, or who were a part of the early colony at Port Jackson.

Konishi is not only a masterly scholar but she has a particularly light and nuanced turn of phrase that engages the reader from the first. For example, I found the introduction to this book more exciting and immediate than any that I can recall. Konishi makes these often ‘mundane’ encounters between men that were ‘often tense, sometimes perplexing and occasionally convivial’ (p. 4) and the debates that surround them alive and engaging, of absolute import to contemporary issues in Aboriginal Australia.

Victoria Grieves

University of Sydney
Heritage sounds such a simple concept, most easily characterised by that old advertising slogan ‘Things we want to keep’. But even with that characterisation there are conflicts: is it just about things, or about intangible qualities as well; who is entitled to be ‘we’ in this statement, that is to say, who are the stakeholders in the heritage; is ‘wanting’ enough or is legislation needed to support it, or is it the other way around and the legislative protections should be subordinate to the strength of ‘wanting’ in the general community; and finally, what is involved in ‘keeping’ heritage things, who pays the costs and for how long should they be kept? In addition, for much non-indigenous heritage it remains true that heritage-rich places are places where nothing much happened (Davidson 2008a); in others, archaeologists recover lost memories where places whose heritage importance we can now evaluate were once disregarded and forgotten ‘lost histories’ (Davidson 2008b). This fascinating book gives food for thought on all of these questions.

The volume arose from the 2nd Indigenous World Archaeological Inter-Congress, held in New Zealand in 2005. It has 12 chapters and five appendices. The chapters are an overview introduction by Allen and Phillips, discussions of cases in Native American (by Watkins), Argentinian (by Haber, Londoño, Mamaní and Roda), Puerto Riqueño (by Luz-Rodríguez), Solomon Islands (by Foana’ota) as well as two Australian (by Mosley, and by Ross) and four New Zealand (by Phillips, by Allen, by Rika-Heke, and by Solomon and Forbes) and an overview by Nicholas arguing that indigenous approaches to heritage should be brought into the mainstream rather than developed as a branch of archaeology separate from other approaches. Only four of 15 authors self-identify as Indigenous in the biographical notes at the end of the book.

The appendices include several documents that guide the behaviour of practitioners in relation to indigenous heritage: 1) the first Code of Ethics of the World Archaeological Congress – which formed the basis for the Code of Ethics of the Australian Archaeological Association, which has subsequently been modified (Davidson 1991; Davidson, Lovell-Jones and Bancroft 1995); 2) the Vermillion Accord on Human Remains, which contributed to the passing of NAGPRA, the US Statute governing the repatriation of Native American cultural property, especially skeletal remains; 3) the Tamaki Makau-rau Accord on the

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Display of Human Remains and Sacred Objects, agreed at this meeting; 3) the Mataatua Declaration on Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous People that arose from the First International Meeting on that subject in 1993; and 5) a summary of discussions at the meeting on the subject of relationships between archaeologists, teaching institutions, heritage organisations and Maori, which has many recommendations that can be generalised to other situations, and legislations. For my money, the book is worth reading for the implications of Appendix 5 alone.

As is usual with edited volumes, especially from broad issue international meetings, there is too much detail to summarise here. But there are some important things to be said about Heritage that kept coming to mind as I read the book. It is certainly a thought provoking book, and well worth reading for that reason.

Heritage is an ambivalent concept applied in different ways by different people in different contexts. As several of these papers show, research archaeologists now routinely involve indigenous people in their work at some level. The most consistent interaction is when archaeologists engage with recording, salvage, or mitigation work in advance of industrial developments (using a broad definition of industrial throughout this review to encompass both conventional meanings in terms of mining, drilling, pipeline laying, infrastructure projects, plant construction, and housing and other construction developments, as well as agriculture). Industry, broadly conceived in this way, is required by law to engage with indigenous communities. As several of these papers emphasise, these three sets of interests do not always coincide. The situation can be pictured as a standard Venn diagram of three intersecting circles representing ‘research’, ‘industry’ and ‘Indigenous culture’.

None of these three groups is coterminous with any other, though in some countries with a relatively short indigenous history (such as New Zealand), all archaeology may be quite close to indigenous knowledge (see chapters by Phillips and by Allen), but at the same time, indigenous culture will encompass much more than archaeologists can study. In some regions (such as the Inland Pilbara), industry may be so overwhelming that it threatens to obliterate all archaeology and all the land associated with indigenous culture. In rare cases (as in the Solomons), archaeologists have worked closely with indigenous people such that it is now indigenous people who are undertaking archaeological research to enrich their own people’s history and heritage (see chapter by Foana’ota). Appendix 5 explicitly recommends that Maori groups should follow this, and it applies equally in Australia. In her chapter, Rika-Hele discusses why Maori do not engage with archaeology.

In fact, almost all of the variables in these relationships are open to negotiation in one context or another. Industry could choose to avoid impacts on heritage in particular circumstances (not to mine when a sacred site is in the middle of the ore body; not to establish a factory in a place of importance to indigenous people) – such choices are rarely exhibited in this or any other collection, but some would say they are not unknown. Indigenous people may feel they have no rights in relation to heritage sites on their traditional land because of the narrative of cultural change produced by non-indigenous archaeologists. Others are re-asserting the rights they have been denied historically (see chapter by Haber et al) or revisiting the way in which colonial society constructed an identity that was indigenous that was different from that it encountered (see Chapter by De la Luz-Rodríguez). Curiously, only archaeologists are unlikely to claim that a particular region is of no interest to them, and perhaps this is one reason why they have been leaders in the recording and registering of sites in advance of industrial development, now, generally, in company with indigenous people. Yet the devastating conclusion in Appendix 5 is that ‘Archaeology at present is a tool for managing destruction of Maori heritage sites’, something that has been said of Aboriginal sites in Australia too. This is made inevitable by another comment in Appendix 5 that ‘The fact that private consultants are paid for by developers can raise concerns about professionalism, or lack of it.’

There is always talk in heritage circles of the protection of heritage places (rarely landscapes) by legislation, yet Allen documents here, just how much legislation may vary. In practice, such protection is often wafer thin, and generally subordinated to the interests of industry, justified using phrases such as ‘the well-being of the whole local community’ (see chapter by Phillips, p. 144). Phillips also quotes McGovern-Wilson about making the results of archaeological work ‘a meaningful contribution to every New Zealander’s understanding of the past’. I have argued previously that such a contribution can only be made by writing the results of the work as a narrative, similar to but different from the oral traditions that connect the places of indigenous people. That is, after all, how countries (such as Spain or Britain) which do not distinguish between their indigenous and their non-indigenous people use archaeology as part of their historical narrative (Bradley 2006). It is urgently needed for Australia (Davidson 2010).

The problem is that it may not be appropriate for non-indigenous archaeologists alone to write such narratives, as that may simply echo the evil effects on indigenous peoples of colonial pasts. Rather, as Nicholas and others suggest in this volume, we should encourage indigenous people to become archaeologists and write their own narratives of these lost histories. My own prejudice as an archaeologist is to continue writing archaeo-histories without pretending that what I am writing is necessarily what indigenous people want to hear, but I recognise that this is not the only way ahead. As Allen says (p. 175) ‘The threat to archaeological places is so great that it is necessary for archaeologists to surrender control over the archaeological heritage in order to secure its lasting survival.’
This would make an excellent textbook for any courses about indigenous heritage because of its wide-ranging discussion of issues and its carefully and wisely presented case studies.

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Iain Davidson

University of New England, Armidale

Bladensburg National Park is one of Queensland’s more remote national parks, located in the north-west of the state near Winton. It is promoted as having ‘spectacular views from flat-topped mesas and plateaus, residual sandstone ranges and vast grassland plains’. It is indeed spectacular as any visitor would attest. But this Park also has a dark history and one that does not feature prominently in the tourist literature of the region. In the late 1870s, it was the site of a major massacre of the Koa people. How many died is unknown but a contemporary report said ‘nearly the whole tribe was killed’. The site is now called Skull Hole and its remoteness and tranquility belies its bloody past.

Conspiracy of Silence: Queensland’s Frontier Killing-Times by Cairns historian Timothy Bottoms convincingly demonstrates that the massacre at Skull Hole was not an isolated event or aberration in colonial Queensland. Bottoms set himself the task of systematically documenting all known or recorded massacres of Aboriginal people in colonial Queensland. Since Ray Evans’ pioneering work Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination was published in 1975 (Australia and New Zealand Book Co), extensive research has been undertaken on frontier relations in colonial Queensland. In particular, detailed accounts and analysis have exposed numerous massacres showing how violent early encounters were between Europeans and Aboriginal groups. Invaluable though this body of work has been, it has generally focused on certain regions (for example Noel Loos on north Queensland) or specific incidents such the mass poisonings at Kilcoy Station, or the clashes at Hornet Bank or Cullin-la-go-Ringo. What has been lacking is a detailed overview of all documented encounters that resulted in the multiple deaths of Aboriginal people. Not anymore.

Bottoms’ work admirably fills this gap. He has exhaustively researched published works, primary sources, oral records as well as interviewing informants and visiting sites to systematically document massacres on the frontier. Bottoms defines a massacre as killings of at least five or six and does not extend his analysis to the deaths of smaller numbers.

This book is not pleasant reading. Bottoms does not let up. It is a relentless narrative of massacre after massacre throughout the length and breadth of colonial Queensland. Bottoms explores the events region by region as the frontier moved west and north. He first examines south-east Queensland and then moves on to southern Queensland and then to central Queensland. South-west Queensland and the Channel Country are the focus of Chapter 4. Chapter 5 explores poisonings and sexual exploitation on the frontier. The following chapters document massacres in central Queensland, north Queensland and Cape York Peninsula, the rainforest areas in north Queensland, and lastly the gulf country and western Queensland. One of the key players in the attacks on Aboriginal groups was the Native Police which was established in 1848 and
operated until the end of the century. By the end, the evidence is beyond doubt that the frontier in Queensland was characterised by a succession of violent encounters. It is not, as earlier accounts of Queensland’s history attempted to demonstrate, that while some massacres did occur, they were merely isolated incidents.

While *Conspiracy of Silence* presents an extensive catalogue, Bottoms is well aware that he may not have documented every massacre. Other killings could have occurred and easily gone undetected. Many pastoral properties had outstations situated in very remote and inaccessible locations. Clashes could easily have occurred without the knowledge of the outside world.

Apart from exposing the extent of major killings on the frontier, *Conspiracy of Silence* constantly reminds us how relatively recent these events were. They did not occur in the distant past but within two or three generations. Many stories are embedded in local oral traditions. For example, Cecil Ngaka Ebsworth was a Wangkumara man from the Channel Country who was born in 1919. When interviewed in 1981, he related how he had seen skulls and bullets from a massacre in 1872 at Mt Leonard Station. His great-grandmother who had been told about the incident was alive at the time. Hazel McKellar, the author of *Matya-Mundu: A History of Aboriginal People in South West Queensland* (Cunnamulla Australian Native Welfare Association, c1984) and the source of information about a massacre in the early 1880s at Monjarree waterhole in south-west Queensland, was born in 1930 and died in 2003. She learnt about the incident directly from her mother-in-law, Granny McKellar. Granny McKellar, who died in 1971 aged 101 years, was a young child when this massacre occurred. Ernie Grant, a Jirrbal/Girrimay Elder from north Queensland, was a young man in 1954 when told graphic stories of a massacre of his people by his grandfather. But stories about massacres and violence also have been transmitted in the families and descendants of the perpetrators, although these families are less forthcoming.

Because the *Conspiracy of Silence* is singularly focused on events on the Queensland frontier, it could be argued that its value is limited to Queensland history. It might be tempting to conclude that Queensland was clearly different from the rest of Australia and that the responsibility for the violence rested with Queenslanders. However, it was not just the pastoralists and the workers on the runs that were responsible but also investors and absent landlords. The Queensland pastoral industry was heavily dependent on southern investment, particularly from Victoria. While Victorian pastoralists might have tut-tutted over their gin and tonics in the Melbourne Club at the bad behaviour of their northern counterparts, a number would indeed reap rich rewards from the violence that enabled their runs to be cleared of ‘troublesome blacks’. The Queensland frontier was part of the Australian frontier and these events cannot be considered in isolation. Indeed, as Norwegian naturalist Carl Lumholtz commented in 1889 about the Native Police in Queensland: ‘their cruelties constitute the black page in the annals of Australian colonisation’. The Queensland frontier was inextricably part of the Australian story. Events on the Queensland frontier, however, had a even wider impact. They were also part of the grand British colonial enterprise.
Like the re-writing of the Queensland frontier, so too has the broader imperial narrative been rewritten to reveal that bloodshed, violence, coercion, slavery were commonplace as the empire expanded across the globe.

The extent of the deaths documented in *Conspiracy of Silence* had a catastrophic impact on Aboriginal groups throughout Queensland. Few escaped the loss of at least some members. It was not just the loss of life as the result of massacres and sporadic killings that was devastating, but the impact on the economic and social cohesion of each group. Take away for example, a few men who were critical in the food and resource gathering process and suddenly the clan could be facing an acute shortage of resources (to say nothing of how the incursion of sheep and cattle was also disrupting resources).

*Conspiracy of Silence* makes an important contribution to understanding Australia’s part, in particular the complex relationships between Europeans and Aboriginal people on the frontier. It provides a synthesis of scholarship from the last 30 years and dispels beyond doubt the myths that the ‘settlement’ of Australia was a peaceful process.

Thom Blake
Ashgrove Queensland
Desert Lake: Art, Science and Stories from Paruku is a compilation of dreaming narratives, personal histories, scientific descriptions, photos and paintings, all centred on the great Paruku lake system, situated on the north-west edge of the Great Sandy Desert (Western Australia). It documents the many, varied responses to the lake, from its traditional owners, the Walmajarri people, to the more recent non-Indigenous arrivals in their many guises; pastoralists, scientists, artists, anthropologists.

And in doing so it reaches far, far back in time. Back to the very beginning. The book begins with excerpts of the dreaming stories that traverse the lake, interspersed with paintings and aerial photographs that give tantalising glimpses of what is to unfold over the coming pages. In part one of the book, the journey into ‘deep time’ continues with geologist Jim Bowler’s essay on what the geological and archaeological record tells us about the site (for example, in dating human inhabitation of the area to nearly 50,000 years). Bowler’s contribution interweaves the story of the lake as revealed by his (and others’) scientific analysis with the story of how that analysis came to happen – though a long-term and ongoing collaboration with the traditional custodians, in particular, Rex Johns. Bowler gently lays out his own evolving response to the seeming conflict between scientific and Walmajarri perspectives, and describes his own personal resolution to the paradox, guided by a ‘sense of mutual empathy with land, its deep time history’ (p. 42). The integration of the two perspectives has also been a preoccupation for some Walmajarri people, and this has been given expression in a painting by Hanson Pye called Parnkupirti layers. Pye explains that the layers depict different time depths, with different stories located at each level. It is clear that Pye and Bowler have exchanged perspectives, and they generously allow us insight into that exchange in this volume.

The second part of the book is set in ‘recent times’ and takes us through a range of contemporary interactions with and around the lake. Kim Mahood and John Carty weave together the oral histories of Biddy Chungulla, Launa Yoomarie, Yanpiyarti Ned Cox, Rex Johns, Shirley Yoomarie, Freda Tjama Napanangka, Anna Johns, and Jamie Brown in an essay that tells the story of European ‘discovery’ of the lake and its broader system of creeks and rivers (when ancient names were overlaid with strange-sounding words like ‘Sturt’ and ‘Gregory’), and the subsequent era of pastoral stations and ‘protectionism’, through to present-day land management arrangements.

Following this, a collection of first-person vignettes captures a range of Walmajarri experiences of the past century. Biddy Chungulla describes how her family took refuge on an island in the lake in the fraught days of early contact with Europeans. Rex Johns’ epic life story chronicles a young man growing up in
the new world order of missions and stations, and later during the fight for land rights. Anna Johns discusses the setting up of Mulan community. Veronica Lulu recounts getting sunstroke while living at Billiluna Station. Bessie Doonday also recollects her early working life at Billiluna, and the period after the handing back of the station to the Walmajarri people. Gracie Mosquito’s life story highlights how the regular currents of family life continue to flow alongside the dramatic change that missions and stations brought. Shirley Yoomarie vividly describes some of the mysteries of mission life, such as having her name changed by the nuns (her parents had named her Julie). Megan Boxer details her schooling life, first at Mulan, then Balgo and Broome, and the challenges being away from home brought. Launa Yoomarie and Megan Boxer use both paint and words to record the harrowing story of a massacre of Aboriginal people at Sturt Creek, witnessed by Yoomarie’s Uncle.

Land ownership and management is a theme that emerges from these personal histories. The contemporary challenges are explored in two essays: one on the waterways monitoring undertaken through the Rangers program and the other on the ongoing implications of human interaction with the lake for the fauna that also call it home. Another important locus of cultural exchange and response to Paruku is through art. Non-Indigenous visual artist Mandy Martin explores the combined artistic output of the large Paruku project team and many works are reproduced in full-page spreads with accompanying explanations. Martin’s own ‘Falling star’ works are also included. Art anthropologist John Carty’s informative essay examines the range of Indigenous responses to Paruku, contrasting the canvases of Kukatja/Wangkatjunga artist Rover Thomas, with the more intimate images made by the lake’s custodians. This part of the book also documents the beautiful and multi-layered mapping work undertaken as part of the Paruku project.

With the past and the present dealt with, we are now taken on a journey into the future. This section is comprised of a thoughtful essay from two acknowledged ‘outsiders’ (Jocelyn Davies and Guy Fitzhardinge) on the ongoing challenges facing Mulan community (the principal residence for most of the Walmajarri project participants), with a focus on the inherent strengths that characterise the community (resilience, for one) and the partnerships that the Walmajarri residents are forging in order to sustain community life into the future. Following this are two ‘insider’ perspectives on the future: Paruku Ranger Jamie Brown reflects on his life and role as a Ranger, and shares his ongoing wishes and concerns for Mulan community. Shirley Brown speaks to the significance of the declaration of the Indigenous Protected Area over the lake and the importance of her ongoing work with the various projects that have resulted – such as the Paruku project.

There is good deal more in this book than can be easily be summed up in a book review, for it has attempted to capture something that is itself vast and untetherable. As a thoughtful compilation of many voices, it succeeds. And as a companion for future generations, I wager it will also succeed. For it feels rich and generous and full of good spirit. The larger Paruku project, for which this book is a key artefact, asked the question ‘How are we to live with our shared
history, our shared environments, our shared homes, in difference and respect. And how do we tell these stories together? This book is a fantastic answer to that question.

Sally Dixon

The Australian National University
As global events and relations have become increasingly shaped by visual culture, individual viewers have experienced the power of a single image to arrest their attention, shock their sense of propriety, arouse feelings of sympathy or anger, and propel them to rally against the ill treatment of other people. The catalyst for this masterly inquiry into the role played by photography in Australian human rights history was Jane Lydon’s epiphanous encounter with the image of two chained Aboriginal prisoners on the cover of Charles Rowley’s *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*. This image inspired her to investigate how such images transformed Australian race relations.

Written during the Northern Territory ‘Intervention’, this book explores how photography triggered the recognition of Indigenous Australians as human beings along with campaigning for Indigenous rights from 1900 to the present. *The Flash of Recognition* embraces transformations in the way that visual media itself was conceived, produced and circulated within specific historical contexts, most notably photography’s rise to a privileged position as proof of distant events. It also maps the intellectual and personal histories of particular images of violence or Aboriginal suffering that Australian campaigners deployed to mobilise support for social reform. Specifically, specialist ideas of Aboriginality were disseminated, certain ideas and events seized the public imagination, giving rise to empathy for the plight of Aboriginal people, and either prompted change or failed to do so.

The central principle driving this inquiry is that photographs bearing witness to a colonising past and its legacies have created significant effects in Australian human rights history. Lydon argues that white privilege was a complex rather than monolithic position from which campaigners used photographic images as signs of injustice to intervene in events. This involved the individuals’ choice to look at such images, acknowledge Aboriginal conditions and make them visible to mainstream society, while others variously chose to support such activism, use images to control or exploit, or forget the past and its victims. Lydon thus engages with WEH Stanner’s notion of ‘the great Australian silence’ by demonstrating that this was less the case of not being told, and more about a society, through a slow cultural process, allowing itself to see beyond the logic of colonialism to recognise Indigenous Australians as equally human with distinctive rights as First Peoples. While locating these campaigners within an ethical tradition that Meaghan Morris calls a relationship of ‘critical proximity’ to a lived past, this book also acknowledges tensions over new limits to bearing such witness. Notably, Indigenous demands for control over photographs of ancestors and rights to privacy and dignity to avoid degrading effects and re-animating misery.
In so doing, it provides an invaluable guide as to how historians might respect Indigenous protocols and limitations while advancing a ‘testimonial’ way of seeing to counter enduring tendencies towards historical amnesia.

Drawing on American anthropologist, Faye Ginsberg’s concept of ‘mediascape’, this book analyses the interdependence of media practices with the local, national and international contexts that surround them. This encompasses the development of multiple cultural forms, from their emergence as the dominant modes of visual media to their current place in today’s postmodern world. Through historicising the flow of ideas about Aboriginality, from how it was conceived to how it was received by mainstream society, this study examines the processes by which, firstly, government officials, missionaries and concerned private citizens enabled remote audiences to witness the treatment of Indigenous peoples, and secondly, how their arguments of injustice prompted identification with, empathy for, and action to ameliorate their plight. In addition this study scrutinises factors that limited such outcomes.

Seven chapters are arranged chronologically and thematically around the use of new media by diverse activists to advance specific rights campaigns in different locations across Australia. It begins in Western Australia on the eve of Federation and contends that while local humanitarian campaigns prompted the 1905 Roth Royal Commission, scientific and administrative discourses combined with pastoralist interests, and constrained the perception of neck-chained Aboriginal prisoners by obscuring their misery. Such images were seen as evidence for containing Indigenous savagery and safeguarding progress. Lydon then examines activism against official mistreatment of Aborigines on the northern frontier during the 1920s and 1930s, finding that perceptions of Aboriginal humanity remained constrained by ideas of race and conventions of taste, as mainstream society grew to see the familiar image of chained Aboriginal prisoners as the acceptable symbol of settler inhumanity. Within the following three chapters, the author traces a profound shift in ways of seeing Indigenous Australians during the 1930s through 1960s. Lydon contends that new global principles of human rights strengthened shifts in visual culture leading to sweeping changes in popular acknowledgement of Aborigines as a struggling people, and the emergence of public protest against failed Aboriginal policy. Chapter 6 examines the intersection of an Aboriginal ‘welfare’ movement that used photography to justify its intervention into domestic affairs within rural Aboriginal camps as a means to social uplift into mainstream society, with an oppositional Aboriginal rights campaign led by a coalition of black and white reformers and supported by a bloc of overseas nations during the 1950s and 1960s. The final two chapters examine the emergence of recognition of an Indigenous humanity entitled to distinctive rights, and the subsequent retreat from this high point in Australian race relations. The concluding chapter examines the profound revision of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians since the 1992 Mabo native title judgement recognised Indigenous rights to self-determination and privacy on their own land. In bringing this book to a close, Lydon reiterates the importance of ethical spectatorship within a world so highly informed and
shaped by photographic images. She argues global visual culture can be put to many political uses. Her focus attends less to seeing people as objects of pity than as human beings with rights.

Lydon challenges the prevailing understanding introduced by Henry Reynolds in his groundbreaking 1998 study of nineteenth-century campaigners *This Whispering in our Hearts*, by arguing that the place of humanitarians must be understood within everyday culture. Her approach radically interrogates white privilege and sheds light on humanitarians’ use of photography to actively contribute to and express public understandings of Aboriginality. This book thus sheds light on a central theme of Australian race-relations history.

Photographic illustrations are critical in works of visual culture. *The Flash of Recognition* is lavishly illustrated in sepia tones and full colour, with attractive design features and stimulating layout. One minor disappointment is that many image source details appear in a small typeface and are located near to the centrefold spine, which impedes their readability.

Overall, this is a perceptive and ambitious inquiry in both scope and complexity of issues. It is a meticulously researched book that draws on an exhaustive range of archival records and visual culture. Lydon provides many original insights, and a sophisticated, satisfying and holistic analysis of the production, circulation, reception and public response to Australian photographic media for a century-plus from 1900. *The Flash of Recognition* makes important contributions to Australian race-relations history, photographic history and human rights history. It makes a convincing case for the largely overlooked value of photographic evidence in historical research and exemplifies ethical research standards. Lydon has taken considerable steps to respect Indigenous photographic protocols, including seeking moral and/or cultural permissions from the image subject or family. For all these reasons, this book is a valuable resource for students and researchers across these domains.

Jillian Barnes

The University of Newcastle

An insurgent may, in the eyes of some, be a freedom fighter. Armed conflict is often seen differently according to one’s experience and perspective. After the Second World War, many new nations in Africa and Asia emerging from the ruins of colonialism and imperial ambition rewrote their histories to incorporate and acknowledge those who fought for and achieved independence and national sovereignty. These were the former plantation colonies, areas grabbed by European powers for their resources and strategic value, not as the future homelands of colonisers.

In the settler-colonies, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, a very different attitude to Indigenous resistance became entrenched. A greater contrast is hard to imagine. Acknowledging Indigenous efforts to repel intruders might mean admitting that dispossession and invasion had actually occurred, something that legal and political frameworks could not easily admit. Giving respect to those who defended their country against colonisers, according to some, threatened the entire basis of the new settler-nations that evolved from the imperial exercise. Far too much was at stake.

Henry Reynolds’ latest book, Forgotten War, asks how Australia will reconcile those who died – at home – in the defence of their countries with the soldiers who fell during the nation’s overseas battles. In some ways, this represents a return to one of Reynolds’ original themes, discussed in his 1993 chapter ‘The Unrecorded Battlefields of Queensland’, in Race Relations in North Queensland (James Cook University, Townsville). Twenty years later, the same questions remain unanswered.

Two main issues are presented in this book: how should Australians acknowledge frontier warfare, and how could our national military history be made more inclusive? Along the way, important issues such as sovereignty and national commemoration enter the debate. The book has great importance for the teaching of history in our schools and universities, as a timely corrective to the seemingly never-ending deluge of ‘war histories’ and ‘military celebrations’. For that reason alone, I am grateful to Henry Reynolds.

My own archival research supports Reynolds’ contention that the frontier, rather than exploration or pioneering was ‘the central thread of Australian history’ (p. 172). Frontier warfare, as Reynolds argues, is central to ‘an understanding of both the past and the present’ (p. 3). He notes that both the Department of Veterans’ Affairs and the Australian War Memorial, the two main institutions fostering the ‘militarisation of Australian history’, are ‘silent about frontier war. It is as though it didn’t exist’ (p. 234). This oversight means Australians ‘have the extraordinary situation that Aborigines who died fighting on the other side of the world are recognised while those who were cut down defending their homelands are studiously ignored’ (p. 234).
As far as Reynolds is concerned, Australia’s continued failure to acknowledge that a form of warfare took place when Europeans invaded this continent means the violence and the deaths that occurred during the frontier wars are forgotten. This ongoing omission has powerful implications for settler memorials, as well as for Indigenous people. If the sacrifice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in defence of country, cannot be admitted, then the deaths of settlers also remains as a continuing silent scar on national history. One cannot be dealt with without admitting the other.

The alternative, as far as he is concerned, is the criminalisation of the settlers themselves: ‘If there was no war then thousands of Aborigines were murdered in a century-long, continent-wide crime wave tolerated by government. There seems to be no other option. It must be one or the other’ (p. 136). In the mind of this reviewer, the serial killing was not only tacitly allowed, but actively encouraged by colonial government and society. How else would the murderous activities of forces such as Queensland’s Native Police be permitted to continue, despite public knowledge of the full extent of the violence?

Reynolds’ previous writing on the militarisation of Australian history has been criticised by conservative commentators and some within the armed forces, and no doubt the same arguments will be trotted out again in response to this book. Did Australia exist before European settlement? If not, then the only alternative is an admission that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who died did so in defence of their own sovereign nations. However, as Reynolds notes, sovereignty is ‘a fundamental flaw in Australian jurisprudence’ (p. 193). Similarly, to reject what happened on the frontier as ‘not really war’ means rejecting the opinion of every credible military historian in Australia today, because none omit the frontier from their list of Australian battlefields.

This is an important and timely book that should be read by every teacher and history student in Australia. The fundamental disconnect between the community and the historical profession, and the institutions charged with remembering war and conflict, speaks loudly about the profound gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous perceptions of and understandings of our national history. We will only go forward, as a nation united, when all the war dead are acknowledged, honoured and remembered.

Disclaimer: My book The Secret War is acknowledged as a source by Henry Reynolds.

Jonathan Richards

University of Queensland
Aboriginal art, for all the attention it receives, remains underappreciated for the profound impact it has had, and will continue to have, on national and international art. Those of us who write about, research, or share a passion for this art in Australia understand it to be among the most significant movements in our increasingly global art history. How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art: Writing on Aboriginal Contemporary Art moves past the platitudes and lazy rhetoric to make an eloquent and definitive case for why that is.

‘This anthology’, Mclean states early on, ‘is inspired by a … sense that something significant has been achieved that needs to be historically assessed, and while celebrated, also moved on from’. While Mclean clearly, even cautiously, defines the terrain he is covering as ‘not Aboriginal art as such, but the ideas that shaped its artworld reception’, the book is unmistakably part of a more ambitious project. This publication seeks to draw a line under tired debates and, in so doing, provide a platform for better thinking and writing about art in Australia.

Just as the title sounds two notes, both radically bold (‘How Aborigines invented the idea of contemporary art’) and descriptively mundane (‘writing on Aboriginal contemporary art’) so does the structure of the book fall into two discrete but related sections: essays and thematically organised excerpts. The anthology is bookended by two of Mclean’s essays: each of them is worth the price of admission. ‘Aboriginal art and the artworld’ is an introduction to the terrain at once so comprehensive and concise that it is tempting then to skip through the next 200 pages of anthologised excerpts. Likewise, the final essay, ‘How Aborigines invented the idea of contemporary art’ is so astute and compelling there is a danger most readers will flick between these and feel it unnecessary to read the rest of the book. But that would be a mistake. I know because, initially, I was one such reader. Familiar with the major texts about Aboriginal art, I came to this collection more interested in what new insights Mclean had to offer than about reading or re-reading the anthologised excerpts. Yet this is a book that rewards the attentive reader.

Great care, and thought, has gone into the selection and editing of this writing to reveal something more than the sum of its parts. There is a deeper structure to the volume, to the way excerpts have been edited and juxtaposed, to the connections and spaces between individual pieces of writing, in which an unsettled history of ideas can be seen playing out. These ideas, and the ways they were expressed from the early 1980s through to the mid 2000s, are structured into a series of thematic sections. ‘Becoming Modern’, traces the first flush of these ideas in the writings of founding figures in Australian art (such as Tony Tuckson) and anthropology (such as Ronald Berndt) through their development in writers
such as Bernard Smith, Rex Butler, Howard Morphy and Eric Michaels. ‘Zones of Engagement’ then explores the ways in which different regions (or conceptual regions such as ‘Urban’, or indeed the ‘Artworld’) have been conceptualised. ‘Issues’ is a forgivingly broad umbrella for the section in which Mclean navigates how questions as diverse as gender, ethics, aesthetics, appropriation, commerce and politics have surfaced and been negotiated by Australian artists and writers alike.

The final thematic section, ‘Futures’, is, perhaps alarmingly, the slimmest offering in the book. The lack of great writing for Mclean to draw from here reveals not only the limitations in our language around art, but in our capacity to speak with confidence and informed critical conviction about the complex terrain of Aboriginality in Australia. Mclean anticipates and excuses this earlier in the book: ‘If we are yet to see a full historical investigation of the subject, it is not due to the poverty of criticism but the difficulty and profundity of the exercise.’ Of course, on one level, Mclean is right; it is awfully difficult terrain and Australian writers have navigated it better than most. But this concession sits awkwardly, in tension if not outright contradiction, with McLean’s recognition that ‘very few Australian art historians have researched Aboriginal art in any substantial way’.

It is no coincidence that over half of the contributions in this book are by writers operating outside the fields of art history, theory or criticism. It is also telling that nearly one third of the contributions included here are written by anthropologists; a subset of the Australian commentariat whose voice Mclean recognises as ‘the most persistent and authoritative in the artworld reception of Aboriginal art’. Anthropologists were among the first to recognise (and analyse) Aboriginal art simply as art. Those included in this volume have gone on to situate rich descriptions of an emerging tradition within a broader set of historical and cultural processes and transformations. This recognition of cultural practice as dynamic, born of a dialectical tension between innovation and tradition, is at the core of these anthropological interpretations of Aboriginal contemporary art. The same cannot be said for our traditions of art history and criticism. Indeed, Mclean notes that

In some respects it seems that Aboriginal art has always been written about as it was already over. … To a certain extent this continues today among those who feel that the knowledge of the old people, along with the rich spiritual motivation of their art, will soon be lost forever.

This misplaced fatalism proliferates in art criticism, arguably because such writers are operating with a fairly static notion of culture as something people ‘have’ rather than a dynamic set of ideas, values and practices that adapt and evolve in what people ‘do’.

The very premises of culture, or at least our preconceptions about it, are laid bare in the debates around Aboriginal art. Refreshingly the artists in this volume, from Lin Onus and John Mawurndjul to Judy Watson and her notion of Aboriginal art as both ‘Country and Western’, eloquently reveal the tenuousness
of static notions of tradition, identity and culture. What seems self-evident to anthropologists and artists – that culture is not an essential substance but a dynamic and adaptive expression of human creativity – is an idea so seemingly foreign it has left Australian art historians mute (or mutely gnashing their teeth) for decades. Before Aboriginal art, Mclean laments, ‘art historians are dumbfounded. They have no choice but to rewrite their stories, and in the process rethink their methodologies.’

This volume argues for a rich tradition of scholarship in Australia, but it is also a record of the difficulty art historians and art critics in Australia have faced in developing informed and scholarly positions about the artistic tradition they purport to explain (or, as is often the case, not explain). For too long it has been possible for art critics and art historians in Australia to operate as experts and commentators in the field without ever having undertaken significant research on the subject. Mclean himself, as this publication reveals, is not one of them.

To return, then, to the book at hand, it is a notable achievement that Mclean has been able to create his own text, a coherent and singular intellectual collage, out of other people’s writing. For a reader familiar with the original texts, he illuminates them anew as instruments or movements (or discordant regressions) in a larger score. For students or readers coming to the recent history of Aboriginal art in Australia with new eyes, it is hard to imagine a better art historical introduction. But this is much more than a survey or edited volume. Despite Mclean’s assertion that ‘as editor, I have sought to trace the shifting debates and ideas rather than arrive at a final judgement’ the choice of excerpts, and book as a whole, present an ambitious argument. And the title, it must be said, gives it away.

The concluding essay from which the volume takes its title, ‘How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art’, is among the most important contributions to the field in recent memory. Mclean takes the genealogy of ideas he presents in the rest of the book as the foundation for a fundamental shift in the terms of the debate. As our conceptual landscape reorients from the ‘Western modern’ towards the ‘global contemporary’, discussion of Aboriginal art – as this volume attests – has often struggled to find a position that transcends the dated dualisms of ethnographic/fine art, and a language beyond the mental block of modernism. For Mclean, Aboriginal artists have been, are now, and will increasingly be, central to the changing contexts of global art. Developing the pioneering work of Terry Smith in rethinking the ‘contemporary’, he argues that Aboriginal art makes the very category of the contemporary possible. It is no longer a question of how the artworld will accommodate Aboriginal art in its categorical frame, but rather how that frame could even exist coherently into the future without Aboriginal art.

Australian Aborigines were amongst the first to show the artworld, raised on the ethnocentric and historicist blinkers of European modernism, what contemporary art after modernism felt like. In doing this, they played a decisive role in the artworld’s globalisation at the end of the twentieth century.
Mclean is one of the few scholars to seriously apply the challenge of Aboriginal art to the conceptual framework of modernity, the contemporary and the practice of art history. But he is not alone. In his concluding essay, and in the volume overall, Mclean makes the case for the specific gifts, values and merits of our position in Australia as a nation, with a national art movement, that has the capacity to lead the world in its thinking. The contributions from Terry Smith, Marcia Langton, Howard Morphy, Hetti Perkins and Mclean himself are potent reminders of the searching intellectual standards we set here. Given Australia’s relative invisibility on the international art stage, it is easy to forget how much pioneering thought on the biggest questions of contemporary art has emerged from within our own island borders. Aboriginal artists, the volume allows us to see with clarity and conviction, have been the drivers, the demanders, the origins of that thought. McLean’s line of questioning – theoretically global, historically local and anthropologically informed – illuminates myriad paths forward into an emerging and uniquely Australian Art history that would be worthy of the name.

John Carty

The Australian National University

Colleen O’Neill, one of the authors in this excellent book, succinctly describes the state of knowledge about the history of indigenous women’s labour: ‘we know that women worked too. But unlike their male counterparts, women’s work remained marginal to the bigger story of economic transformation’ (p. 194). Scholarship has been undertaken in the past to understand the significance of indigenous women’s work and this book builds on this scholarship to specifically understand what the work meant at particular times and places, but even more importantly, how it relates to the social and economic transitions that were occurring both for indigenous people and the larger society.

The book covers a wide time period associated with European contact and colonialism (from 1830s until the 1980s), and includes diverse geographical areas. In a book of 15 chapters dealing with labour in specific places, nine are associated with the United States with the remaining six dealing with Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. It also has a very helpful overview by Joan Sangster in the first chapter and a short, interesting lesson in beading at the end by Beth H Piatote. Throughout there are excellent photographs illustrating the work being examined. Each chapter is relatively short and many have been worked up from research available from previously published material by the authors.

The strength of this volume is in the way it situates the work in the specifics of time and place as well as in relationship to government policies. This results in sophisticated insights that go beyond the ‘awfulisation’ that can occur when talking about the painful transitions in indigenous societies as they came under the influence of capitalist colonial regimes. This is not to say that awful things did not happen, because of course they did, but equally significant is what is shown about how women managed to cope with changing employment conditions within a society that was not only racist, but also patriarchal. In this sense the book also goes beyond an emphasis on cultural preservation (the tendency of current historians, according to one author) or the processes of erasure in the face of colonisation and tries to understand the significance of women’s labour as entire economies changed and indigenous peoples were engaged in the production and maintenance of both their own and Newcomer communities.

Particularly helpful in understanding the transformation in the work of indigenous women is the different types of experiences examined – sealing and plantation work in Australia’s early history, mining and seasonal fruit picking in California, logging and the fur trade in Canada, and service sector work including school teaching in Oklahoma and the more recent work in casinos. The examples touch on women’s participation in the industries that were either dominant or crucial in particular places and demonstrate how women’s paid labour was an essential part of survival for indigenous populations.
The earliest periods, by necessity, rely almost exclusively on the information provided by either colonial administrators or employers, such as information about the aboriginal women who worked in the sealing trade in Tasmania and those in the fur trade in Canada. The migration of female south sea islanders who worked on sugar plantations as indentured servants in Queensland from 1868–1906 relies on general information about plantation work, government documents and diaries, but most of the information about the work itself, primarily in the fields, comes from the analysis of photographs of women working. The main value of this is that it shows that women worked under the same brutal physical conditions as men.

A major theme in the book is the way that women were either prominent in or dominated certain types of income-generating industry, but as economic conditions were transformed their work was frequently undermined. This was particularly true in the agricultural work of Lummi women in the Pacific West Coast, the blanket weaving of Navajo women as the wool economy changed, the Anishinaabe women in Wisconsin who worked in tourism, which was a notoriously volatile industry. Also significant were the impacts of industrialisation and the general shift of populations from rural to urban areas, particularly in response to government policy and the decline in local opportunities. This is most comprehensively explored in Alice Littlefield’s chapter on the Anishinaabe women in Michigan and the distinction in the work and location of people in tribes that were officially recognised by government and those that were not. Throughout the book a special effort is made to show that women were active agents in both their own lives and in bringing about change in their communities.

The book’s editor, Carol Williams, is to be congratulated for bringing together such a stellar group of scholars on a subject that has not received the attention it deserves. As she notes, the information in this book contests the homogeneity of male-dominated national development narratives. Altogether, it challenges the ‘structural amnesia’ (p. 75) in most historical accounts of indigenous work in an exceptionally readable and informative way. Its insights are ideal for teaching, but the book is also an inspiration and should encourage further scholarship on the work of Indigenous Women.

Marjorie Griffin Cohen

Simon Fraser University
Fiona Skyring’s history of the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia (ALSWA) over the 40 years between 1970 and 2010 is an important contribution to understanding the civil rights movement in 20th century Australia and the role of Indigenous community-controlled services in challenging inequality. It also adds to our understanding of the internal white Australia policy and the depth to which it remains imbricated in our social, political and economic structures and continues to resist demolition.

The book begins where it ends. Discrimination, poverty, over policing, over imprisonment of children and adults, and the numbing institutional brutality by the state and its criminal justice system. In what could have been just another commemorative history she asks very frank questions. Why is racial disparity in Western Australia (WA) now worse than it was when the ALSWA was established? What benefits do Aboriginal people have to show for its existence?

The origin of the service is traced through the influence of Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people in wider social movements in WA, including trade unions and the legal profession. Encouragement from the rest of Australia also made an impact, including from the founders of the Aboriginal Legal Service in Redfern and the model it provided. The national networks of Aboriginal people, which became possible after the advent of the Whitlam government in 1972, were also formative in the final developments which led to its incorporation in 1975.

In successive chapters the book follows the ALSWA’s expansion into new territories and their further development. These new territories included WA outside of Perth, the representation of Aboriginal people by lawyers in courts, including in Perth, and of Aboriginal people, working as courts officers, who began to appear in the same courts for Aboriginal people. It traces particular events and themes which have preoccupied Indigenous communities in WA and the ALSWA. Some have been constant. It covers the Laverton Royal Commission; Indigenous languages and the acceptance of the Anungu rules for the interrogation of Aboriginal people in police custody; the quest for recognition of land rights; the problems of providing legal services state wide; the organisational management and reform of the service; the establishment of its own agenda for change including ending violence against women; stopping deaths in state custody including its roles with the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody; mandatory sentencing; the advent of native title and its part in resisting WA legislation seeking to reverse the effect of Mabo v Queensland (No 2) in the Native Title Act case; and, the stolen generations and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission inquiry and report.

Over four decades the ALSWA grew from a number of voluntary and parallel activities including those of the Justice Committee of the New Era Aboriginal Fellowship Inc into the largest community-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander legal organisation in Australia. It has a head office in Perth and 17 regional offices and employs over 100 people. It continues to defend Aboriginal people charged with criminal offences and provides representation in family law matters. It is actively involved in individual civil cases relating to human rights. It also retains a focus on law and advocacy and policy and law reform, community legal education, media, human rights including targeted activities. In Australia’s less formal network of interest group politics it is one of the Indigenous organisations with which state and federal governments feel the need to engage.

The Laverton Royal Commission into the brutal treatment of 30 Aboriginal people at Skull Creek in Wangkatha country was an important early success for the new body. It exposed racism in policing policies which the state would have preferred to keep undisclosed. This brought the service to prominence and into issues of conflicts between official practices and law and customary Indigenous law. The royal commission may have led to the prominence that public inquiries have had in its advocacy role. The ALSWA also followed up on less striking but serious discrimination by drawing attention to the two lists of applications for housing based on race maintained by the State Housing Commission.

These advocacy and representative activities ultimately made the ALSWA more visible in WA with the increasing insistence by Indigenous people on equality in respect of civil rights and over land and resources. The events around Noonkanbah are relatively well documented, the role of the ALSWA less so. The book places this conflict into a wider context and the lesser known resistance to mining in 1977 by the Oombulgurri community on the Forrest River reserve, the site of the 1926 massacre. The struggle to prevent mining exploration at Noonkanbah from desecrating a sacred site was lost. The national and international publicity was a major embarrassment for the federal government. The ultimate result was that it acquired the power to protect areas of importance to Indigenous peoples within states in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 (Cth).

The book also points out significant instances which failed to produce positive outcomes. The frustration of the Seaman Land Rights Inquiry and the government’s rejection of its recommendations overshadows the influence of premier Brian Burke in the Hawke government’s abandonment of its national land rights policy in 1986. The confrontation with the Legislative Council over the ALSWA’s records and the Lawrence government’s introduction of mandatory sentencing are stark examples of the use of state power against both the service and its clients.

Success where it appears is often incremental, such as the spread, from the Northern Territory, of the Anungu rules for the interrogation of Indigenous peoples by law enforcement agencies. Some may also be unstated as they may be difficult to quantify. The manipulation of electoral rolls and intimidation, by scrutineers for the Liberal Party, of returning officers in the seat of Kimberley led to the Court of Disputed Returns sitting at Kununurra, Turkey Creek, Halls
Creek, Fitzroy Crossing and Derby. This educated a judge about the fragility of the civil rights of Aboriginal citizens in the north-west. The Chief Justice, Sir Francis Burt, experienced the colour bar in bush hospitality himself when a publican at Kununurra refused to accept his cheque for accommodation when conducting a hearing into the bashing of Aboriginal children.

The book is open in dealing with the conflict to be found in any organisation in management and governance. Not surprisingly the ALSWA’s expansion from criminal law into land, resources and political lobbying meant that its importance to the Indigenous community grew. This saw internal as well as external conflict. One form will be familiar to some other organisations in their early phase, that between the non-Indigenous professional and the Indigenous executive officers. Another was the role of the elected board overseeing the service. That role waxed and waned depending on the relationship between the principal legal officer and the executive officer. When Rob Riley took over as executive officer in the early 1990s the service was at a low point. His skills and commitment re-energised it with a new outreach to, and focus on, the wider WA community.

Some of the conflicts between the ALSWA and other Indigenous organisations are also covered. The maturing of the land rights movement and the appearance of native title posed new challenges for it and its relatively large land and heritage branch. It became a native title representative body for the whole state. This produced conflict with both new land councils and the well-established Kimberley Land Council. Part of the conflict is explained as over the negotiated political and regional approach taken by the ALSWA and the more court-based anthropological approach taken by the NT land councils influenced by the model of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Amendment Act 1978 (Cth). Running through this is also the conflict found in the law imposed on Indigenous peoples by both land rights and native title. These include the differences between people able to remain on their country compared with those not able to as well as the false promises of the Aboriginal Land Inquiry, the Hawke government’s national land rights, and of native title.

One of the great strengths of the book is the voices of the people who have made the ALSWA which continuously speak through it. They carry the narrative forward over the many events and themes. They talk directly to the reader about their experience and memories. For those who have lived through the past 30 years snatches of the events of which they tell of are known. In time they will be a lasting record of these events.

Understandably part of the ALSWA story is yet to be told and set in other contexts. There were wider movements in legal aid in the 1970s which saw, in the first year of the Whitlam government, the establishment of both Aboriginal legal services and the Australian Legal Aid Office. John Toohey QC when he located to Port Hedland also acted for non-Indigenous peoples. The House of Representatives inquiry into Aboriginal legal aid in the late 1970s and the Harkins inquiry in 1986 are covered and were informed by other forms of legal aid. The similarities which led to wider support for legal aid in the 1970s and
1980s, including community legal services, and which appear to have faded in the 1990s and 2000s, are still to be joined up. These need to be more widely explored. This book will contribute to that.

Another story which is only partly revealed is what, if any, has been the impact on those who became involved with the ALSWA in their contribution to other areas of public life? Aboriginal people went on to senior roles in other organisations, the public service and in their own communities. Non-Indigenous lawyers also have become ministers, premiers and judges, including three judges of the High Court of Australia. Other Indigenous organisations also have distinguished former associates but those of the ALSWA may have achieved more prominence than others. Some return in this book to speak of their experiences at the time but rarely of the influence the service had on them or on the roles which they came to later. Understandably these themes are too many for one book, particularly one which is the first in its field.

The core activities of the ALSWA remain around the excessive policing to which Aboriginal people are exposed. The imprisonment rates for Aboriginal people in Western Australia are the highest for indigenous peoples in the OECD. In 2011, the year the book was published, Aboriginal people represented 3.3 per cent of the population of WA yet 68 per cent of all children in juvenile detention and 38.5 per cent of adult prisoners were Indigenous. One explanation for this is suggested to be the trend in advanced English speaking economies to imprison more people in the past 30 years. Any reversal may come from the search for more rational approaches to criminal law enforcement as a result of economic pressure on governments who have less revenue because of pressures to tax less.

What of the honest questions which the author asks about how racial disparity appears to have intensified and what do Aboriginal people have to show for its existence? These may not be the ways to measure the unresolved issues of how Australia remains diminished while Aboriginal people are still seeking equality. The question may be, how much worse would things now be without the ALSWA.

Neil Andrews
Victoria University
Minyjun (M Hale) begins his unique and valuable autobiography with a straightforward declaration that hints at the honest, unpretentious storytelling to come. ‘This is the way my forebears lived in the desert’, he begins, recalling a traditional world that, in numbers of years at least, is not long gone. Minyjun’s own parents, in fact, lived in the traditional way in the Great Sandy Desert before his birth in 1934, and other families continued there until well into the mid-twentieth century. The temporal closeness of this traditional world to the present time belies, however, the extreme societal transformation that Minyjun witnessed over his lifetime within his Ngulipartu Nyangumarta community – a transformation that is chronicled through words and pictures in his stunning book *Kurlumarniny: We Come from the Desert*.

The twentieth century brought social change on a hyper-compressed scale to the Pilbara’s Aboriginal communities. Minyjun clearly saw the devastating effect this can have on cultural continuity; he says with dismay that ‘the town has taken the young people away from us’ (p. 209). And so in order to sustain his part of his people’s story against this cultural erosion, Minyjun created *Kurlumarniny*, a painstakingly-written, beautifully-published and fully-bilingual Nyangumarta-English account of big events and daily happenings, of people met and of knowledge gained over the course of a life well lived. This book will be enjoyed by members of the Nyangumarta community, as well as by linguists, teachers, historians and members of the general public. It will intrigue those who have an interest in the history of Aboriginal political and social movements, both within the Pilbara and in general; it will inspire those who study Indigenous Australian languages, given the large amount of continuous Nyangumarta text it offers; and it will appeal to those interested in new frontiers in Indigenous publishing and bilingual resources.

Minyjun’s book represents a particularly significant and unique contribution to Indigenous literature because it is a life story written entirely by the one who lived it, and entirely in his native language. A longtime Nyangumarta literacy teacher at the community-controlled schools he helped establish, Minyjun did not need the assistance of a ghostwriter; he wrote the Nyangumarta text himself over the course of many years, starting back in 1979. He then worked with linguist Mark Clendon and his daughter Barbara Hale, who is herself fluent and literate in both English and Nyangumarta, to translate the full text into English. The translations are presented on facing pages; each left-hand page is in Nyangumarta while each right-hand page gives the English version of the same text. The translations are eloquent and persuasive, cleanly avoiding the trap of over-literalism that renders some translated stories stilted and choppy-sounding.
Likewise, the Nyangumarta text is clean and readable, following the spelling and punctuation conventions that Minyjun himself helped develop for the Nyangumarta community’s Strelley school system (outlined in Appendices 2 and 4). These rules are logical and consistent, and – most importantly from the reader’s perspective – they comply with the standard orthography now accepted across the region. While some of the other Strelley conventions (eg, spacing of verbalisers or bound pronouns) do differ slightly from those used in Brian Geytenbeek’s 2008 Nyangumarta dictionary and/or Janet Sharp’s 2004 grammar, these are relatively minor discrepancies (and Nyangumarta scholars have yet to agree on the ‘right’ analysis for all these forms, anyway). In any case, since most people who can read in Nyangumarta learned to do so through the Strelley schools, it makes the most sense to retain their orthographic conventions here.

The main text of the book – Minyjun’s autobiography – is divided into nine chapters. Chapter 1 is introduced, appropriately, by a short Dreamtime story explaining how humans acquired language. Minyjun then progresses chronologically through his story, detailing his life on stations and in mines, his family and education, and his involvement in some of the momentous political and social movements that have defined a modern vision for Aboriginal people both within and outside his community, across the Pilbara and beyond. Specifically, Minyjun focuses on the Pilbara pastoral workers’ strike of 1946, a seminal instance of collective action in which Aboriginal station workers from around the region left their employers in a united protest against poor pay and conditions. He describes how the striking workers supported themselves through alluvial mining, how they organised into business entities and purchased their own pastoral stations, and how they challenged discriminatory laws and police brutality. Minyjun talks about the split that eventually divided the strikers and led to the formation of the Nomads group, in which he was to be a principal member. He then discusses at length the Nomads’ purchase and maintenance of Yurtingunya (Strelley Station), focusing particularly on the development of Strelley Community School, Australia’s first registered, community-initiated independent Aboriginal school (p. 133) and now the oldest continually-operative school of this kind in the nation (Strelley Community School 2012). Minyjun was instrumental in designing the school’s innovative Nyangumarta-English bilingual program, and he taught in the school for decades. Additionally, Minyjun’s family also features prominently throughout the book; he dedicates one chapter to memories from the first years of his marriage, and another to the illness and passing of his wife. All these stories are enriched by dozens of archival and family photos, plus helpful notes in the margins that give extra information on the places and people mentioned. These additions greatly enhance the informative quality of the book while also facilitating easy reading.

In addition to the main chapters, the book also includes some excellent front and back matter that strongly enriches the text. Among the introductory pages, the editor’s note is particularly useful; it explains how and why characters may be referred to by a variety of names in the text, including section (skin group) names,
kinship terms and personal names. This is followed by a list of 13 of the book’s key characters, with a photo and brief biography for each one. Importantly, this part also notes each person’s skin group, as well as any additional names Minyjun uses when referring to that person. This section prepares readers for the main chapters by introducing them to the important players in Minyjun’s life, while of course also proving useful for reference while reading. The front matter also includes four maps detailing various regions relevant to the story.

The back matter, in turn, comprises four appendices, a bibliography and an index for the English text. Appendix 1 provides an unusually thorough introduction to Nyangumarta naming conventions and kinship terms, going far beyond the standard skin group diagrams. It expands upon the editor’s note at the beginning, explaining that an Aboriginal person may be known by a variety of names, including a traditional family name, a name associated with their place of birth or with a significant plant or animal, and a ‘whitefella’ name assigned by Europeans in the community. It goes on to explain that people may also be referred to by their skin group, by reference to their other family members (eg, ‘so-and-so’s father’), by their place in the birth order among their siblings, and by kinship terms that reveal how they are related to the speaker and/or others under discussion. This is followed by a list of singular, dyadic and tri-relational kin terms and their meanings, along with a discussion of moieties (generational, matrilineal and patrilineal).

As mentioned before, Appendices 2 and 4 explain the orthographic and stylistic choices employed throughout the Nyangumarta text. Appendix 2 provides a pronunciation guide and Appendix 4 gives additional notes on spelling and punctuation, including an explanation for the treatment of English loan words. Appendix 3 is a glossary, largely comprising placenames used in the story.

One of the most valuable elements of Kurlumarniny is the abundance of cultural information it shares with readers. For example, Minyjun describes multiple Law (initiation) ceremonies (as on pp. 89, 129, 171–173), relates Dreamtime stories (as on pp. xvii, 9, 61, 195) and tells about bereavement customs (p. 139). Even aside from these explicit descriptions of ceremony and beliefs, however, this book is replete with implicit cultural information about daily activities like hunting and cooking (as on pp. 65–67, 175, 191), remote travel and vehicle repair (as on pp. 45, 147, 163-167) and the customs associated with a highly communal style of living, such as centrally collecting and distributing pension money (pp. 129, 203). This is the type of knowledge that Minyjun wanted to preserve through writing this book, and this is the book’s real gift; such information will give readers, both Nyangumarta and non-Nyangumarta alike, an invaluable look into the tenets and practices of Minyjun’s community.

The one concern I can raise about Kurlumarniny is that the vignettes it is comprised of do not always weave together into a cohesive whole. Each chapter is made up of multiple short stories, usually no more than a page or two each in length. This discontinuous style means that central themes can get lost among the details of the many individual anecdotes. The problem is ameliorated, though, by the
introductions that are provided before each chapter, which help create a sense of continuity; furthermore, the notes in the margins assist readers in making connections among the various stories. In the end, this concern does not detract from the book’s overall value and appeal; *Kurlumarniny* remains an outstanding addition to the field of bilingual Indigenous literature.

*Kurlumarniny* was launched at a celebration in Karntimarta (Warralong) community, Minyjun’s home, in May 2012. Appropriately, the community’s newest school building was officially opened on the same day – another branch of the Strelley Community School system to which Minyjun dedicated so many years of his time and effort. In more ways than one, the day marked a culmination of his life’s work.

Sadly, Minyjun’s funeral was held in nearby Strelley community almost exactly a year later. People from around Australia, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, attended or sent messages remembering this thoughtful and dedicated leader. We can all be thankful that he lived to see the completion of his exceptional book, and that he was able celebrate its publication and present it to us himself – one last gift from a very gifted man.

**Reference**


Amanda Hamilton

Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre

South Hedland
Learning Spaces: Youth, Literacy and New Media in Remote Indigenous Australia
9781922144089 (pbk), $36.95.

Learning Spaces takes a new look at youth, literacy and new media in remote
Indigenous communities. Kral and Schwab start the book by stating that they
will dispute the current commonly presented view that the future of Indigenous
youth is bleak (p. 2). Through a collaborative ethnographic research approach
Learning Spaces explores how early school leavers (16+) and young adults (post
school age) extend their learning and literacy skills through innovative use of
technology.

The book is illustrated with colourful speech blocks that include quotes from
participants, images of various learning spaces and of people learning in them.
It is a short book based on a research project undertaken by the authors. Kral
and Schwab argue that learning spaces in remote communities are important
for Indigenous youth’s cultural and linguistic identity, and that such places help
to develop youth’s literacy, or multiple literacies, as well as the more general
and workplace skills such as organisation, language, confidence, initiative and
problem-solving skills.

Learning Spaces opens with a forward by Professor Shirley Brice Heath, an
anthropological linguist, who argues that the book ‘reminds us that envisioning
change primarily through formal education will increasingly limit human
potential’ (p. x). This book certainly encourages its readers to rethink how and
where learning takes place.

In this book, learning spaces are spaces for learning that do not include
institutional or formal learning places, such as primary and high schools and
adult learning centres. Rather, they are non-formal spaces youth can use to
extend their learning: spaces outside the school in remote areas where youth
can hang out, mess around and geek out (Ito et al. 2010). Learning spaces are
existing sites within a community that can be used for ‘situated learning and
productive activity’ (p. 30). Kral and Schwab argue that the physical space ‘is
not as important as the productive learning’ that takes place in that space. These
spaces provide informal learning, apprenticeship and voluntary specialisation
development. High levels of technological competence are not generally
needed as the skills are acquired through observation, imitation and practice.
The spaces give people ‘the first step in gaining independent, non-directed
computer experience and problem solving confidence’. High degrees of reading,
writing and teamwork skills are embedded. Additionally, high-level thinking
and analysing skills are developed, and, the authors argue, such skills often lead
youth to work or further study.

Through international and national literature various concepts of learning and
learning spaces are explored in Chapter 3, including questions of the evolution
of learning: is it ‘learning to be’ or ‘learning to become’ (p. 50)? The discussion on
learning explores the relationship between school-based learning and learning socialisation. This is a fascinating chapter making links between the two, and argues that ‘in addition to instruction in school, it is ongoing out of school social practice across a life span that determines competence’ (p. 48). Learning spaces certainly do not replace but complement school-based learning. Bringing the two together can only be of benefit for remote Indigenous Australians.

Kral and Schwab argue that learning is a process of shaping and reshaping oneself, that is creating and shaping one’s identity; but this does not just happen. Chapter 4 clearly identifies eight important principles needed for designing quality, productive learning spaces. This chapter also answers some of the practical design questions that seemed unclear in the previous chapters. For example, up to here it was not clear whether the Indigenous youth using these spaces required or received guidance from a teacher or someone else. But it is clear in the Design Principles that a ‘mentor expert’ is needed to assist the youth when they are not sure of the next step or just to get them going. Design Principle 3 outlines the skills and practices required of the mentor expert whilst emphasising that learning is between the two rather than top down. The mentor needs to be passionate and collaborative and have the ability to teach complex technical skills but only when appropriate. In these spaces learning is project-based rather than assessment driven. In addition, the authors argue that the mentor needs to respect and be interested in the community’s language and culture and have an ongoing relationship with it.

Developing youth literacy is an important aspect of learning spaces. Literacy is acquired in situ in creative ways to support participants with low literacy skills. ‘Interest-driven engagement in projects and activities’ (p. 40) is the best way to learn; such interests help to develop literacy, not only in the written word but also in voice and film. Kral and Schwab also argue that learning spaces generate and demonstrate learning in the younger generations by the youth allowing younger people to watch them, and learn the skill before trying it for themselves.

Social media is not learning media but personalised learning. Learning Spaces emphasises that learning takes place at the pace of the learner through trial and error and practise because participants are interested and choose to learn the particular skill. There is evidence that the skills learned, as with all skills, are transferable to other areas/disciplines – that is general capacity building – and have led many to employment or enterprises within and outside the youth’s home community – though this was not an outcome intended by the project. The accompanying appendices provide valuable supporting resources. Appendix 1 provides a good list of national and international relevant websites, and Appendix 2 provides useful tips for expert mentors to use to help support participants’ language and literacy when working in these spaces or with computer digital devices.

In Learning Spaces, Kral and Schwab do indeed dispute the current commonly presented view that the future of Indigenous youth is bleak. They do this through demonstrations of out-of-school learning tools and techniques that
enable positive, culturally appropriate and relevant learning contexts. So I would recommend this book to anyone who is interested in innovative learning through the use of technology.

**Reference**


Jo Caffery

University of Canberra
This book is a fascinating and absorbing biography of a man who should be widely recognised as a leading Australian Aboriginal rights activist. It reconstructs the life of Anthony Martin Fernando an Aboriginal man who, deeply disturbed by the treatment and condition of Aboriginal people in Australia, took his grievances to the world stage. Paisley describes him as a political envoy who, in exposing Australian conditions, appealed to the world in a variety of forums in England and across Europe for their intervention in Aboriginal affairs. He wanted their help to push for a morally reformed and responsible Aboriginal administration in Australia answerable to the global community. Such a story, the depth of Fernando’s despair and the length and breadth of it, is an evocative saga. In its telling Paisley recreates important parts of the war and interwar world. It is a gritty story of the late nineteenth century brutal (and brutalising) Australian frontier, a divided Europe shaped by shards of race hate, impoverished urban pockets where itinerant workers, like Fernando, scratched out meagre existences or got caught up in the logistics of state-sanctioned disciplinary regimes. And there are glimpses of humanity not least in the two English men who housed, employed and looked after him intermittently till his death in 1949.

It is not just Fernando’s mobility that has transgressive effects in this complex mix, but his outsidersness. While Paisley is at pains to demonstrate his fit with a wider national and global indigenous and Afro-American political movement, particularly around the ports and wharfs of the bustling imperial metropolis and its colonial peripheries, Fernando remains the lone protestor, as the title of the book suggests. The question of what his story can offer Aboriginal, Australian, imperial or world history for that matter hovers around the contours of its telling. As an Aboriginal man devoted to the Aboriginal cause, how does Fernando’s life illuminate the story of black-white relations both in Australia and outside of it? Although Paisley does not specifically ask this question her book provides a number of possibilities.

Anthony Martin Fernando was born in Wolloomooloo, Sydney, in 1864. He was taken from his mother as a child and raised by white missionaries, so Paisley surmises, ending up on the rough north-western mining frontier of Western Australia by his fifties. It was there that he witnessed police brutality to Aboriginal people and, barred a fair hearing, took to the world to expose Aboriginal conditions. Paisley maps his journey as a series of performances in London and throughout Europe, including Turkey and Rome, from 1913 to 1942, when he was finally committed to Claybury Hospital in Essex, London, aged and unwell. At every turn he uses his situation to advertise the Aboriginal condition in Australia, even during a period of internment in Austria in 1916. Some of his most dramatic performances were in London itself: his street protests outside
Australia House or at speaker’s corner in Hyde Park. Even during his three separate trials for assault in the Old Bailey between 1929 and 1938, he uses the courtroom as a stage to protest conditions in Australia.

Like a needy child seeking attention Fernando’s performances constantly rehearsed his sense of grievance. He was willing the world for change. Believing firmly in British culpability for Aboriginal demise what he ultimately wanted was international intervention in Australia. He imagined an international commission overseeing the management of Aboriginal Australians and reminding the world of British wrongdoing and incapacity for mandatory power over both Australia and any future colonies.

The book demonstrates what a world away Australia was from both Fernando’s crusade and the European world on which it was staged. But not completely. His ‘call for help from Australia’ to the people of Switzerland, via the Der Bund newspaper elicited some hostile responses which were echoed wherever Aboriginal claims to justice and fair play were made in Australia. His attempts to raise the issue before Catholics in Rome raised deep suspicion and hostility despite a Vatican exhibition celebrating Catholic missions which largely supported his conclusions of genocide in Australia’s colonial history. And his accusations of genocide in Australia outside Australia House in London saw a hostile response from the Australian rector of St Clement’s church opposite who had organised a patriotic Anzac Day service on the same day.

While the hard lines of race literally shaped his existence they also shaped those around him. Threaded through the book is the story of Fernando’s encounter with Mary Bennett, a leading advocate for Aboriginal rights in Australia and England. Alerted by her friends in the humanitarian network of Fernando’s impending trial, she visited him while he was awaiting trial at the Old Bailey in 1929. She was deeply moved by him and his story of loss and dislocation. She not only shared Fernando’s angst about Aboriginal people, she shared much of his vision for redress. Like him she was an internationalist. Like him she was advocating for self-administered and governed Aboriginal reserves, equal citizenship, education and legal equality. Paisley surmises that Bennett’s meeting with Fernando fuelled her own crusade for Aboriginal rights. Indeed, if Fernando died without redress his cause lived on in Bennett’s own lifelong efforts, in Australia, defending Aboriginal human rights.

The focus of the book is Fernando himself. Yet, the small handful of friends, supporters and humanitarians who were on his side, have a shadowy presence in the story. Two, in particular, stand out – Frank Crawshaw and Douglas Jones – who not only employed him but also intervened to help him at critical times. Without their constancy and support, as well as the assistance and knowledge of their descendants shared with Paisley herself, Fernando’s story would still not be properly known. Indeed, without their help one wonders what would have become of him. Yet, we know very little of them or their particular stories or investments, except in Fernando himself, by the end of the book. I finished the story and had many questions about them, particularly Douglas Jones who was
a consistent supporter and friend to Fernando, apparently without paternalism or charity. In the world Paisley describes he was a rare beast but who was he and from where did such empathy spring?

Paisley makes the point in her acknowledgements that in writing the book she had to go beyond the usual limits of Aboriginal, Australian or British imperial history. This refers to the stretch of her own historical research as she tried to etch in, and make sense of, the story of Fernando’s life. I found this one of the great contributions of the book. Paisley digresses throughout to explain how Fernando’s story fits with myriad, often untold threads, of global history from policing in Fascist Italy to the medical examination of prisoners in Brixton, to the consumerist market culture of interwar Britain. Furthermore, at key moments in the book she fills in gaps in the story, Fernando’s origins, as expressed in his name, being the most obvious. While closely linked to his Catholicism she suspects South Asian background. This is less a story of ‘what if’ than ‘perhaps’. For some of her questions there are no clear answers such is the fragmentary nature of his life and the scattered archives on which it is based.

Yet the story Paisley weaves is anything but fragmentary. It is handsomely produced. The timeline at the beginning usefully plots, both temporally and geographically, Fernando’s journey. There are a series of wonderful black and white photographs in the book which also provide graphic detail and representation for the story. Many are referential. Included among them are images of Woolloomooloo and Peak Hill in Western Australia around the time Fernando lived there, photographs of concentration camp internees, key pieces of architecture central to the story and examples of Fernando’s own diary entries.

In the final analysis it was Fernando’s atypicality which makes his story important and suggestive as Paisley knows. His story works as a relief capable of throwing light on events at a critical time in world history, a sort of back-door view of the world. It was his capacity to slip through not only the hard edges of the early twentieth century world but through the historiography, too, which makes his story so powerful. As Paisley reflects, he has remained virtually unknown for decades. Thanks to her painstaking efforts and those of her researchers his anonymity is no more and we must all reflect a little harder, as Fernando implored, about the consequences of Australia’s imperial legacy.

Alison Holland
Macquarie University
I did not want to write this review. I did not want to read this book. I could not make myself read the details of the sexual abuse suffered by small children contained within its pages; it was too horrifying, too upsetting. Child sexual abuse is a difficult topic to talk about; it is a difficult topic to write about; it is a difficult topic to read about. And it is even more difficult, it seems, when the abuse is happening in Aboriginal communities.

Why is child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities so difficult to talk about? We should be shouting about it; we should be screaming and yelling and demanding that it stop. But we are not.

As Hannah McGlade explains in her confronting book *Our Greatest Challenge: Aboriginal Children and Human Rights*, child sexual abuse is very difficult for the victims and their families to talk about – for all sorts of reasons, including: intimidation, shame, powerlessness, and normalisation. Tragically, many Aboriginal girls ‘simply accepted that they would be sexually abused’ (p. 98). Others do not expect to be believed. Those who do tell, and whose cases get taken through the criminal justice system, have such a low expectation of success that it serves as a disincentive to others to speak out.

Non-Indigenous people do not talk about it for other reasons. There was a flurry of media interest and outraged/ill-informed commentary following the release of the ‘Little Children are Sacred Report’ in 2007, but the failure of the Northern Territory Emergency Response to adequately address the problem of child sexual abuse has gone largely unremarked. Disinclination to interfere in something that is incorrectly viewed as ‘cultural’, or an ‘Aboriginal problem’, may help to explain the deafening silence from the non-Indigenous community on this issue, but that is only part of the reason. The real reason we do not talk about it is because we do not want to know about it, because knowing about it and not doing anything to stop it makes us monsters.

Settler Australians have a long history of not listening to stories about Aboriginal oppression and abuse; white and black activists have always struggled to make non-Indigenous people hear about the atrocities suffered by Aboriginal people. Child sexual abuse is the latest horrifying example in a long list of horrifying examples. By not acting to protect Aboriginal children from sexual abuse – regardless of the race of the perpetrator – we are actively discriminating against them, and denying them their human rights.

As McGlade’s study makes clear, the current epidemic of child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities is directly attributable to the trauma of colonisation, violent dispossession, family disruption, and ongoing racial discrimination. And we have known about it for more than ten years. McGlade analyses a decade
of government reports and inquiries – one could also look at Christine Choo’s 1990 report *Aboriginal Child Poverty* sponsored by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care.

A Noongar woman, victim-survivor of child sexual abuse, human rights lawyer, and doctor of philosophy, McGlade brings a wealth of personal, professional, and academic expertise and insight to this most difficult of subjects. Seeking solutions from outside Australia, she draws inspiration and ideas from the United States and Canada, arguing that any future Australian responses must be based on the empowerment of women and children; must be developed from the ‘grassroots’ by communities; and must be in close cooperation with the criminal justice system. It must also have the support of the entire Australian nation.

Rani Kerin

The Australian National University
At first sight, possibly because of the back cover blurb and the opening lines of the introduction, one expects the book to be a new biography of the Reverend Lancelot Edward Threlkeld in his role as Missionary to the Aborigines at Lake Macquarie from 1825 to 1841. Although Threlkeld is the main character Anna Johnston insists that her work is neither biography nor history but a literary/cultural study. Be that as it may, I would argue that it is history and it is good history.

For the last 40 years colonial, imperial and cross-cultural historical studies have been dominated by the literary theorists and references to Foucault, Said and their contemporaries are almost mandatory in the historical literature. Johnston is really in this same historical tradition despite her claim to examine the archive ‘as a set of writing and reading practices, seeking to make different meanings than a historian might’. Of course she has in her sights historians with selective vision such as Henry Reynolds and Keith Windschuttle.

The ‘Paper War’ was Threlkeld’s own term for the bitter controversies he had with the directors of the London Missionary Society (LMS) – who first employed him at Lake Macquarie – the Reverend Samuel Marsden and the Reverend Dr John Dunmore Lang, involving him in public disputes and a libel case. Johnston extends the term to take in the paper archive that resulted.

The book has an introduction on colonial archives and textuality, five main chapters, a brief conclusion, a select bibliography, 39 pages of detailed notes and references and a comprehensive index. Each chapter is set in a colonial context. The first chapter, ‘Colonial Morality’, introduces the main players, Threlkeld himself, the Reverend Daniel Tyerman and his lay colleague George Bennet of the LMS who approved the mission, Marsden and Lang, and the two British Quakers, James Backhouse and George Washington Walker, who were caught up in the Paper Wars as observers and witnesses.

The second chapter, ‘Colonial Linguistics’, is concerned with Threlkeld’s pioneering work on the Awabakal language and how it was understood and used. The missionary’s linguistic work has always been regarded as his greatest achievement. Johnston appears to recognise this though throughout the book she is overly aware of what she sees as Threlkeld’s academic limitations. Anyone studying his linguistic work should begin with the LMS director Samuel Greatheed and the early missionary linguistic work in Polynesia.

Chapter 3, ‘Colonial Press’ takes us right into the Paper Wars. The narrative focuses on the harrowing story of Tommy, an Aboriginal prisoner, who was hanged in 1827 and attended by both Threlkeld and Lang. The attempt by a Catholic priest to baptise Tommy on the scaffold drew forth an angry
correspondence in the press with Threlkeld writing as Spectator in the *Sydney Gazette*, to be followed by five more letters early in 1828 designed to expose the ‘heresies’ of the Catholic church. In a three-cornered correspondence that ensued Lang and Threlkeld became sparring partners, Lang identifying Spectator as ‘that well-known Missionary to the Aborigines, who has expended upwards of £2000 in forming a petty settlement, at Reid’s Mistake’ and making a snide allusion to his former acting career.

Chapter 4, ‘Colonial Respectability’, discusses Threlkeld’s embarrassing plight in 1828 when the LMS refused to honour his bills, wrongly accusing him of extravagance and presumably resenting his independent stance. Threlkeld’s published *Statement* in defence of his position is analysed as well as Threlkeld’s libel case against Lang in 1836 after Lang had published three articles on ‘Missions to Aborigines’ in his own newspaper *The Colonist* which were scornful and defamatory. The outcome of this case was seen as a Pyrrhic victory for Threlkeld as Lang was to pay one farthing damages.

Chapter 5, ‘Colonial Legality’, also involves the courts but it is the section of the book that is most concerned with Aboriginal issues such as the appropriateness of British law, the place of customary law, the use of Aboriginal evidence and the question of sovereignty. One question that is not comfortably resolved is the non-baptism of Biraban and presumably other Aboriginal people who were nominal Christians, who could have given evidence if baptised.

The question went deeper than Tommy’s case. The baptism question had split the Society Islands mission where Threlkeld had worked previously. The LMS had allowed individual missionaries to pursue the practices of their own churches. Some of the Calvinistic Methodist missionaries (including Threlkeld’s great friend John Williams) were prepared to baptise anyone who asked; those of Dissenting background regarded baptism as the first stage of church membership requiring impeccable character. In Tahiti the whole national conversion process had been delayed because the missionaries refused to baptise King Pomare II because of his drunken bouts and his homosexual behaviour. However, he did get baptised and was accepted as an antinomian though not admitted to church membership. No doubt Threlkeld would never have baptised Pomare whom he loathed just as he would never baptise Biraban whom he loved because his friend was frequently drunk. Although the Aboriginal mission came under Church of England control presumably more liberal Anglicans felt obliged to respect Threlkeld’s uncompromising position. It would be interesting to know if Biraban ever asked for baptism.

The *Paper War* is well-written and well-researched and is, as the blurb confirms, an ‘engaging and intelligent book’. While the unifying theme is exploring and interpreting the paper archive, Johnston has a professional interest in contemporary colonial studies and the networking theories of the British empire and humanitarianism. As a historian trained before the literary/cultural revolution I find the intrusion of the names of contemporary scholars
in a historical narrative somewhat anachronistic but Johnston’s references are all pertinent and deftly done. To bury the names in remote endnotes would be inconvenient which rather justifies including contemporary names in the text.

Johnston suggests that her methodology is different from that of historians in regard to how documents come to be created but I doubt if this is so. Source criticism should always be a vital part of the historian’s approach. We should look at the documents in much the same way as she does except that, traditionally, the historian regarded this work as ‘homework’ and did not share it with his or her readers.

Because *The Paper War* is so well conceived and insightful I would like my comments to be taken as an alternate point of view rather than as criticism. Johnston resorts to social class and the Church/Chapel social divide as explaining most of the issues. While class was an undeniable factor the other two important factors in the breakdown of relationships were personalities and denominationalism (as distinct from the Church/Chapel divide).

Applying modern class terms to the past can be misleading. To see Threlkeld described as ‘a working-class British subject’ when he was the product of training designed to remove all traces of a working-class background seems a little anachronistic and that was why I prefer the term ‘mechanic class’ used by that incipient lower-middle class for themselves. Certainly some of the first LMS missionaries were working class, and as their critics said, ‘could not look a gentleman in the face’. But Threlkeld could look a gentleman in the face.

I do not take Lang’s jibes against Threlkeld too seriously as he had a somewhat warped personality and a penchant for malicious satire. His nasty unpublished satirical attacks on Marsden and the whole body of colonial clergy were far worse than anything he wrote about Threlkeld. The two missionaries to the Aborigines, William Walker and Threlkeld got off comparatively lightly – ‘Good grants of land, good flocks of sheep & good herds of cattle, are very good things after all for a zealous Missionary to the Aborigines’ (Fragment, Lang Papers, National Library of Australia). Any connection with trade was seen as self-aggrandisement and in Lang’s view, only men with university degrees should be conducting missions, yet he did have Threlkeld on his committee to supervise the German mission at Moreton Bay.

In the relationship with Marsden it is true that Threlkeld and Lang both thought Marsden was anti-chapel and had persecuted the LMS missionary William Pascoe Crook when he attempted to found a Congregational church in Sydney in 1810. While it was true that Marsden saw no need for a chapel in his parish he would not have interfered had not the Governor demanded it. Both Lang and Threlkeld wrote about the suppression and it appears to have been the initial cause of the breakdown of relationships.

None of the disputes make proper sense without taking into account the rise of denominationalism from around 1811 with the formation of the Protestant Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty to the repeal of the Test and
Corporation Acts in 1828. Many of the LMS missionaries nurtured in an eclectic Calvinistic Methodism were converted to the new political Nonconformity. Threlkeld, who had been a field preacher for the Vicar of Hatherleigh, and Crook declared themselves Congregationalists and the influence of these men became a disrupting factor both at home and in the mission field.

The almost fanatical embrace of Dissent had an adverse effect on personality. Threlkeld was described as one of the ‘perpetual blisters’ on the LMS in 1832 and the others were significant. With their new-found freedom and zeal for reform these men were seen as trouble-makers by the establishment. Historian Coupland blamed them for stirring up hostility to the Boers in South Africa and John Smith in the West Indies became a martyr when he died in prison in 1824 for his presumed role in the slave revolt in Demerara. These men were models for Threlkeld to emulate. The LMS itself also fell victim to the rise of denominationism and became a predominantly Congregationalist organisation. Tyerman and Bennet represented the two sides struggling for hegemony within the LMS.

While this review concentrates largely on the participants in the Paper War a large part of the book concerns Aboriginal issues particularly in relation to the evolution of the law. Johnston is even handed in her approach though occasionally allows herself to be influenced by politically correct secondary sources rather than ‘the tradition of the elders’. Biraban was after all a man of high degree schooled by the wise men of an earlier generation.

*The Paper War* deserves to be widely known. Like another Aboriginal history classic, *The Lamb Enters the Dreaming* by Robert Kenny (Scribe 2010), it deserves better quality presentation. The paper cover with its deliberate dog-eared appearance may be symbolic but it does not have market appeal. The illustrations (mostly portraits) are adequate but John Fraser’s linguistic map (fig. 23) is really too cramped to be useful and the print is too small to read.

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During the late 18th and early 19th century, small groups of European men from the maritime industry established depots along the remote southern Australian coast to service merchant vessels that infrequently passed through. These were men who shunned mainstream society, running small farms and living seasonally as sealers with their Aboriginal wives, who hunted and laboured for them. For these small communities, outside goods were provided from trade with passing ships, which in turn picked up seal and kangaroo skins, salt, and whale bone. The Aboriginal people living here were an important component in the colonial economic growth of the region. The earliest phase of European settlement in many parts of southern Australia was haphazard, and in terms of colonial government it was unsanctioned. In this environment, few records remain to accurately document its growth, and there are many conflicting accounts concerning the identities of the Europeans and Indigenous people who were involved.

In Roving Mariners, Lynnette Russell uses the tools of an historian/anthropologist by examining captain’s logs, ship’s records, journals of sailors, government records and museum artefacts to produce an in-depth account of the lives and adventures of Indigenous people caught up in the maritime industry of the southern oceans. Russell’s intellectual starting point is the fact that for most Indigenous people in Australia the impact of colonialism was brutal – involving dispossession of land, relocation, devastating diseases, murder and institutionalisation. From here the author considers a major exception in the southern coastal region, and describes just how a select few Aboriginal people in Tasmania managed to survive the harshness of the frontier and become well-established individuals as whalers and sealers.

Chapter 1 commences with a description of the maritime industry, while Chapter 2 concerns the Aboriginal cultural relationships with whales. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with examples of Indigenous people who left a record, such Tommy Chaseland, William Lanné, Henry Whalley, Walter George Arthur, who worked as sealers and whalers. Chapters 5 and 6 deal with cross-cultural relationships and the history of colonial and race relationships. Chapter 6 considers the physical evidence that speaks of Indigenous involvement with the southern maritime industry, from the mementos that whaling ship captains collected and lodged in their homes, to an adze found on Kangaroo Island that had been made from a 19th century telegraph insulator. In the case of the ‘hybrid’ objects, that is hunter-gatherer implements made from European materials, Russell has continued her archaeological work (Russell 2005) and proposed that they are from a ‘hybrid or creolised community’ (p. 139).
The bibliography of *Roving Mariners* shows that the author has published widely in the areas of social theory, Indigenous histories, post-colonialism and representations of race, museum studies and popular culture (ie Russell 2001, 2005). This eclectic background has her well-equipped for the subject of her book. Russell examines her personal reactions to the power of objects in museums. She describes recently visiting a new Aboriginal display in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, and unexpectedly encountering here William Lanné’s tobacco pipe in a glass case. She explains that she

was overwhelmed by the simplicity, the humanity, and the utter recognisability of the item and, by extension, its owner. With this viewing the personhood of William Lanné, whose body is often described in terms of his being ‘the last Tasmanian “full blood male,” asserted itself into my conscience from where I have been unable to dislodge it (p. 91).

*Roving Mariners* is no bland academic text. Russell uses the classic fictional book, *Moby-Dick*, by Herman Melville (1851) to help set the scene for her description of 19th century life in the maritime industry.

Among the main strengths of *Roving Mariners* is the insight it gives into the backgrounds of the individuals who are caught up in the history being written. While other readers may be struck by the lives of other people she documents, for me it was Whalley that left the greatest impression. From my own research, this man was probably the son of the European sealer known as Whalley (Henry Wallen) and of Aboriginal woman Martha, originally from Port Lincoln in South Australia and living among the sealers based on Kangaroo Island prior to official settlement (Clarke 1998: 46). With money gained from the trade in skins, his father sent the young Henry Wallen junior to Hobart Town, where he received an education. He was later employed as a cabin boy on a brig, where he was called ‘Black-Harry’. Henry eventually became a whaler, taking one of the names of his father, ‘Whalley’. Henry knew William Lanné, and was a pallbearer at his funeral in 1869. Henry Wallen Junior died near Macquarie Island on 6 August 1877 as the result of an accident when the whaling vessel, the *Bencleugh* was caught in a storm.

Russell’s account of Whalley family history differs slightly from my own, as it has him as the son of a Tasmanian Aboriginal woman known as Betty or Bet. She believes that he was William Lanné’s cousin. Due to the lack of precise records for the sealing period and to the uncertainty of genealogical research based on oral records, we may never know Whalley’s exact parentage. Russell provides an outline of his character, and by drawing heavily upon written records she documents Whalley’s rise to prominence in the maritime world in which he became a respected whaler, harpooner and first-mate. Whalley’s shipmates cared for him when mortally wounded, by getting him off the ship and into one of the huts on Macquarie Island, left vacant during the offseason for sealing. He died here and was then buried between the ribs of a ship wrecked there.
earlier. As Russell declares ‘Whalley died not a half-caste or descendant of an Aboriginal mother but as he lived, as a whaler and sealer. His obituary stated he was a “mariner.”’ (p. 90).

Another major strength of *Roving Mariners* is what it adds to Australian history as a whole. By focusing on the ‘mixed’ communities of whalers and sealers, the book challenges assumptions about possible gaps between Aboriginal and European Australian histories. Given the fact that there are thousands of Indigenous people living today between Adelaide and Hobart who can trace their descent to sealers, both European and Aboriginal, the investigation of the history of this period is highly relevant. Russell’s work, which focuses chiefly on Tasmania, adds to the study by Rebe Taylor (2002) of the Indigeneity on Kangaroo Island. The detailed account of the niche economy for Aboriginal people of southern Australia bears some resemblance to what is described in northern Australia, where coastal Aboriginal groups interacted closely with the Macassans who arrived each year with the north-west monsoon to chiefly gather trepang (sea slug) for the Chinese market (Macknight 1976; Mitchell 1996). In both cases, the non-Aboriginal people arrived by sea, worked seasonally, employed Aboriginal people with relevant skills, and did not engage in missionising activities. Many of Russell’s findings may prove to be equally valid in this different landscape.

*Roving Mariners* is well written and enjoyable to read. The chosen graphics used to illustrate it include those of colonial paintings, historical photographs and maps, all of which are highly relevant. The book will become a classic in the Aboriginal history field.

**References**


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Ludwig Leichhardt is perhaps Australia’s best-known and most controversial explorer. Various places are named after him and he is the subject of a voluminous literature that ranges from strong support to scathing criticism. In 1844 and 1845, the young Prussian scientist with a boundless curiosity about Australia led an exploration party from Moreton Bay in Queensland to Port Essington in the Northern Territory for almost 5,000 kilometres through mostly uncharted country. He returned to a hero’s welcome in Sydney and won international recognition. Leichhardt’s second intended major expedition that commenced in late 1846 was less successful. Planning to travel from eastern Queensland to Swan River in Western Australia, he was forced to turn back in the middle of 1847. Some detractors both then and later questioned the value of his achievements and noted the explorer’s inability to get on with his companions. Leichhardt set out again for Swan River in 1848. After being last seen at a Darling Downs station in April that year, he and his six men disappeared somewhere in the Australian outback far from the frontiers of European settlement. The circumstances of that disappearance have never been satisfactorily explained in spite of countless attempts to do so.

Darrell Lewis is particularly well equipped to examine what he calls ‘this marvellous mystery’ (p. xxiv). An archaeologist, bushman and historian, Lewis has worked closely with Aboriginal people and other residents in the Northern Territory and elsewhere in remote Australia. Among his many publications on Territory history is the well received A Wild History: Life and Death on the Victoria River Frontier that appeared in 2012. Where is Dr Leichhardt? was researched and written while he was based at the National Museum of Australia’s Centre for Historical Research. Like A Wild History, his latest book is a groundbreaking work.

Lewis does not solve the Leichhardt mystery. Instead he forensically considers the history of various search expeditions (including his own), the validity of relics claimed to have Leichhardt associations and the different theories proposed to allow readers to reach their own conclusions on where Leichhardt went, where he died, how he died and where any surviving evidence of him might be. Material is logically organised in ‘regional clusters’ that ‘fall along the lines of the two routes Leichhardt is suggested to have taken – a northern arc across the continent and a direct east-west line’ (p. x).

Where is Dr Leichhardt? shows that while search parties found ‘L’ marked trees and a few items possibly belonging to Leichhardt’s expedition, the only authenticated artefact is a small brass plate marked ‘LUDWIG LEICHHARDT 1848’ discovered during the early twentieth century. The ‘evidence is strong’, Lewis contends, ‘that the plate was found … in the north-west Tanami near Sturt
Creek, and in turn this suggests that Leichhardt followed his stated plan [of how to reach Swan River] and made it at least two thirds of the way across the continent’ (p. 180).

This view is elaborated further in the important final chapter where Lewis proposes two reasons why Leichhardt planned to take the northern route. The first was the need for regular and large water supplies. The second was the powerful influence of the scientist Alexander von Humboldt, which meant that Leichhardt followed the longer route to Swan River in order to more accurately determine continental-scale biological and physical features.

Lewis also believes on the basis of Aboriginal evidence that at least some Leichhardt expedition members perished well south of Lake Gregory and that the explorers may have split into two groups, which could account for stories of white men living with Aborigines beyond the frontier and ‘about the massacre or perish of a party of white men’ (p. 377). He notes, though, that such evidence remains inconclusive and that arguments about where Leichhardt died ‘remain a matter of probabilities rather than certainties’ (p. 379). Lewis is justifiably dismissive of Dan Baschiera’s recent far-fetched claim that ‘the British’ deliberately poisoned all the expedition members after Leichhardt spoke about Aborigines having their own civilisation.

Lewis’s story involves ‘an amazing cast of characters – “wild” Aborigines, explorers, bushrangers, frontier squatters, prospectors, aristocrats, charlatans, clairvoyants, madmen, scientists, historians, “armchair experts” and others’ (pp. ix–x). They include well-known figures such as the explorers John Forrest and David Carnegie, and the politician Bill Grayden, who all searched for Leichhardt evidence. The most extraordinary of the characters was the charismatic ‘con man’ Andrew Hume, who falsely claimed to have discovered important Leichhardt relics and a survivor of Leichhardt’s party living with Aborigines during the 1860s and 1870s.

Where is Dr Leichhardt? presents immensely detailed results of massive research yet remains highly readable. As Henry Reynolds notes on the front cover, the suspense is maintained until the final pages. The book’s sources include a wide range of secondary materials, newspapers, periodicals, collections of personal papers and government records. Lewis’s deep first hand knowledge of northern Australia also informs his discussion. Footnotes are where they ought to be at the bottom of each page and there is a comprehensive bibliography. Excellent use is made of numerous images and maps.

There are only minor weaknesses. Many readers will probably need a little more background information on Leichhardt than that Lewis very briefly provides. He makes the questionable assumption that in ‘the national consciousness Leichhardt is, perhaps, second to Ned Kelly’ (p. ix). Although the book is generally well written, there are very occasional lapses such as ‘Years later he later claimed’ (p. 98) and ‘a man named Andrew Hume’ (p. 138).
Where is Dr Leichhardt? is a splendid addition to historical scholarship that deserves the wide readership for which it is intended. It is well designed and sturdily produced. There is much in it about European contacts with Aboriginal people and the use of Aboriginal accounts. Lewis convincingly and entertainingly tells a wonderful story but one that also provides perceptive observations about Leichhardt’s continuing role in the Australian imagination. Perhaps one day with the discovery of new evidence Leichhardt’s fate will be finally revealed. Until that happens, Lewis’s book is likely to remain the standard source on his disappearance.

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Barbara Miller’s book *William Cooper Gentle Warrior* narrates the amazing story of an Aboriginal man’s fight against racial injustice, despite his not having any legal rights and being considered as equivalent to ‘flora and fauna’. Perhaps more extraordinary still, the book narrates Cooper’s willingness to speak out against the Third Reich’s persecution of Jews when most white Australians at the time remained silent or dismissive. Miller does a wonderful service in bringing attention to Cooper’s heroic tale spanning six decades of activism and protest. And in contrast to recent revelations that the Italian Giovanni Palatucci did not save thousands of Jews from death camps under the Third Reich (Poggioloi 2013), there is no doubt that William Cooper was the ‘real thing’. Miller’s moving historical account fills in missing gaps in the story of Indigenous activism within Australia, including her own participation in the 1970s and 1980s. Moreover, the book adds a significant new dimension to our understandings of indigenous politics on a global scale both pre and post World War Two. And perhaps most importantly, as discussed below, the account points to the intersections between Australia’s Indigenous and immigration policies or, to put it another way, its internal and external racial strategies. As Miller suggests, these issues are deeply connected. This insight underscores the book’s current relevance in thinking about problems on both internal and external fronts facing Australia – and other countries – in the early decades of the 21st century.

William Cooper was a stoic fighter and determined to speak out against the discriminations of his own people. Despite his family suffering enormous deprivation under white Australia’s colonial policies that included explicit directives of genocide, protectionism and assimilation, Cooper set out at an early age to bring attention to the plight of Australian Aborigines. Born in 1860 in Yorta Yorta country near Echuca on the Murray River, Cooper spent parts of his childhood on Daniel Mathews’ missionary station at Maloga where he was influenced by the churchman’s championing of Aboriginal rights. As a young man he lived at a government run station called Cummeragunga, usually abbreviated to ‘Cummera’. In his later years, at the age of 72, he was forced to leave Cummera and moved to a modest house in Footscray where he emerged as a leader amongst the urban disenfranchised Aboriginal community. There Cooper became increasingly involved in local organisations and political activism fighting for black equality in a white world.

As a founding member of the Australian Aborigines League in 1934, Cooper sought political representation of blacks in state and federal parliament (Attwood and Markus 2004). Acutely aware that Maoris in New Zealand had been granted political representation in parliament since 1867, Cooper demanded that Australian Aborigines be given similar political representation in what was coined a ‘New Deal’. Drafting a petition to the King of England, Cooper managed to obtain nearly 2,000 Aboriginal signatures by 1935 supporting the
demand ‘to prevent the extinction of the Aboriginal race’. This was a miraculous accomplishment given his limited financial resources and that signatures were obtained from remote communities across the country (p. 45). This petition also evidenced a growing ‘pan-Aboriginal consciousness’ that spoke of native unity in the face of severe adversity.

Unfortunately, the looming war helped defeat Cooper’s effort to have Britain grant political representation to native peoples, or at least provided the excuse not to pursue it. In 1938 Cooper turned his attention to domestic politics and demanded citizenship rights for blacks. He heavily campaigned against the 150th celebrations of Australia Day, calling the event a Day of Mourning. Cooper, along with fellow activists such as Jack Patten, Doug Nicholls and Bill Ferguson, formed a delegation and presented a petition outlining a 10 point plan to Prime Minister Lyons in Parliament House, Canberra. The government, however, denied the petition on the basis that native peoples were not subjects of Australia but of Britain pursuant to section 51 of the Constitution hence outside the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister. As Miller writes, ‘the Commonwealth Government had no authority to pass legislation at all for Aborigines. It could not therefore pass legislation giving them representation in Federal Parliament’ (p. 61). This point must have been exceptionally hard for Cooper to stomach given that his son had died in World War One fighting with the Australian forces yet could never be recognised as an Australian citizen.

The petition’s failure in 1938 to be even considered by the Australian government underlined the political reality at the time. Under the Constitution native peoples could not be considered citizens of the land they had occupied for thousands of years, unlike the British, Irish, and other immigrants who had been coming across the seas for the past 150 years.¹ This explicit denial of legal recognition of Aboriginal peoples correlated with the country’s white Australia policy which sought to keep Australia ‘an outpost of the British race’ as expressed by Prime Minister John Curtin during World War Two. The denial of citizenship rights was a terrible blow to Cooper and the burgeoning pan-Aboriginal movement. Despite this setback, or perhaps because of this setback, Cooper aggressively protested Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, which occurred in Germany in November 1938 and left approximately 30,000 Jews incarcerated, over 1,000 synagogues destroyed, and at least 90 people dead. William Cooper led a delegation of the Australian Aborigines League to the German Consulate in Melbourne to deliver a petition which condemned the ‘cruel persecution of the Jewish people by the Nazi government of Germany, and asks that this persecution be brought to an end’. On 7 December 1938, The Argus newspaper reported that the Consulate refused the delegation admission.

What inspired Cooper to speak out in defense of Jewish refugees? Why, despite decades of setbacks in terms of fighting for Aboriginal rights, did Cooper rally

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¹ This statement needs qualification. Before 1901 all inhabitants of colonial Australia, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, were considered British citizens. However, with Federation in 1901 Aboriginal peoples were declared to remain British, not Australian citizens.
the energy to speak out on behalf of European minorities? An answer is offered in Cooper’s letter to the Minister of the Interior, written nine days after being refused admission at the German Consulate:

‘We feel that while we are all indignant over Hitler’s treatment of the Jews, we are getting the same treatment here and we would like this fact duly considered…I would like to emphasis that what we are asking for the aboriginal born in Australia is already available to Chinese, Japanese, or other alien(s) if they happen to be born here’ (cited p. 212).

In other words, Cooper saw parallels between black and white racial oppression that others could or would not see and in desperation sought to broadcast his observation. It should be noted that Cooper’s public denunciation stands in stark contrast to the outcome of the Evian conference in July earlier that year. At this international meeting, Australian representative Mr TW White made it clear that Australia would not respond to the German crisis and accept Jewish refugees stating that ‘As we [Australia] have no real racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one...’ (cited p. 184).

Barbara Miller’s account of William Cooper and these turbulent years of emerging Aboriginal activism in the 1920s and 1930s is truly fascinating and offers what I see as three important insights. First, apart from reminding the reader of the commitment and agency of Indigenous leaders dedicated to fighting the deeply racist policies of the period, Miller’s narrative is a welcome reminder that black activism started well before the civil rights era of the 1960s and 1970s. In short, contrary to popular belief, the Australian black movement did not start with the 1962 amendments to the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, 1967 Referendum, or 1972 Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra and related black mobilisation centered in Sydney’s suburb of Redfern. Rather, the civil rights movement in Australia was prefigured by earlier campaigns and protests that had long historical connections to British and United States anti-slavery movements. As Miller notes, William Cooper grew up on the Maloga mission in the 1870s to the sound of negro spirituals and the abolition rhetoric of Daniel Mathews. Moreover, the grandson of William Wilberforce, who is largely credited with ending slavery in Britain, spent some time living in Australia in the 1880s and is presumed to have had a relationship with Cooper’s mother and fathered some of his siblings (p. 25, 29, 69). Miller’s account brings to light elements of these startling overlapping histories of racial oppression and minority resistance within British settler societies.

Secondly, *William Cooper Gentle Warrior* underscores the global influences on domestic Indigenous politics in Australia. While the book is ostensibly about Cooper’s activism prior to his death in 1941, equal time is spent on Indigenous politics in the post World War Two era. In this period Miller points

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2 Drawing parallels between the plight of native peoples and Jews was not unique to William Cooper and one can see a similar move in the work of Felix Cohen, a Jew advocating for Native American rights (see Washburn 2009), and in the activism of black scholar WEB Du Bois and other pan-African organisations (see Darian-Smith 2012).
to the increasing international pressures that were brought to bear through such organisations and activists as the Black Panthers, Angela Davis, and the South African anti-Apartheid movement that together helped to dismantle the white Australia policy. For instance, the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (FCAA) launched a huge media campaign to seek constitutional reform in the 1960s that would allow the federal government to legislate on behalf of Aborigines. In a FCAA meeting in Canberra in 1964 there were many Aboriginal delegates present as well as over 40 observers from the embassies of the United States, Canada, Soviet Union, Indonesia, Brazil, Burma and the Irish Republic (p. 93). The FCAA, like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the United States, had learnt to aggressively seek international oversight over oppressive national policies. Specifically, these organisations turned to the laws of other countries as well as the collective authority of the United Nations as leverage for domestic legislative reform (see Darian-Smith 2012).

Thirdly, and this is what I see as truly innovative in this historical account, are the parallels and connections William Cooper made over 80 years ago between Australia’s policies toward immigrant refugees and its policies toward its domestic native communities. As Miller provocatively notes, ‘The White Australia Policy is usually thought of in terms of immigration but it also affected policy towards Aborigines. Why go to all that trouble to keep “coloured” races out of Australia and then have a growing group of mixed race within your own borders?’ (p. 150). This line of argument resists conventional sensibilities and offers an insightful historical lesson. So often indigenous politics – and indigenous studies in general – are contained within national borders and classified as domestic issues. But as I have argued elsewhere, a country’s policies toward its native peoples, and the place of those native peoples within the national polity, are constantly refracted through that country’s larger relationship with the rest of the world (Darian-Smith 2013). No nation-state operates as an island, no matter how often and determinedly the island rhetoric is mobilised. Hence immigration policies, and the acceptance of refugees into Australia (ie German Jews in the 1930s, Vietnamese in the 1970s, or ‘boat people’ in the 2010s) cannot be disentangled from domestic histories of anxiety about Aborigines and their relationship to mainstream society. However, analysts and academics of both indigenous and immigrant issues seem curiously determined to keep these arenas separated.

Barbara Miller’s William Cooper Gentle Warrior is a brave and wonderful book that should be read by all those interested in Australia’s recent history. It leaves me asking many questions about the past and future of Indigenous politics and more tangentially the interrelationship between native and immigrant laws and policies. Today in Australia, the island rhetoric has become a mantra that plays to a conservative political agenda and xenophobic sentiments. Perhaps not coincidently, the rising hysteria about ‘boat people’ comes at a time when one fifth of Australia is under Aboriginal ownership, and more and more Indigenous communities are capitalising on their mineral resources in what Marcia Langton
has called a ‘quiet revolution’ (Langton 2013). A troubling question raised in my mind is the possible connection between on the one hand the heavy-handed militarisation of the Northern Territory Intervention that clamps down on Aboriginal rights, and on the other hand the increasingly shrill demands for patrolling the nation’s island borders and incarcerating its refugees. Both internal and external policies reinforce white paternalism and racial superiority, and underscore white elites’ inability to fully embrace cultural and religious diversity.

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