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Editors’ Introduction

Welcome to the new-look *Australian Humanities Review*, published by the ANU E-Press. This and future issues of *AHR* will be available in PDF and HTML formats online and also in hard-copy as a print-on-demand (POD) book. The entire *AHR* archive remains available and, of course, everything accessed via the web is available free of charge.

Though the journal looks different, the format is essentially the same. Each issue will present a number of target essays, often connected by a common theme. The Eco-Humanities Corner will continue, and each issue will also feature a number of book reviews. From time to time we’ll also publish extracts from new books. We have retained ‘emuse’: please send contributions to ahr@anu.edu.au. Emuse discussions from each issue will be published in subsequent issues. Also, please feel free to give us feedback on the new look and layout: we are keen to hear your views and to improve your experience of reading *AHR* in whatever ways we can.

*AHR* was launched by Cassandra Pybus in June 1996, a few months after John Howard’s election as Australian prime minister. From 1997 under the editorship of Elizabeth McMahon, *AHR* maintained throughout the 11 years of the Howard government a commitment to publishing informed critical debate on contested issues facing our community, reflecting principles of intellectual freedom and a commitment to social justice, in particular for Australia’s Indigenous peoples. In March 2008, with the Rudd government newly in office, *AHR* will continue to provide a forum for open and informed intellectual debate on the full range of issues that confront Australia and the region.

We begin 2008 with a special issue dedicated to exploring the idea of ‘the South’ and its role in Australians’ perception of their place in the world. Culturally and politically, Australia is closer to the North than to the southern nations that are its neighbours, while geographically, ecologically and historically it remains part of the South. What are the implications of Australia’s global position? What reorientations of our notions of history, culture and knowledge are required for Australia fully to acknowledge its southern status?

In the opening essay, Shino Konishi examines a little-known historical event, where sailors of the 1803 Baudin expedition believed they had encountered a fabled race of giants in north-western Australia. She argues that pre-modern ideas of a fantastic Great South Land persisted well into the age of ‘scientific’ exploration.

Kevin Murray’s ‘Keys to the South’ uses a number of objects as talismans for rethinking the international networks of the global art world, breaking away from the ‘axial’ relationships mediated by northern metropolitan hubs, towards
direct linkages between countries of the south based on shared geographic, cultural and historical affinities.

In ‘Cultural Studies’ Networking Strategies in the South’, Stephen Muecke considers the emerging field of Indian Ocean studies and how its international scholarly networks reconfigure maps and flows of information and knowledge.

We then present two extracts from sociologist Raewyn Connell’s recent book *Southern Theory*, which explores the global emergence of social science as a discipline with a cartographic (North/South) bias. An extract from Chapter 1, ‘Empire and the creation of a social science’, elucidates the role of the Northern metropole in producing the South as an object of sociological study. In Chapter 4, ‘The Discovery of Australia’, Connell acknowledges that the North/South, metropole/colony relation has been formative for Australian sociology, but also reverses the global hierarchy in her exploration of the formative role Australian producers have played in the making of the discipline.

In her essay, ‘The South in Southern Theory’, Margaret Jolly responds to Connell’s book, considering the role of the ‘Asia-Pacific’ and ‘Oceania’ in imagined configurations of knowledge and power between Australia and the Pacific. She challenges both a purely textual as well as cartographic imagining of the region through her contention that social theory is embodied not only in scholarly texts but also in visual and performing arts.

The ‘Southern’ theme continues in Eco Humanities Corner (see below), and also in the book reviews, where Emily Potter reviews Tom Griffiths’ recent book on voyaging to Antarctica, while Anne Maxwell considers the shifting locations of global intellectual production in Laurence Simmons’ collection on New Zealand’s public intellectuals, and Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly’s collection on the legacy of Edward Said. David Carter considers Sherman Young’s arguments for the digital transformation of book culture, while Paul Gillen reviews Melissa Harper’s history of bushwalking in Australia.

Producing our first issue of *Australian Humanities Review* has been a steep learning curve for both of us, and it could not have happened without the support of many people. We wish especially to thank the staff of ANU E Press, Lorena Kanellopoulos, Teresa Prowse and especially Duncan Beard for their patience in dealing with novice editors. William Douglas and Cara Foster assisted with the preparation of the AHR archive, and Jesse Reynolds and David Vermont provided invaluable advice and technical assistance. We also wish to thank our editorial board for the quality and timeliness of their refereeing. The publication of *Australian Humanities Review* is supported by a grant from the School of Humanities at The Australian National University, for which we are very grateful.

Finally we wish to thank Elizabeth McMahon for her enormous contribution to Australian intellectual life as editor of *Australian Humanities Review* for the past
Editors’ Introduction

ten years. We hope that this and future issues of AHR will continue the work of rethinking humanities debates outside their traditional conceptual and geographical boundaries.

Russell Smith & Monique Rooney, March 2008

The Eco Humanities Corner

How shall we understand our place in the world in this era of climate change and relentless globalisation? Emily Potter and Paul Starr offer an insightful engagement with climate change issues, arguing that now more than ever, as the earth system is changing so rapidly and unpredictably, we need to reorient our relations to place. They pose the prospect of post-national citizens linked by climate, emissions and other factors.

Val Plumwood asks similar questions in the context of globalised consumerism and damage. Her analysis challenges us to consider not only the places where we live and love, but also the shadow places which are disregarded but which make our lives possible. Each of these lively and timely articles challenges us to think about place in terms of connectivities, and thus to consider responsibilities that are both near and distant.

It was with great sadness that we learned shortly before this issue went to press of the death of Val Plumwood at the age of sixty-eight. An obituary tribute follows her essay.

Deborah Rose, March 2008
ESSAYS
‘Inhabited by a race of formidable giants’: French Explorers, Aborigines, and the Endurance of the Fantastic in the Great South Land, 1803

Shino Konishi

Introduction

This paper concerns a very small episode in Australian history that few would be aware of: a failed fishing expedition off Shark Bay, Western Australia, in 1803, which culminated in two cross-cultural encounters between French explorers and local Aboriginal men. The few scholars who are familiar with this incident generally explain it away in a brief sentence or two—for instance Colin Dyer simply states that ‘the French experienced the usual hostile reception extended in this region’ (113)—and then quickly move on to more significant events in the history of French maritime discoveries in Australia. So why am I writing about this seemingly uneventful event?

There are three reasons. Firstly, this incident challenges the assumption that post-Enlightenment explorers were thoroughly modern, rational, sceptical men of science, who eschewed their pre-modern predecessors’ fabulous imaginings. Many hagiographers of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century explorers overemphasise their scientific and secular achievements, and pay less attention to their journals’ discursive qualities, including their roots in pre-modern thought (for example see Fornasiero et al. 258; Duyker 183-8; Brown 354-7). Secondly, the episode sheds light on contemporary theories about the ‘South’ and the ‘antipodes’, that is, in the words of Ross Gibson, how Australia has been a ‘duplicitous object for the West’, identified as both self and other, so simultaneously known and unknown, European and exotic, offering a canvas for European projections of a ‘world upside down’ (Gibson x; Beilharz iii-vi; Hetherington 3-4). The final reason, which has been omitted from the historiography, is the most important because it both explains why the fishing expedition failed and gives rise to the first two reasons outlined: the indigenous group that the erstwhile fishermen encountered at Shark Bay were not recognised as Aboriginal men as the scholarship states, but were instead believed to be a ‘race of formidable giants’. I am intrigued by the fact that the possibility that a remnant race of giants existed in the Great South Land was entertained as late
as 1803, and by the fact that no historian has considered this worthy of exploration.

The possibility that this cross-cultural encounter involved not only an exotic race, but a monstrous race, gives rise to new ideas about the role Australia and the South played in the modern European imagination. Giants, along with other fabulous beings and marvels, played a significant role in evolving western conceptions of this continent, from its beginnings as the unknown terra australis incognita, or Great South Land, to the modern nation, Australia, it has become. This is because stories of giants have permeated the West since antiquity, represented in the Old Testament, medieval folklore, and Renaissance mappae mundi (Cohen; Stephens, Giants in Those Days).

Stories of giants have also flourished in indigenous and post-contact Australia. Some Aboriginal Dreamings and legends depict giants, locating them in marked spaces and thereby rendering them taboo places; for example the Yawaru people of Broome, Western Australia tell stories of Wadaba (or Gumbun), who lurks in the mangroves and must be avoided (Kerr 23; and see also Mathews 139-41). Giants also figured in Anglo-Celtic-Australian folklore in the guise of the Wildman and bunyip since the time of the First Fleet (Holden).

In all of these disparate temporal and geographical cultures giants have marked the boundaries between known and unknown lands or domesticated and untamed spaces, as well as symbolising the differences between contained and unrestrained bodies, through their sexual and gastronomic indulgences (Cohen xii-xiii). By exploring this little episode in Australia history, which began as a humble fishing trip in 1803, I hope to explore the history of the fabulous possibilities contained in the idea of the Great South Land before it was domesticated and transformed into a western nation, only contingently found in southern waters.

**Historicizing the Great South Land**

Before exploring the French fishermen’s terrifying clash with the ostensible giants of Shark Bay, it is imperative to explore the history of western conceptions of the Great South Land, or terra australis as it was better known, for it provides the foundation for why such an extraordinary encounter in Australia was even remotely entertained by the French explorers in 1803. Like legends and stories about giants, ideas about terra australis have their roots in antiquity. In the fifth century BC, Pythagoras proposed that a great southern land mass must exist in order to balance the known land masses in the northern hemisphere. He contended that the world was divided into five parts: two frigid parts in each hemisphere, two temperate, and a fiery equator bisecting the two zones. The logic, that an inaccessible, great southern land mass must exist in order to balance the weight of the northern continents, was similarly put forth by Crates of Mellos in the second century BC, Pomponius Mela in the first century AD, Ptolemy in
150 AD, and Macrobius in the fifth century AD. This theory came under attack from Christian dogma in the Middle Ages, when scholars ‘felt repugnance for imagining lands not mentioned in the Bible’ (Sankey 28), and St Augustine declared such ideas heretical. However, some brave cartographers continued to imagine *terra australis*, only now populating it with fabulous races, such as the skia-pods who had one giant foot, or antipodes with backward-facing feet (Eisler 9-11; Holden 25-6; Sankey 28-9).

Such cartographical embellishments were emblematic of the medieval period, as cultural Others were represented as increasingly marginalised from the Christian centre of Jerusalem in accordance with their degree of difference, ranging from the exotic and curious peoples of the east (Freedman 3), through to the monstrous races of the extreme periphery, exemplified by the inaccessible and unknown southern continent. This schema, mapping human difference to geographical distance, was also replicated in the late Middle Ages in the wildly popular fourteenth-century opus, *The Book of John Mandeville*, which charted a fictitious journey around the world and Mandeville’s encounters with a range of bizarre peoples and monstrous beings (Camargo 69). That these monsters were then depicted in the *Nuremberg Chronicle* of 1493 further entrenched expectations that the margins of the known world were peopled with fabulous creatures (Holden 27).

During the Renaissance the notion of *terra australis* became more than just hypothetical as European explorers such as Marco Polo and Amerigo Vespucci discovered new coastlines in the south, and cartographers creatively, if not accurately, incorporated them into their new maps. Despite remaining elusive, the unknown continent was now imagined to be south of either South America or Java. For instance the kingdoms Marco Polo discovered, Beach, Lucach and Maletur, were eventually incorporated into *terra australis* and mapped south of Java, precisely where Western Australia exists. And Ferdinand Magellan’s discovery of Tierra del Fuego was also imaginatively mapped by Gerard Mercator in the sixteenth-century as separate from South America, and part of the uncharted fifth continent, *terra australis* (Eisler 11-6, and 22-37; Sankey 29-31).

It is also at this point that ideas of *terra australis* intersect with giant lore, for on the same voyage, Magellan’s crewman, Antonio Pigafetta, recorded that they saw a giant standing on the beach north of Tierra del Fuego. He claimed that the tallest was ‘so tall that our heads did not reach his belt’ and that he was ‘a size like a giant, who had a voice like a bull’ (Sturtevant 331). This encounter was forever engraved on the history of this land, for it was subsequently named Patagonia (from Patagón, or ‘big-foot’) after the colossal people seen there, and seventeenth-century maps of this territory, for example those of Jocodus Hondius and Willem Janszoon Blaeu, were adorned by illustrations of giants (Harvey 21-2). Magellan’s sighting inaugurated the giants’ entry into the menagerie of
fantastic beings, amongst skiapods and antipodes, depicted as inhabiting the still incompletely-charted southern extremes of the world.

In the seventeenth century, the conceptions of *terra australis* became more prosaic, with the Dutch going in search of the Great South Land because rumours of gold and spices portended its mercantile potential. Travelling south from Batavia (Java) the Dutch launched various expeditions, beginning with Willem Jansz’s discovery of Cape York in 1606 and culminating in Willem de Vlamingh’s extensive survey of the west coast and the Swan River in 1696-7. In fact, the west coast received the most landings because many failed to navigate Brouwer’s 1611 route, which was supposed to halve the journey time between Europe and the Spice Islands. Dirk Hartog, for example landed in Shark Bay on the *Eendracht*. Such landings, intended or otherwise, enabled the Dutch to chart great tracts of the Australian coastline, but, disappointed by the ‘low and monotonous’ coastline (Jansz, qtd in Schilder 94), the Dutch did not recognise it as the fabled Great South Land and so named the country New Holland (Schilder 57-94, Eisler 68-99).

However, the advent of New Holland did not quell British and French fantasies about *terra australis*, which in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries manifested in a number of imagined voyages to the Great South Land, perhaps most famously in Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1735). This novel accentuated its satire by intertwining absurdly fantastic elements with real world examples of European explorations. For instance, in a letter Gulliver admits to advising his ‘cousin Dampier’ on ‘his book called *A voyage round the world*’ (Swift 39), here referring to the famed English buccaneer William Dampier who landed in north-western Australia twice in the late seventeenth century. Swift also plotted his fictional lands cartographically within the vicinity of *terra australis*. Lilliput and Houyhnhnms Land, inhabited by fabulous races of giants, little people, horses and yahoos, were mapped south of Java, and next to the actual Dutch discoveries in Australia: the former near Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania), and the latter next to Edel’s Land, Lewin’s Land, and Nuyt’s Land (all Western Australia) (Plate 1, Part 1 and Plate 4, Part 4, Swift 48 & 216). French authors similarly wrote novels about imagined voyages, and one which merits discussion here is the Huguenot writer Gabriel de Foigny’s little-known 1676 novel, *Terres Australes, Connu* (*The Southern Land, Known*) because it fancifully represents the society of the ‘Australians’.

*Terres Australes, Connu* traces Sadeur’s epic journey on the back of a giant bird to the Southern Land: ‘an earthly paradise that, while containing all the riches and curiosities imaginable, is exempt from the irritations of our world’ (de Foigny 46). One of these curiosities is the fact that the inhabitants—the ‘Australians’—are a race of hermaphrodites, who go completely naked, lack possessiveness, never quarrel, and ‘all love each other equally and in equal measure’ (48). Yet the
Australians’ oppressively monocultural society, in which difference is obliterated (through killing strangers or ‘half-men’, and the Australians’ wars with their austral neighbours), and corporeal functions such as sexual intercourse are regarded as ‘shameful and irrational’ (Faussett xxxvii), progressively disillusioned Sadeur, so he eventually escapes back to Europe. This utopian novel, which was a fictional allegory of religious sectarianism, was also a historical treatise on terra australis. De Foigny, much like Swift in his reference to Dampier, begins by charting real explorers’ searches for the unknown continent, which lent much credibility to the more fantastic elements of the novel, such as the fabulous creatures, and the ‘world upside down’ of the hermaphroditic society.

The French and British also harboured ambitions to discover the actual terra australis, because while New Holland still remained to be circumnavigated, there was always a chance that its coastline was part of the larger unknown southern continent. Abbé Paulmier’s Memoirs concerning the establishment of a Christian mission in the Third World, otherwise called the Austral, South, Antarctic, Unknown Land (1654), a compendium of French ideas about terra australis, inspired various French expeditions in the eighteenth century (Sankey 36-49). The British search is best represented by James Cook, the most famous navigator to land in Australia. One of the aims of his first expedition was to discover terra australis, but after charting the east coast of New Holland in 1770, and exploring Antarctic waters on his second voyage in 1772-3, he concluded that it did not exist. Even though the mythical terra australis was now replaced by the reality of New Holland, and later Australia, the fabulous possibilities of the former could not be completely discounted in the latter. Which brings me to the Baudin expedition’s Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands (1809), and their extraordinary encounter with giants in 1803.

**Turtle fishing at Shark Bay**

One of the later voyages of discovery in Australian waters was the French expedition, led by Post-Captain Nicolas Baudin, of the Géographe and Naturaliste to the ‘southern lands’ from 1800-1804. Devised by Baudin, this assignment aimed at discovering the natural history of this still incompletely charted territory, and to make new discoveries in the south-west of New Holland in particular. But once word spread about Baudin’s ambitions his proposal was co-opted by the newly formed Société des Observateurs de l’Homme and intrigued none other than Napoleon Bonaparte. The expedition eventually transcended Baudin’s humble amateur-naturalist fantasies, incorporating two corvettes, a crew of 251, including 23 naturalists—the ‘largest and best-qualified scientific team ever to leave Europe’—and a budget of 150,000 francs (Brown 34-51).

The expedition set sail from Le Havre on the 19th October 1800, and, after crossing the Indian Ocean, finally spied the Australian coast seven months later (Baudin 157). The ships then made numerous stops along the western and
southern coasts, including longer stays at Maria Island and the D’Entrecasteaux channel in Tasmania, a five-month sojourn at Port Jackson, and a visit to Timor, before returning to the west coast again in 1803. During this long period the French crew encountered numerous Aboriginal peoples and compiled detailed ethnographic studies of their corporeality, culture, and material life. By the time they returned to the west coast the naturalists’ attitude towards the Aborigines was somewhat jaded (see Konishi); no longer considering them exemplars of Rousseau’s noble savage, the French were bored by the ostensible poverty and striking uniformity of the different peoples throughout the continent (Péron 269). In 1803, having decided that they had achieved all of their aims, except those ruled out by circumstance, the French explorers prepared their ships for the long voyage home. Throughout the entire period of their journey, it was probably the least likely time that they expected to encounter the fantastic.

On the 17th March 1803 the crew of the Géographe were alarmed by the sudden return of one of their boats from a routine turtle-fishing trip. The corvette was anchored off Péron Peninsula at Shark Bay, a site on the west coast they had visited and named back in July 1801. Baudin had remembered that the waters were teeming with giant turtles and that the arid waterways were an excellent source of salt, so returned for the sole purpose of restocking the ship’s food supply before embarking on the final leg of their expedition. To this end, he anticipated staying at this seemingly uninhabited barren cape on the edge of the Indian Ocean for no longer than five or six days (Baudin 505). Though largely unknown, this stretch of land held no interest for the French, who were familiar with it not only from their own earlier visit, but also from the well-known account of the English buccaneer William Dampier, who had dismissed its potential in the late seventeenth century. However, their curiosity was reinvigorated by the extraordinary story told by the unexpectedly returned sailors.

The expedition’s zoologist and chronicler François Péron observed that ‘Fear was still evident in the faces of the crew’ who manned the boat, as they blurted out the story of their terrifying encounter with the ‘extraordinarily big, strong men’ who ‘prevented their going ashore’. He was told that:

These giants (there were a hundred or more) carried great shields and enormous spears; long, black beards grew down to the middle of their chests; they ran like furies along the beach, brandishing their weapons; they uttered great, long cries and threatened [the] fishermen, who fled precipitately toward the ship (Péron and Freycinet 134; see also Baudin 506).

Upon hearing this fabulous tale the listeners laughed at the frightened men, but were soon perturbed by the arrival of the second fishing boat manned by equally ‘panic-stricken’ sailors. This ‘second detachment of fishermen (who had been
sent for the same purpose to another point on the mainland’ had unfortunately landed on the beach before the giants had appeared, so had ‘an even closer view of these so-called giants and had only managed with difficulty to escape from them’ (Péron and Freycinet 134). Reflecting the eighteenth-century divide between the ‘erudite’ and ‘vulgar’ classes (Stephens, Giants in Those Days; Daston and Park), the learned post-captain and naturalists were sceptical about the lowly sailors’ claims that such ‘marvels’ actually existed. Yet, these ostensibly rational men of science could not easily dismiss the notion that this part of New Holland harboured colossal people because there had been earlier reports which corroborated the extraordinary claim.

As the sailors explained the details of their bizarre experience, Péron immediately recalled that ‘the most ancient chronicles that we possess concerning this part of New Holland portray it as inhabited by a race of formidable giants’. Before visiting the southern lands he had read a French edition of the Dutch navigator Willem de Vlamingh’s account which alleged that he had found ‘gigantic human footprints’ during his exploration of the Swan River. Further, Péron remembered that his own compatriots, Sub-Lieutenant François Heirisson and Midshipman Charles Moreau, had found ‘the print of a man’s foot, of an extraordinary size’ on the 18th June 1801 during their reconnaissance of the Swan River (Péron 144). He also recalled that two years earlier Louis de Freycinet had been ‘seized with astonishment at the sight of a print of this nature’ found in Shark Bay (Péron and Freycinet 145-6). With these earlier examples in mind Péron, as a learned naturalist, acknowledged that the eye-witnesses’ claims seemed ‘extravagant’, but still held that:

> These various close encounters did not fail to be given credence by the believers in marvels (for there were a few of them among us) and seemed to them to offer, along with the double report of our fishermen, if not rigorous demonstrations, at least very strong probabilities in support of the existence of a race of giants on these shores (145-6).

Determining that no matter how ‘extravagant such assertions [about giants] might seem, it was still necessary to obtain precise information on the matter’, Baudin assembled a party, to be led by Lieutenant-Commander François-Michel Ronsard and including Péron, to go ashore and find the natives, giant or otherwise, and ‘become acquainted with them’ (Péron and Freycinet 134; Baudin 506). However, upon arriving on the same shore visited by the ill-fated fishermen, Ronsard and his men ‘found not a single one of these so-called giants’, even after exploring ‘all of the environs’ and ‘hunt[ing] in all the bushes’. Their only discovery that day was ‘twelve to fifteen huts’, so ‘Hunting no longer for the fantastic giants of Eendracht Land’, Péron decided to turn his attentions to more scientifically commendable pursuits; he ended his day collecting the tantalising
‘brilliant shells’, extolled by Dampier over a century earlier, whose study would add ‘to the glory of the nation’ (Péron and Freycinet 134-6).

Explaining giants

The scientific aims and achievements of the Baudin expedition, combined with the recent scholarly desire to rehabilitate it from obscurity, has resulted in the historiography portraying these explorers with a modern, rational, empirical sensibility completely divorced from the medieval or early-modern past. This a priori assumption obviously impacts on some historians’ examination of the Baudin expeditions’ brief dalliance with the fantastic: they simply excised it from the historical record. For example, Colin Dyer, in his *The French Explorers and the Aboriginal Australians* (2005) says of the aforementioned sailors’ altercation with the giants that ‘the French experienced the usual hostile reception extended in this region. Two fishing boats were prevented from going ashore by “a band of natives, all … armed with spears, clubs and shields”’ (113). Similarly, Jean Fornasiero, Peter Monteath, and John West-Sooby in their *Encountering Terra Australis: The Australian Voyages of Nicolas Baudin and Matthew Flinders* (2004) state that ‘The six-day stay at Shark Bay was most notable for an encounter with a large group of Aborigines … whose hostile attitude put great fear in the hearts of a French shore party and prevented them from landing’ (258).

Edward Duyker, on the other hand, in his *François Péron: An Impetuous Life* (2006) does acknowledge the reference to giants by claiming that ‘Péron considered his most significant anthropological finding of the visit to have been the dismissal of the notion (going back to de Vlamingh’s 1697 report of gigantic human footprints) that the local inhabitants were a race of giants’. Duyker does not mention the sailors’ hysterical allegation that they had witnessed the giants themselves, instead simply stating that they had ‘encountered a group of a hundred formidable indigenous inhabitants intent on resisting their landing’. Nor does he acknowledge that Péron had decided to go ashore with the specific aim of discovering this mythic race of giants (183-8). Finally, Anthony Brown examines this episode in the greatest detail in a section of his book *Ill-Starred Captains: Flinders and Baudin* (rev’d 2004) titled ‘The Giants of Shark Bay’. His text is an innovative history combining conventional historical accounts of the voyage interspersed with his own imagined recreations, and it is only in one of these interludes that he describes the frightening encounter with giants (354-7). Unfortunately he does not subject this episode to any analysis or discussion, nor does he consider this incident within the historical context of western conceptions of the fantastic.

Although the Baudin expedition only entertained the notion that a race of giants existed on these shores for a brief period, the complete omission or drastic underplaying of this episode in the historiography is significant because it
suggests a somewhat teleological approach to the text. In reading the extraordinary accounts of the inhabitants of the unexplored beaches and interior of what was then called Eendracht’s Land, the scholars anticipate the ordinary reality of Shark Bay and its known indigenous inhabitants, thereby expunging the fantastic from Australia’s history. At the very least, the scholars adopt an anachronistic interpretation of the sources, for while the erudite naturalists were sceptical about their existence they did not share today’s resolute belief that giants are entirely fictitious (Stephens, Giants in Those Days 5). Walter Stephens posits that it was only in the twentieth century that giants became purely conceived of as ‘creatures of fable and fairy tale’ for he states that prior to that western cultures have defined giants as ‘special races distinct from the rest of mankind’, with biblical scholars positing that some antediluvian giants may have escaped the Great Flood and still be lurking in the uncharted peripheries (1-2). As late as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, archaeological discoveries were credulously interpreted and displayed as the bones of giants, though they were received with scepticism by scientific communities.

Giants also figured in the extensive history of the south land, which as Robert Holden argues, was believed populated with ‘a bizarre menagerie of creatures as well as fantastic races of people’ (Holden 46). In fact there were claims in the late eighteenth century that a giant had been brought from Australia to England. A theatre handbill announced that on the 29 November 1789, less than two years after the establishment of the first colony, ‘a wonderful large WILD MAN, or monstrous GIANT, BROUGHT FROM BOTANY BAY’ had arrived in London on the Rover (Anon). Such stories of the fabulous down under were popular; Maria Nugent reports that numerous versions of this handbill exist, all citing different dates and ships, illustrating not only the contemporary beliefs in the fantastic but also reflecting long-held notions of the antipodes as a ‘world upside down’ (Nugent 19-22). The idea of ‘antipodean inversion’ pervaded European perceptions of Australia, for, as Ross Gibson states, ‘On the upside-down face of the world, perversity could be perceived to be the rule’. So given the other perversities which marked the south land such as black swans, rivers which ran inland, wood that did not float, and birds which failed to sing or fly (Gibson 10), it was not utterly implausible that the inhabitants would be perversely gigantic.

It is not only their possible survival and prodigious size which defined giants. With the exception of Rabelais’ good giants, Gargantua and Pantagruel, who were ‘a burlesque of all the other giant-lore’ (Stephens, ‘Giants’ 101), Stephens notes that in both the folklore and the ‘erudite giantology’ explored by theologians and secular philosophers alike, giants were usually ‘distinguished from ordinary human beings because they were dedicatedly, unremittingly evil’ (Stephens, Giants in Those Days 3). Referring to Hayden White he also states that with few exceptions, ‘the figure of the giant “designated an area of
subhumanity that was characterised by everything [societies] hoped they were not”’ (66). Victor Scherb concurs, observing in his study of the enduring myth of Gog and Magog that in the medieval romances the infamous characters indulged in transgressive and barbaric behaviours such as cannibalism, incest and free love. Scherb states that Gog and Magog, who first appeared in the Book of Ezekiel but are best known as the English giant goemagog after Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia, frequently serve to unite and strengthen a group’s identity against an ‘alien force’. This helped to forge ‘a western identity in the face of barbarian invasions and … create a sense of solidarity within a civilised European community’ (Scherb 63). Most importantly, he points out that giants demarcated a cultural boundary for they were purported to inhabit the unexplored margins, places that were conceived of as simultaneously remote and menacing, much like the uncharted and unexplored inland of Australia in 1803.

Evidently the French sailors’ sighting of giants followed a long history of giant references within early travel narratives, exemplified by the claims first made during Magellan’s visit to Patagonia, and even as late as 1764 when John Byron echoed the belief that Patagonia was inhabited by a race of giants, claiming that these people ‘in size come the nearest to Giants I believe of any People in the World’. John Hawkesworth memorialised this claim in his edition of Byron’s journal writing that the Patagonian chief ‘was of a gigantic stature, and seemed to realise the tales of monsters in human shape… I did not measure him, but if I may judge of his height by the proportion of his stature to my own, it could not be much less than seven feet’ (Sturtevant 332).

In ‘Measuring the Marvelous: Science and the Exotic in William Dampier’, Geraldine Barnes and Adrian Mitchell contend that William Dampier ‘rides the boundary between medieval and modern ways of comprehending the cosmos’ because he is a ‘traveller who is sceptical of the marvellous, but whose narrative discloses vestiges of such bygone notions as monstrous races and the terrestrial paradise’ (Barnes and Mitchell 47). I believe that despite the Enlightenment’s rationality and empiricism, this sentiment applied over a century later to Baudin and his men. Such an episode illustrates that while this does not necessarily seem to be a radical proposition, it does challenge the prevailing ideas about the Enlightenment. For instance, Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park are convinced that the Enlightenment had banished beliefs in the marvellous. They will only concede that some key thinkers embraced the marvellous in a very tempered way: Buffon still included an entry on monsters in his Histoire Naturelle, but ‘his uncharacteristic brevity is still louder testimony that they had been banished to the margins of natural history and natural philosophy’ (Daston and Park 359).

The long history of the fantastic weighed heavily on the French sailors, bolstering their faith that they had indeed witnessed a race of giants charging towards them ‘like furies’ on the shores of Shark Bay. In contrast to what has been written
in the aforementioned teleological and rationalist historiography, the French naturalists did not immediately dismiss the story as bogus. And despite their failure to find any giants on their first day of searching, the next day they renewed their investigations, and again set out to hunt the mysterious giants of Eendracht’s land.

**Giant hunting at Shark Bay**

The day after the first campaign to find Shark Bay’s ‘fantastic giants’ another, smaller, party, including Péron, artist Nicolas-Martin Petit and mineralogist Antoine Guichenot, was sent ashore to conduct a more leisurely survey of the land and search for the natives, giant or otherwise. Though they did not meet anyone at the landing site, the environment indicated the inhabitants’ nearby presence: a mass of human footprints, a smouldering fire, and some huts, which appeared to Péron as ‘the most finished examples that [they] had occasion to observe in New Holland’ (Péron and Freycinet 137-8). Péron was also intrigued to find some caverns that were clearly used as shelters, for they had ledges carved out of the walls to store ‘household utensils’, and were ‘carpeted with a thick layer of seaweed’. But anxiety concerning his isolation from the longboat, and ‘the approaching night’ prevented Péron from examining more than one of these refuges (138). Once back in the sunlight, the naturalists’ sense of disquiet was alleviated by the discovery of their other highly sought after quarry, the beautiful shells adorning the waters off the eastern coast of the peninsula.

Péron, Petit, and Guichenot waded knee-deep in the waters, marvelling at the shells which could be simply plucked from the sandy bottom, as well as the ‘shoals of fish’ swimming fearlessly around them: wrasse, chaetodon, balistes, mackerel, rays, and globe-fish (144). But this pacific interlude was disturbed by the arrival of ‘several large sharks’, one of which suddenly veered towards Petit’s naked ankles, frightening him into ‘fir[ing] at the creature’. The shot not only alarmed the fish, but also Petit’s companions, for Péron, perhaps remembering their still unseen giants, feared that the noise would draw them towards the vulnerably half-dressed naturalists. Still not knowing where the Aborigines or giants might be lurking, Péron and Guichenot hurried out of the water to ‘fetch their clothes and hide in the bushes’, but the ‘foolhardy’ Petit jeered at their barely contained hysteria, or as Péron prefers to describe it, ‘prudence’, and remained in the water. However, Péron notes that Petit’s ‘rash sense of security soon gave way to terror’ (144).

Before Péron and Guichenot had even finished dressing they suddenly heard ‘fearsome cries’ and saw ‘a troop of natives running down to the shore from the top of a dune’. Despite the fact that the fact that the *raison d’être* of the expedition was to meet the natives, upon ‘the sight of them’, the Frenchmen, including the formerly brave Petit, raced half-naked around a nearby point, and once hidden, evaluated their defences: ‘a musket and two pistols’. Crouching down, the frightened men
loaded their weapons and planned their strategy, ‘solemnly promising not to fire, except as a last resort’, and even then, due to their limited ammunitions, only ‘at point blank range’ (144). At this point the Aboriginal men swiftly negotiated the promontory, and ran towards the hapless naturalists, shrieking ‘terrible, menacing cries’. Realising that the natives were only men and not formidable giants, the Frenchmen speculated that another panicky retreat would only ‘embolden’ the hostile men, so the explorers decided instead to approach them in a masquerade of confidence.

This unexpected action disconcerted the Aboriginal men, momentarily ‘halt[ing]’ the group, and leading the tallest to come forward and seemingly invite one of the Frenchmen to come and parley with them. Despite the fact that this was the goal of their expedition ashore, Péron considered their position too vulnerable, as they were isolated from the Géographe and could expect that the ‘number of natives would increase at any minute’, so he decided that it was imperative to ‘avoid’ ‘an interview of this nature’ (145). With a resolute air, the naturalists kept together and resumed their deliberate approach towards the Aboriginal men, who again appeared perturbed by this tactic. And, to the disappointment of the modern reader, after some discussion, the Aboriginal men simply ‘turned their backs and headed towards the point of the coast whence they had come’ (145).

Having circumvented a serious altercation, the explorers could finally relax, and evaluate their encounter in a more rational manner. Péron dismissed the charge that the men of this coast were giants because to his eye, the tallest of the group, the one who appeared the boldest, and had ‘particularly harangued’ them, ‘appeared to be 5 feet 4 or 5 inches tall’. The others were thought to be ‘of ordinary height—even small’, and the French could ‘plainly detect in them that spindliness of limb and slenderness of form which [Péron believed to] characterise the various peoples of New Holland’ (146). By surviving their potentially dangerous encounter with the natives and realising that they were merely ordinary men, the explorers believed that they had now banished the myth of the ‘existence of these new giants of the south’ (146). With this claim Péron perhaps felt that that they had penetrated the unfamiliar margin, former home of giants, and by rendering the unknown known, cast off the vestiges of his pre-modern faith in the fantastic.

**Conclusion**

Although this incident concerning the search for giants on the shores of Eendracht’s Land is only a minor incident in Australian history it is worthy of scholarly attention because it can bring into conversation two disciplinary approaches to historical conceptions of terra australis/Australia – the sweepingly theoretical approaches of cultural studies, and the evidentiary focus of history.
Drawing on a kaleidoscope of genres, periods, and texts, cultural theorists such as Ross Gibson have broadly articulated the ‘image of Australia [as] oddly doubled’. He claims that

on the one hand, Australia is demonstrably a ‘European’ society with exhaustive documentation available concerning its colonial inception and development. Yet on the other hand, because the society and its habitat have also been understood (for much longer than two hundred years) in the West as fantastic and other worldly (Gibson x).

Such an approach thrills with its possibilities in acknowledging a multilayered imagining of Australia, but it also frustrates the reader because of its elusive evidence and sweeping generalisations. Yet, historians can be too focussed on their evidence and too measured in their interpretation, and, as in the historiography outlined above, can produce work that lacks imagination. By portraying such incidents in a sentence or two as little more than a cultural encounter between European explorers intent on making scientific discoveries and Aboriginal Australians defending their land, the historians have elided the broader historical and textual contexts of this Shark Bay incident. Further, the historians’ approach is teleological, retrospectively projecting the prosaic reality of Australia onto historical conceptions of the mythical terra australis, and ignoring the fact that throughout millennia of western mythmaking the Great South Land was conceived of as a site for fantastic possibilities.

Moreover, this scholarship also takes for granted the inevitability of the west’s confident appropriation of the south. The Baudin expedition’s experiences in Shark Bay illustrate the anxieties of liminality experienced by European explorers. Caught between the security of their ship, a floating laboratory dedicated to the emerging taxonomic sciences, and the unfamiliar landscape of the southern continent they charted, these men were constantly allaying their fears about the unknown—be it the strange flora and fauna that both tantalised and repulsed, or the frightening spectre of the native inhabitants charging towards them from the unseen interior. Moreover, the Aboriginal men were not simply pushed into a defensive response to the coming of the Europeans, as the historiography suggests, but displayed varying attitudes to the white strangers, including curiosity and indifference. They were not simply colonial subalterns in waiting, but active agents in a cross-cultural extra-colonial encounter which may have unfolded in any number of ways. It is disingenuous to ignore the historical accounts of the explorers’ trepidation and wonder towards the new land and its people, and only depict their modern, rationalist, and empirical views of the land as a potential site for mercantile and intellectual imperialism.

Consequently, this little story of giant hunting in Shark Bay in 1803, which is so rich in potential for revealing competing ideas about Australia and the terra australis, demonstrates that the different disciplines need to come into
conversation with each other, borrowing from each other in approach, evidence, rigour, and imagination.

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**Notes**

1 Unfortunately for the modern reader, Vlamingh’s original journal has been lost to time, and the extant English translations do not include Péron’s assertion (Vlamingh).

2 Given that a French foot was 32.48cm (Dyer 50-1) this height converts to approximately 173-176 cm.
Apsley, Victoria.
Photograph by Kevin Murray

Thinking beyond the Southern Hemisphere

Apsley is a small Victorian town on the edge of the Wimmera, just before the South Australian border. With a population of 166, there’s nothing much to divert a stray tourist on their way to the nearby Coonawarra. But those who do decide to stop and stretch their legs in the broad median strip will discover Apsley’s ‘claim to fame’. A broken wooden sign proclaims the nearby Eucalypt to be ‘The Largest Flowering Gum Tree in the Southern Hemisphere’.

If the visitor stayed a little longer, they might begin to wonder about this claim. They might ask themselves, ‘But isn’t the flowering gum an Australian tree? Then shouldn’t this tree be the largest “in the world”?’
This paper explores the assumptions brought into question by this stray tourist. Why is the Southern Hemisphere the default benchmark for recognition of value in Australia? This Southern Hemisphere operates as a kind of world B division. As the Chinese proverb goes, it is better to be the head of a chicken than the backside of an elephant. But it’s lonely at the top. Is this vertical evaluation the only way of considering Australia’s latitude? Can Australia be positioned in an alternative horizontal axis that enables relationships with other countries of the South?

In response to this question, I examine three ways of understanding Australia’s place in the South: the Southern Hemisphere, the Global South, and the Colonised South. These frameworks are evaluated for the possibilities they open up for cultural dialogue. The paper concludes with a series of Keys to the South, developed to stimulate these possibilities.1

The Southern Hemisphere

Australia’s place in the South seems self-evident. Unlike Africa and South America, Australia is the only settled continent not linked by land bridge to the north. Its pre-eminence across the latitude is evoked in the phrase ‘Great Southern Land’. This South is a ‘big pond’ in which Australia floats alone and proud.

The claim ‘biggest in the Southern Hemisphere’ seems a fitting ambition for this continent. Googling this phrase in English reveals 3,840 instances on the Internet (by comparison, ‘biggest in the Northern Hemisphere’ is only mentioned 8 times). The subjects of this claim include cultural activities (Scottish Highland Festival, temple and casino), sports (rodeo, triathlon and marathon) and man-made structures (desalination plant, drive-in and telescope). As an arena for competing against the world, the Southern Hemisphere fits a young aspirational nation.

In broader terms, this ‘biggest in the Southern Hemisphere’ aspiration can be seen as part of the story of Australia as a nation that is still finding its place in the world.2 After being the last outpost of the British Empire, it confronts the challenge of getting to know its neighbours—those to our north in the Eastern Hemisphere, and those alongside us in the Southern Hemisphere. So to what extent does being the ‘biggest in the Southern Hemisphere’ help or hinder in engaging with our neighbours in the South? To consider this question carefully, we need to distinguish between ‘Southern Hemisphere’ and ‘South’.

The ‘Southern Hemisphere’ refers to a clearly defined geographical region below the equator. Implicit in this is a vertical hierarchy of ‘above’ and ‘below’ which conveniently aligns with the hierarchies of developed and developing, mind and body, macro and micro.

The history of colonialism is coincidental with this vertical mindset. On the other side of the Southern Hemisphere are the centres of the North. Local ambitions in the South are measured by success in the centres—Paris for fashion designers,
New York for businesspersons, Hollywood for actors, London for academics and Milan for furniture designers. The Cuban curator Gerardo Mosquera calls this concentric arrangement ‘axial globalisation’. In the economy of cultural capital, the elevation of northern centres casts a shadow over the credibility of local cultures. The shame of parochialism is evoked by the alleged remark about Australia’s lowly status that emerged during Paul Keating’s time as Prime Minister. In 1996, the previous leader Bob Hawke claimed that Keating had disparaged Australia as the ‘arse-end of the world’. This comment confirmed popular perception of Keating’s elitism and coincided with his decreasing opinion poll figures (see Watson 500).

Within this vertical hierarchy, the Southern Hemisphere offers a sub-division in which Australia has opportunity to play the leading role. Like the Pearly King and Queen of Cockney London, Australia can be seen to internalise the hierarchy which subordinates it in order to re-claim some symbolic credit. The ‘colonial cringe’ becomes the ‘colonial strut’.

But is this southern aspirationalism particular to Australia? With the aid of Google, it is possible to test whether Australia’s boast is the most common in the Southern Hemisphere. To search for the equivalent phrase in Spanish produced only 1,530 hits, however the Portuguese had 4,690. A sampling of country references in the three languages, weighted by their frequency, reveals the following table of claims in order of percentage frequency:

**Table 1 Percentage claims by country to the ‘biggest in the Southern Hemisphere’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>CLAIMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporations</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other African</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the population and economy of Brazil, it is no surprise that it has twice as many claims as Australia. While putting us in our place, this table does prompt us to consider Australia as part of a community of nations inhabiting the South. But what do they share in common apart from this aspirationalism?

With these reservations in mind, it is important to consider collaborative uses of the Southern Hemisphere. At an official level, the Southern Hemisphere has provided the framework for at least one network in trade and science. The Group of Temperate Southern Hemispheric Countries on Environment (the Valdivia Group) was established in Chile, 1995. Australia, Argentina, Chile, New Zealand,
South Africa and Uruguay agreed to exchange information about environmental and scientific issues. However, given the global dialogue around climate change, the group does not seem to play an active role and has been subject to criticism for its limited agenda (see Dodds). 5

Politically, there is no high profile network across the South which matches Australia’s involvement in APEC. Other alliances such as the Group of 77, IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) skirt Australia. A 2004 government report on these south-south alliances advocates for increasing trade liberalisation in developing countries. However, there is no mention in the report of Australia’s involvement in this growing region (DFAT).

Given the limited benefits of the Southern Hemisphere as a frame for Australia’s place in the world, is there an alternative way of positioning Australia in the South? The Southern Hemisphere is only one way of representing the South. South is a direction as well as a place. This South appears anywhere in the globe.

The Global South

Culturally, South is commonly associated with the less civilised past of the world. This has been particularly evident in Italy, with the enduring tension between the north, such as the Lombardy League, and the south, particularly Sicily (see Moe). Such a north-south divide can be mapped onto Europe with different cities containing distinct post-colonial populations—South Asians in London, Algerians in Paris, Moroccans in Spain, Turks in Germany, etc.

In general terms, this divide is an intrinsic part of the global economy. The north-south divide is present in most first world cities—it’s the division between those who take taxis and those who drive them. Australia’s place in this striated world is no different to other first world countries. We also have Somalis driving our taxis, Indians serving our 7/11s, Filipinos cleaning our offices and Chinese making our products. The South provides the labour that enables the first world countries to pursue growth in new information industries such as design. It is a shadow cast throughout the first world.

Australia has no special place in this South other than as another economy dependent on importing skills and labour from other countries whose material expectations are lower than its own. It doesn’t mean that the Global South is irrelevant to Australia—far from it. But it doesn’t have anything unique to say about Australia’s place in the world.

While compromised by the Southern Hemisphere and excluded by the Global South, there is an alternative southern framework for Australia. There exists an historical alliance between Australia and other countries of the South that goes beyond geography. If you assume that China and Japan were never colonised in the same way that India was, then the colonised world rests roughly below the Tropic of Cancer. This includes countries such as India, Mexico and Egypt.
The Colonised South

Colonised countries have an obvious connection in their shared history as outposts for imperial interests. But between colonial incursions such as the ‘scramble for Africa’, the Spanish conquest of the New World and terra nullius in Australia, there are stark differences in the course of colonisation. It is understanding the scope of these differences, within an underlying common condition, which makes the Colonised South a particularly generative framework.

There are stark differences in the relative dispossession of first peoples within the Colonised South. In Oceania and most of Latin America, the settler peoples remain dominant. By contrast, the African nations are now experiencing growing black empowerment.

Yet despite these differences, there are strong historical parallels. Most are countries that have experienced a similar sequence of events—invasion, settlement, state-building and reconciliation. In many cases, state-building has involved overtly repressive measures whose violence is now subject to a reconciliation process. This includes Apartheid in South Africa and military dictatorships in countries such as Chile, Argentina and Brazil. Australia can place the ‘stolen generation’ alongside other collective crimes requiring memorialisation in the South.

The process of reconciliation has been most dramatic in South Africa. Through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Bishop Desmond Tutu invoked the traditional concept of ‘Ubuntu’ to counsel for forgiveness on behalf of victims. The end of Apartheid has seen a program of ‘upliftment’ to improve the conditions of those ‘previously disadvantaged’, including the political dominance of those who had been excluded from white areas.

In a country like Australia, reconciliation is still a largely symbolic exercise. Protests in 2000 such as the march across Sydney Harbour Bridge called on the government to say ‘sorry’ for its policy of the ‘stolen generation’. The official apology offered by the new Rudd government has no concrete reparation attached. It has now become a standard feature of public life that a ‘Welcome to Country’ is made at official public events. This entails an acknowledgment of the traditional owners of the land. Sometimes a local Aboriginal elder is invited to mark the occasion with a welcoming ceremony followed by brief speech. Australia is relatively unique in this practice.

Reconciliation has focused particularly on the rights of Indigenous peoples. This seems relatively straightforward in the case of a country like Bolivia, where the current indigenous president Evo Morales proudly upholds the cause of the Aymara. It is more complicated in South Africa, where there are eleven official languages, none of which belong to the Indigenous peoples, the San and the Khoikhoi.
But the focus on Indigenous rights by itself is not co-extensive with the Colonised South. The connections between Indigenous peoples are often made through a northern metropolitan centre, such as the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, the Musée de quai Branly in Paris, the Prince Klaus Foundation in Amsterdam, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs in Copenhagen and the United Nations in New York. In Australia, international Indigenous connections are well developed with Maori in New Zealand. While there are strong common issues shared between Indigenous peoples, the danger of limiting the idea of South exclusively to Indigenous identity is that it exempts descendents of settlers from critical dialogue. It is left for whitefellas to be the invisible managers, enabling Indigenous development but not reflecting on their own place in this process. It risks being yet another missionary narrative.

By contrast, the issue of non-indigenous identity is relatively undeveloped. The country with the most developed non-indigenous identity in the Colonised South is New Zealand, where writers such as Michael King have constructed the identity of ‘Pakeha’ as an acknowledgment of the difference between New Zealanders of European descent and those living in Europe itself (see King). Pakeha is now an official ethnic category used in census and immigration documentation.

Non-indigenous identity may not seem relevant when the primary focus for recognition is the colonial centre. However, when the Colonised South is convened, it opens up the question of the ongoing status of the non-indigenous. There are other ‘Pakeha’ stories lying untapped across the South, in countries like Australia (‘Balanda’) and South Africa (‘Umlungu’) (see Murray). The question of non-indigenous identity offers the opportunity to advance post-colonial dialogue beyond a confessional mode to one that includes an Indigenous voice on an equal platform. There is potential for descendents of the North to acknowledge their inauthenticity while negotiating a place for themselves as guests of the first peoples.

It was in the context of these kinds of untapped dialogues between the Colonised South that the South Project was developed by Craft Victoria in 2003. For a craft organisation, the South offered a stage for the values of egalitarianism inherited from the Arts and Crafts movement. In previous eras, the Arts and Crafts movement had looked at various times to folk cultures of distant lands to invigorate a soulless West—Iceland for William Morris and Japan for Bernard Leach. But to invite cultures into a multilateral conversation, it was important to leave the question of art form open. In Melbourne, July 2004, South 1 launched the conversation with representatives of artists and writers from across the Colonised South.

For Australia, the South Project presented itself as a new chapter in a familiar story. We had spent the latter twentieth century getting to know those with
whom we share the Eastern Hemisphere. Championed by politicians such as Paul Keating, celebrated in Brisbane’s Asia Pacific Triennials, and institutionalised in Asialink, Asia offered a brave new frontier in the country’s quest to distance itself from the colonial past. And now, in the twenty-first century, we face the challenge of developing relationships with our neighbours in the South.

Much work was done in the lead up to South 1 to develop a context for a gathering of southern cultures. Twelve keys were developed to assist thinking about potential common ties. These keys were specific ‘coincidences’ between countries of the South and were used to unlock shared issues. These keys remain as indications of the rich potential in developing Australia’s position in the Colonised South.

**Keys to the South**

1. **The flightless bird**

The prompt for the first key came from the film *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World* (2003). Based on the Patrick O’Brien novel, the film celebrates the global adventure pursued by Anglo nations. In the film, Captain Jack Aubrey strays from his mission in pursuit of an enemy vessel around the South American coast. But here he comes up against Dr. Stephen Maturin, the ship's surgeon, whose theatre of heroism is the wounded body rather than the high seas. The doctor is a man of science, eager to gather new knowledge from the world they pass by, particularly the Galapagos Islands and the flightless cormorant he spies from a distance. In gratitude for the doctor’s support, the captain promises him time on the islands to study the elusive bird. But a last minute threat forces him to withdraw the offer and they sail off to pursue the enemy. In consoling the doctor, the captain reminds him that the bird that so fascinates him is flightless, and therefore not likely to be going anywhere. The two men share a smile at this good fortune and head off into another thrilling adventure, happy that their world remains secure for the future exploration. Through the device of the flightless bird, the film invokes an image of the South as a passive realm, whose only agent of change comes from the North.

So what happens when you take the view of the flightless bird rather than the venturesome sailor? Flightless birds are almost all located in the South. What they share in common is exactly what keeps them apart: their inability to fly. These creatures seem a fitting symbol for the plight of living in the South. The focus on not belonging to the world above prevents those of the South from noticing each other. This flightless bird metaphor proved the key story for developing the network of schools that is part of South Kids, a children’s component of the South Project in partnership with ArtPlay in Melbourne.
2. Foreign trash & local treasure

The second key was developed to identify the cross-fertilisation that had occurred across the South due to trade and colonisation. Some of this is negative. In South Africa, Cecil Rhodes introduced the Australian ‘Port Jackson wattle’ (Acacia mearnsii) to bind together the loose soils of the Cape flats. This tree soon flourished and its roots began to strangle the delicate ecology of the fynbos. There is now a campaign to rid the Cape of these ‘aliens’ and some artists are assisting by making sculptures from its bark. A similar story occurs in New Zealand, where the Australian possum is a declared vermin and there is a thriving craft industry using its skins and fur. Victorian Indigenous artists like Vicki Couzens have to import their materials from New Zealand to make traditional possum skin cloaks.

Alternative positive exchanges occurred in historical movements such as Mambu that affected Melanesia in the early twentieth century, often disparaged as ‘cargo cults’ (see Burridge). Here elements of western technology became valued for their magical qualities, rather than practical benefits. In a more constructive way, South African craft has beautifully re-used elements such as telephone wire. This key invokes the interconnectedness between history and nature through countries of the South, and the different values they attach to each other’s materials.

3. Gondwana

The idea that the countries of the South were once joined together is a powerful symbol for developing south-south exchange. The Gondwana legacy has provided countries of the South, including India and Saudi Arabia, with a common biological legacy. This is evident in a common genetic base to their flora and fauna. Gondwana evokes the possibility that the pieces of continental jigsaw might be fitted together again, culturally if not geologically.

But its use as a symbol often carries a specific political message. Gondwana can be used to speak for a nature that predates the appearance of humans and as such privileges Western science over Indigenous culture. Gondwana Link is an organisation that lobbies for linking together bushland areas across south-west Australia to ‘restore ecological connectivity’. It raises the issue whether promotion of nature implicitly denies the rights of local peoples. This issue is particularly acute in Patagonia, where individuals such as the US businessman Douglas Tompkins are buying up large areas of land to preserve them from the threat of development. This is often to the chagrin of local people anxious to make a livelihood out of their land.
4. Southern Cross

The constellation of the Southern Cross has particular resonance for Australia’s place in the South. It was forged in the Eureka Rebellion and is now boldly included in the national flag. It is invoked countless times in Australian place naming, most recently in the re-vamped Southern Cross Station in Melbourne. This Southern Cross is like a tattoo engraved indelibly into Australian identity.

But is the Southern Cross used to exclude more than connect with the South? Henry Lawson’s poem ‘Flag of the Southern Cross’ (1887) uses the constellation as a rallying symbol for Australians in their battle to assert themselves against the imperialist world.

Let us be bold, be it daylight or night for us
Fling out the flag of the Southern Cross!
Let us be firm—with our God and our right for us,
Under the flag of the Southern Cross!
Austral is fair, and the idlers in strife for her
Plunder her, sneer at her, suck the young life from her!
Fling out the flag of the Southern Cross!

There seems no question for Lawson that this constellation applies exclusively to Australians. Yet other countries include the Southern Cross in their flag, such as Brazil, Samoa and Papua New Guinea.

The Southern Cross as a key challenges us to consider alternative meanings, such as its pre-colonial history. Classical Greeks identified it in the constellation of Centaurus. In his Purgatory, Dante describes the 'four stars/Ne'er seen before save by the primal people.' He invokes the process of precession (the 26,000 year cycle of Earth rotation), according to which the last time the Southern Cross was visible on the horizon of Jerusalem was when Christ was crucified. This eschatological belief helped drive the quest for the New World. The first engraved map of South America was titled Terre Sancte Crucis (1501).

While the Southern Cross is clearly identified with colonialism, its place in a common theatre of the night sky means that it is subject to diverse readings. It has a variety of interpretations across Indigenous Australia. The Booyong people in northern Victoria saw the stars as representing a tree that protects Bunya, an opossum. The main character, however, is not the stars, but the patch of darkness at the foot of the constellation known in the north as the 'coal sack'. To the Booyong, this is Tchingal, the ferocious emu that threatens Bunya. The Pointers are two hunters who kill Tchingal and stick their spears in the tree (Johnson).

There are many other points of intersection in the heavens, such as the Pleiades story distributed across the south as narratives of seven sisters. The Southern Cross thus opens the door to alternative stories of the southern skies. How can we look afresh on our world of the South?
5. Lost Tribe

Another mythology of the South that inspired early acts of exploration was the existence of the lost tribes of Israel, dispersed after Assyrian invasion of Israel in eighth century BC. A number of colonists such as Cecil Rhodes claimed descent from the lost tribes as a sign of their right to inherit far reaches of the world. The Mormon missionaries believe that Polynesian peoples are descended from the Nephites, thus rendering them suitable subjects for conversion.

At the same time, the concept of Lost Tribe was also used as a narrative of struggle against colonists. In New Zealand, 1864, the prophet Te Ua Haumene identified Maori with the people of the Old Testament: 'The Maori people were one of the lost tribes of Israel, living in 'New Canaan', and the angel said that they would be delivered from bondage from their Pakeha overlords' (Ihimaera 79). A partner movement arose in KwaZulu-Natal, through the teaching of Isaiah Shembe who founded the African Christian church ibandla lamaNazaretha. As the most popular religion in South Africa, ibandla lamaNazaretha interprets the Bible within an African context. However, many of its rituals are drawn from Scottish culture (Muller).

The syncretic prophet movements across the Colonised South challenge the simple duality of colonisation that presents Western knowledge as an inevitable instrument of oppression. Identification with the Jewish tribes of the Old Testament was one way in which this knowledge could be used as a basis for anti-colonial struggle.

6. El Niño

As well as historical experiences and narratives that cross the South, there are common threads arising from shared natural challenges. The weather pattern known as the Southern Oscillation produces a climatic cycle at odds with the calendar inherited from the North. The naming of El Niño originates in Peru, reflecting the unseasonal warm weather at Christmas. Rather than regular annual seasons, the El Niño phenomenon creates drought conditions over an irregular number of years.

It can be argued that the concept of ‘drought’ implies that the weather is exceptional by comparison with the more standardised European calendar. As J.M. Arthur argues,

The ignorance of El Niño and other climate patterns (which are, even yet, not fully understood) has meant that colonial ignorance of the nature of the place where they were has been interpreted by the colonist as a deficiency belonging to the place. Drought becomes then a particularly colonial experience. (Arthur 144)
Unpicking the European calendar is a significant undertaking. At Craft Victoria, a series of Summer Christmas promotions was developed to counter-balance the winter theme of the festive seasons. The first colour, Black Christmas, contrasted the White Christmas of fake snow and reindeer with references to bushfires, flies and night swimming.

7. Antarctica

While southern countries might seem to gather below the equator, from the perspective of Antarctica, they are clustered around a common neutral continent. The Antarctic Treaty (1959) proclaimed the continent available for ‘all mankind … to be used for peaceful purposes.’ There is no special claim that nations of the South have over Antarctica. Among the nine largest populations are the US Americans, Russian, British, Japanese and Italian.

Yet despite its neutral status, Antarctica is subject to colonial fantasies. In Felipe Fernandez-Armesto’s recent publication, The Americas: The History of a Hemisphere, he counters the popular prejudice that the Latin Americas are fated to play second fiddle to their more powerful northern partner. In looking for a horizon to conclude his book, Fernandez-Armesto turns to Antarctica. He writes that soon we will have the technology to 'make the ice bleed with minerals', but 'planned exploitation could help equalise the Americas and crown the reconvergence of historical trajectories in the hemisphere with justice' (Fernandez-Armesto 170). Is Antarctica a way in which the victims of colonisation can themselves become colonists?

An increasingly large number of southern artists have been drawn to Antarctica. One of the challenges faced by artists is the relative rarity of access to the continent, which grants their work an automatic cachet. How to go beyond the rare mystery of Antarctica to create a common theatre of meaning? Today Antarctic art is evolving from nature photography to more politically aware work. The South African artist Thomas Mulcaire has developed a mobile artist residency designed to bear witness to the international nature of Antarctica. As a key, Antarctica prompts us consider the global responsibilities of the Colonial South.

8. Shell

By contrast with the world above, the South is predominantly ocean. Before the advent of monetary currencies, various natural materials were used as forms of exchange. Cowries were used to purchase slaves from Africa (30,000 in the Congo). In Togo at the end of the nineteenth century, 4,000 cowries were worth one German mark.

Shells retain relevance in the contemporary South. Today, the cowries are associated with traditional magic. In South Africa, sangomas wear them in
necklaces. In the Afro-Brazilian religion called Candomblé, shells feature in a ritual known as jogo de buzios, when they are thrown to reveal the future.

But despite their non-monetary status in the post-colonial world, shells have a symbolic value as fruits of the sea. One of the most contentious issues in New Zealand at the moment concerns ownership of the country’s foreshore. The Waitangi Tribunal is considering submissions about various interests about their right to harvest shellfish from New Zealand's beaches. Traditionally, Maori gathered food such as toheroa, pipi, tuatua and tipa from the beaches. The concept of 'Kaitiakitanga' (guardianship) includes the practice of 'Rāhui', which is a prohibition or ban instituted to protect resources.

This key questions whether there is a way for the South to exempt itself from global capital. Open Source software is one means by which third world nations can escape global monopolies such as Microsoft. It is interesting that the two popular packages of Linux operating system are named Ubuntu and Tango, both cultural expressions that are indigenous to the South. Can the Colonial South think differently about how it exchanges goods?

9. African Renaissance

In the twentieth century, the emergence of the post-colonial voice was particularly evident in France. Negritude writers such as Aimé Césaire created a poetic sensibility specific to the experience of the colonised. Towards the end of the century, Libya and South Africa were vying to be centres of the African Renaissance—Libya for the cultural significance of North Africa and South Africa as an economic driver to the continent.

In South Africa, the concept framed the introduction of African values such as Ubuntu into public life. In his 1996 speech adopting the new constitution, Thabo Mbeki proclaimed ’I am an African’. Mbeki was careful to present a way of being African that transcended colour: ’I am formed of the migrants who left Europe to find a new home on our native land. Whatever their own actions, they remain still, part of me’ (Mbeki). The identity of white African challenges us to consider primitivist stereotypes of the continent.

Academically, there is a critical approach to Western culture claiming an unacknowledged debt to African influences. This is evident in the controversial work of Martin Bernal’s Black Athena and recently in the emergence of New Southern Studies (see McKee and Trefzer), which identifies a stronger influence of Senegambian cultures in the American South. Australia, in particular, faces a particular challenge in overcoming its status as a ‘white fortress’ by looking to recently arrived refugees from Africa as future contributors to the nation’s identity.
10. Weft

With concept of the South comes the spatial reorientation towards horizontal connections along the south-south axis. Historically, this opposes the loom of genealogy with the weft of diaspora. While migratory groups most often identify with the people of their source, there are implicit links with those who have migrated to other countries. Particularly strong dispersions across the Colonised South include the English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, German, Italian, Scottish, Irish, Welsh, Jewish, Japanese, Greek, Chinese and Indian.

Alongside this historical horizon, the South has seen the recent emergence of a new art movement involving artist collectives. The collective Trama emerged from the economic catastrophe in Argentina at the start of the twenty-first century. Given the collapse of the commercial art market, they found ways to barter art in the local neighbourhood. These groups are associated with a broad Latin American political movement known as horizontalismo (see Sitrin), which is aligned with the radical politics of the Zapatistas.

Artist collectives mostly subscribe to a relational aesthetics, which locate the value of art in the way it brings audience together, rather than in the object itself. This framework is celebrated as a form of Marxism for the ‘network age’ (Bourriaud). Its anti-consumerist values align art with the quest for a way of building community which escapes forces of commodification.

However, there is a caveat with such practices. In championing the existence of art outside the market, relational aesthetics is in danger of limiting its production to those with capacity to engage in purely symbolic practices. Artists in townships and villages are more likely to be dependent on a traditional market to provide for necessities. Their strong ties to family and tribe mean they are unlikely to be as interested in creating a community of strangers as those living in metropolitan centres. This point of view needs to be taken into account in any identification of an art movement as natural to the South.

11. Coca-Cola

Part of the colonial economy was the use of the South as a resource for the food energy necessary to support the rigours of capitalism. This is particularly coffee, chocolate, sugar and spices such as cinnamon. The typical neo-colonial story is the commodification of these substances, most evident in Coca-Cola, which transformed a local Bolivian coca leaf into the world’s leading brand. A recent instance of this struggle is in Paraguay, where the local herb stevia has been taken up by China as a new crop to replace sugar, and likely to be a future ingredient of Coca-Cola.

Yet the success of Coca-Cola indicates a hunger particularly in the developing nations to enjoy the taste of the first world. It is a challenge to purely missionary-based approaches to South-South dialogue that seek redemption from
global capital. As a key, Coca-Cola challenges any concept of the Colonised South to include the voice of those seeking to enjoy the goods that those in countries like Australia might take for granted.

12. Open key

The twelfth key was kept open for responses by participants in South 1. Their responses included canoes, coconut palms, the parrot, blue, horizon, string, and verandah. Since then, a number of new issues have been revealed. These include the aesthetics of poverty, from poor theatre to Italian neorealist cinema. These ‘arts of necessity’ imply that the exigencies of the Third World can nurture a creativity that is missing in the prosperous First. The ‘soul’ of the South informs the appeal of ‘world’ cultures, such as ‘world music’, ‘world cinema’ and ‘world craft’. Like most of the Colonised South, Australia has its own magical realist school of literature in writers such as Richard Flanagan. As yet, these developments lack a critical context. To what extent is ‘world culture’ a continuation of primitivism? Seeing Australia alongside its more lively southern cousins raises these questions.

Conclusion

As a framework, the Colonised South provides an important alternative to the aspirational Southern Hemisphere and the more generalised Global South. It positions Australia not as lone ranger of the South, but as one of many nations yet to develop common dialogue. It is important that the ground is cleared for this dialogue by questioning ways of viewing the world inherited from the North. Critical self-reflection is essential to ensure that the dialogue is open to all cultures of the South. Elective affinities such as the Keys to the South provide starting points for this dialogue.

The South Project has proceeded to host gatherings in other regional centres—Wellington, Santiago and South Africa. These have been successful in developing a strong network of artists, writers and organisations. The challenge now lies ahead for a broad alliance of projects that might join the dots shared between the countries of the South.

Australia shouldn’t make do with ‘the biggest in the Southern Hemisphere’. Why not ‘the most southern in the first world’? There are many questions left to ask.

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Works cited


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Notes

1 Much of the material in this paper was gathered from my experience in developing the South Project at Craft Victoria. It should be noted that I am no longer formally involved in the South Project and my comments here do not necessarily relate to the project in its current form. My concern here is to address the broader issue of the South.

2 'Much of Australia's history has been shaped by the contradiction that it depended intimately and comprehensively on a country which was further away than almost any other in the world. Now the dependence had slackened, the distance had diminished. The Antipodes were drifting, though where they were drifting no one knew.' (Blainey 339)

3 'This structure of axial globalisation and zones of silence is the basis of the economic, political and cultural network that shapes, at a macro level, the whole planet. The to-ing and fro-ing globalisation is really a globalisation from and for the centres, with limited South-South connections ... The world is practically divided between curating cultures and curated cultures.' (Mosquera)

4 In an interview with Time magazine, Robert Menzies described this as Australia’s ‘Southern Hemisphere complex’ (Time Magazine, 1 March 1960, qtd in McQueen)

5 The Cairns Group first met in 1986 and consists of Agricultural Ministers of exporting countries—Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, and Uruguay. This group lobbies forums such as the World Trade Organisation to reduce subsidies in markets like the European Union. It was successful in having agriculture as part of the Uruguay round of the World Trade Organisation talks. The Cairns Group is productive, though its purview does go beyond the Southern Hemisphere.
Cultural Studies’ Networking Strategies in the South

Stephen Muecke

In the 1990s I started to take an interest in the networking capacity for Cultural Studies when I saw how Kuan-Hsing Chen set up the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies group, an alternative intellectual knowledge-exchange which now has an eponymous (Taylor and Francis) journal and a vital and well-funded network of scholars working among Taiwan, China, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, India, Korea, etc. For younger scholars in the humanities, this network has effectively displaced any need for them to work within the older Area Studies frameworks controlled by Anglo-American universities, nor do they necessarily feel the need to go to one of those universities for their graduate training. The local training in Taiwan or Hong Kong still uses English a lot, as a lingua franca, and still uses many canonical cultural studies texts, but the decolonisation process is well-advanced. It is an extraordinarily successful network, using interdisciplinary theory as another kind of lingua franca, breaking the hegemonic hold of the older disciplines and their area-studies foci, and opening up new specific areas of study not visible to those older networks: new media, gender studies, alternative globalisation studies.

This creates, in the process, a new set of intellectual voices, ones that don’t sound like the older ‘tone’ in the language of the social sciences, some of which makes me want to characterise it as ‘cargo knowledge’. The speaking subject enunciates with assurance: ‘This is what I have found out, this is the true. Here’s a “transparent” language with a “load” of content’. But this ‘true’ is a fictional truth of the coloniser, by virtue of what it does not reveal and the way it is distributed. The cargo knowledge the coloniser unloads goes only one way. It does not appear on the jetties of the South; it is packed up and shipped to the port cities of the North. It is ‘packed’ in the kinds of stories it tells, and in the kinds of stories it responds to; a fiction created by the encounter with different kinds of discourses which are selectively heard and translated. Stories are thus crafted with selected omissions and/or excesses, things which can’t always be contained by the available concepts. Ethnography, for instance, is often a fiction to the extent that it masks its conditions of possibility: the funding from the Ford foundation or some Research Council. Or, historically, a story about the ‘fabulous’ wealth of the East blinds the European merchant-adventurer to the likelihood of the more meagre realities he will find on arrival.
This is why neither the language of fact nor the language of fiction is sufficient for describing how our new networking might work; neither the ostensibly transparent language of the social sciences that ‘delivers’ knowledge in its authoritative tone, nor the beautiful truth of nationalised and standardised literatures that also return ideas and images to the centre to be judged as more cargo of a different sort: ‘commonwealth literatures’ used to be the name for that particular kind of package.

A language that travels and inspires is not a uniform one, but it might have the kind of ‘magic’ implied by fabulation, a Bergsonian concept re-used by Gilles Deleuze. Fabulation involves inventing in relation to a problem or a situation that must be remedied, particularly with regard to the situation of ‘the people who are missing’ (Deleuze 1991, 4). If a contemporary Indian Ocean body of literature is ‘missing’ in that sense, it remains to be invented, something I attempted recently in a creolised retelling of Paul et Virginie, Bernardin de St Pierre’s canonical Rousseauian text of 1788 (Muecke 2006). So fabulation involves writer and the people moving towards one another. Fiction in this model is freed from the imperative to create a true world, just as the ‘cargo’ social scientific voice is freed from the model of transparency to the true fact. Fabulation works best hovering between the oral and written, the real and the imaginary, being neither a document nor a fiction, but a fictocritical form of enunciation that oscillates between these poles. This is not the romance of the indeterminate; it is a listening method which ‘hears’ not only the words but the discursive frameworks which are the practice for putting words together as knowledge. The new southern networks, I argue, are ones that are developing in conjunction with new digitally-vehicled audio-visual literacies. They will be the future.

This is something I learned from the storytelling of Nyigina elder Paddy Roe (Roe 1983), when I started my association with the Indian Ocean in the North-west of Western Australia, sitting on the beach and gazing out ‘to the islands’ (to borrow the title of the famous Randolph Stow novel), the islands to which the spirits of the Aboriginal coastal people return, out in the Indian Ocean where the great storm clouds of the wet season gather and come rolling in like monstrous heads and give the North-west peoples the iconography of the Wandjina figures that they call their gods today.

There I began to take an interest in the links between oral histories and stories and the literary mainstream, with me as link and scribe. Were the Broome stories I recorded destined to be just a marginal note in the story that the Australian nation was constructing for itself, based on the traditions of England? Less than 100 years ago that small island, still rich from its imperial trade, invested its surplus in a cultural superstructure, a nationalism that involved the locals turning their attention from the illusion of the purity of the classical languages to make their own Creole (English as a combination of Romance, Germanic, Anglo-Saxon
and Nordic languages) into a Great Tradition, a great literary tradition through the institutionalisation of a canon of great writers. Once these cultural heroes had their reputations secured, they were also exported to the colonies. Quite a network, quite a turnaround in the fortunes of a once-despised vernacular. So that is what I was working against with ‘Paul and Virginia’, projecting Paddy Roe’s vernacular across the Indian Ocean towards Mauritius and St Pierre’s canonical text. The Indian Ocean might have a new network, but it would have to be invented.

In *Cinema 2: The Time Image* (Deleuze 1989), Gilles Deleuze conjures a moment of fabulation in which cultural forces regroup and start to generate their own stories. The places and the materials, in the form they take and the way they can be transformed, talk to the writing or to the way stories are told. This reassemblage of forces is a way of re-creating the Indian Ocean world, an ancient world reconstituted as a contemporary world through the practice of what I call ‘artful politics’.

This is a politics of seeing and hearing such that a strange kind of language will have to come into being, a language that will challenge any firm distinction between description and fictionalisation and which will introduce a queer defamiliarisation into the heart of the most familiar experiences in order to project reality and not normalise it. The language of fabulation is one which ‘determinitorialisces’ the cargo language, which in effect creolises it. ‘What has to be filmed’, says Deleuze, ‘is the frontier, on condition that this is equally crossed by the filmmaker in one direction and by the real character in the opposite direction: time is necessary here: a certain time is necessary which constitutes an integral part of the film’ (Deleuze 1989, 153-4).

Whether it is a matter of making films, telling stories or writing academic papers, we who are in the business of inventing cultures as we describe them have a stake in our own performances, like getting immersed in Indian Ocean studies, in which the time of the performance is an integral part of its quality. For some, time does not matter, and so the effect is delayed or displaced (anachronic or anatopic). Here, you could say, here is my piece of cargo writing, my academic report, delivered up on time to the funding body, to act on in their good time, or not act on at all, in which case one might have to question the value of the cargo. So delivery matters, and delivery involves thinking about the mode of enunciation, the decolonisation of the subject-object (master-slave) relation, and do I hear also a trumpet call for the retreat of the forward march of European modernity around the world?

But wait, you may say, wait a minute, these theoretical and rhetorical adjustments are all very well, but what if the delivery of cargo knowledge is not only on time but valued, that it does a good job with IMF money reforming government and industry in third-world countries? Social indicators are improving, there is
some economic growth and environmental sustainability as well. Maybe so, but that analysis belongs in someone else’s paper. My thesis would be that the World Bank needs its spin doctors too; the red carpet is not always rolled out and waiting for the agents of capitalist reform; it too has to ‘fabulate’, to tie its threads of institutional thinking in with local desires and aspirations, to make things become, to make virtual realities before they exist concretely.

What I am seeking to do is to trace, as Bruno Latour says, ‘the unique signature drawn by associations and substitutions through the conceptual space’ (Latour 1999, 161). The fascinating ‘conceptual space’ that is constituted by Indian Ocean studies today is an historically formed image where we see European enlightenment thought (reflected back in waves to the seventeenth century) meeting the trans-continental mercantile-religious complex that was the pre-colonial Indian Ocean. That particular conjunction gives us the potential to see postcolonial thought, which, after all, developed out of the meshing of European theory and empirical analysis of the colonial situation, further localised in the Indian Ocean, instead of developed only elsewhere, in the northern diaspora for instance.

So let us consider different chains of associations drawn though that heterogeneous space that is the Indian Ocean, creating the ‘unique signatures’ that will be our renovated languages of analysis. Yes, the new area studies—let’s call it the Indian Ocean Network—is both a critical intellectual project and a radically empirical one. One chain is the annual monsoon rhythm (OED: Arabic mawsim, lit. ‘season’ < wasama to mark) and the way it brings rains to the Subcontinent enriching the agriculture there. The rains link to vitality, to ritual, to the interlocking lives of plants, animals and humans. The monsoon becomes a sacred thing, not in itself, but precisely in the manner that, in its network of relations, it crafts a ‘unique signature’. Between October and April it turns around, and blows from the north-east, encouraging departures, sailing and eventually trade; another network of associations is established here, one based on working the relations of the scarcity and abundance of goods. Techniques for the transcription of value have to be developed: coinage or letters of credit; the character of the merchant has to be forged as trustworthy by the way he dresses and speaks and can trace his social relations. Does all this culture trace back to the monsoon? Yes, at that time it was a natural-cultural continuum of connections that couldn’t be broken.

And when the Portuguese, with da Gama, finally succeed in rounding the Cape in ships designed for ‘remote control’, as it were, since they are going such a distance, a different conceptual structure appears on the Indian Ocean scene (Law 1986). The notion of imperial force appears, as the sovereign drives these expeditions from a distance for the profit of the national capital; and there is a singular god overseeing a global world which remained to be envisioned by
Copernicus, but which Camoens was later to ‘give’ to da Gama in the great Portuguese national epic, the Lusiad, written some 70 years after the voyage. In Canto 10, set in India, a goddess speaks to da Gama of the extraordinary máquina do mundo:

‘To you, my hero, God in his divine wisdom has granted to see with your bodily eyes what is denied to other mortals, whose vain strivings after knowledge but lead them into error and misery. Follow me, you and your men, with firm and courageous, yet prudent, step up this densely-wooded slope.’ And so saying, she led him into a thicket where a mortal might only with extreme difficulty make his way.

Soon they found themselves on a lofty mountain-top, in a meadow studded with emeralds and rubies that proclaimed to the eye it was no earthly ground they trod. And there they beheld, suspended in the air, a globe of such transparency that the light shone right through it and the centre was as visible as the outer surface. What it was made of could not be divined, but it clearly consisted of a series of spheres contrived by the wand of God to rotate about a simple fixed centre in such a way that, however they revolved or rose or fell, the whole neither rose nor fell but showed the same from every angle. Its supernatural artifice in short had neither beginning nor ending, but was in all things uniform, perfect, and self-sustained like God its maker.

As da Gama gazed at it he was deeply moved, and stood lost in curiosity and amazement. Then the goddess spoke: ‘This thing you see before you is a representation in miniature of the universe, that you may see where your path lies, whither it leads, and what the end of your desires. This is the mighty fabric of creation, ethereal and elemental …’ (Camoens 233-4)

I think it is significant that this fiction, this spectacle of the Machine of the World (Máquina do Mundo), and of the power of science, is located in India as a blessing bestowed on an imperial explorer. Its vision of the world is as a universal system, obeying mechanical laws whose evolution, as Jean-François Lyotard says, will ‘trace a foreseeable trajectory and give rise to continual “normal” functions’ (Lyotard 90. Thus Da Gama’s goddess, rather than simply prophesying in the classical manner of the Odyssey, provides a machine so that ‘you may see where your path lies’. This will become the predictive capacity of the scientific laws of the mastery of nature that will reach their height with Newton and Descartes. By 1800, says Michel Serres, ‘Science alone is universal, in its practice of a verifiable reality, since it provides the very laws of the universe, whatever the latitudes. This is how our fathers saw it, and how we ourselves believed it to be. And this is why eighteenth-century Europe celebrated
the Enlightenment. And this is why the nineteenth century wrote of Absolute Knowledge’ (Serres 128).

Nature and culture will be driven into separate realms by this line of thought, as A. N. Whitehead and William James, and more recently Latour et al have shown (Latour 2004). It is the physicist who has privileged access to the facts of the natural world in a relentless drive for immutable laws, but the multifarious and contingent experiences of the real world are lost in this: smells, aberrations, stray facts, beautiful sunsets—all this has to be bracketed out. It is the dream of the navigator rather than the pathfinder. It creates a different chain of associations to the one I described of the mariner linking to the monsoon.

But the rationalist Enlightenment had its rivals, in a different genealogy traceable from Montaigne to Rousseau and Diderot, who celebrated contingency and experimentalism, adapting themselves to the landscape as they proceeded, rejoicing at chance and the unexpected. ‘Everything has its outcome in nature, the most extravagant as well as the most reasoned experiment. Experimental philosophy is always happy with what comes its way’, Diderot said in De l’intérpretation de la nature (qtd in Saint-Armand 102).

My version of a contemporary cultural studies finds itself descended from this rival enlightenment because we proceed from the contingencies of encounter rather than from founding principles. Strangers meet, like ships in the Condradian night, and ask each other what the game is, what the stakes are, what the matter is. They begin to fabulate. They don’t seek to confirm available fictions, or fictionalise a truth. They meet with maturity and respect, and share wry humour, because they know that ‘things must go both ways’, as my old mentor Paddy Roe in Broome used to say. But their fabulations are not just for fun; they can be a valid and sturdy mode of existence, well-crafted yarns and memories reinforcing each other, lasting longer, perhaps, than mere paper knowledge.

Is it by chance that I thought of Alan Villiers and his experience of pearling, and picked up Monsoon Seas once again to prepare this essay? Is it by chance that Villiers found himself in the Gulf waters before the Second Gulf War and then wrote this? I quote at length for you to experience the fabulation or con-fabulation that goes on here as strangers meet respectfully and knowledge is disseminated through a story:

The waters of the Persian Gulf are rich with pearl oysters, particularly on the chain of reefs and banks near Bahrein, farther up the Gulf not far from the Bay of Kuwait, and off the coast of Trucial Oman. The best banks are on the Arab side of the Gulf. The season lasts for four months and ten days in summer, when the water is hot, for all diving is without gear except for a sort of clothespin nipped on the nose and a stone to go down with. In 1905 there were 4,500 boats and 75,000 men employed in Gulf pearling, according to statistics kept at Bahrein.
[...] 

[In 1939] I spent some time with them on the banks, pearling, and also made a buyer’s run among the fleets of Kuwait and Bahrein, with the expert buyer Sheik Mohammed Abdul-Razzaq, who had with him interesting paraphernalia, consisting of pieces of red flannel, a minute pair of scales which he held by hand, a large box of silver rupees, his brother, a clerk, a servant and a handyman, five sheep, several goats, and a large supply of sherbet, rice, ghee, and other necessities. We travelled in a small motorboat, and it was our custom to spend the day among the pearling vessels and the nights at anchor close off some pleasant beach, where we drew up our carpets out of the reach of the tide and slept on the sand, beneath the stars. It was a good life. 

[...] 

The sheik practiced a most curious method in his bargaining. When we approached a little pearler, or a big one, we would go aboard with quiet and unhurried dignity, be received with coffee and sweet confections, and discuss all manner of things for an hour or so before the subject of pearls was mentioned. Then in due course, out would come a piece of red flannel or an old black sock, and the nakhoda would carefully untie the bundle to display his take. They were always a lovely sight, and the sheik’s eyes used to gleam, though he would invariably begin by decrying the gems and lamenting that the waters of the Gulf no longer produced pearls worth a buyer’s attention. Then, in another hour or so, he would condescend to examine the take properly, sieving it and weighing the various grades, and examining some through a small magnifying glass. Only after several hours would the subject of a price be mentioned. Then would follow the usual sparring, always cheerful and conducted according to rule.

If he really intended to buy the pearls, the sheik would at last grab a spare piece of his red flannel, throw it over his right hand, grasp the right hand of the nakhoda beneath this flannel, and conduct the final negotiations by manipulation of fingers, according to some ancient code, in solemn and complete silence. Sometimes he varied the procedure by grabbing his brother’s hand in the same manner, and working on his fingers, but this was when he wanted to get his brother’s idea of the value of the parcel he was considering. (Villiers 236, 237, 238-9)

This to me is a kind of quintessential scene of Indian Ocean trade, where a chain of relations links natural value to cultural value in a describable continuum. Nature is not hidden, as in the western imaginary, where the savant removes Nature’s veil to uncover her secrets (Hadot 2006). Here the art of concealment
is openly cultural: the piece of red flannel clearly signals, in something of a ritualised performance, what it is we should not know.

In any case, truth was never literal or transparent, that is only one of its fictions, as if anyone could be constantly exposed to its burning light. Truth was always a process of masking and unmasking, or a dancing movement between the general and the specific—proofs cast as syllogisms, for instance. It exists, I’m afraid, only in the movements of discourse, which is saying that it is never singular and never quite present either. Attached to the strings of artifice, it burst onto the scene like a deus ex machina, or like a flying carpet bearing Douglas Fairbanks in The Thief of Baghdad.

Ah yes, popular culture, it too, is part of our Indian Ocean scene, as I want to work to conclude by taking everything in this Indian Ocean world back to a fundamental idea: everything in it is in a natural-cultural continuum. Everything has some value; everything is worthy of respect. ‘Everything has its outcome in nature’, said Diderot. The Indian Ocean is full of popular culture, so let’s not exclude it because it might seem trivial. Each story, artifact or flying carpet carries a bit of cultural value which, if you follow a zigzag path of associations, is linked to natural things and beings. In ‘A Thousand and One Nights at the Movies’, Robert Irwin says that the thousand and one productions of that story in film,

are an important part of Orientalism, and they need to be considered as part of a broader cultural phenomenon that includes such diverse things as Turkish cigarettes, Flying Carpet Travel Agents, Flying Carpet Dry Cleaning outlets, cinemas called the Alhambra, Egyptian music halls, Orientalist sheet music, camel jokes, the Genie in advertisements for brass polish, three wishes jokes, Wilson, Keppel and Betty’s Egyptian sand dance, Kettleby’s ‘In a Persian Market’, the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band’s ‘Ali Baba and his camel’, Fry’s Turkish Delight, the posters for conjuring and circus shows, Tommy Cooper’s fez, night club versions of the Dance of the Seven Veils … (232)

Strange stuff, this popular orientalism: fabulations out of control, asking the analytic writing what it has learned. Edward Said didn’t deal much with the popular, coming as he did out of a literary tradition. And he had an epistemological framework that doesn’t help the schema I am trying to construct. His problem was one of representation, or rather misrepresentation. The reality of Asian worlds has nothing to do with the false representations made of them in western discourses. But the way he has set up the problem (not just him, but any ideology-critique) based on two characters, subject and object, self and world, facing each other across the abyss of the mystery of representation, will never be able to grasp anything new, because the only winner in that game is language, and meta-language, and the constant exhortation to close the gap:
If by ‘epistemology’ we name the discipline that tries to understand how we manage to bridge the gap between representations and reality, the only conclusion to be drawn about it is that this discipline has no subject matter whatever, because we never bridge such a gap—not, mind you because we don’t know anything objectively, but because there is never such a gap. The gap is an artefact due to the wrong positioning of the knowledge acquisition pathway. (Latour 2007, 90)

Why should we acquire knowledge about Indian Ocean popular culture? Because it will tell us how people are connected via what they share, and today this extends with new media beyond the geography of the ocean. The flows are different now. Michael Pearson sets up a problem to do with the Indian Ocean, a familiar and important one about littoral cultures: ‘Surat and Mombasa have more in common with each other than they do with inland cities such as Nairobi or Ahmadabad’ (Pearson 345). The question is set up as an area studies one, in which the similarity matters to us as scholars, but how do we go from there—where we scholars now have a set of terms to debate in common—to making it matter to the poor fisherfolk who supposedly have the actual littoral culture in common? Perhaps now they continue to have cultures in common with a contemporary popular culture overlay; they are watching the same Bollywood movies for instance, so they are a part of an evolving network.

An artful politics expresses what matters for networks and helps improve the network, which involves time and construction work. People will build associations to deal with matters of concern that arise for their fishing, commercial and cultural communities: NGO and trade union linkages; research institutes that monitor ecosystems that provide livelihoods and export income.

At the same time there are networks working towards completely different ends, for instance in the Australian Indian Ocean Territories, including Christmas Island. At the time of the 2001 ‘Tampa’ crisis, Christmas Island could have been a possible destination for asylum seekers because it was still Australian sovereign territory at that stage. Then a new law was passed excising it from Australia for that purpose, so any asylum seekers (‘boat people’) landing there could not expect to be processed. A new detention facility was built at huge expense (up to half a billion Australian dollars). But it is not a single thing, it is part of a network that makes it possible. This installation is only partly functional, designed for up to 800 detainees, but now with a change of government it may never house any. With what did it link? What is it or was it good for? It was clearly going to be good for the private security corporation that would have run it on a lucrative government contract; it was good for the builder Baulderstone and the labourers flown in from Australia at great expense; it underscored the previous Australian government’s vote-winning exercise about being tough on refugees with brown complexions; it networked with a broader
global coalition of creating security fears as part of a capitalist-militarist complex (the so-called war on terror); it even linked to those individual share-holders who have no qualms about investing in one of the world’s most lucrative investment lines: correctional management companies.

Networks thus co-exist, and are sometimes in competition. The right-wing Australian government voted out in 2007 wanted to build up associations of the things they believed would ‘work’, and they took the trouble to destroy networks that exist as alternatives, like trade unions and student associations. It is no exaggeration to say that they spent propaganda money to destroy the idea of such associations as well.

To return to Latour’s idea, the point for critical theory and its place in Indian Ocean studies is to stop doing critical theory! That is to say, it is pointless continuing with a mode of discourse whose main platform, repeated endlessly, is one of scepticism about representations. ‘There is a gap between what the government is telling us and what is real, they are not being truthful’, as if, if they finally told the truth, we could trust them and all would be well. That is not the point, if what they are really doing is building up associations, and that includes stories, texts, objects, ideologies, military forces, cash, etc. That kind of ‘constructive’ effort creates a powerful network, tending to leave all opposition drowning in its wake. The facility at Christmas Island, looking like one of its failures, is a kind of eloquent expression of that network’s capacity to mobilise itself rapidly and then move on.

I am not a political scientist, but my discussion of politics is designed to make us re-consider our modes of knowledge acquisition as we recraft Indian Ocean studies. The framework suggests that knowledge is a living, transforming set of relations, not a cargo traded on the cheap and deposited back in the rich north in single-discipline warehouses. Interdisciplinarity makes new things visible (like popular culture and security centres). Nor is knowledge a set of representations lagging behind the real, always trying to catch up, reporting on it. It is part of the real; it is in itself a mode of existence as well as but much more than language and representation.

Within that interdisciplinary discourse, or set of discourses, the abandonment of ideology critique will pave the way for the introduction of a radical empiricism that again will make new objects visible in their working relationships with other things.

I have worked with two concepts in this essay: Fabulation and the Network (artful politics). Fabulations are the kind of storytelling that takes off on a flight of becoming rather than repeating the available discourses and genres. It is fabulations that enable a subject to begin to feel engaged, or disengaged, to either belong or depart, but in any case to continue a process of becoming. Traditionally, literature is a set of textual mechanisms, commercialised into an
industry, that create and distribute forms of subjectivity. To the extent that it becomes fixed to a set of social values it doesn’t work so well. But when it is articulated with feelings like ‘hope for the future’ then it engages a community and a set of subjects in a process of becoming—that is the task of fabulation. So it is not airy-fairy, it provides valid modes of existence. And one can see how it links to the politics of the network.

The type of network I have been sketching owes a lot to the science studies of Bruno Latour et al. But not being purely in the domain of science, my framework integrates human subjects via the mechanism of the fable, oscillating between description and fictionalisation, between speech and writing. There is no compulsion of the fact or of the fully-present truth. The network is not the domain of objective facts or things of the world (the world ‘out there’ that humans come to, trotting over the bridge of representations). It is a natural-cultural continuum of real empirical linkages which our analysis will have to trace in their complexity. Concepts, fish, sails, monsoon winds, songs, ceremonies, slave beads: all these are possible actors in the network.

As a concluding example, let us consider the position of my Réunion colleagues Françoise Vergès and Carapin Marimoutou in Amarres: Créolisations india-océanes:

When Europe used to think of itself as the centre of the world, and organised the world around this centre, we were somewhere over there at the end of the world. Then, we were moored to France, but it was an imposed mooring which strangled us on occasions. Today, now that Europe has become one of the provinces of the world, we are rethinking our moorings. Our project is now one of decentering the gaze and redrawing the cartography of the world from the Indian Ocean viewpoint, here where France, Africa, Europe, Asia and the Muslim worlds cross paths. (Vergès 8)

There is something politically at stake for this island culture; it does not see itself as ‘just one culture among many’, it must perforce see itself in somewhat more absolutist terms as it throws these mooring ropes overboard. This is a process of cultural negotiation: the more we jettison, the closer we get to what matters to us absolutely, that which we will never give away in a negotiation about how we share a culture with France. We can do without philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre in the Indian Ocean they might say; splash. Here are all of the popular songs of Trenet and Piaf, and Halliday may as well go too. Splash, we have our own music. Nouvelle Cuisine? Splash, we have our fish curry and rice. What about Sarkozy? Wait, that might be illegal; after all, here in Réunion we are a Department d’Outre Mer. And having thrown off one set of moorings in a critical gesture, what new links do we make, whom do we pull on board? Drowning souls who have yet to discover the joys of Indian Ocean scholarship and its networks?
Culture by its very nature is excessive, and like nature it is an organic set of strange and wonderful things that we can never quite pin down. If in Réunion someone finds a rusted iron shackle that once held a slave’s ankle, then this rare artifact might appear in Francoise Vergès’ museum to focus a regional identity centred on the history and identity of the slave or the marron. With scraps of historical evidence, with useful concepts like créolisation, a culture is assembled which has room to move even within the constraints of the French State. The president of the republic can’t be thrown overboard, not yet, nor the French language, nor, ultimately, the power of the State which finds its absolute in its right to impose military force if necessary. These are the new questions for networking research in the Indian Ocean that I would modestly propose. Not so much the question of ‘have we got the representations right?’, but, as we construct the network of associations of facts, values, institutions, scholars, activists and fish: what can we afford to jettison? And then, what further allies can we acquire? Unlike the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies network, which is well-established, the Indian Ocean cultural studies network of scholars and activists is just beginning. Crossing languages, old imperial affiliations, vastly different continents (Africa, south Asia, Australia), the network faces difficulties that have yet to be analysed, let alone resolved.

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Works cited


**Notes**

1. This has also been termed the ‘authoritative plain style’ of the English-speaking protestant scientific community (see Bennett).
Extracts from *Southern Theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social science*

Raewyn Connell

From Chapter 1: Empire and the creation of a social science

Origin stories

Open any introductory sociology textbook and you will probably find, in the first few pages, a discussion of founding fathers focused on Marx, Durkheim and Weber. The first chapter may also cite Comte, Spencer, Tönnies and Simmel, and perhaps a few others. In the view normally presented to students, these men created sociology in response to dramatic changes in European society: the Industrial Revolution, class conflict, secularisation, alienation and the modern state. This curriculum is backed by histories such as Alan Swingewood’s (2000) *Short History of Sociological Thought*. This well-regarded British text presents a two-part narrative of ‘Foundations: Classical Sociology’ (centring on Durkheim, Weber and Marx), and ‘Modern Sociology’, tied together by the belief that ‘Marx, Weber and Durkheim have remained at the core of modern sociology’ (2000: x). Sociologists take this account of their origins seriously. Twenty years ago, a star-studded review of *Social Theory Today* began with a ringing declaration of ‘the centrality of the classics’ (Alexander 1987). In the new century, commentary on classical texts remains a significant genre of theoretical writing (Bachr 2002).

The idea of classical theory embodies a canon, in the sense of literary theory: a privileged set of texts, whose interpretation and reinterpretation defines a field (Seidman 1994). This particular canon embeds an internalist doctrine of sociology’s history as a social science. The story consists of a foundational moment arising from the internal transformation of European society; classic discipline-defining texts written by a small group of brilliant authors; and a direct line of descent from them to us.

But sociologists in the classical period itself did not have this origin story. When Franklin Giddings (1896), the first professor of sociology at Columbia University, published *The Principles of Sociology*, he named as the founding father—Adam Smith. Victor Branford (1904), expounding ‘the founders of sociology’ to a meeting in London, named as the central figure—Condorcet.
Turn-of-the-century sociology had no list of classic texts in the modern sense. Writers expounding the new science would commonly refer to Comte as the inventor of the term, to Darwin as the key figure in the theory of evolution, and then to any of a wide range of figures in the landscape of evolutionary speculation. Witness the account of the discipline in the second edition of *Dynamic Sociology* (1897) by Lester Ward, later the founding president of the American Sociological Society. At the time of the first edition in 1883, Ward observed, the term ‘sociology’ had not been in popular use. However, in the intervening decade a series of brilliant scientific contributions had established sociology as a popular concept. There were now research journals, university courses, societies; and sociology ‘bids fair to become the leading science of the twentieth century, as biology has been that of the nineteenth’. Ward listed 37 notable contributors to the new science. The list included Durkheim and Tönnies, but not Marx or Weber.

The list of notables became a common feature in the textbooks of sociology that multiplied in the United States from the 1890s, Giddings’ *Principles* being one of the first. (Ward had included Giddings in his list, and Giddings politely included Ward in his.) The famous ‘Green Bible’ of the Chicago School, Park and Burgess’s (1924) *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, listed 23 ‘representative works in systematic sociology’. Simmel and Durkheim were among them, but not Marx, Weber or Pareto. Only one work by Weber was mentioned in this thousand-page volume, and then only in the notes.

As late as the 1920s, then, there was no sense that certain texts were discipline-defining classics demanding special study. Rather, there was a sense of a broad, almost impersonal advance of scientific knowledge, the notables being simply leading members of the pioneering crew. Sociologists accepted the view, articulated early in the history of the discipline by Charles Letourneau (1881: vi), who was to hold the first chair of sociology in the world, that: ‘The commencement of any science, however simple, is always a collective work. It requires the constant labour of many patient workmen . . .’

We therefore have strong reasons to doubt the conventional picture of the creation of sociology. This is not just to question the influence of certain individuals. We must examine the history of sociology as a collective product—the shared concerns, assumptions and practices making up the discipline at various times, and the shape given that history by the changing social forces that constructed the new science.

**Global difference and empire**

Sociology as a teaching discipline and a public discourse was constructed during the final two decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth in the great cities and university towns of France, the United States,
Britain, Germany and, a little later, Russia. The internalist foundation story interprets these places as the site of a process of modernisation, or capitalist industrialisation, with sociology seen as an attempt to interpret what was emerging here. ‘It was above all a science of the new industrial society’ (Bottomore 1987: 7).

The main difficulty with this view is that it does not square with the most relevant evidence—what sociologists at the time were writing. Most general textbooks of sociology, up to World War I, did not have a great deal to say about the modernisation of the society in which the authors lived. Giddings’ *Readings in Descriptive and Historical Sociology* (1906), typical in this respect, ranged from polyandry in Ceylon via matrilineal survivals among the Tartars to the mining camps of California. It was so little focused on modernity that it took as its reading on ‘sovereignty’ a medieval rendering of the legend of King Arthur.

What is in college textbooks need not correspond to the research focus of sociology, but on this too we have abundant evidence. Between 1898 and 1913, Émile Durkheim and his hard-working collaborators produced twelve issues of *L’année sociologique*, an extraordinarily detailed international survey of each year’s publications in, or relevant to, sociology. In these 12 issues, nearly 2400 reviews were published. (I have counted only the reviews in large type, whatever their length, not the brief notices in small type in the early issues, nor the listings of titles without reviews.) The reviews concerning Western/Northern Europe and modern North America increase with time: they average 24 per cent of all reviews in the first six issues, 28 per cent in the next five issues, and 32 per cent in the bumper issue of the year before the war.

Modern industrial society was certainly included: the journal published reviews about the American worker, the European middle class, technology in German industries, books by the Webbs and by Sombart, Booth on London poverty, even a work by Ramsay MacDonald, later Labour prime minister of Britain. But works focused on the recent or contemporary societies of Europe and North America made up only a fraction of the content of *L’année sociologique*: about 28 per cent of all reviews. Even fewer were focused on ‘the new industrial society’, since the reviews on Europe included treatises on peasant folk-tales, witchcraft in Scotland, crime in Asturias and the measurements of skulls.

*Twice as many* of the reviews concerned ancient and medieval societies, colonial or remote societies, or global surveys of human history. Studies of holy war in ancient Israel, Malay magic, Buddhist India, technical points of Roman law, medieval vengeance, Aboriginal kinship in central Australia and the legal systems of primitive societies were more characteristic of sociology as seen in *L’année sociologique* than studies of new technology or bureaucracy.

The enormous spectrum of human history that the sociologists took as their domain was organised by a central idea: difference between the civilisation of
the metropole and other cultures whose main feature was their primitiveness. I will call this the idea of global difference. Presented in many different forms, this contrast pervades the sociology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The idea of global difference was often conveyed by a discussion of ‘origins’. In this genre of writing, sociologists would posit an original state of society, then speculate on the process of evolution that must have led from then to now. The bulk of the three volumes of Herbert Spencer’s *Principles of Sociology*, first issued in the 1870s, told such a story for every type of institution that Spencer could think of: domestic institutions, political institutions, ecclesiastical institutions, and so on. Spencer acted as if the proof of social evolution were not complete without an evolutionary narrative, from origins to the contemporary form, for each and every case.

The formula of development from a primitive origin to an advanced form was widespread in Victorian thought (Burrow 1966). Sociologists simply applied a logic that their audience would find familiar. The same architecture is found in works as well known as Durkheim’s *Division of Labour in Society* (1893) and as obscure as Fairbanks’ *Introduction to Sociology* (1896). In none of these works was the idea of an origin taken as a concrete historical question. It could have been, because historians’ knowledge of early societies was growing dramatically in these decades. Troy, Mycenae and Knossos were excavated by Schliemann and Evans. Flinders Petrie systematised the archaeology of Egypt, and the first evidence of Sumerian culture was uncovered at Lagash and Nippur (Stiebing 1993). But sociologists were not interested in where and when a particular originating event occurred, nor were they concerned about when the major changes actually happened. Time functioned in sociological thought mainly as a sign of global difference.

Durkheim did not have to find a precise time in the past for ‘segmentary societies’; they existed in his own day. Durkheim used the example of the Kabyle of Algeria as well as the ancient Hebrews, and made no conceptual distinction between the two. He knew about the Hebrews because the ancient texts were in his library. How did he know about Kabylia? Because the French had conquered Algeria earlier in the century, and at the time Durkheim wrote, French colonists were evicting the local population from the best land (Bennoune 1988). Given the recent history of conquest, peasant rebellion and debate over colonisation, no French intellectual could fail to know something about the Kabyle. Indeed, the social life of France’s North African subjects was being documented in great detail by a series of private and official enquiries (Burke 1980).

Algeria was not an isolated case. In the dozen years before *Division of Labour* was published, the armies of the French republic had moved out from Algeria
to conquer Tunisia; had fought a war in Indo-China, conquered Annam and Tonkin (modern Vietnam) and seized control of Laos and Cambodia; and had established a protectorate over Madagascar. Under the Berlin Treaty of 1885, French trading posts in Central and Western Africa became the basis of a whole new empire. While Durkheim was writing and publishing the *Division of Labor* and the *Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), French colonial armies were engaged in a spectacular series of campaigns against the Muslim regimes of inland North and West Africa which produced vast conquests from the Atlantic almost to the Nile.

All this was part of a larger process. The British empire, also a maritime empire with a pre-industrial history, similarly gained a new dynamism and grew to a vast size in the nineteenth century (Cain and Hopkins 1993). The thirteen-colony United States became one of the most dynamic imperial powers of the nineteenth century, with about 80 years of overland conquest and settlement (the ‘westward expansion’), followed by a shorter period of overseas conquest. The Tsarist overland conquests, begun in earlier centuries, were extended to North-east and Central Asia. In the later part of the nineteenth century, they were consolidated by Russian settlement. Prussia’s expansion as an imperial power began with conquest within Europe—in the process, setting up a relationship between dominant and conquered races in the East which became the subject of young Max Weber’s (1894) first sociological research. German overseas colonies in Africa and the Pacific followed the formation of the Reich in 1871. By the time the system of rival empires reached its crisis in the Great War of 1914–18, the expansion of Western power to a global scale had reached its climax.

In this light, the making of sociology takes on a new significance. The places where the discipline was created were the urban and cultural centres of the major imperial powers at the high tide of modern imperialism. They were the ‘metropole’, in the useful French term, to the larger colonial world. The intellectuals who created sociology were very much aware of this.

Since Kiernan’s (1969) remarkable survey *The Lords of Human Kind*, historians have begun to grasp the immense impact that the global expansion of North Atlantic power had on popular culture (MacDonald 1994) and intellectual life (Said 1993) in the metropole, as well as in the colonies. It would be astonishing if the new science of society had escaped the impact of the greatest social change in the world at the time. In fact, the relationship was intimate. Sociology was formed within the culture of imperialism, and embodied an intellectual response to the colonised world. This fact is crucial in understanding the content and method of sociology, as well as the discipline’s wider cultural significance.
Chapter 4: The Discovery of Australia

Australia is an English colony. Its cultural pattern is based on that fact of history—or, more precisely, on that pair of facts. Direct English inheritance determines the general design of our living and its detail, ranging from our enthusiasm for cricket to our indifference to the admirable wines which we produce. But the fact of our colonialism has a pervasive psychological effect, setting up a relationship as intimate and uneasy as that between an adolescent and his parent.

—A. A. Phillips (1953)

Two centuries ago, having lost thirteen colonies in North America, the British state planted a new one, a penal settlement, as far away as it was possible to sail. Both the memoirs of officials and surviving narratives from the convicts reveal how strange the new environment was felt to be: birds that laughed instead of singing, animals that hopped instead of running, Christmas in summer, and a native population for whom no place could be found in the European social order.

A ruthless expansion into this alien world followed, and through the nineteenth century fortunes were made in pastoralism, mining and trade. Wool, gold, wheat, meat and silver were shipped out to Europe (and more recently, coal and iron ore to East Asia). For a couple of generations, import-substitution industrialisation planted factories in the cities and manufacturers became prominent in the local ruling class; a witty economist wrote a book calling Australia ‘a small rich industrial country’ (Arndt 1968). Rich it remains, but it is now deindustrialised: the twenty-first century economy centres on services and mining. Under the ‘White Australia’ policy, official until the 1960s, a workforce was imported from Europe while immigration from Asia was forbidden. Diversity has grown but the large majority are still of European descent. Politicians still proclaim Australia’s affiliation with the metropole: formerly with the British Empire, now with Western civilisation and the American Alliance.

This history produced cultural dilemmas that are bitterly contested. A small European community parked on the edge of Asia harbours racial anxieties which are still capable of turning elections. The relation between settler and Indigenous people has become an inflamed, unresolved issue (see Chapter 9). Identification with the metropole plus geographical remoteness plus economic dependence have led to chronic difficulties about identity. The prevailing attitude, which the literary critic A.A. Phillips famously dubbed ‘the cultural cringe’, is contested by outbursts of nationalism and searches for local grounding that have inspired some of the best Australian literature and art. But Australian nationalism, once socially radical, has gradually been captured by the political right—itself committed to dependence on metropolitan power and international capitalism.
In this contradictory world of settler colonialism, what happens to the social sciences? The relationship between colony and metropole remains crucial, and the broader cultural problems are reflected within social science disciplines. But the shape of these problems changes. In this chapter, I focus again on the case of sociology, and analyse colony–metropole relations in two historical moments: the Australian colonies’ role in the making of sociology in the second half of the nineteenth century; and the forming of an academic discipline of sociology in Australian universities from the 1950s to the 1970s. Recent years have produced other possibilities, which I consider at the end of the chapter.

**Australia’s place in the making of sociology**

During the second half of the nineteenth century, metropolitan texts—especially the writings of Comte and Spencer—circulated far beyond the metropole. Spencer had a considerable impact in Japan and India; Comte was read in Iran and had a powerful influence in Brazil. Such an impact depended on the existence of a local intelligentsia prepared to work with these ideas. The creation of a higher education system in Australia exactly coincided with the invention of sociology in the metropole. Comte’s *System of Positive Polity*, subtitled *Treatise of Sociology*, was published between 1851 and 1854 in the early days of Louis Bonaparte’s regime, the subject of Marx’s *Eighteenth Brumaire*; the University of Sydney opened for business in 1852 and the University of Melbourne very soon after.

The colonial universities’ curriculum was originally a stodgy amalgam of classics and technical training, but it gradually broadened, and as it did so it was possible for themes from ‘the social science’ to be included. Colonial newspapers—more diverse and intellectually substantial then than now—provided another arena in which ‘the social question’, relations between races, the status of women and other sociological themes were debated.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, these debates developed actively in Melbourne, then one of the largest cities in the world of settler colonialism, with a diverse and radical intelligentsia and a surprisingly open-minded university. A notable product of this milieu was the work of W.E. Hearn, an Irish classicist who became professor at the University of Melbourne in the 1850s and produced an impressive series of books over the next 30 years (La Nauze 1949). The unstructured state of the social sciences at the time is illustrated by the fact that Hearn was professor of history, literature, logic, political economy and law—most of them at the same time. His book *Plutology*, published in Melbourne in 1863, was arguably the first important text of economics to be written in Australia, and *The Aryan Household*, published in 1878, was the first important text of sociology.

*The Aryan Household* is recognisably part of the genre of studies of social progress, in broad comparative style, that were undertaken in the 1870s and 1880s by
Tylor and Spencer in Britain, Letourneau in France, Ward in the United States and Tönnies in Germany. Hearn explained his purpose clearly in the introduction:

I propose to describe the rise and the progress of the principal institutions that are common to the nations of the Aryan race. I shall endeavour to illustrate the social organization under which our remote forefathers lived. I shall, so far as I am able, trace the modes of thought and of feeling which, in their mutual relations, influenced their conduct. I shall indicate the germs of those institutions which have now attained so high a development; and I shall attempt to show the circumstances in which political society took its rise, and the steps by which, in Western Europe, it supplanted its ancient rival. (Hearn 1878: 2)

Several things are interesting about this passage. The tone is sober—this is intended as a technical contribution to science, not a popularisation. Hearn makes a simple identification with Europeans (‘our remote forefathers’), reflecting the idea of Australian colonists as transplanted Britons. There is a clear presupposition of progress (‘so high a development’). Notable also is Hearn’s opening of a contrast between two types of society. This is an early example of the technique of grand ethnography (Chapter 1), which soon became central to metropolitan sociologists’ representations of time and progress. A few pages later, Hearn gives a very clear summary of this way of representing change:

In all its leading characteristics—political, legal, religious, economic—archaic society presents a complete contrast to that in which we live . . . no central government . . . no national church . . . few contracts . . . Men lived according to their customs . . . They were protected, or, if need were, avenged, by the help of their kinsmen. There was, in short, neither individual nor State. The clan, or some association founded upon the model of the clan, and its subdivisions, filled the whole of our forefathers’ social life (Hearn 1878: 4–5).

The rest of the book fills out this contrast. It traverses a range of sociological themes: the nature of custom, the position of women, the social organisation of the household, types of association, types of power, and the relationship between the state and civil society. But there is one oddity. Hearn, although he lived in a colony, found his examples rigorously in the early history of the ‘Aryan’ nations of Europe and their supposed ancestors.

It may partly be for that reason that Hearn’s brilliant beginning found few Australian followers; he created no local school of sociological research. His text was, rather, a contribution from the colonies to the metropolitan literature of speculation about social progress. There was no institutionalisation of ‘sociology’ in the colonial universities, any more than there was at Oxford or Cambridge. When in the 1880s the University of Sydney began to modernise its badly
outdated Arts curriculum, it developed modern history, philosophy and political economy, but did not try to develop sociology (Turney, Bygott and Chippendale 1991: 271 ff.).

That development occurred shortly afterwards in North American universities. The explosion of undergraduate sociology courses, textbooks, professional organisations and research output in American colleges met with an upsurge of interest in sociology across the North Atlantic, including the first chair of sociology in Britain in 1907.

It was these events that Francis Anderson, appointed to a chair of philosophy during the University of Sydney renovation of Arts, had in mind when he delivered the 1911 lecture that is often taken as the starting point of Australian sociology. Sociology in Australia: A Plea for its Teaching, published the next year as an eleven-page pamphlet, was not a work of sociology, nor was Anderson in any sense a sociologist. He was a professional philosopher who held a Comtean view of the structure of science. In this view, sociology was the ‘mother science’ that stated the broad principles of which specific sciences such as economics were examples. Sociology’s task was ‘to ascertain the natural laws which are manifested in social growth’ (Anderson 1912: 10). Anderson seized upon the recent expansion of economics and commerce teaching at the University of Sydney to argue that the mother science should also be taught.

Anderson’s view of sociology was, in 1912, already a little dated. Within ten years, the whole system of evolutionary social science and its laws of progress would be plunged into terminal crisis. Nothing like Anderson’s program could possibly be implemented. His lecture marks the end of an era rather than the beginning: Comtean theory never got established here. But there was another feature of colonial reality that did make Australia important for sociology in the nineteenth century.

As I showed in Chapter 1, reports from the colonised world became a major data source for evolutionary social science. In the preface to his great work Primitive Culture, Edward Tylor (1873) made a ‘general acknowledgment of obligations to writers on ethnography and kindred sciences, as well as to historians, travellers, and missionaries’ (1873: I, vi). Such observers provided sociologists with rich documentation of the primitive which their grand ethnography sought to contrast with the advanced society of the metropole.

The British conquest of Australia was no exception. The first colonial governor was instructed to make contact with the natives and take them under his protection, which he dutifully attempted to do. His reports launched British colonial administration on a see-saw of conciliation, coercion and hand-wringing over the growing frontier violence between settlers and Aborigines. This lasted until the white colonists had seized the richest land in eastern Australia and persuaded Whitehall to grant them control of the rest, in the form of responsible
government—in other words, quasi-independence. Accounts of this process, with descriptions of the Aboriginal communities to whom it was applied, flowed back to Britain.

A notable example comes from one of the great scientific documents of the age. Charles Darwin’s *Journal of Researches* (better known as *The Voyage of the Beagle*) contains a chapter about his visit to Sydney and trip over the Blue Mountains, and then short visits to Van Diemen’s Land (now Tasmania) and King George’s Sound (now Western Australia). Here he witnessed a ‘corrobery’ of the White Cockatoo people. His description ends:

> When both tribes mingled in the dance, the ground trembled with the heaviness of their steps, and the air resounded with their wild cries. Every one appeared in high spirits, and the group of nearly naked figures, viewed by the light of the blazing fires, all moving in hideous harmony, formed a perfect display of a festival amongst the lowest barbarians (Darwin 1839: 426).

Despite the pejoratives, Darwin was not hostile to the Australian Aboriginal groups he met. He admired their bushcraft and hunting skills, sympathised with their vulnerability to imported diseases, and did not blame them for the frontier violence. But he did regard the Australian Aborigines as a more primitive people than the British; he expected their extinction, and he saw this as an unavoidable consequence of a stronger variety of man meeting a weaker: ‘Wherever the European has trod, death seems to pursue the aboriginal’ (Darwin 1839: 411).

Hundreds of such accounts of native life in Australia—some much more substantial than Darwin’s—came back to the metropole and became part of the raw material from which evolutionary social science was built. I could give examples from very well-known writers including Tylor himself and William Graham Sumner, but will quote just one, the progressive liberal Lester Ward. Surveying the races of mankind in his *Dynamic Sociology*, Ward (1897) declared:

> Among other very low savage races may be mentioned the Fuegians, who, though of rather large stature, are mentally little superior to animals; the aboriginal Australians of the interior, who, along with other simian characteristics, are nearly destitute of the fleshy muscles constituting the calf of the leg (*gastrocnemius* and *soleus*) . . . Many of these tribes and races live almost entirely after the manner of wild beasts, having nothing that can be called government, religion, or society (1897: II, 418).

None of these theorists had visited Australia or met an Australian Aboriginal person, and none made any attempt to verify their startling (and, in Ward’s and Sumner’s cases, undoubtedly false) claims. Australian Aborigines had no human reality for them. They were simply tokens in the construction of a scientific fantasy of the primitive, which in turn validated a doctrine of social evolution.
Australia’s role in the making of sociology, like that of the rest of the colonised world, was to be a data mine, a source of ethnographic examples of the primitive. Within the colonised world, Australia had the distinction of being the most primitive of all, illustrating the extremity of degradation or backwardness.

This was certainly the assumption behind the most famous appearance of Australia in the texts of ‘classical’ sociology. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, deliberate ethnographic observation was replacing ‘historians, travellers and missionaries’ as the key source of information about non-European peoples in the intellectual shift that produced modern social anthropology. Some of this pioneering work was done in Australia, and among the most influential was research conducted in the 1890s, in the central desert around Alice Springs, by Baldwin Spencer and F.J. Gillen.

Back in Paris, Spencer and Gillen’s well-illustrated report *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* was read with enthusiasm by Durkheim and his colleagues. It was warmly reviewed in *L’année sociologique*, and a decade later became the main empirical basis for Durkheim’s last book, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, published in 1912.

In this book, the customs and mythology of the Arrernte people as they stood in the late nineteenth century became the basis for a general sociology of religion. Durkheim, like most sociologists who wrote about ‘Australians’, understood little of the diversity or dynamism of Indigenous cultures in Australia. Durkheim knew there were different communities, but believed they were ‘perfectly homogeneous’ because their societies ‘all belong to one common type’ (Durkheim 1912: 95). The Arrernte were used for one reason. Durkheim thought he had found, in Spencer and Gillen’s ethnography, a detailed description of the most primitive form of religion, and he thought that by studying the most primitive form, he could reveal the most fundamental truths about religion. There is no ambiguity about this. Durkheim says exactly:

> In this book we propose to study the most primitive and simple religion which is actually known . . . A religious system may be said to be the most primitive . . . in the first place when it is found in a society whose organization is surpassed by no others in simplicity; and secondly when it is possible to explain it without making use of any element borrowed from a previous religion (Durkheim 1912: 1).

‘Australian totemism’ fitted the bill, because Australian Aborigines had the most primitive documented society. Here the crude racism of a Ward or Sumner is transcended—up to a point. Durkheim’s prejudice takes a very sophisticated form; his sociology embeds a deeply ethnocentric viewpoint nonetheless. And it conceals a radical misunderstanding of Australian Indigenous cultures.
This was already knowable in Durkheim’s day. In a biting review of *The Elementary Forms* published the following year, the anthropologist van Gennep (celebrated for his work on ‘rites of passage’) pointed out that the book was riddled with doubtful factual claims. But, more importantly, it was based on a monumental conceptual error—an error, I would say, that infected the whole enterprise of evolutionary sociology:

The idea he [Durkheim] has derived from them [the ethnographic documents] of a primitive man . . . and of ‘simple’ societies is entirely erroneous. The more one knows of the Australians and the less one identifies the stage of their material civilization with that of their social organization, one discovers that the Australian societies are very complex, very far from the simple and the primitive, but very far advanced along their own paths of development (Van Gennep in 1913, quoted in Lukes 1985: 525).

The creation of Australian academic sociology

In the four decades that followed Anderson’s appeal and Durkheim’s great fantasy, while metropolitan sociology changed profoundly (see Chapter 1), little happened organisationally in Australia. Bits of the new welfare-state sociology popped up in odd contexts—the Workers’ Education Association, university philosophy courses, political speculation by progressive liberals, or surveys of educational inequalities. But there was nothing like the Chicago School, let alone an Australian Parsons, to pull them together.

Australia’s most brilliant social scientist, Vere Gordon Childe, left the country in 1921, dismayed at the Labor Party’s betrayal of the workers, and went off to Europe to invent scientific prehistory. For the next generation his astonishing creativity was practically ignored in Australia, where it was known that he was a communist (Gathercole, Irving and Melleuish 1995). Other talented social researchers also left the country, such as Elton Mayo who became a founder of industrial sociology in the United States.

When research programs within the new sociological episteme finally appeared in Australia, they were outgrowths from social anthropology and social psychology. The professor of anthropology at the University of Sydney, A.P. Elkin, famous for his work on Aboriginal cultures, began in the early 1940s to direct some of his students towards ethnographic studies of ‘our own society’—that is, white settler society. He also undertook a study of wartime social integration based on survey data. The notable products of this initiative were a well-observed, though modestly presented, ethnography of a mining town by Alan Walker (1945), and an even better ethnography of rural kinship and family life by Jean Craig (1957), later known to every sociologist in Australia as Jean Martin.
In the late 1940s, the new professor of psychology at the University of Melbourne, Oscar Oeser, launched a research program on ‘social behaviour’ which also drifted into the territory of the new sociology. His research team conducted elaborate observational and interview studies in a Victorian country town, in suburbs of Melbourne, and in seven factories. The topics included class-consciousness, job satisfaction, industrial relations and family life. This style of social-realist field observation was soon dropped by Australian psychology, which fell under the spell of behaviourism. But the three volumes of the *Social Structure and Personality* series (Oeser and Hammond 1954; Oeser and Emery 1954; Lafitte 1958) provided key empirical material for the first university courses in sociology, which were launched almost immediately after these books were published.

During the 1950s, the idea of social surveys on the white community became familiar. An Australian market research firm, Roy Morgan Research, started sample surveys using its ‘Gallup Poll’ in the 1940s. The poll findings, presented by Morgan as scientific measures of opinion, were reported in the press and increasingly noticed by politicians. University- and welfare-based surveys appeared, describing specific social groups and their problems. They included the aged in Victoria, surveyed by a University of Melbourne group (Hutchinson 1954); the young in Sydney, surveyed by a University of Sydney group (Connell, Francis and Skilbeck 1957); and the leisure problems of a Melbourne suburban estate, surveyed by the Brotherhood of St Laurence (Scott and U’ren 1962). Academic researchers also began to see the national census as a source of data for social analysis. George Zubrzycki (1960) thus conducted ‘a demographic survey’ of immigrants in Australia.

This generation of social researchers forged a new relationship with metropolitan sociology. Australia ceased to be a data mine, an economy exporting facts (or imagined facts). Most of these studies were published in Australia and remained unknown in the metropole. However, the new generation of researchers adopted the new American definition of the subject-matter of sociology, and they adopted the methods of metropolitan researchers.

Walker’s *Coaltown*, for instance, mentioned no theory and did not compare its findings with any other research. But it was clearly modelled on community studies such as the Lynds’ *Middletown* and Warner’s ‘Yankee City’ series. The Sydney educationists’ *Growing Up in an Australian City* was more explicitly connected with models in the American sociology of youth. For *Old People in a Modern Australian Community*, the academic and business sponsors actually imported from Britain ‘an experienced investigator of social problems’ to run the study (Hutchinson 1954: v).

This stance was familiar in Australian intellectual life at the time. A.A. Phillips (1953: 85) diagnosed ‘the persistence of the colonial surrender in the Australian
mind’ as a major problem for literature too. So it was easy for Australian sociology to constitute itself as a branch office of metropolitan sociology, importing metropolitan methods and topics in order to address a local audience about local versions of social problems.

The commonest title of an Australian sociological report, for the 30 years from 1950, was *X in Australia*—where *X* was a phenomenon already defined in the metropole and for which metropolitan paradigms of research were available. *X* might be ‘religion’, ‘status and prestige’, ‘social stratification’, ‘divorce’, ‘marriage and the family’, ‘urbanization’, ‘prostitution’, ‘political leadership’, ‘women’, ‘mass media’, ‘immigrants’ or ‘sociology’ itself. (These are all actual titles from the period.) The task of the Australian sociologist was to apply the metropolitan research technique, demonstrate that the phenomenon also existed in Australia, and say empirically what form it took here. In some of this writing there was a faint missionary flavour, as if the sociologists were bringing new light to the unsophisticated locals.

These metropolitan-style studies of ‘our own society’ were the knowledge base on which an academic discipline called ‘sociology’ was installed in Australia’s expanding university system. The action was very fast. A half-dozen years, from 1959 to 1965, saw the first named chair of sociology, the first sociology teaching programs, the first textbook, the foundation of a professional association, and the first issues of its academic journal. This brief period even saw the first pop sociology best-seller, *The Lucky Country*, written by a journalist (Horne 1964). In the following decade, another ten departments of sociology sprang up around the country.

But a collection of social surveys was not enough to claim space in the universities as a new discipline. There also needed to be ideas, as Davies and Encel observed in the first edition of their textbook *Australian Society* (1965). In a vigorously argued paper on ‘The Scope and Purpose of Sociology’, Harold Fallding (1962) insisted that sociology was now an established discipline in terms of its object of knowledge—systems of social action—and its theoretical logic. Since no sociological theory was being produced in Australia, this too had to be imported from the metropole. Fallding’s solution was to import Parsonian functionalism in a lump. Others imported empiricism, Weberianism, interpretive sociology and, a little later, neo-Marxism.

The result was a hybrid structure of knowledge in the new discipline, where Australian sociologists combined metropolitan theory and methodology with local data and audiences. A notable example was Sol Encel’s (1970) monograph *Equality and Authority*. Encel’s book traversed the metropolitan (mainly British and US) controversies about class and stratification, adopted a modified Weberian position, and then reported seriatim the author’s impressive compilations of data about Australian elites. Another example, I have to confess, was Connell and
Irving’s *Class Structure in Australian History* (1980). We started with a chapter debating metropolitan theories of class before settling into an exposition of Australian empirical material.

Along with metropolitan theory—though this was hardly noticed at the time—came a metropolitan vision of what society was and how we should talk about it. ‘Australian society’ was simply presumed to be *the same kind of thing*, for which the same conceptual categories were unproblematically appropriate.

The rising quality of Australian research entrenched this pattern. As Australian sociologists became more sophisticated in using the metropolitan tools, they began to publish in metropolitan journals. There were good reasons: as well as the desire to find a wider audience, the prestige attached to international publication greatly helped promotion in Australian universities. However, to publish in those forums, Australians had to write in forms familiar to metropolitan editors: to use metropolitan concepts, address metropolitan literatures, and offer credible interventions in metropolitan debates. Australian sociology was thus produced as a professional account of Australian society as seen through metropolitan eyes.

The construction of Australian sociology as an academic discipline in the decades 1950–80 thus completely reversed the relationship between Australia and metropolitan sociology that had existed a hundred years earlier. Then Australia was treated as the site of difference—in fact, extreme difference—from the advanced society of the metropole. Now Australia was treated as the site of similarity.

Of course, this involved a shift of empirical interest from Aboriginal to settler society. But Australian society was not theorised in the new discipline as a settler society; it was simply regarded as part of modernity. Indigenous cultures were now regarded as the business of anthropology—which was, in Australian universities, the older and more prestigious discipline. This was a boundary the sociologists did not yet challenge. The *relationship* between Indigenous society and settler/modern society that had been so important for evolutionary sociology simply vanished as an intellectual theme.

Aboriginal *people* did concern sociologists, but in a new way: as the subjects of social processes characteristic of modernity. They could be seen as a disadvantaged group in a system of social stratification (Ancich et al. 1969). More commonly, they were classified under the North American rubric of ‘ethnic minority’. This is how they were treated, for instance, in Ballock and Lally’s (1974) survey of *Sociology in Australia and New Zealand*. In this book Aboriginal people appeared in a chapter on ‘studies of ethnic minorities’ whose primary focus was postwar non-British immigration. The ironic result of the new structure of sociological knowledge was that Indigenous groups were understood as being the same kind of group as the most recent settlers.
With local sociology wholly dependent on metropolitan concepts and methods, people began to wonder about the identity puzzle. What was specifically Australian about this? Australian sociology had, perhaps, a characteristic empirical focus—for instance, on migration. Indeed, Jean Martin, George Zubrzycki and other sociologists were prominent in constructing the discourse of multiculturalism that framed Australian policy on ethnicity and immigration until the 1990s revival of racism.

Alternatively, Australian sociology had a characteristic irony, because sociologists’ documentation of stratification, elites and exclusions ran counter to Australian egalitarianism. Busting ‘myths’ about Australia became a favoured trope in Australian sociological writing in the 1960s (e.g. Taft 1962). But it was hard to see a distinctive cultural formation in the sociological books published in Australia, or in the papers in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*. A definition of the identity of Australian sociology thus proved very elusive, even in the period when the discipline was growing most vigorously.

**New possibilities**

The relationship between colony and metropole has been formative for Australian sociology, though the terms of that relationship have changed. Can the terms change again?

Much of Australian sociology continues on the path already mapped out. Metropolitan theory remains hegemonic. Parsonianism and Weberianism were displaced by structuralist Marxism, and that in turn by a strong wave of post-structuralism. In the twenty-first century, Foucauldians and Bourdieuvians frolic where functionalists once safely grazed.

Theories are certainly deployed with more sophistication and skill, and it is possible for Australian sociologists to do work that is path-breaking in international terms. John Braithwaite’s (1989) criminological work on reintegration comes to mind, as does Michael Pusey’s *Economic Rationalism in Canberra* (1991). Combining survey data on federal civil servants, analysis of political and institutional change, and a social vision influenced by Habermas, Pusey created a pioneering sociology of neoliberalism which has very wide implications.

Australians have also done work in sociological theory, not as peripheral consumers of the metropole’s output but as participants in metropolitan debates. Notable examples are Clare Burton’s (1985) synthesis of feminism and social theory; Jack Barbalet’s (1998) work on the macro-sociology of emotions; and Pauline Johnson’s (2006) study of the changing idea of the public realm in the thought of Jürgen Habermas. This work is often published in the metropole and, whether or not it uses any Australian research or experience, the focus is on a metropolitan literature. In effect, these authors have followed the same
strategy as W.E. Hearn, doing Northern theory in new conditions and abandoning
the identity problem.

But in a changed cultural and political environment, an opposite strategy was
also possible: focusing on the specificity of Australia as a product of settler
colonialism. Interest in the relationship between indigenous and settler society
was revived by historians of frontier conflict, by anthropologists’ rethinking of
their own connection with colonialism, and above all by the Aboriginal Land
Rights movement (see Chapter 9). A sociologist such as Vivien Johnson (1996)
could become deeply interested in the Aboriginal art movement, considering
not only the body of artistic work but also the ways in which it is appropriated
by the dominant culture—including widespread commercial exploitation and
copyright violation. In her *Radio Birdman*, Johnson (1990) turned the intellectual
relationships around, using some Aboriginal social concepts for analysing that
most metropolitan of social phenomena: a new wave rock band.

It was also now possible to think, from an Australian starting point, about global
structures and connections. This was done by Chilla Bulbeck in *One World
Women’s Movement* (1988), written before globalisation had become a popular
sociological theme. This book took up the problems raised by the United Nations
Decade for Women (1975–85), discussing whether it was possible to have a
united international feminism, given the different situations of women in different
countries, and resistance to the dominance of white Western feminism. In the
sequel *Re-orienting Western Feminisms* (1998), Bulbeck looked more deeply at
the problems of universalism and cultural difference, and offered a complex
relativism as a basis for political cooperation among women’s movements. Few
have gone as far down this track as Bulbeck. Nevertheless, in the 1990s it became
more common for Australian sociologists to set their analyses in a broader
international context, or within a wider understanding of colonialism (e.g.
Bottomley (1992) on migration and culture; Gilding (1997) on the family; Connell

None of this defines a distinctive Australian school of sociology. What it does
mean is that Australian sociologists have recognised a wider spectrum of
possibilities inherent in the geopolitical situation of a rich peripheral country
and the history of settler colonialism. Recognising these possibilities, Australian
sociology may contribute to much more important goals than the creation of a
local ethos. For the first time, as Bulbeck’s work clearly shows, it is possible to
move beyond the traditional link with the metropole to link with the intellectual
projects of other regions of the periphery.

Extracts (pp. 4-9 and pp. 71-86) from *Southern Theory: The global dynamics of
knowledge in social science* by Raewyn Connell. Published by Allen & Unwin,
Raewyn Connell is University Professor at the University of Sydney. A leading Australian social scientist, her work is well known in sociology, education, gender studies and political science, and has been translated into thirteen languages. Her books include Masculinities, Schools and Social Justice, Gender and Power and Making the Difference.

Works cited


The South in *Southern Theory*: Antipodean Reflections on the Pacific

Margaret Jolly

**A Reading of *Southern Theory***

In her recent book, *Southern Theory*, Raewyn Connell has challenged the domination of social theory by those in the metropoles of Europe and North America. She argues that this has entailed a view of the world from the skewed, minority perspective of the educated and the affluent, whose views are then perpetuated globally in educational curricula. The South appears in such global theories primarily as a source of data for Northern theorists rather than as sites of knowing and self-conscious social reflection, places where important social theories are also developed. Through a survey of nineteenth and twentieth-century ‘Southern theory’ from Latin America, Iran, Africa, India and Indigenous Australia, Connell aspires to restore the fullness of the world to social science, to include its many voices in a more democratic global conversation.

The volume offers a multifaceted argument. It narrates an alternative ‘origin story’ for sociology and, by implication, anthropology. It highlights the global reach of early theorists such as Comte, Spencer and Durkheim in their obsessions with the process of modernity, linking European ancients and contemporaneous ‘primitives’ in narratives of progress, debating the origins of human differences of race, gender and sexuality: ‘Sociology displaced imperial power over the colonised into an abstract space of difference’ (Connell 16), a claim equally true of early anthropology (see Fabian). Connell suggests that the more restricted focus on industrialised metropolitan societies was linked to the professional growth of sociology in the United States, from the urban ethnography of the Chicago School to the abstract social theory of Talcott Parsons. Such modern ‘general’ theory, from Parsons through Coleman, Giddens and Bourdieu aspires to universals, irrespective of time and place. Yet all such theories, albeit in different ways, fail to acknowledge the specificity of their ground of knowing, they ‘read from the centre’, with sweeping gestures of exclusion and grand erasures. ‘Whenever we see the words “building block” in a treatise of social theory, we should be asking who used to occupy the land’ (Connell 47).

Although some social theorists such as Giddens, Hardt and Negri strenuously detach contemporary modernity from the colonial past, Connell discerns continuity and a perduring imperial gaze in much Northern theory. Theories of globalisation, translated from economics into sociology in the 1990s, too often
witnessed the global spread of modernity through theoretical reifications of ‘culture’. In Chapter 3, Connell consummately critiques the agonising antinomies of such literature—global and local, homogeneity and difference, dispersal and concentration—as vortices in swirling debates. Claims about abstract linkages conceal the parochial power of the metropolis while breathless declamations about tsunamis of global transformation become performative utterances constituting the very facts being researched. Again the ‘South’ is a source of data but not of ideas.

The latter parts of the volume rather look to the South as site, or rather sites, of social theory, extending from Australia, through Africa, Latin America, Iran and India. From the early use of Spencer and Gillen’s ethnography of Indigenous Australians in Durkheim’s theory of elementary religion to the twentieth-century canon of Australian sociology (including Encel, Bottomley, Braithwaite, Bulbeck, Pusey, Pauline Johnson, and Connell herself), Connell shows how Australia, a rich if peripheral nation, has fed, and sometimes stretched, metropolitan debates in social theory. She affords a tantalising glimpse of how Indigenous Australian social theory, as evinced in visual art practice, can illuminate modernity, as in Vivien Johnson’s creative analysis of the rock band, Radio Birdman.

A similar potential emerges in discussions of Indigenous knowledge in Africa, as in the claim by Akiwowo that Yoruba oral poetry was a fertile source for African social theory, an exemplar of ‘Indigenous sociology’ (and closely akin to many anthropologies, foreign and Indigenous which have long suggested alternative theories of the social and the person in non-metropolitan places, e.g. Geertz, Strathern). In several ensuing critiques of Akiwowo, the problems of reifying an unchanging culture, uncontaminated by colonial processes, and homogenising elite male practice as ‘tradition’ were highlighted (cf. Jolly ‘Politics of Difference’ and ‘Specters of Inauthenticity’). As Connell astutely observes, a radical epistemology for international sociology betrayed a conservative older male view of social change in Africa (96). Claims for a distinctive African philosophy, like the négritude movement in art and literature were potent rejections of imperial presumption and power. But, as the Dahomey philosopher Houtondji suggested (105-6), they threatened to confine Africans yet again in the essentialisms of race and the authenticities of culture. Connell suggests that similar perils prevail in the more recent rhetoric of an ‘African Renaissance’, even if the distinctive location of Africa-focused intellectuals needs to be acknowledged.

The interpenetration of indigenous and exogenous knowledge is perhaps even more deeply sedimented in the ground of Latin America. In Chapter 7, Connell focuses on the question of autonomy from metropolitan power in the work of theorists such as Raúl Prebisch, Cardoso and Faletto, Hopenhayn, Montecino and Canclini. They perforce focus attention on the place of imperial centres, and
especially the United States, as much as on the specificities of Latin American experiences of dependency and development. The historical context of such theories moves from the Cold War period with US military support of client dictators, to the more veiled imperial power of neoliberalism initiated in Chile under Pinochet. All these theorists selectively deploy and critique generations of Northern theorists, from Kroeber to Bourdieu, from Frank, Amin and Wallerstein to Lyotard and Baudrillard. But they regularly refuse to be captive to the false claims of universality and the totalising metanarratives of the North, as they address the diverse specificities of Latin American life and the regional potential for progressive politics.

The chapters on Iran and India (6 and 8) raise fascinating visions of alternative universals. Islam is focal in Connell’s empathetic reading of the texts of al-Afghani, Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati in translation. Al-Afghani wrote in the 1880s, the latter in the 1960s and 1970s, but all were preoccupied with the strength of Islam in the face of Western domination. Al-Afghani refuted Western materialism but celebrated Islam as the most rational of religions and, like modernist science, open to proof and refutation. In his view, if ulama were to offer true leadership, Islam would be a force for resistance and British imperial power might be defeated. Later social theorists continued this critique, Al-e Ahmad in his famous, if unruly and misogynist, attack on ‘Westoxication’, raged against the alienated and impotent Westernised male and the vapid materialism of secular nationalists. Islam and the ulama were again seen as the key to resistance and regeneration. His successor, Ali Shariati, drew on Marxist class analysis but critiqued its materialism, celebrating Islam rather as a ‘this-worldly’ religion which potently challenges unjust domination. He avowed the unity of God and the unity and equality of humankind, including women. His ideas in part incited the Iranian revolution but the conservative forces around Khomeini triumphed in 1981, culminating in a more militant and fundamentalist resistance to the ‘West’.

The struggle with British imperial power and knowledge in the subcontinent has generated similarly powerful anticolonial critiques, from the revolutionary thought and political practice of Gandhi, through the later scholarship of the subaltern theorists, led by Ranajit Guha from 1982. Connell offers a telegraphic distillation of their influential approach and the ‘extraordinary outpouring’ of criticism it provoked, including the alleged neglect of caste and of women in earlier theorisations of the ‘subaltern’. Connell alludes to the complex relations between Western and Indian feminisms and the unfortunate reproduction of radical feminist universalisms about ‘patriarchy’ and ‘nature’ in the ecological feminism of Shiva. She finds more congenial southern theorists in the work of anthropologist Veena Das and her collaborator, psychologist Asis Nandy. Das practises anthropology ‘not by immersion in a warm bath of traditions, but by the painful route of studying … “major conflicts”’ (178), for example, the violence
against women during Partition in 1947 and the horror of the Bhopal chemical
disaster in 1984. In such conflicts Das depicts communities not as primordial
entities but as emergent political constructs and deconstructs the ‘truth’-making
of states and courts, to affirm the truth incarnate in the victims of violence and
injustice.

Nandy (who collaborated with Das in research on Partition violence), explores
what colonial violence did to both Indians and the British, for instance in the
complicity between exaggerated imperial masculinity and Indian ‘warriorhood’
(cf. Jolly, ‘Moving Masculinities’). Through studies of writers such as Kipling,
Aurobindo and Gandhi, Nandy charted the psychological damage, the shared
‘inner pain’ of colonialism, which potentially offered a recognition of shared
humanity, as for Gandhi. Although Nandy is much indebted to metropolitan
psychology and psychoanalysis, Connell rightly discerns the influence of rich
and diverse Indian ideas in Nandy’s illuminating explorations of the personal,
refracted through the public, political texts of books and films.

Through this brief review I hope I have suggested the range of Connell’s reading
beyond the confines of metropolitan social theory. But what is it that connects
these several sites, what articulates these articulate congregations of Southern
theorists? In her introduction, Connell stresses that her conception of the South
is relational. Her purpose is ‘not so much to name a social category as to highlight
relations of power’ and especially ‘periphery-centre relations in the realm of
knowledge’ (viii). Those in the South are authors of theory and not just objects
of study, and the ground of their knowing, their location, matters. In the
conclusion Connell acknowledges the problems inherent in the labile languages
of global divisions: North/South, West/East, First World and Third World,
developed/underdeveloped, centre/periphery (212; cf. Slater). Connell prefers
the first and last couplets and challenges those, such as Hardt and Negri, who
argue that all such demarcations are obsolete in this era of globalisation. Naming
such divisions is for her ‘an absolute requirement for social science to work on
a world scale’ (212). For Connell, to deny this is to deny the global reality of
perdurate inequalities, between the affluent and powerful 600 million living in
the ‘centre’ and the poorer, less powerful 5400 million of the ‘periphery’.

‘Southern Theory’ in the Pacific and Asia?

I absolutely agree that we need to acknowledge global inequalities and the way
these shape social theory. But we also need to reflect on the effects of our naming
of such differences (Gibson-Graham). So I now explore the consequences of
Connell’s preferred labels of ‘North’ and ‘South’, ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’. In
my view, use of the language of the cardinal points of cartography to describe
inequalities between nations or peoples tends to naturalise and dehistoricise
difference, to associate the points of the compass with the body habitus of up
and down, left and right. Clearly this is at odds with Connell’s avowed aim to
stress relationality between peoples and the changing contexts of power and knowledge across time and place. So, although I endorse Connell’s prophetic vision of an inclusive and worldly social theory (cf. Curthoys and Ganguly), I am rather more wary about deploying geopolitical labels which derive from cartographic referents which themselves betray a deep imperial history.

In a recent overview of foreign and Indigenous representations of the Pacific (Jolly, ‘Imagining Oceania’), I have counterposed ‘cartography’, grounded in imperial navigation and the hubris of Western ‘discoverers’ and Indigenous ‘genealogies’, which connect people not so much through the abstract logic of kinship detached from land (as for Lévi Strauss, see Connell, *Southern Theory*, 66-67, 196) but through the connection of people and place, the place of the ocean as well as the land, where Oceanic peoples were travellers on ‘routes’ as much as natives with ‘roots’. In that essay I also consider how the interpenetration of these views in the course of colonial history has yielded a ‘double vision’. While Pacific peoples have, arguably, adopted the powerful optic of Western cartography and the associated ethnological partitioning of Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia, this has not necessarily led to an eclipse of Indigenous visions.

My discussion here continues Connell’s exploration of ‘Southern theory’ but emphasises relationships of knowledge and power between Australia and the Pacific. This region, although clearly part of Connell’s ‘periphery’, is mentioned only in passing and through a brief narrative of the fate of Kahana valley on Oahu, Hawai’i (204-6), as part of a critique of settler colonialism in North America and Australia and ‘the silence of the land’ in global social theory (cf. Wolfe). In the Pacific we might witness not just the ‘silence of the land’ but the ‘silence of the ocean’ in contemporary cartographies configured by geopolitical influence.

In previous papers dealing with Pacific feminisms and the language of human rights (Jolly ‘Woman Ikat Raet’” and ‘Beyond the Horizon’), I observed how notions of ‘North’ and ‘South’ like ‘West’ and ‘East’ uneasily connect geographical cardinal points with geopolitical potencies. I further suggested that the language of universalism articulated by Pacific women is not heard as such because they are speaking from places seen as remote and powerless. The designations of North and South refer both to the hemispheres above and below the equator in a conventional Mercator projection of the globe, and the respective positions of rich and developed nations of Europe and North America and the poor and underdeveloped countries of Africa, Asia, South America and the Pacific (see Figure 1). Of course, no-one assumes the two are coincident — Northern and Southern hemispheres do not map inequalities of wealth and power between or within nations. But what is the effect of making such a link, and our embodied association with ‘up’ and ‘down’? The geographic/geopolitical coordinates of East and West are more laterally conceived, opposed like North
and South, but less hierarchically conceptualised. The Middle East (Said) and the East of Asia have in EuroAmerican social theory, both past and present, often been seen as rival loci of ‘civilisations’, even if clamorously constructed as a ‘clash’ (Huntington) or as antithetical (as in representations of the ‘West’ in debates about Asian values, see Dirlik, ‘East-West/North-South’).

Figure 1: North-South Divide

In such cartographic imaginaries Australia has often been presented as anomalous, a country of the ‘North’ in wealth, development and dominant intellectual genealogies but ‘South’ in latitude. Our antipodean location has often been exploited by those of us who want to challenge the hegemony of social theory from Europe and North America, in intellectual challenges which echo Australian anti-colonial sentiments about both British and American empires. Coming from the ‘South’ seems to have a rebellious resonance which coming from the ‘North’ lacks. It is a claim that many of us have made: it is a resonant refrain in Australian social theory, to combat the ‘metropolitan’ perspectives from New York or London as partial, even parochial. Indeed, some of Raewyn Connell’s most influential books on gender, masculinities and class (e.g. Ruling Class, Gender, The Men, Masculinities), though global in their reach, have been suffused and strengthened by a strong sense of antipodean location. In a rather more limited way, I have challenged the hegemony of North American visions of feminist anthropology in reflections on the politics of difference (see Jolly, ‘Our Part of the World’).

Yet adopting the position of ‘Southern’ theorist as a privileged Australian scholar might also distract from contributions to social theory from those who are more truly ‘Southern’ in ‘our part of the world’, for example, Indigenous Australians, discussed in Southern Theory and Indigenous Pacific peoples, who are not. Before I explore what might constitute ‘Southern theory’ in the relations of knowledge
and power between Australia and Pacific, let me briefly allude to the region with which the Pacific is often linked, to suggest both a comparison and a contrast: Asia.

In debates about Australia’s relation to Asia from the 1990s to the present many have observed that Australia is in but not of Asia and urged the importance of a revitalised engagement (Fitzgerald). With the recent election of the Rudd government in November 2007, the central importance of Australia’s relation to the Asian region is likely to focus not just on the present and future geopolitical weight of China and India but the urgent need for more Australians to familiarise themselves with the diversity of Asian languages, cultures and histories and hopefully to appreciate the ‘Southern theory’ emanating from such places. For India we have already witnessed the global influence of subaltern theorists, as discussed by Connell. The appreciation of ‘Southern theorists’ from China is perhaps less well developed in Australia, partly because they usually write in Chinese rather than English. Still, several books and films by Geremie Barmé and collaborators (New Ghosts, Old Dreams, Shades of Mao, In the Red, Gate of Heavenly Peace and Morning Sun) and a recent book by Gloria Davies, Worrying About China (2008), are important introductions to the character and complexity of contemporary social theory there, and the reconfiguration of foreign theories in a Chinese context.

In exploring Australia’s relation with the Pacific we might observe that as with Asia, we are seen as in but not of (see Jolly, ‘Imagining Oceania’). But the Pacific is far removed from such continental Asian giants as China and India, in terms of population, wealth and geopolitical influence. Increasingly the affluent countries and classes of Asia can no longer be construed as part of a ‘periphery’ in relation to an imagined EuroAmerican centre. But most of the Pacific is still perceived as peripheral—remote, underdeveloped, poor and weak—in dominant Australian representations, and in need of our aid and assistance. Over the nearly twelve years of the Coalition government, Australia’s involvement in the Pacific markedly increased, especially in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Solomons, with dramatic interventions in situations of political turbulence and threat, and in saving states from ‘failing’. Such interventions regularly raised questions about sovereignty and neo-colonial influence (e.g. see Kabutalaka on RAMSI in the Solomons and Dinnen on PNG) but reinscribed the ‘special relation’ which Australia sustains with PNG, its erstwhile colony, and with several proximate countries of the southwest Pacific.

In what follows I will consider the rival regional imaginaries of ‘Asia-Pacific’ and ‘Oceania’ and the way they differentially imagine the relations of knowledge and power between Australia and the Pacific and the place of ‘Southern’ social theorists. Then, I consider how these different optics are materialised not just in the texts of scholars but in visual and performance arts displayed at the
Asia-Pacific Triennial of Art at the Queensland Art Gallery and the Oceania Arts Centre at the University of the South Pacific. In *Southern Theory*, Connell for the most part confines her attention to texts, since ‘it is only written texts that allow sustained argument and systematic critique’, the capacity for self-reflective knowledge and ‘communication of complex social knowledge across planetary distances’ (xii). Yet elsewhere in that volume she allows that Indigenous Australian art embeds a social theory (Chapter 9) and celebrates how this is creatively deployed in a study of contemporary rock music by Vivien Johnson (*Radio Birdman*). It is my contention that social theory in the Pacific has been embedded not just in scholarly texts such as those of Epeli Hau’ofa discussed below but, as in Indigenous Australia, embodied in visual arts, oratory and dance (see Katerina Teaiwa ‘Visualizing Te Kainga’ and ‘Learning Oceania’).

**Contending Imaginaries of Region: Oceania and Asia-Pacific**

There are different visions of the Pacific, rival regional constructs, which I encode as ‘Oceania’ and ‘Asia-Pacific’. These names are not just innocent reflections of cartographic realities but, as Gibson-Graham attest, such naming produces real effects in the world. So we might pause to ponder the origins and effects of these different words.

The word ‘Oceania’ has a long and complex colonial genealogy, exhaustively researched in recent time, especially by scholars in Australia and France (Clark ‘Dumont D’Urville’s’; Jolly ‘Imagining Oceania’; Tcherkézoff, Thomas, *In Oceania*). The insights of this literature might be briefly distilled. First, the cartographic referents of Oceania have been historically fluid, shifting from the epoch of European ‘discoveries’ through later periods of conquest and settlement. In its original articulation by Dumont d’Urville in 1835 and in the map of Océanie (attributed to Levasseur) it embraced the islands of the Pacific (divided into Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia) and Australia and the Malay peninsular. In many later iterations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these Asian and Australian edges fell off the map. Second, foreign perspectives on ‘Oceania’ have shifted with the different lens of contending British, French, North American and Japanese imperial visions (see Endo *Framing*, Matsuda, Wilson *Reimagining*). Third, such foreign visions were not just colonial mirages but became sedimented in Pacific places and in the minds and bodies of its peoples as in indigenous appropriations of sub-regional labels: ‘the Melanesian way’, ‘the Polynesian triangle’, ‘the Micronesian world’ (see Jolly ‘Imagining Oceania’, Narokobi).

The generic colonial label, ‘Oceania’, has been reclaimed and revalorised by the Tongan scholar Epeli Hau’ofa (‘Our Sea’) in a visionary reconceptualisation of the embodied life experiences of Pacific peoples and the intellectual work of Pacific Studies (see Hau’ofa *We are the Ocean* and Figure 2). We might thus see him as a quintessential ‘Southern theorist’. In a series of influential articles (‘Our
Sea’, ‘The Ocean’, and ‘Epilogue’), he critiqued the prevailing developmentalist and geopolitical models of the Pacific as discursively diminishing their small scale, lack of development and isolation from each other. He refocused attention not just on the small islands and atolls of land but the connecting ocean. He highlighted Oceanic cosmopolitanism, ‘world travellers’ traversing the region in the ancient past and the present, connecting Pacific peoples in the islands with the countries of the Pacific Rim. He critiqued the colonial partitioning of Pacific peoples into Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia and the associated rhetorical stress on roots rather than routes as defining of indigeneity (see Clifford Routes, Jolly ‘On the Edge’). Hau’ofa defied essentialist views of culture and reified notions of tradition, by advocating cross-cultural exchange, mixing and creolisation, a vision realised in the innovative Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture established at the University of the South Pacific from 1997 (see below).

Figure 2: Epeli Hau’ofa

Hau’ofa’s prophetic visions have been much debated: some have stressed how centuries of colonialism also catalysed new cultural flows (with sail and steamships and the turbulent waves of Christian conversion); some have argued that his conception of Pacific peoples as world travellers and overseas migrants is skewed towards Polynesians (see Jolly ‘On the Edge’); some have seen his visions as utopian, given the stark realities of stalled development, poverty,
inequality and violence in the contemporary Pacific. Yet such debate has probably only broadened and deepened his influence. Since the mid-1990s ‘Oceania’ has proliferated in the titles of scholarly books, conferences, cultural events, and Pacific organisations, especially in Hawai‘i, in Fiji and New Zealand. But, especially in Australia, ‘Oceania’ confronts a pervasive rival in regional labelling, ‘Asia-Pacific’.

Hau‘ofa was expressly critical of such prevailing regional labels of the late twentieth century: Pacific ‘region’ and ‘rim’ and ‘Asia-Pacific’, which he claimed portrayed the Pacific in terms of lack, as ‘the hole in the donut’ (‘Our Sea’). Dirlik and his collaborators in the United States (Dirlik ‘The Asia-Pacific’ and What is, Connery, Wilson and Dirlik 1995) were simultaneously mounting fierce critiques of these regional imaginaries whose origins they discerned in US foreign policy discourse from the mid-1970s. According to Connery, Pacific Rim discourse emerged during the late Cold War contention with the socialist bloc, when defeat in Vietnam, the ascendancy of Japan and economic decline threatened the United States. Pacific Rim discourse stressed connection and partnership between the United States and Japan (on the axis of West and East) but also nervously anticipated the emerging spectre of China’s power. Such discourses migrated to Australia, assuming a particular salience in the Keating period and beyond. During this time, there was passionate and sometimes agonised public debate about Australia being ‘in’ but not ‘of’ Asia (see Fitzgerald) and renewed reflection on Australia’s ‘special relationship’ to the Pacific (see Fry ‘Framing’).

Trenchant scholarly critiques have had little impact on the continued use of the term. ‘Asia-Pacific’ has moved far beyond its initial use as a geopolitical label preferred by certain economists and politicians, becoming the conventional regional language of many international organisations and NGOS, sporting events and carnivals, celebrations of the visual arts, and networks of Australian scholars who research in ‘area studies’ (e.g. at The Australian National University in the College of Asia and the Pacific where I work and across Australia in a network sponsored by the Australian Research Council, the Asia-Pacific Futures Research Network, in which I am involved). I am not criticising this conjoint emphasis on these two regions of the world nor the need for Australians to consider them both, or in relation to one another. But, in the Pacific, there has often been consternation at this yoking together of two such disparate regions, which seemed less about their historical relations (many and varied) but more about geopolitical visions from ‘beyond the horizon’ (Jolly ‘Beyond’). So we might ask, what is the effect of such naming and framing, what happens when Asia and the Pacific are so conjugated by a connecting hyphen?

Perceptions of the Pacific in Australia’s foreign policy in the Howard years were dominated by geopolitical questions about national and regional security, especially in those countries proximate to Australia which some dub ‘the arc of
instability’ (see May et al) or portray as ‘failing’ or ‘failed’ states. Greg Fry (‘A
Coming Age’, Whose Oceania) has offered a critique of such an approach and
has also advocated an approach to regionalism in which Australia might assume
a less hubristic and agonistic posture. He observes that the processes of
region-building and of state-building have been complicit in the colonial and
postcolonial periods, and thus regionalism is not so much an alternative to state
forms, but a parallel development, albeit with increased velocity since 2001.
The idea of the Pacific region is for him materialised in regional organisations
like the Pacific Community, based in Nouméa and the Pacific Islands Forum and
the University of the South Pacific, both based in Suva. But, as Fry insists,
regionalism is not just confined to those organisations which are congregations
of states, but is articulated in broader social movements, embracing NGOs and
church groups, human rights activists and environmentalists, and in the work
of scholars, artists and performers (cf. Bryant-Tokalau and Frazer).

Moreover, contending visions of the Pacific pose the crucial question of ‘whose
Oceania?’ (Fry Whose Oceania). Behind the seeming unanimity of the 2004
Auckland declaration by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders of a prophetic ‘Pacific
plan’ he discerns large differences. At one extreme are Australian-led initiatives
to deepen regional integration predicated on the idea of Australia’s ‘special
responsibility’ to lead and the security imperative of the ‘war on terror’. At the
other is a model proposed by Pacific leaders which valorises good governance,
redressing poverty and deeper regional participation. For Fry, these contending
visions have divergent moral and political legitimacy. His analysis again
highlights the ambiguous and ambivalent perception of Australia, as in but not
of the region (Whose Oceania).

But the dominant frame continues to be that of ‘Asia-Pacific’, in which Australia
assumes a special responsibility to lead and not ‘Oceania’ where Australia might
adopt a more modest position as an integral part of the region. It will be
interesting to see what the recent election of the Rudd government will mean
in terms of a different orientation to the Pacific. Early signs—especially the
appointment of Duncan Kerr as Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Islands Affairs,
and Rudd’s visit to PNG in March 2008—augur well. But rather then speculate
about the likely future directions of Australia’s foreign policy, aid and
development in the region which others are far better qualified to do, I now
ponder the rival labels of Asia-Pacific and Oceania as frames for the visual and
performing arts, by comparing the Asia-Pacific Triennials at the Queensland Art
Gallery in Brisbane and the Oceania Arts Centre in Suva, inspired and headed
by Epeli Hau‘ofa.
The Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art at the Queensland Art Gallery

The exhibition of cosmopolitan contemporary artists at the Asia-Pacific Triennials of Contemporary Art (APTs), from 1993 to 2006, is one of the more public and perduing attempts to envision ‘Asia-Pacific’ from an Australian perspective. Reaching out to the Pacific has perhaps been easier from Brisbane because of Queensland’s geographical proximity and colonial history: Torres Straits Islanders, South Sea Islanders, and migrants from New Zealand, Tonga and Samoa are part of large Pacific communities (some recently organised in a group called ‘Pan-Pacific Oceania’). The art selected for APTs was perforce ‘contemporary’ and came primarily from the vibrant Oceanic arts scene in Aotearoa New Zealand (especially John Pule, Michael Parekowhai, Michael Tuffery and Gordon Walters, see Thomas, *Oceanic Art*) and from Papua New Guinea (Michael Mel, Wendy Choulai). The inclusion of textiles created by women within this rubric of ‘contemporary art’ was problematic for some, but was especially prominent in 2006, in the superb Pacific Textile Project curated by Maud Page (see catalogue essays by Thomas, Page, Jeffries and Teaiwa in Seear and Raffell *The 5th Asia-Pacific*, 24-31, 172-183). These textiles included quilts by Aline Amaru from Tahiti, Emma Tamaril from the Marquesas, Tungane Broadbent and Tekauvai Teariki Monga from the Cook Islands, Gussie R. Bento and Deborah (Kepola) U Kakalia from Hawai‘i, and woven pandanus textiles and baskets by Finau Mara from Fiji, Susana Kaafi from Tonga and Sivamauga Vaagi from Samoa, along with many unidentified textile artists. In 2006 these art works were complemented by a series of superb films by Sima Urale, a filmmaker of Samoan ancestry living in New Zealand (as part of an innovative cinema program created by Kathryn Weir) and a number of performances, floor talks and discussions by artists.

There is much to applaud about the Asia-Pacific Triennials and the selection and the display of Oceanic art has been particularly exciting and vibrant. Yet there are important questions posed by the regional frame. Francis Maravillas earlier argued apropos the ‘cartographies of the future’ of the fourth APT at the Queensland Art Gallery, that the missing third term, hidden under the hyphen, was Australia. The ‘curatorial imaginary’ was for him less characterised by regional liaison and exchange and more by a presumption of Australia ‘as a privileged curatorial subject, actively defining the conditions of regional dialogue and exchange, and its place at the centre of it’ (‘Cartographies’). Exhibition strategies rendered ‘invisible the power and privilege’ of Australians in assembling and legitimising works of contemporary Asian art. Similar tough questions have been posed apropos the fifth APT by Michelle Antoinette (‘On Collecting’). Earlier Antoinette (*Images*), radically deconstructed the language of regionalism, arguing that South East Asian arts on display at APTs and elsewhere have been unduly seen through the lens of region, ethnicity and
biography, occluding other themes—pre-eminently body, mobility and memory—and even neglecting the aesthetic potency of the works as art.

These questions posed by Maravillas and Antoinette about Asian art at APTs can be extended, perhaps more forcefully, to Oceanic art. The fifth Asia-Pacific Triennial and the superb new Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA), where many treasures of previous Triennials are exhibited, makes this question even more timely (see Figure 3). Oceanic art was highlighted in 2006; indeed the John Pule work *Tutalagi tukumuitea (Forever and ever)* features on the catalogue cover. But rather than focus on the aesthetic potency of works in APT5 by Pule and Parekowhai whose engagement with critical questions about European colonialism, Christianity, migration and memory, imperial power and translation, has been much discussed, I focus on the beauty and the power of textiles created by Pacific women and displayed in Brisbane in 2006.

*Figure 3: Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA), Brisbane*

Across Oceania, textiles are, as Teresia Teaiwa (‘Keeping Faith’) proclaims, ‘precious things’, wherein the value of women’s creative work with threads and fibres is celebrated. Women textile artists are thereby keeping ‘faith’ both with their Christianity and indigenous cultural values. Different forms and styles signal diverse cultural origins—Hawai‘i, Tahiti, Samoa, Fiji, the Cook Islands—but all these textiles alike embody and reflect upon the creolisation of indigenous and exogenous in the course of colonial history and Christian conversion. Indigenous fibres—like pandanus, bleached and/or dyed, plaited
or looped, and bark beaten into *tapa* and dyed or decorated—were conjoined with novel forms—stitching cotton and silk with needle and thread and knitting or knotting wool (see Jolly ‘Of the Same Cloth’). But these conjunctions were not always benign hybrids. Introduced forms were often appropriated for Indigenous purposes and foreign genres deployed to anti-colonial ends.

Let us look at one example, the Hawaiian quilt, in which ‘techniques originally taught by American missionaries have been adapted to create inimitable textiles that appear to pulsate’ (Page, 172). The high-ranking women who were taught quilting by New England missionary women from the 1820s quickly transformed the dominant techniques of patchwork and the preferred motifs (snowflakes, log cabins). They favoured geometric patterns akin to indigenous *tapa* or dramatic representations of the sacred fertility of land and indigenous flora (breadfruit, taro, pandanus), created by folding and cutting to a template design, often using a striking palette of two coloured cloths (e.g. red on white, green on white, purple on gold). Like indigenous *tapa*, Hawaiian quilts were not just icons of cosy Christian conjugality but embodied the *mana* of ali‘i nobility and especially the monarchy. The royal coat of arms was woven into nineteenth-century Hawaiian quilts and even became a sign of resistance when Queen Lili‘uokalani was overthrown by American interests in 1893. As well as signing petitions for the return of the monarchy, Hawaiian women gathered around the Queen to create a giant silk patchwork quilt, emblazoned with their names and declarations of loyalty to royalty. Deborah (Kepola) U Kakalia’s stunning gold and purple quilt from 1993, displayed as part of APT5 in Brisbane, titled simply *Lili‘uokalani*, evokes the poignant moment of the overthrow a century before, with central images of crowns and feathered standards, and an eight point star representing the Queen’s husband, all framed by the Queen’s favourite flowers of milkwood and fluttering fans (see Figure 4). This is not just a nostalgic lament for a lost past but an affirmation of sovereignty sentiments in opposition to the United States in a contested present.

Postcolonial cultural politics in practices of creolisation are apparent across a range of genres. From its inception the APT has included Oceanic cultural performances and more recently film screenings alongside exhibitions of paintings, sculptures and textiles. In Oceanic cultural festivals, the embodied art of dance has often been more important than exhibitions of visual arts detached from the body. Typically this has involved performances from dance groups from diverse islands, but as the history of the Festivals of Pacific Arts (previously South Pacific Arts Festivals every four years from 1972-2004) evinces these have not always been benign performances of regionalism (Hereniko, ‘Dancing Oceania’). ‘Disunity in diversity’ has been enacted in debates about authenticity and the appropriation of dance styles between islands. But, as Vilsoni Hereniko has shown, cross-cultural exchange and creolisation long evident in the visual arts and in Pacific literatures (see Hereniko and Wilson,
Inside-Out), are now increasingly apparent in dance, most notably in the Oceania Dance Company based at the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture in Suva, to which I now move.

![Hawaiian quilt by Deborah (Kepola) U Kakalia. Collection: Bishop Museum Honolulu. Image courtesy of Bishop Museum Honolulu.](image)

**Figure 4: Liliʻuokalani (1993)**

**The Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture in Suva**

In contrast with the large, superb and costly edifice of Brisbane’s new Gallery of Modern Art, the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture at the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Suva is a small if elegant and airy structure (see Figure 5). It is a sign of the differential wealth of Australia and the burgeoning business of art in this capital of Queensland, as against the relative lack of resources for such projects in Fiji, whose small and struggling commodity economy has been
further weakened by the political turbulence of several coups from 1987 to December 2006. As Hereniko notes, the Oceania Centre was established in 1997 and Epeli Hau’ofa appointed Director only after several years of institutional struggle (‘Dancing Oceania’). The administration of USP had a minimal interest in the development of arts and culture as against the formal academic programs where Hau’ofa had taught politics and development studies in the past. He was supported only by a program assistant and a part-time cleaner and allocated only a tiny budget for development. So, given the material constraints, the achievements of the Centre over a decade have been remarkable (see White ‘Foreword’).

Figure 5: Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture, University of the South Pacific, Suva

Much of this has been due to Hau’ofa’s visionary leadership: the Centre embodies in aesthetic practice the vision of Oceania which Hau’ofa first developed in the several theoretical texts discussed above. Hau’ofa criticised how the expression of Pacific multiculturalism at USP too often emphasised cultural differences rather than affinities and cultural exchanges (‘Epilogue’). In accordance with this philosophy, he advocated more mingling and exchange of cultural forms, rather than an array of arts which articulated essentialised ethnic identities. He thus moved beyond a ‘unity in diversity model’ of Pacific cultures to foster exchange between Pacific peoples at the University of the South Pacific: indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian, Solomon Islanders, Samoans, Tongans,
ni-Vanuatu, Banabans and so forth and fostered a community of artists working between the several genres of visual arts, music, dance and literature (see Figure 6).²

Let me offer some impressions of an exemplary performance designed by choreographer Allan Alo for the conference Vaka Vuku held at the University of the South Pacific in Suva in July 2006. In a statement in the final plenary of that event Allan celebrated his unique faʻafafine³ identity, as neither male nor female, loved and respected by his Samoan family and his community, not denigrated as are some who cross genders in the West. We saw a video of the several painful days in which he acquired his pe’a, the tatau iconic of hegemonic Samoan masculinity and cultural survival. Yet, in the final dance performances which he choreographed we witnessed the creative creolisation of Celtic and Pacific forms, in stunning, zesty moves, which flowed effortlessly from River Dance to the Oceanic (see Figure 7). They concluded with a brilliant dance by women dressed in white, men dressed in black and other more ‘feminised’ men, in the middle, in sinuous silver sulus. Dance styles alternated between masculine, feminine, and faʻafine modes, with suggestive brushings and conjugations
between different couples. The remarkable erotic energy, fluidity and virtuosity thrilled the audience. Sitting amongst a packed audience Epeli Hau’ofa nodded with approving relish.4

Figure 7: Oceania Dance Company performing Fenua, September 2006

So we see in these two contexts the embodied materialisation of two contending visions, one in Brisbane framed by ‘Asia-Pacific’ and the other in Suva by ‘Oceania’. The contrast suggests how rival regional frames can influence how works of art are created, seen and interpreted. It also reveals significant differences between the two contexts. In the first Australia assumes a strong and well-resourced authority, even responsibility, to bring together art from the Asian and Pacific regions, including Australia and New Zealand. Whether the sequence of the Asia-Pacific Triennials has also catalysed significant exchanges or collaborations between Asian and Pacific artists beyond their congregation every three years is a question that might be asked and further researched. In the more modest circumstances of Suva, regional relations were rather constructed between Oceanic peoples, without Australian curatorial mediation or funding, and the stress was firmly on collaboration and mutual exchange.
Narrative Threads in a World of Texts

But you might ask how do such aesthetic performances by Pacific people relate to Connell’s arguments in *Southern Theory*? Clearly performative utterances in silken threads and sinuous bodies in dance cannot engage in the ‘sustained argument and systematic critique’ nor the ‘communication of complex social knowledge across planetary distances’ (xii), which for Connell is the hallmark of social theory. I am, of course, not suggesting that such artifacts or performances are akin to scholarly texts nor that they are aspiring to articulate meta-narratives of global relevance, as do some social theories. Yet ideas about what it is to be human and what ‘culture’ or ‘the social’ means in a post (or neo?) colonial and globalised world were surely subtexts of these materialisations. Moreover, such vivid examples of artistic creativity reaffirm what Connell’s text highlights, that being ‘peripheral’ does not entail passivity or powerlessness and that material poverty sometimes co-exists with cultural vibrancy and intellectual élan. Moreover, in witnessing these visual arts and performances in both Brisbane and Suva, I learnt from artists and audiences engaged in passionate and self-conscious reflection, perhaps in languages that are accessible more widely than those of scholars like us who are most at home in a world of texts.

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The South in Southern Theory: Antipodean Reflections on the Pacific


**Notes**

1 This downplays the wealth of oral, visual and embodied knowledge as cumulative rather than critical and reflexive, oddly denigrating both non-literate cultures and the importance of such modes of knowing in audio-visual and global electronic media.

2 Given that Fiji has not even embraced multiculturalism this move towards mixing seems both provocative and optimistic. One of the extraordinary features of Fiji’s colonial history has been the ideological suppression of the realities of mixing between peoples: Europeans and Fijians, Chinese and Fijians, even Indians and Fijians. But perhaps in his prophetic way by plotting mixtures of the imagination, minglings in the domain of beautiful things, Hau’ofa may also be advancing the prospect of a mixing of peoples in Fiji, a transculturalism which goes further than any multiculturalism imagined to date.

3 *Fa’afa‘afine* means ‘acting like a woman’ in Samoan and refers to gender liminal persons born men but acting as women. It parallels Tongan *faka‘leti* analysed by Besnier.
This paragraph repeats a paragraph in my Introduction to a volume on Oceanic masculinities, where this is told in another context (Jolly ‘Moving Masculinities’).

Both Thomas (‘Our History’) and Jeffries (‘Texts and Textiles’) read these textiles as texts, narrating cultural histories and propounding identifications through threads of narrative. Jeffries (‘Texts and Textiles’, 180) notes that text and textile alike derive from the Latin texere, to weave. See Jolly, ‘Of the Same Cloth’, for a critical consideration.
REVIEWS
Book culture without books?

*The Book is Dead (Long Live the Book)*
By Sherman Young
ISBN 978-0-86840-804-0

Reviewed by David Carter

It seems appropriate to be writing this in Tokyo where a recent bestseller list showed that five of the year’s most successful novels, including the top three, were first written to be read on mobile phones before being republished in book form. One has already gone to film. Written in screen-size chunks and chapters that can be finished in the time it takes to go from one Tokyo metro station to the next, their success has provoked a predictable division of opinion: they’re symptomatic of the death of real reading among the young or they’re the very thing most likely to promote reading among those who might otherwise have little interest in books. ‘The book is dead; long live the book’ indeed.

Sherman Young is not in the least afraid of the irony of writing a book about the death of the book. And as his argument shows along its course, it’s only an irony if you don’t get the point: the point, in this case, being just where we are in the intersecting histories of publishing, communication and entertainment technologies and their markets. The book explains its own logic for existing as a book but also the limitations of appearing in this form (and as that rare thing, an Australian trade hardback). So there’s a logic, too, in the book’s closing invitation to join the author and his readers in continuing the debate on the accompanying website (www.thebookisdead.com).

Although many of its arguments are familiar from the genre in both its utopian and dystopian forms, Young’s book is not another death-of-the-book book. And despite his enthusiasm for much of what digital media can do, neither is it another techno-liberation treatise. It argues against the book as object so as to make an even stronger case for the book as a ‘machine for reading’, an ‘ideas machine’. It is unapologetic, but not nostalgic, about asserting a values discourse in favour of the cultural significance of what books do or should do or once did in sustaining ‘the human conversation’ through what Young calls ‘book culture’.

The book’s thesis can be put simply: in order to save the book, the book must be killed off. In other words, in order to save and reinvigorate the valuable things about writing and reading that books (some books) have traditionally sustained, the fixation with the book as physical object, with the bound codex of ink on paper, must be left behind. ‘By killing the physical object of the book,
you breathe new life into the book itself’ (102); ‘the way to save the book is to kill the object, and replace it’ (127).

In many ways this is a simple argument. What makes it more complex is the deep anchorage of the pre-conceptions it must overcome; and the need to steer a clear line between digital optimism and bookish pessimism, between click and clique. Young has a workable knowledge of both publishing and digital media and a serious enthusiasm for what both can do, a combination pretty rare in the death-of-the-book debate but probably much less so in the real world. And central to the argument is that we do away with the opposition between books and digital forms to begin with.

Young’s starting point is the assertion that printed books no longer sit at the centre of our culture and that book reading seems to be in terminal decline. Yes, more books are being published, books are more readily available, and book sales are up. But compared to the range of other media, books are marginal to what shapes the culture. And in any case the majority of books being published ‘are more “anti-book” than book’ (more on that distinction later). ‘Take away the ghost-written sports autobiographies, ignore the celebrity cookbooks and cynical movie tie-ins. Bin the self-help books and the cash register stocking fillers. What’s left? Not a lot.’ (6-7). Although absolute sums for book purchases look impressive, take out the educational market and the stocking fillers and the figures don’t look half so flash. And even if they were, a large proportion of the books sold today ‘are not meant to be read’ (52). Publishers are no longer interested in moving ideas into the public realm, only moving objects into the marketplace (they happen to be printed book objects). The economics of the publishing and bookselling sectors today make this almost inevitable as long as the book object (its printing, binding, shipping and storage) remains the central focus of the industry.

If this sounds like the familiar decline-from-the-golden-age-of-book-culture narrative, what’s original about Young’s argument is that it resists reading the decline of the book as we know it as the end of civilisation as we know it (well, it might be the end of parts of civilisation as we know it, but it’s more about transformation than general decline).

On the one hand, he’s able to survey the wide range of digital technologies to draw lessons for the future of the book. There are things that the internet, blogs, wikis, and the rest are very good at doing—providing continuous updates, creating new forms of ‘public writing’ for new (kinds of) writers, offering instant and cumulative interactive texts. But there have also been plenty of digital dead ends, and there are things the new media doesn’t do well at all.

On the other hand, there are things books do well. Young defines in order to defend just what it is about books or ‘book culture’ that is valuable. Thus while the book as an object is dead, ‘its place in the cultural milieu is essential and
must be protected’ (20). A blog is not a book—not better or worse, just a different
kind of medium, allowing or demanding different kinds of writing and reading
capacities.

If what makes the internet so powerful is speed, timeliness and the
‘democratisation’ of production, books are essentially about slowing down time
and establishing authority. Writing books, whatever the genre, is hard work.
It takes time and research. ‘Ultimately, books are about time; about slowing
things down and forcing readers to slow down with them.’ (41)

The process of writing (or more to the point, of reading, thinking and
writing) is the journey that must be made to reach the destination.
Authority does not come from merely having an idea. Authority, in book
culture, is bestowed on someone because they have authored something.

... Books are creative acts whose only constraints are imposed by the
author. As such, they are a retreat to the slow; to the thoughtful and
reflective in an otherwise frenetic world. (82)

And yes, for this process to keep happening we still need publishers. Editors
turn raw ideas and rough texts into books, which turn writers into authors (104).
Publishers provide a kind of validation different from the forms of validation
opening up in the new media.

But none of this makes the physical printed book object a necessity (indeed, the
qualities that editing can bring to books, Young suggests, are largely missing
from contemporary book publishing). The limitations of the book object in the
context of present markets and technologies can only impede the reinvigoration
of ‘book culture’. Although printed books will not disappear—Young offers a
very clear-eyed account of the survival and ‘re-purposing’ of older technologies
alongside the transformative power of the new—the future for books is an
e-future in publishing, archiving, distribution and bookselling.

Book history as a discipline is not Young’s major strength, less so than media
tistory. The claim that publishers are no longer interested in ideas only in moving
objects is the kind of over-statement loose enough to be more than a bit true
and more than a bit misleading at the same time. While exceptions are
acknowledged, it scarcely stands up as good history, as a substantial account of
structural changes in publishing, bookselling, or reading. Nor can it account for
the new kinds of life book culture keeps finding. Young is uncertain about
whether it was ever all that different, whether or not most books were always
‘anti-books’, whether or not the mythical golden age was mythical, and just
when the big change in publishing culture and reading habits occurred, twenty,
fifty, or perhaps a hundred years back. These are constitutively difficult
questions—there’s never a moment in the modern history of publishing when
it wasn’t primarily commercial—and the opposition between ‘culture’ and
'commerce' is probably the least helpful way of attempting to answer them. In a different kind of book, the more sweeping claims about publishing made here would probably risk collapsing the argument. But if we read the broad history as being less about galloping commercialism than the changing place of the printed book within a rapidly expanding range of alternative forms of entertainment, information-provision and intellectual enquiry, and if we’re prepared to go with book’s polemical, accessible, provocative style, then, for the sake of the larger argument, I’m happy to let the generalisations pass (and to promise myself to slow down with the book’s arguments at another time). Similarly it would be easy to challenge Young’s definition of ‘book culture’, relying as it does on defining the majority of books published today (and perhaps always) as ‘anti-books’. Real books are the ones that contribute to the conversations about how we live, to ideas, values, debate. Personally I’d want to make an argument about the way that the self-help, travel, cuisine, interior decoration and other lifestyle books share the contemporary function of the ‘good books’, the classy literary fiction, memoirs, biographies and histories, that we find them next to in the ‘good book stores’. And if we look back to the early twentieth century we find book culture constituted as much by the ephemeral bestsellers as by the literary classics. But perhaps that’s part of Young’s point: this broad, heterogeneous, public book culture—not just the minority culture of classics and moderns—is what’s disappeared. Again the concept is workable for the purposes of the argument. Young needs it in order to separate ‘book culture’ (the ideas) from ‘print culture’ (the objects), but he’s happy to leave the borders of the former term vague and open to question. It’s not particularly about defending Literature or traditional high culture forms. Young acknowledges that e books and other screen based reading platforms haven’t yet succeeded in reproducing the printed book’s readability but argues, by analogy with other areas (music recording, telephony, photography), that this is no reason for concluding that the technical problems won’t be solved. ‘Technological changes take longer than we expect, but with an impact that can be greater than imagined’ (140). Just as the introduction of the iPod and iTunes was the tipping point for music, a similar tipping point for the printed book can be imagined. So too for the ‘heavenly library’: all books always available, on screen or through some version of print on demand (Young sees the kind of POD future as envisioned by Jacob Epstein and others as only one small part of the larger revolution of the book). The hurdles might ultimately be cultural rather than technical: our attachment to the physical book, and our sense that books are cheap, portable, readily accessible and permanent. Young challenges each of these preconceptions — a paperback is cheaper than a laptop, but add up the costs of those books on your shelves… And think about just how far we have already gone down the digital
pathway. Most printed books are now just one ephemeral manifestation of a digital file, and the digital is where its permanence resides. An enormous amount of scholarly communication is now digital—like AHR—even if our institutions sometimes struggle with the fact. Wikipedia, as Young points out, has not proven to be the recipe for chaos predicted but an extraordinarily comprehensive, reasonably reliable, frequently corrected resource, one that stands the comparison with authoritative print equivalents.

Printed books will continue and not merely as antiquarian collectibles in so far as they still have utility, readability, marketability and authority. New media forms for the most part don’t replace existing forms (think of radio) but they do shuffle their place and purpose in the cultural field. Indeed The Book is Dead shows the capacity for the printed book itself to be renewed. It is released under UNSW Press’s new ‘New South’ imprint as a shortish, stylish hardback, on good stock, and with a cool, minimalist design, its essay-ish form—it has more ‘maybes’ than you’d get away with in a PhD—itself I think influenced by new media modes. It shows what smart publishers can do while still behaving like traditional publishers (though I do object to the use of the American ‘math’; we do ‘maths’!). While I’m probably more sceptical than Young about the potential for the new technologies to produce dramatic changes in reading and writing practices, or rather to produce an expanded, democratised and reinvigorated book culture rather than just more of the same, I suspect he’s more right than wrong about the future of the printed book.

David Carter is currently Visiting Professor in the Centre for Pacific and American Studies at the University of Tokyo on leave from his day job at the University of Queensland. He has recently published Making Books: Contemporary Australian Publishing (UQP 2007), edited with Anne Galligan.
On the beaten track

*The Ways of the Bushwalker: On Foot in Australia*
By Melissa Harper
University of New South Wales Press, 368pp, $32.95, 2007.
ISBN 978-0-86840-968-9

Reviewed by Paul Gillen

Walking, if noticed at all, is usually assumed to be a more or less incidental, unproblematic aspect of some seemingly weightier topic like tourism, exploration, pilgrimage, sport, poetry and so on. Understanding it as a distinct subject with a history of its own is a recent development, perhaps no more than two decades old. The majestic peak of this new genre is Rebecca Solnit’s *Wanderlust*. Solnit discusses walking from evolutionary, spiritual, philosophical, literary, political, artistic and architectural perspectives. Her history encompasses a *Paradise Lost* of recreational walking, from its rise with the Romantic Movement in the second half of the eighteenth-century to its suburban fall in the second half of the twentieth. Melissa Harper zooms in on a small sector of this big picture—the Australian, non-urban, recreational one—but traces the same pattern of ascent and decline. She is sensitive to the wider context of ideas that have shaped the very existence of ‘walking’ as a worthwhile field of study but for the most part sticks to straight historical narrative. And she engages with some aspects of walking that have largely escaped notice; especially notable is her focus on sexuality.

Like many books about walking, *The Ways of the Bushwalker* is itself like a walk, and self-consciously so. The track it follows is more of a scenic ramble than a grand expedition. Harper is a cheerful, chatty companion. She is eager to show us around but does not burden us with tendentious opinions or too much information, although she does have a weakness for amateur psychologising, and her style is sometimes a little breathy for me. ‘The pant-suit caused quite a stir in the small mountain community [of Mount Buffalo in the early 1900s]’, Harper hypothesises of one Alice Manfield, ‘but Alice secretly enjoyed incredulous looks’ (22). Later she tells us, obscurely, that ‘Brereton and Grainger’s recollections [of their experiences of the bush as boys] are decidedly romantic and it is crucial to ask how much their representation of an Edenic childhood experience came from a desire to stress a persona that was more appropriate to their adult selves’ (95).

Many curious things divert the reader along the way. In 1788, a little bunch of men strides away from Port Jackson for a few nights of camping out, armed with
some salt meat, a brace of muskets, and ‘a Bottle of O be joyful’. A century later, John Monash takes a train from Melbourne to explore Mt Buffalo. Dot Butler, barefoot and wearing very short shorts, strides across the landscape. If you peer behind a bush, you might catch Havelock Ellis ejaculating—but let us move on, our leader does not wish to seem like a voyeur. We find ourselves held up by a horde of randy young plodders on one of the popular 1930s mystery hikes and intrepid wilderness-seekers scale awesome Tasmanian peaks. Through much of the book, Miles Dunphy and Marie Byles crusade tirelessly for national parks.

The term ‘bushwalking’ was not coined until the 1920s. Its heyday as an iconically Australian activity occurred in the following decades, coinciding with the heightened communitarian fervour and pursuit of self-discipline that accompanied the political and economic crises of the first half of the twentieth century: compulsory schooling, athletics, exercise and dieting regimes, temperance laws, tighter immigration controls, xenophobia, militarisation, totalitarianism and organisations intended to instil social responsibility and loyalty in children. (Incidentally, the Boy Scouts probably deserved more attention from Harper as a major source of recruits for bushwalking clubs and of widespread knowledge of bushcraft. Unfortunately, while there are some good studies of scouting in other countries, the Australian branch of the movement has received little attention from academics).¹

Bushwalking is chiefly a twentieth century phenomenon, but nearly half of The Ways of Bushwalker is set in the nineteenth. Apart from the intrinsic interest of the earlier material, Harper has another justification for this bias: she wants to show that bushwalking has longer, deeper and more complex roots than is often recognised. At the same time, her treatment is necessarily selective and shaped by the nature of the archive. Women walkers are well represented, although perhaps more could have been made of their common parodying of bushwalking men and the male bushwalking ethos, described in Allison Cadzow’s doctoral thesis Waltzing Matildas. The south-eastern states predominate: people began to bushwalk in them earlier, and there have always been more people there. With some exceptions, like the south-west corner, neither the terrain nor the climate of the rest of the continent is as pleasant for walkers and campers.

Harper distinguishes bushwalking as a modern leisure pursuit premised on escape from urban life, which is why Aboriginal people before colonisation, who walked in the bush all the time, never bushwalked: ‘walking in the bush for pleasure was a European concept. Indeed, it became a crucial marker of what Europeans confidently thought of as civilisation’ (xiii). This approach means having to enforce a separation of bushwalking from walking in the bush for reasons of travel, work, pilgrimage and so on, a distinction that Harper admits is ‘blurry’ (91).
Actually, the very idea of leisure—‘spare’, or as the French say, ‘lost time’—is implicated with modernity and with an economy that pays for working time. A leisure pursuit is an attempt to reclaim time, to put lost time to good use. But the desire to escape civilisation is not confined to modernity: for thousands of years people went out from towns and cities to discover spiritual insights and to have visions, and also to hunt and kill wild animals for pleasure. Chinese literati sought refuge from the demands of court life in bamboo shacks shrouded in mountain mists, and legendary Indian princes wandered in forests before returning to win back their kingdoms. Such escapes are often played in a religious key, but in Australia the abstract, rationalising Protestant traditions of most of the settlers impeded the sacralisation of the colonial landscape. As a recent article in Australian Geographer shows, many recent immigrants—especially Buddhists and Daoists—have proved less inhibited in re-enchanting Australian nature.

Romanticism, like Protestantism, tends to resist endowing specific landscape features or species with enchantment. If anything is to be sacred, let it be Nature as a holistic abstraction. This is what Solnit calls the ‘artificially natural’ (Solnit 119); it is not what people usually do with nature, not what they do ‘naturally’. What Romanticism most values in our experience of nature is essentially passive. In the wilderness we ‘walk through and look at’. Romantic nature is ‘not invested with the human’ (Solnit 174). This is the informing ideal of Harper’s ‘real’ bushwalking: getting off the beaten track, as far as possible from other human beings, taking nothing to or from the bush (i).

The Ways of the Bushwalker is no circular walk. In the final chapter we arrive at a place we know well: the here and now, with its camp fire arguments about sandshoes versus walking shoes, battles between conservationists and four wheel drive enthusiasts, the environmental impact of large numbers of walkers and campers, newspaper controversy about the costs of finding lost bushwalkers, and ‘the complex philosophical tangle’ (301) over wilderness and land rights. In approaching these questions, Harper worries about the elitism of ‘real’ bushwalkers. Her impulses are democratic and favour human flourishing over the biological kind. She leaves us pondering: how can these ideals be realised in an era of ecological disaster?

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**Notes**

Public intellectuals and their publics

*Speaking Truth to Power: Public Intellectuals Rethink New Zealand*
Edited by Laurence Simmons

*Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual*
Edited by Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly
ISBN 0-522-85356-0

Reviewed by Anne Maxwell

*Speaking Truth to Power: Public Intellectuals Rethink New Zealand* sets out to establish and investigate the current intellectual climate, both academic and public, in New Zealand. Over the last 20–30 years, this western country has undergone extensive free market reform and, along with Australia, corporatisation of its tertiary education sector. Edited by Laurence Simmons—an Associate Professor in Film, Television and Media Studies from Auckland University who has an impressive breadth of expertise (post-structuralist theory, psychoanalytic theory, New Zealand art, photography, film and Television, and Italian Cinema)—the book features three long essays by academics and 10 interviews with eminent New Zealanders, all of whom have spoken out publicly on New Zealand social issues. The essays are by Roger Horrocks (Film and Television studies), Stephen Turner (Literary criticism) and Ian Sharp (Political Studies). Those interviewed have made an often controversial impact in the academic as well as the broader public sector. For example, the collection includes Brian Easton, a well-known newspaper and television journalist and Lloyd Geering, an Emeritus Professor of Religious Studies, who faced charges of doctrinal error and heresy in the courts after he wrote two extremely controversial articles on ‘The Resurrection of Jesus’ and ‘The Immortality of the Soul’. There is also Jane Kelsey, author of arguably the most devastating critique of Rogernomics and passionate critic of free market trade, Marilyn Waring, a professor of public policy and a former National Government MP who entered parliament at the age of 22 and later published books on feminism and human rights, leading historian and biographer Michael King, James Belich a Professor of History who wrote *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict*, the celebrated poet and novelist Ian Wedde, former Professor of Maori Studies and author of books on Maori politics and activism Ranganui...
Walker, feminist investigative journalist Sandra Coney and Nicky Hager, the investigative journalist who exposed several recent Government cover-ups.

The first essay is Horrock’s sombre yet incisive account of the profoundly negative treatment that those who work in the university sector and the art world have historically received in New Zealand at the hands of one of its ancient but still ‘ruling repressions’—anti-intellectualism. This vision is followed by Turner’s immensely witty but also cutting account of the ‘dog-like’ status that, as he sees it, is the lot of academics and some intellectuals today. This piece cleverly teases out the contradictions that underlie the discourse of the anti-intellectual establishment in New Zealand while along the way coining some handy terms such as ‘the new university’ and ‘the anti-intellectual intellectual’.

The third essay is Ian Sharp’s more measured and informative account of Bruce Jesson, arguably New Zealand’s most dedicated Marxist intellectual. While not denying the embattled state of New Zealand intellectuals, Sharp nevertheless reminds readers of Jesson’s observation that the neo-liberal revolution that began around 1984 and which saw the emergence of right-wing governments, also gave birth to a class of intellectuals who were prepared to remain silent. This is how Sharp describes Jesson’s position:

This, too, was the fundamental flaw he saw in the intellectual classes of New Zealand. The politically committed knew and cared little about the alien forces that were controlling them. The rest—in the universities, the professions, and the civil service—were mere technicians … They kept their heads down and sustained the status quo… Jesson’s charge against New Zealand’s intellectuals was even more serious. They gave their compatriots nothing at all: no idea of what the vibrant political life of a republic of equals could be; no respect for intellectual systems of any kind; above all no understanding of the economic relationships that made a life of republican equality so difficult and the triumph of free market dogma so easy. When the neo-liberal revolution arrived they were silent (82-83).

Although ostensibly about the status of contemporary New Zealand intellectuals, these three opening essays provide us with a rich understanding of the history of intellectualism in New Zealand and its historical relation to the democratic values that were originally advanced by the country’s early statesmen, themselves considered leading public intellectuals in their day. It is therefore ironic that in reading these accounts one is continually struck by the amount of sheer vitriol that is regularly and systematically showered at intellectuals, especially by self-acclaimed spokespeople for the broader community, the so-called ‘ordinary bloke in the street’—and by many leading figures in the media. As Horrocks observes, much of this can be explained by ‘The traditional strain of egalitarianism in New Zealand culture’, a culture that has ‘constantly linked
intellectual activity with social “elitism”, such that ‘decades of left-wing thinking have made intellectuals very prone to guilt feelings on that score’ (36). But if this is the case, then it would seem that between 1900 and the present day something happened to drive a wedge between the intellectuals and the broader community, and that something has to do with a perceived elitism. In his introduction, Simmons points to what he sees as the main culprit behind this change, namely the growing specialisation of knowledge and expertise which culminated in the sharp cultural turn toward theory that was a feature of the 1970s and 80s. This process—a world-wide phenomenon—led to a feeling of public disempowerment and consequent feelings of resentment and a demand for a language of ‘common sense’.

If the essays tend to give the reader a rather gloomy vision of intellectual life in New Zealand, then the interviews are more uplifting. This is the case even though several of the interviewees (Ranganui Walker, Marilyn Waring, Jane Kelsey, and James Belich) are academics. This is especially true of the history writers and Maori intellectuals and this, perhaps, also reflects a more widespread receptivity to these groups in the current, bicultural climate. The more upbeat nature of the interviews may also be to do with discussion of activism. Several of the interviewees are involved in community programs designed to better the lot of Maori and other minorities. This sector comes across as more optimistic than the grim environment of the corporatized university, where there are now fewer publishing outlets for discussion of pedagogic practice and critical debate (New Zealand’s The Listener was the last journal to publish cultural criticism that was aimed at a broader audience and that was recently purchased by the Fairfax group with the consequence that it now publishes only television programs). Creating some confusion is the lack of definition regarding who does and does not count as an intellectual, especially given the mix of academic and non-academic interviewees. Further, while in many of the essays and interviews, terms like intellectual and academic are elided, Jesson makes a clear distinction between the terms in his essay.

On the other hand, Simmons succeeds in imparting coherence and cohesion to the collection by having his subjects reflect on the experiences that have made them want to speak out on public issues, together with their views on the forces both contributing to and detracting from healthy public debate. In addition, he asks them the following three questions. Firstly, why do so many of the country’s public intellectuals find it difficult to admit that they are intellectuals? Secondly, what effect do they think the increasing corporatisation of the University and the arts sector is likely to have on the democratic freedoms of New Zealanders? And thirdly, why has there been such a strong historical resistance to intellectualism in New Zealand? While each of his subjects responds differently, it is possible to detect an emerging pattern in their answers. All of the respondents seem to agree that the greater their involvement in the broader
community, the more optimistic their feelings about the status of intellectual work in New Zealand.

This brings me to my final observation about *Speaking Truth to Power*, which is that its focus is predominantly pragmatic and is perhaps rather inward-looking. There are few references to non-New Zealand theorists and none of the essays refer to international examples of intellectual practice. Moreover, all of the situations described in the essays are based on local or national events. In some ways, this represents a real strength—the text has a clearly demarcated constituency of readers who are familiar with the names and the events described. In addition, the non-jargonistic style of writing and the minimum number of allusions to international intellectual figures, such as Foucault and Benjamin, means that the book will be read and enjoyed by those both inside and outside academia. Conversely, and despite the fact that writers like Horrocks, Turner and Sharp have made a valiant attempt to inform readers who may not be familiar with the events described and some of the local issues at stake, it also suggests that the book may not travel well. The risk is that readers in other countries, including nearby Australia, will fail to see the universal applicability of many of the problems and dilemmas that New Zealand intellectuals are presently facing.

While Simmon’s book creates strong connections between intellectual and broader community life, Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly’s *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual* situates the public intellectual in relation to the experience of exile. This book—unlike *Speaking Truth to Power*—is more explicitly aimed at an international coterie of scholars and uses a critical discourse that is exclusively academic. There are 14 essays in the collection. Eight of these focus on elaborating and critiquing Said’s model of the public intellectual, while the other six address, respectively, Said’s intellectual fascination with classical music, his importance to critiques of popular culture and the impact that his scholarship has had on analyses of contemporary settler-colonial relations. Significantly, all but two of its 14 essays are by Australian academics, some of who have reputations beyond the university sector. An important feature of the book is its combined breadth of knowledge. This is appropriate given Said’s own intellectual legacy, and his reputation as an intellectual whose authority derived from his valuing of diverse and wide-ranging knowledge rather than narrow specialisation. As the editors’ remark:

> It is an extraordinary testament to the ‘worldliness’ of Said that our volume has crossed many borders in order to rise to the challenge of his textured *oeuvre*, with contributors assessing his impact on fields such as sociology, political activism, literature, humanism, philology, musicology, settler-colonial history, orientalism and popular culture, Internet and media studies, Judaeo-Arabic history and Zionism (Curthoys and Ganguly 1).
However, the fact that the essays span a broad range of disciplines and include questions about Said’s relevance to the increasingly corporate model of the university that reigns today, can arguably also be seen as testimony to the editors’ decision not just to celebrate the ‘inspirational power of Said’s legacy in an Australian settler-colonial context’ (2), but also to interrogate the limits of the public intellectual model that Said represents.

Of the essays that explicate and critique Said’s ideal of the public intellectual, Bill Ashcroft’s ‘Exile and representation: Edward Said as public intellectual’ is memorable for the way it highlights Said’s use of the interstitial cultural space of exile to produce a counter discourse that is at once a ‘counter truth’ and ‘counterpunch’ to the colonial forms of representation that continue to poison US middle Eastern relations today. As Ashcroft observes, representation as a concept may be currently unfashionable among intellectuals, but this is to ignore the main process through which colonial power historically operated and through which it still operates today, as demonstrated by the insuperable power of the US media.

While Ashcroft’s essay is aimed at explicating and defending the model of the public intellectual represented by Said, Saree Makdisi and Gerald Goggin’s essays are notably more equivocal. For Makdisi, a major point of contention with Said’s model of the public intellectual hinges around what he sees as a fundamental contradiction between his ‘high modernist invocation of “the amateur” intellectual fiercely at odds with institutions of power and embodying a unique personal aesthetic, a signature “style” as a romantic, charismatic genius’ (10-11), and the desire to radically reshape society by engaging with the public sphere.

Similarly for Goggin, a major problem lies in the tension between Said’s old-fashioned conception of the heroic intellectual figure and the changed nature of the public sphere. His main question, for example, is ‘how does Said’s work … enable reflection on the Internet’s central role in contemporary public intellectual practice?’ (57) While on the one hand he finds that the internet at many points resembles the sort of public intervention that Said envisages, especially in the form of the casual, quixotic reporting method represented by the blog, there remains the question of how this new technology might be harnessed to the creation of new kinds of social relations.

Two further essays are worth mentioning for the especially valuable accounts they give of Said’s philosophy of Humanism. Curthoys is particularly effective in explaining the pivotal part played by philology in the thinking of Vico, Spitzer and Auerbach—the intellectuals from whom Said claimed to have taken most inspiration. In addition to containing an excellent and detailed account of Auerbach’s concept of Ansatzpunkt, this chapter provides a particularly lucid overview of Vico’s heroic achievements, one which goes a long way towards
explaining what it was about the humanist tradition that caused Said to unfailingly place it at the heart of his own critical practice throughout his entire career. We get a glimpse of the extent of Vico’s importance to Said’s ideal of the public intellectual in sentences like the following: ‘Vico inherited a rhetorical tradition that emphasises an erudite understanding and supple use of linguistic persuasion as a form of practical wisdom’ (163); and, ‘In this respect Vico’s pedagogical and ethical responsibilities require him to revive the fading rhetorical art of prudent discourse and the sociality of topical reasoning in an age of constrictive rationalism.’ (163)

Debjani Ganguly, by contrast, usefully assesses the relevance of Said’s philological and comparative humanism from the vantage point of the post Cold War era, attending in particular to Said’s posthumously published book Humanism and Democratic Criticism. While the essay makes little or no attempt to explain why Said remained such a strong champion of high modernist literature and music, it does a very good job of suggesting the ways in which Said’s revived model of humanism could form the basis of a new kind of translational and philological approach to the reading and study of canonical western texts that has the potential to replace the political dichotomies of Cold War and 9/11 rhetoric with a new rhetoric of global interconnectivity.

Critics have previously raised the question of Said’s intellectual relation to Derrida before but never, as far as I know, in quite the same way that John Docker poses it in his essay ‘The question of Europe: Said and Derrida’. The essay ranges across a number of themes that embrace these two thinkers including the significance that their different disciplinary groundings have had upon their political impact. In addition, Docker examines their relations to the concept of carnivalesque and to popular culture. More controversially, however, he notes that both men were Arabs, but only Said rose to the challenge of championing the Arab at a time of Middle-East/US conflict, and this leads him to ask the startling question: was Derrida in fact Said’s betrayer?

Less provocative but no less thoughtful is Peter Tregear’s essay on Said and Adorno as public intellectuals who were also musicians. In addition to explaining Adorno’s and Said’s contrasting positions vis à vis the political uses of classical music, the essay offers up detailed insights into the way music has the potential to function as a boundary defying, transgressive force that is averse to hegemonic and monolithic political categories like nationalism. In addition, Tregear presents a clear and incisive account of the analogous circumstances surrounding Said’s conception of the public intellectual and his setting up of the West-Eastern-Divan Orchestra with the Jewish pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim.

Patrick Wolfe’s and Lorenzo Veracini’s essays on the comparative history of settler colonialisms represent a stimulating extension and development of the views of Said. Wolfe’s call for a relational interpretation of settler colonial history
looks forward to the possibility of Israel and Palestine becoming a single state founded on longstanding cultural and racial ties. This essay is especially worth reading for the striking way it follows the logic of Said’s teachings concerning the value of transnational and intercultural ways of thinking over and above political solutions based on the oppositions that sustained colonialism.

The focus on Said, a single public intellectual with immense international appeal, will no doubt result in this collection travelling well. On the other hand, readers might wonder at the significance of having so many Australian contributors when the topic would clearly benefit from international input. Readers might also be forgiven for noticing that as a study of Said’s legacy, it contains a few gaps. For example, none of the essays grapple with the wholly masculinist nature of Said’s intellectual model. Said is notorious for his ignoring of feminism and his accounts of colonialism that elide gender differences, so why isn’t this subject addressed? Also disappointing is the fact that, although the collection carefully positions itself as issuing from a country where the legacy of settler colonialism is particularly strong, there are no essays by Aboriginal scholars. Again such a perspective would have enhanced our understanding of Said’s limitations as well as his legacy as a public intellectual. Furthermore, it would have been valuable to have included critical commentary encompassing Said’s recently published (and much ignored) autobiography. Among other things, this includes important information about Said’s experience growing up in formerly British occupied Lebanon and Cairo, about his profoundly ambivalent relationship with both of his parents and his newly adopted homeland of America.

Finally, one is tempted to ask what Said himself would have made of a book like this, especially given his avowed commitment to scholarly work that engages with real world inequities and injustices and his excoriation of those in the academy and elsewhere who renge on this responsibility. Would he conceive of it as a valuable contribution to the attempt to keep the figure of the modern intellectual alive? Or would he interpret it as another exercise in intellectual specialisation and career advancement? In attempting to answer this question myself, I have been guided by the highly reflective tone of the individual essays themselves and the editors’ introductory comments, and the overwhelming impression I have received is of a book dedicated precisely to perpetuating the legacy of the politically ‘engaged’ intellectual that Said himself stood for, while at the same time asking how might the model that he embraced be adapted to the situation of Post Cold War and 9/11 politics and the ‘New University’ that so triumphantly rules today?

Anne Maxwell reviews Speaking Truth to Power and Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual

Anne Maxwell gained her BA and MA from the University of Auckland, New Zealand and her PhD from the University of Melbourne. She is currently a Senior
Lecturer in the English program at the University of Melbourne who publishes mainly in the broad field of colonial and post colonial literature and culture.
Tom Griffiths’ vivid, poetic and engaging history of Antarctica nearly lost me early on. Anyone who has read even a little of the popular literature that concerns this continent would be familiar with the tropes of voyaging, exploration and endurance that so strongly characterise Antarctic narratives. And here is this book, I thought, going over the same ground. In *Slicing the Silence*, the voyage is there, and so are the explorers, with their flags and frozen feet, haunting Griffiths as he travels aboard the *Polar Bird* to dispatch a new lot of ‘winterers’ at Casey Station. This is how *Slicing the Silence* begins and ends. But in between there is so much more. Griffiths comes to the endeavours of empire, and its exploring heroes, only to hurtle his readers elastically through space and across millennia, from the deep time of Gondwana to the new contours etched in the ice by climate change: all writing into being the story of the ‘Great South Land’.

There is a reason, he suggests, why the ‘heroic age’, as it is known, and the impulse for personal pilgrimage there are just so prominent in the literature of Antarctica. Even Jenny Diski, who begins her book *Skating to Antarctica* with a refusal to get out of bed, let alone leave London, eventually sails down South (although she never sets foot on the ice). For Griffiths, people ‘come’ to Antarctica in two ways—through the stories they encounter, and the journeys they physically undertake—and it is this insight that reorients the familiar aspects of *Slicing the Silence* in an original and fascinating direction. Intractable material reality and the power of narrative are the two forces that drive Griffiths’ account, and much of the book’s poetry lies in the realising of their profound interrelation.

Rather than idealising the heroism of iconic explorers—such as Scott, Shackleton, Mawson and Byrd—Griffiths’ history is more concerned with exploring the relationship between human and non-human worlds. This relationship was deeply natural, as well as culturally played out. Griffith shows us how the industrialising world was impacting upon Antarctica even before humans first set foot on the continent. Reciprocally, and well before this, the separation of Antarctica and Australia is thought to have had ‘a decisive effect on the evolution of early humans’ (81), as a restricted flow of tropical water to the Indian Ocean saw Africa—the ‘cradle of civilisation’—start to dry up.
In Griffiths’ hands, the history of Antarctica is complex and multi-faceted. It exists in the minutia of daily life, the pursuits of science, and the structure of ice. It is also in the books carefully chosen and brought South by wintering teams; the pile of whale bones on Grytviken beach, the refuse of a once-massive industry; and the roaring forties winds that puffed the sails of empire. In keeping with this understanding of history, the book does not unfold in chronological fashion—only Griffiths’ journey to Antarctica is linear in nature.

Griffiths’ journal entries punctuate this weave of historical narratives. For me, these short, reflective notations are less interesting than the rest of the text. They do provide some sense of what it is to travel to Antarctica on a modern expedition, as part of an Antarctic community, and they give Griffiths an outlet for the hyperbolic descriptions of overwhelming immensity that inevitably seem to attach to the continent. But I have to admit that Griffiths’ journal entries didn’t convince me that, as he puts it, ‘you need to be there’ (18), in order to appreciate the singularity of the Antarctic environment. Or perhaps it’s that language will always be insufficient to adequately communicate the experience of being in place. Griffiths’ claim is more persuasive when it is considered in light of the quality of the broader narrative which showcases his great capacity not just for beautiful and affective prose, but also his ability to articulate the profoundly dynamic nature of place—something that an encounter with the Antarctic environment, scattered with the remains of various human pasts now frozen into a kind of eternal present, must sharply bring into relief.

It is an opportunity to think with the place that Griffiths’ journey enables, as the reader is taken amidst the dusty log books of previous expeditions and navigated through the Antarctic’s various and peculiar landscapes—‘time assumes different rhythms [here]. There is the deeper pulse of the ice ages, the seamless months of eternal light or night, the fourth dimension of a blizzard’ (251). Griffiths is confronted by the reality of an environment that has been the object of much fascination and pursuit but is also a place where no human belongs. Even Griffiths’ fellow winterers—who will continue to stay for another six months on the continent, undertaking tasks of scientific investigation and maintaining a community on the ice—will only ever be temporary presences in Antarctica. All humans come here as outsiders and Griffiths shows how this place continues to be an unhomely home, even for its more persistent travellers.

Griffiths’ exercise in history writing is a self-reflexive response to an environment that challenges both communal conditions and social memory. ‘Down south, each year begins anew with the break-up of the winter ice. Can history and culture resist the devastating rhythm?’ he wonders (259). He issues a warning against ‘societies without history or memory, frozen not just by temperature and energy gradients but also by a challenging information gradient, by a severe disconnection between the past and the present’ (271). The importance of history,
Griffiths argues, is to sustain and make sense of the world—something that the explorers themselves understood.

Integral to Griffiths’ account of Antarctica is the inherent instability of its historical archive. This theoretical approach is due not only to Griffiths’ view of the importance of narration to human existence but, more specifically, to his account of the efforts of those who visited Antarctica in the age of exploration (and even more recently in the years of geo-political wrangling over Antarctic territories). For Griffiths, these explorers must write themselves into history. The story of Scott, at once poignant and pathetic, is sensitively handled in Griffiths’ account. The famous explorer began to construct his memory as soon as he set off for Antarctica, culminating in the final staunch letter he wrote to his public back up North, as he lay dying in his freezing tent. This demonstrates how history is made in Antarctica: having ‘lost the race to the pole, [Scott] had to find an alternative glorious ending’ (22). The landscape of ice and snow may have confounded Scott’s ambitions, but it enabled him to re-imagine his own ending and provided a frozen time capsule in which his written words could, after his death, re-enter life.

Whatever history in Antarctica is, *Slicing the Silence* tells us, it is not just the sum of the parts that we know. That is, it is more than the explorers and their words, the machinations of international politics, meteorological statistics and the deep time of the ice. Rather, it is in the relationship between all these things that something ‘alive and unpronounceable’ (21), something like Truth, can be discerned. One of the best parts of the book, for me, is the chapter devoted to the Emperor penguin and how it beguiled scientists in the early twentieth century. Griffiths offers a multiplicity of stories on this fascinating creature, as he follows the Emperor into the twenty-first century. This story culminates in the release of the film *March of the Emperor* in which, he argues, the bird stands in for the virtues of monogamy in a battle between the American religious right and their opponents.

Before humans and Emperor penguins first met each other, before the first egg was taken and analysed, it was believed that this was an unevolved bird, exceptional in its biological primitivism (222). Perhaps this explains the need felt by the Scottish Antarctic Expedition to regale a penguin with bagpipe music in 1903—an effort to civilise this fetishised creature. In 1911 a party, headed up by Cherry-Garrard, set out to bring back the first Emperor eggs: an extraordinarily difficult quest as these penguins nest in the dark of winter. In a brief but wonderful section, Griffiths writes about the approach of Cherry-Garrard and his team from the point of view of the penguins. He imagines himself into their world, and recognises the meeting as one in which, to be sure, different powers were at play, but where the men and the penguins faced each other in a moment of mutual strangeness and political opportunity.
Here is another story that Griffiths relates: ‘An Adélie penguin once courted Dr Edward Wilson by dropping a pebble at his feet. It was probably a misguided expression of love. But perhaps we can see it as a shrewd act of diplomacy’ (242). Apparent in this face to face encounter between the Emperors and the men who were after their eggs in the dark of an Antarctic winter, and in the gift of the pebble placed at Dr Wilson’s feet, is a relationship based not on the hard lines of exploitation or resistance, but on the negotiation of things—human and non-human. Humans are not at the centre of this story, and this is a possibility, as Griffiths knows, for both history writing and for a global environmental future in which the health of Antarctica is crucial. *Slicing the Silence* provides much-needed inspiration for how we might take up this possibility and run with it.

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ECO-HUMANITIES CORNER
Introduction

The Victorian Government’s ‘Black Balloon’ television ad campaign (2006), designed to encourage the use of renewable energy in the home, depicts household CO2 emissions through the ‘release’ of black balloons from a range of domestic sources—each equivalent to fifty grams of greenhouse gas. The balloons emerge one by one, with a slow squeeze out of the smaller appliances and more hurriedly from the larger, and begin to float outwards, joining up with balloons from other sources in other rooms. As one mass, the balloons resist the confines of the house, pushing open the door to the outside and finding release into the world. In the final scenes of the ad, a sea of black balloons rush up into the sky and in an aerial shot the entire screen is filled with balloons—still floating on—as far as the eye can see.

The strikingly visual metaphor of the balloons takes on a concern that has plagued climate change communication strategy—the invisibility of greenhouse gas. ‘You can’t see it,’ a voice narrates, ‘but you produce greenhouse gas every time you use energy’. And indeed, the Google Earth-esque vision of a vulnerable planet, only just discernable through a moving swarm of black blobs, certainly makes its point. As reported in The Age in March 2007, the number of Victorians who switched to renewable energy since the campaign launch had doubled (Rood 2007). But what is most notable in the ad, for us at least, is the seeming agency of the balloons in their break for freedom: the balloons strain against their source, and once released, surge forth. These are journeying balloons; they merge and mingle, and move on, well away from their very local point of emergence.

It is not just the fact of emissions that the advertisement materialises; more effectively, it is also the momentum and dispersal of greenhouse gas—its relationship with other places—that is depicted. The flying balloons filling the sky indicate a connection between here and elsewhere (although it has to be said that there is no definite sense of emissions from the outside entering an interior space). They call us, as the viewer, to consider our position in an open-ended network of relations, as much as to focus on energy consumption in the sphere of the home. And it is this network of materials, effects and place that forms the interest of this paper.
As the reality of climate change has been increasingly accepted around the world, new economies, policies and practices have correspondingly developed. So too have geographies: under conditions of climate change our places are altered, and in more-than-environmental ways. The new geographies of climate change that we will go on to discuss are constituted by multiple actors, processes and manifestations—and they are real as much as they are immaterial. Through an elaboration of two key examples of climate change’s new economies—the bio-fuel industry and renewable energy—we will explore how this multi-faceted phenomenon provides the context for rethinking Australian geographies. This has implications not only for how we imagine ourselves in Australia, but also how we proceed in our efforts to mitigate the effects of environmental devastation—both at home and away.

**Gases and climates**

Some sense of the new geographies of climate change is given in a recent report by the CSIRO that identifies greenhouse gas generated in the Northern Hemisphere as ‘partly responsible’ for the transformation of Southern Hemisphere climates (Clarke 8). According to the report’s authors, who studied ocean currents for two years in the different hemispheres, warm water is being pushed further South by emissions in the North as atmospheric circulation changes. The resulting warmer waters around the continent are seeing rainfall and wind patterns alter in Australia. Whereas previously the study of Northern-generated pollution and climate change had identified other impacts situated in the Northern Hemisphere—‘like more summer time floods and droughts in China, and the weakening of the South Asian monsoon’—this latest report now evidences an interrelation between North and South on these lines. The point we want to work from here is not that Australia is, once again, defined against its relationship to the North (although this is in some way true), but that, in the machinations of climate change, the country is always turned towards the outside. It is intimately connected to elsewhere in the very making of place. The fact that the influence of Northern pollution on Southern climates is understood to be partial suggests that this openness is always active—its connections are never fully determined.

Indicated here are the dynamic processes of climate change. As both a force and an effect, climate change is generated by elastic relations of proximity and distance: the mingling of pollutants in the world, the often non-linear, often inequitable dispersal of their impact, and the realignment of political, economic and cultural interests in response to ongoing environmental transformations.

Ecologies are shifting, and with this the arrangement of human relationships and the ground for imagining. Unlike other kinds of pollution, greenhouse gas has a global reach: with a lifespan of over one hundred years, it eventually disperses relatively evenly throughout the atmosphere of the Earth. ‘When it
comes to the greenhouse effect,’ writes Robert Henson, ‘one nation’s emissions are everyone’s problem’ (Henson 31). Yet this is not so straightforward. Poor (and small) countries are much more vulnerable to the effects of climate change, even while they are often low emitters of greenhouse gas. Populations across the globe are being realigned through their experiences of suffering, and others—in geographically distant places—via their culpability. And this does not necessarily follow old economic alliances: the low-lying coral atolls of the Maldives, with the second-highest GDP in South-East Asia, is facing the threat (along with poorer South Pacific countries such as Tuvalu) of sea level rise and increasing tropical cyclones, while the Ukraine, well-behind other European countries in terms of wealth, has the most carbon intensive economy, topping the list for CO2 emissions per unit of GDP (40).

The new regional alignments brought about through conditions of climate change overlie other economic or physical proximities. The Kyoto Protocol’s creation of ‘Annex 1’—a grouping of developed countries who, having grown wealthy from carbon-fuelled economies, are charged with acting to address climate change before those countries whose gains are much more minimal—redrew the parameters of industrialised world without the United States of America and, until December 2007, Australia, both of whom initially signed but did not ratify the Protocol. Emissions trading markets established in the wake of Kyoto create carbon-based relationships within regions where the emissions from one country are absorbed by another. More insidiously, the so-called ‘out-sourcing’ of emissions, whereby the carbon-intensive production of goods is shifted off-shore, means that manufacturing countries such as China are emitting the greenhouse gases belonging to many millions of people in other places around the world.

Transforming environments notate geographic relationships oriented by patterns of effect, as well as by emissions. Drought periods in Indonesia, India, South-West Africa, Northern South America and Australia are shaped by the natural cycles of El Niño and La Niña, and it is possible that climate change will alter their oscillation—already the influence of El Niño (which increases the incidence of drought and raises temperatures) has been more pronounced over the last 30 years (Henson 112). There are connective threads that run between the forests of Kalimantan and Sumatra, subject to severe fires and drought, and the parched farmlands of South-Eastern Australia, where in the riverine areas healthy fruit trees are being cleared for lack of water to sustain them. We will go on to discuss in more detail two examples of new Australian geographies under conditions of climate change, and, in particular, explore the relation of these to the older geographies of a North/South divide. While in some respects, the North/South divide still makes sense when articulating Australia’s position in the world, it is also an insufficient model for understanding the non-linear orders of ecologically-based relations between places. Before we do this, however, we will
briefly discuss the concept of place that informs our position, and enables a more nuanced perspective of the relations between ‘here’ and ‘elsewhere’.

**Making Places**

What we are arguing here is not that climate change instates an entirely new paradigm of place identity, but rather that it enables us to recognise, and think through the implications of, the unfixed nature of place at a time of significant environmental challenge. For places always begin elsewhere. According to Paul Carter, they are always doubled. The background to Carter’s assertion is his study of the poetic colonisation of place through naming. His thesis is that places are the product of story-telling; place stories, in the form of founding legends, histories of exchange, and names for place, are initiated from the outside—that is, it is the arrival of the teller that marks the story’s—and the place’s—beginning (Carter 1988). Healthy places are multi-storied, constituted by many arrivals, and they exist both here and somewhere else. In the case of Australia, the dramatic transformations to place brought about by colonisation indicated a new arrival, but the doubled nature of place was largely denied. The indigenous stories already there, of human culture and community, and of the environment itself, were consciously forgotten, and a new culture of place—closed to the outside—was instated.

Australia was therefore founded on the desire to repress its complex relationship with other places. Only a single and chronological genealogy was allowed. As Carter writes of place-making in Australia:

> The white myth of nation-making… symbolically excludes anyone who arrived too late to be part of the foundations… Despite the embrace of multiculturalism in the 1980s… the émigré is acceptable on condition his past life is annulled. The inability of our culture to imagine, let alone commemorate, the presence here of other landscapes, communities and cultures, is not due to a lack imagination, or the effect of a collective memory lapse: it is due to a discursive inadequacy, an incapacity to articulate the doubled identity by any (and perhaps all) of us who are conscious of coming from somewhere (Carter 2007).

Carter’s concept of postcolonial geography sits within a substantial body of critical work that has illuminated the imaginative processes of Australia’s colonisation by non-indigenous settlers. Ross Gibson’s *South of the West* described the ways in which the Great South Land operated as a negative mirror to the countries of the North—representing degeneracy and deficiency in its indigenous state. The drive to remake the Australian landscape in an image of Northern Hemisphere environments, as writers such as Jay Arthur and Deborah Bird Rose have explained, has its origins in this dichotomous opposition (see Arthur; Rose). *Terra nullius* was a fantasy that supported a belief in the righteousness of colonial
endeavour in both environmental and human terms, and to sustain this non-indigenous Australians had to participate in a two-fold forgetting—of the places brought with them (beyond the approved myth of origins), and the histories that recalled the dispossession and repression upon which the nation was established.

This blindness to the nature of place is a self-induced unsettlement. The conditions for belonging set up by white Australians have undermined this ultimate goal, and at a high environmental cost. As a cast of names recalling European origins were laid out over the Australian landscape, a shadow ecology was imposed: stories of Northern Hemisphere environments—its rivers, soils, seasons and vegetation—that took material form in the active remaking of Australian landscapes, from the redirection and damming of rivers, to the clearing of land for agricultural industry. As it becomes more evident that the environment can no longer sustain this single ‘place story’, indicating the presence of other histories and rhythms in the land, non-indigenous Australians find their places shifting around them.

With climate change entering the mix of Australia’s dire environmental state, intensifying drought and flood periods, and altering ecologies as the planet warms, strategies to ameliorate the damage done by a dominant place story must take account of this denial of doubled place. However—and revealing the persistence of the desire to feel assured in the solidity of place, and thus of our relation to it—one reaction amongst some cultural and environmental writers, who recognise the ill-suited nature of prevailing Australian place stories, is the urge to re-establish dichotomy by asserting the distinct differences between Southern and Northern Hemispheres and appealing to a return of the land to its ‘original’ condition (see Tacey and Flannery for examples of this trend). This is the logic of a closed system—in ecological terms, a kind of ‘eco-fundamentalism’ (Carter 2007) that retrains a gaze to the ground at one’s feet as if the stories to be found were hermetically local. Once again, place is turned inward, away from the possibilities of a connection to elsewhere.

This logic can be discerned in the increasingly prevalent ‘ecological footprint’ model of human environmental impact which, as a circumscribed description of human/environment relations, reiterates a system in which happenings are discrete. Effects do not radiate in unpredictable ways. Suggesting Carter’s assertion that our dominant place stories lend themselves to ‘static objects’ rather than ‘mobile processes’ (Carter 2008), the ‘ecological footprint’ promotes a very particular form of response to environmental distress, one that directs responsibility and care—if only figuratively—towards a certain and quantifiable patch of ground. Furthermore, the agency to impact is solely attributed to humans. Places, as mobile composites, are excluded from this picture of the individual marking the world. The much more messy connections between
things indicated in the advertisement bearing the flying black balloons suggests that a different way of thinking about care and responsibility in the face of significant environmental change is needed. We will return to this concern at end of the paper, but will now turn to two examples of how climate change asks us to reconsider place relations.

**Bio-fuels**

Biofuels are about geographies: their making stretches out over regions and is a movement through international supply chains. More importantly, many biofuels have a significant transformative impact on lands where they are grown: their making is place-making. In Australian geographies, biofuels are likely to start out as sugar stories, with their production caught up in the transformation of the landscapes and economies of sugar cane growing. In this sense, biofuels stories for Australia may well be minor remakings of sugar systems—systems that were early products of dichotomous North/South thinking and Australia’s agricultural exporting history. But that is only the start, both in Australia and beyond, as many feedstocks are available for biofuel production.

A recent major study conducted by the Royal Society classifies several key types of biofuel feedstocks (Royal Society 2008). Conventional food crops that produce sugar, oil and starch, including sugarcane, wheat, corn/maize, canola and palm oil, are the current major feedstocks, but lignocellulose sources such as tree crops and perennial grasses are also significant. Further opportunities for biofuel exist beyond the agricultural economy, such as food production co-products, domestic vegetable waste, marine organisms and tank-bred biological systems. One important factor concerning food crop feedstocks is that they will have implications for food cycles, such as increasing maize and wheat prices due to competition between fuel and food end-uses. In turn, due to the extent of integration between grain and meat cycles (such as for beef production), the shift of grain product and grain lands to biofuels production, accompanied by higher grain prices, drives up other food prices.

This complex geography of interacting changes in land use, supply chains and the interactions between food and fuel cycles is also a story about climate change. Theoretically, some biofuels are able to achieve carbon-neutrality, in marked contrast to the rapid growth in the carbon footprint of conventional, fossil-fuelled transport. As well as energy security arguments, climate change responses are driving the development of biofuels research, manufacture, supply and use.

Looking at biofuels, untangling their geographies and implications (environmental, social and economic), it is necessary to acknowledge the doubled nature of places and the complexity of place-making. A decision to keep sugar cane land in production in Australia for ethanol not only may have implications for runoff water quality into the Great Barrier Reef lagoon, it also sends price
and other signals into Australian fuel markets and global energy supply chains. Similarly, biofuel demands in Europe have driven palm (oil) plantation growth in Indonesia, contributing both to species impacts, and, ironically, to additional greenhouse emissions when fire is used for landscape conversion.

These stories are starting to gain popular currency, including the more complicated tales of multi-place interactions between the fuel and food cycles. However, many recent popular accounts of these key global cycles, including Sonia Shah’s *Crude: The Story of Oil* (2005) and Felicity Lawrence’s *Not on the Label* (2004), approach supply chains and product cycles through discourses of travel, especially metaphors of journeying. While this can work as an initial strategy to engage popular opinion, it may well end up obscuring the multi-place simultaneous effects of our biofuels choices—especially where we are talking about complex interactions between multiple food and fuel cycles, across multiple places, all at once.

While there are dangers in falling into travel discourses and journey metaphors when thinking about biofuels, a degree of North/South thinking can be valuable here. The extent of public engagement in North America and the EU with debates about Indonesian land use and species impacts from palm oil plantation development (especially rainforest conversion and orang-utan conservation) is in part a product of prior debate about North/South developmental inequities, including previous debates about sourcing timbers from the South. In the context of biofuels debates, North/South thinking has set up some powerful shorthand, including an awareness of impacts throughout the South of the Americas (especially in Brazil) caused by North American demand for beef (and therefore for feedstock grains). This then provides a platform for arguing out the consequences in the global South of driving biofuels markets in the North. Brought back to the Australian context, Australian biofuels production asks pertinent questions about whether the country should identify with other sugar-based biofuels producers in the South (such as Brazil) or focus on other approaches to fuel security and the reinvention of transport.

**Renewables**

While North/South binaries make sense for Australia when it comes to climate change issues such as biofuels and the interactions between food and fuel cycles, it is important not to take this thinking too far. Other aspects of the renewable energy response to climate change force us to conceptualise our position in the world outside a North/South framework.

Wind and solar are two of the renewable energy sources most commonly discussed in debates about energy policies and climate change responses. In Australia, recent debates about wind energy development have focused on contested project proposals—usually contested on aesthetic and/or heritage
grounds. For example, several wind energy developments in Victoria (including in Gippsland and near the Great Ocean Road) have been opposed by local residents and heritage groups for changing landscapes and landscape values, including heritage values and property values. Solar energy in Australia is often discussed in terms of Australia’s abundant solar resources, its role as originating key technological innovations (especially in solar photovoltaics), and domestic solar panel or solar hot water use and rebating.

Renewable energy debates around wind and solar in Australia do sometimes reference overseas examples. In debates about coastal siting of wind farms in Victoria and South Australia, reference is often made to European approaches where offshore siting is an option. Looking beyond Australia, it is the Spanish experience that has most to offer Australian debates, whether on wind or solar, especially large scale developments.

It may seem strange to suggest Spain as an analogue of Australia, including the issue of renewables, but some aspects of the respective physical and human geography of both places bear further consideration. The Spanish population of around 45 million people is twice that of Australia (21 million), but the coastal distribution of both populations is quite similar. With the exception of the inland cluster around Madrid, both the Australian and Spanish current patterns of human settlement involve coastal population growth, both in large conurbations and linking corridors. This is significant in terms of the distance for transmission between the generation of renewables and centres of energy demand. While the Spanish topography includes significantly higher mountains, the energy challenge in both places is how to use less-settled lands and the coastal zone to generate renewable energy for dense, coastal uses. Both countries are hot and dry across many regions (around 1% of land area covered by water), which has implications both for hydro-electricity and also for being able to meet the water (steam) needs of coal fired electricity generation.

Recent figures put Spain at having achieved the second fastest rate of new wind energy capacity growth (3.5GW in 2007), behind the United States, and ahead of China.1 New Australian targets for renewables capacity of 20% by 2020 are expected to drive significant growth in the Australian market. Spain achieved this 20% renewables benchmark in 2006, and is on track to meet its target of 30% of electricity generation coming from renewables by 2030. Significantly, Spain has managed a relatively smooth integration of intermittent renewable generation (mainly wind and solar) with their electricity grid, providing a powerful counter to arguments still current in Australia that renewable energy is not suitable for displacing significant percentages of fossil fuel generated power. Spain also mandates the integration of photovoltaic generation in new buildings and the installation of solar hot water systems.
The Spanish experience with renewable energy generation for electricity supply is a powerful example for the Australian context. Not only does it address issues of integrating renewables as a large share of grid supply, the Spanish experience addresses many of the challenges of renewables siting for supply to coastal development in a sunny, dry climate, and validates the business cases for investment in renewable energy. Australia and Spain are strange doubles, sharing climatic and resource opportunities. The challenge is to recognise the value of the Spanish experience for Australia, to see their complex relation, with Spain understood as part of Europe, as part of a global North, and not part of a cultural Commonwealth.

While this is still a struggle in the climate change context of renewable energy debates, Australians have conducted this kind of North/South, Australia/Spain bridging thinking already. A key example is the development of homoclime analysis, mainly attributable to Australian viticultural research conducted by Dr Richard Smart. A homoclimate is a localised climate sharing common properties (such as sunshine hours, mean daily temperatures, humidity) with another climate. Homoclimate analysis was developed in Australia for application in the wine industry, mainly as a tool to assess commonalities between key European wine regions and possible Australian analogues. The results of the application of homoclimate analysis to Australian and Spanish wine regions is an extensive series of commonalities, including those Australian regions sharing climatic characteristics with Spanish regions such as Ribera del Douro, Rioja and Toro.

It is possible to extend the basic principles of homoclimate analysis into the spaces of renewable energy, and acknowledge common resources and opportunities shared by Australia and Spain. Both for wind energy and solar power, the resources, the population distribution, the climate, the buildings and the patterns of energy consumption all support a comparative analysis. It is at this point we can see some of the risks in going too far into North/South modes of thinking regarding climate change issues such as renewables. Too firm a location of Australia in a global South and Spain in a global North, and the possibilities of homoclines and of shared chances become remote.

While a North/South divide can help us to make sense of Australia’s recent environmental history and the politics of climate change, we need to approach this particular place relation in nuanced ways. This means acknowledging North/South utility when considering biofuels and their complex implications for land use, social change, economic development and culture, without losing sight of discursive risks (such as the conventional uses of travel discourses and journey metaphors in understanding supply chains, when notions of folding, simultaneity, market signals or complementarity may be more useful). There is also a need to recognise that some powerful thinking can be done about climate
change by stepping outside North/South identification, such as in the case of Australia’s and Spain’s commonalities regarding wind and solar.

**Conclusion**

One of the continuing challenges of climate change for Australia is that it asks for a reorientation of our relations to place. When Australian resources are consumed in China for steel production, the greenhouse emissions that result are Australian, Chinese, and global in their locations and subsequent impacts. This reorientation of place in Australia and beyond poses the prospect of post-national citizens, linked by climates, emissions and practices (not to mention international agreements). The mobility of forces and effects illuminated by climate change challenge us to reconsider what it means to take care of something that is simultaneously close and distant.

Citizenship under climate change, including in Australia, can operate in North/South terms, as biofuel geographies and debates reveal, with informed citizens understanding that their mobility choices in a global North may well play out simultaneously as land use change and species loss in a global South. But the point is that the relations between places, peoples, sources and effects in our world can never be fully explained in this way. Place identity, and subsequently the stories by which we know and narrate the world, always exceed a reduction to this or that. Places are never singular—the South is always also the North (and many other places too) and vice versa. Rather than the static image of the Southern Hemisphere culturally colonised by the North, or held as a distorted mirror image of the one true identity (the Global North), North/South relations are manifold, contradictory and dynamically situated. Moreover, as environmental transformations are clearly illuminating, places, and the species—human and non-human—within them, are constantly on the move. Ranges shift, refugia shrink, microclimates alter, patterns of touristic and hunting movements change—we expect climates and get weather—different weather. In a time of climate change it is vital to recognise this: to see ourselves in the world in terms both concrete and local, and as participants in networks that stretch beyond what is right here and now, into other places, other systems, other times and other lives.

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Water, Heritage and the Arts on applied sustainability issues, particularly water efficiency.

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**Notes**

1. ‘Europe remains the leading market for wind energy with over 57 GW of wind energy at the end of 2007, representing 61% of the global total. In 2007, the European wind capacity grew by 8.5 GW, over 17% compared to the previous year’ (European Wind Energy Association).
2. For more on homocline analysis and its application to viticulture, see www.smartvit.com.au.
Shadow Places and the Politics of Dwelling

Val Plumwood

The Problem: Place Discourse and Ecological Consciousness

Much contemporary environmental theory, especially in the eco-humanities, focuses on place as a locus of continuity, identity, and ecological consciousness, and on ‘place education’. Recovering a storied sense of land and place is a crucial part of the restoration of meaning. But if commodity culture engenders a false consciousness of place, this meaning can be fake. There is a serious problem of integrity for the leading concepts of much contemporary place discourse, especially the concept of heimat or dwelling in ‘one’s place’ or ‘homeplace’, the place of belonging. The very concept of a singular homeplace or ‘our place’ is problematised by the dissociation and dematerialisation that permeate the global economy and culture. This culture creates a split between a singular, elevated, conscious ‘dwelling’ place, and the multiple disregarded places of economic and ecological support, a split between our idealised homeplace and the places delineated by our ecological footprint. In the context of the dominant global consciousness, ideals of dwelling compound this by encouraging us to direct our honouring of place towards an ‘official’ singular idealised place consciously identified with self, while disregarding the many unrecognised, shadow places that provide our material and ecological support, most of which, in a global market, are likely to elude our knowledge and responsibility. This is not an ecological form of consciousness.

Ostensibly place-sensitive positions like bioregionalism evade rather than resolve the problem of the split by focussing exclusively on singular self-sufficient communities, thus substituting a simplistic ideal of atomic places for recognition of the multiple, complex network of places that supports our lives. If being is always being towards the other, the atomism and hyper-separation of self-sufficiency is never a good basic assumption, for individuals or for communities. Communities should always be imagined as in relationship to others, particularly downstream communities, rather than as singular and self-sufficient. An ecological re-conception of dwelling has to include a justice perspective and be able to recognise the shadow places, not just the ones we love, admire or find nice to look at. So ecological thought has to be much more than a literary rhapsody about nice places, or about nice times (epiphanies) in nice places. And it must crucially, as a critical ecological position, be able to
reflect on how nice (north) places and shadow (south) places are related, especially where north places are nice precisely because south places are not so nice.

I want to argue that dematerialisation in commodity culture engenders a false consciousness of place whose deconstruction must be a crucial part of any ecojustice approach to environmental degradation. It is not, as some Marxists claim, that an emphasis on place is simply bourgeois romanticism, or that place is un-important. The place dimension is vitally important. It is rather that this false consciousness is expressed in a literature that treats attachments to place in dematerialising ways as unified, innocent, and singularistic, the environmental project simplified down to one of increasing attachment to and care for ‘one’s place’. I think this is over-singularised, and much like suggesting that celebrating the beauty of wives is the answer to gender inequality and oppression, the Song of Solomon as the answer to women’s liberation. Contemplation of the agency, power and mystery of places potentially has a lot to contribute to understanding our relationships to the earth (see especially Rose, ‘Dialogue’). But unless further elaborated, I think place-based discourse is open to some very adverse interpretations, and its tendency to replace a more clearly focussed body of ecological and environmental critique and awareness may become a matter for concern.

So I want to ask two questions especially of current place-based discourse:

1: What (more?) do we need to add to place awareness/encounter/attachment projects or discourses about SENSE OF PLACE to have them converge with an ecological awareness or environmental justice projects?

2: Can discourses of place and belonging marginalise denied, dislocated and dispossessed identities, privileging ‘the self-identical and well-rooted ones who have natural rights and stable homes’? (Haraway 215; Plumwood, ‘Environmental’, 23) Is the ability to maintain access (unproblematically) to a special homeplace and to protect it not at least partly a function of one’s privilege/power in the world?

We need to replace loose discourse about ‘sense of place’, I suggest, by place-based critique, that can make room for the power analysis of an environmental justice perspective. To resolve problems of NIMBYism in place and situate place in terms of an ecological consciousness, we need an ethics and politics of place, where the latter are to be understood in Nancy Fraser’s terms not as disconnected, as in the story told by the usual suspects, but as importantly related. Such a critique must aim to replace the consumer-driven narratives of place that mark our lives by different ones that make our ecological relationships visible and accountable. This has been one of the aims of bioregionalism, and the critical place project I am advocating can alternatively be seen as a critical reworking or reframing of bioregionalism. Critical bioregionalism, on my reading, must
help make visible north/south place relationships, where the north/south pole operates as a correlate of (various different kinds of) privilege, exemplifying certain relationships of domination metaphorised as place, especially sacrificial and shadow or denied places.

Provided it is not treated in bland and over-simplifying ways, there are a lot of very important things we can do with a critical discourse of place. Developing a politics and ethics of place has great potential to clarify, focus and connect environmental and ecojustice concerns. Just as in the gender case, an important missing ingredient in the bland ‘celebration’ of ‘sense of place’ is a consideration of power relationships—whose place is made better, whose worse, and what patterns can be discerned? Discerning patterns of sacrificial and shadow places, based on the power and privilege—or lack of it—of the human communities associated with places is a major focus of critical geography and of studies of environmental racism (see for example Hayden; Bullard). Similarly, an anti-colonial critique can mobilise the inappropriate sense of place and the false consciousness of place typical of colonialism to press home an important critique of contemporary settler cultures and their maladaptation to the land, in which illusions about settler identity are linked to illusions about ‘our place’, or ‘Home’.

This kind of place critique holds out the prospect of developing the understanding of place in a way that connects with and supplements the ecofeminist critique of nature, as a category defined by a dualistic narrative of splits. In its critique of western dualisms, ecofeminism has certainly provided a good basis for understanding a kind of erasure of place that has resulted from its fragmentation by the mind/body, reason/emotion, respect/use and other splits characteristic of contemporary western culture. The dissociation of the affective place (the place of and in mind, attachment and identification, political effectiveness, family history, ancestral place) from the economic place that is such a feature of the global market is yet another manifestation of the mind/body dualism that has shaped the western tradition. Concepts and practices that erase these aspects of place help to erase an awareness of nature as part of our lives. Contemporary market-based practices that effect a dissociation between affective/identity places and places of production reduce and fragment place, stripping it of meaning. This analogue of the mind/body split in the contemporary structure of place presents serious problems of integrity for much contemporary place discourse and can greatly limit its usefulness for ecological concerns.

**Dematerialisation and Place**

*Dematerialisation* (a term I owe to Barbara Ehrenreich), applied to cultures, traditions as well as processes, is the process of becoming more and more out of touch with the *material conditions (including ecological conditions) that support or enable our lives*. Losing track of them means making more and more exhausting
and unrealistic demands on them, and being deluded about who we and others are. This means losing track of the labour of others that supports our lives and the labour and agency of nature, of earth others—what some socialist feminists call the sphere of reproduction in contrast to production. The flight from the material is the political and economic and cultural process that corresponds to the mind/body and spirit/matter dualisms of the western tradition and encourages their elaboration into the dematerialising frameworks that govern our lives, especially in the global economy.

One aspect of dematerialisation is the division between mind people and body people—expressed increasingly in both class and gender terms. ‘To be cleaned up after, says Ehrenreich, ‘is to achieve a certain magical weightlessness and immateriality’—or rather the illusion of these modes of being (Ehrenreich 103). This is in part the foundation of what has been known as class-consciousness—think of people who are used to having servants and who act as if the associated services are beyond their attention. Another closely related form of denial is to be able, as privileged nations, to ignore, neglect or deny our energy use and pollution trail, one kind of ecological footprint—‘being picked up after’ by the biosphere. Real humans labour mentally, and material work, bodily labour, is increasingly and ideally the sphere of machines, except for a few holdovers like giving birth and suckling.

Dematerialising political structures erase the agency of the more-than-human sphere, cause us to misunderstand our lives, and thus engender a false consciousness that justifies appropriation. The illusions and irresponsibility resulting from the underlying cultural problematic of dematerialisation have intensified with increasingly globalised and commodified relationships to nature and place. Another aspect of dematerialisation, which I also discussed in my last book (Plumwood, ‘Environmental’), is remoteness from ecological consequences and illusions of our independence of nature and of the irrelevance of nature.

The logical end-point of the striving to deny and devalue the sphere of the body, nature, labour and matter is the retreat of the affluent from these spheres into a state of remoteness, of virtual existence and ‘ghostly pursuits like stock-trading, image making, and opinion polling; real work, in the old-fashioned sense of labour that engages hand as well as eye, that tires the body and directly alters the physical world tends to vanish from sight’ (Ehrenreich 103), and thus, of course, from responsibility. So, I would add, does our ecological footprint, and what can be thought of as the supporting labour of nature required to hold up that foot. The process of heedless dematerialisation in our culture may end in our final dematerialisation, in the sense of vanishing act, from the earth.
Attachment to Place

Place wisdom usually sees salvation in attachment to place, and enjoins us to care for ‘our place’. There is much to be said for love for a specific individual, animal or place. Love can develop capacities for perception and sensitivity that might otherwise be stunted, and can provide a basis to spread its virtues of attention, compassion and care to a wider field. Love for a specific earth place can provide a basis to care for other (similar) places. Participating regularly in contexts of neighbourhood can counter anthropocentric ways of thinking and disrupt human self-enclosure. Local nature study and observation can foster respectful disclosure and friendship, mutual knowledge and care, as well as understanding of the ways and needs of non-human neighbours. Whether local knowledge makes footprint relations more visible is contextually variable and contestable, but not the need for a place-sensitive culture whose institutions and customs can support a deep, rich connection to land and place.

But place attachment is developed and exercised in the context of dominant market cultures which commodify land and place, and of markets in labour usually requiring individual workers who have few or portable attachments (such as the nuclear family or less). Place attachment is the first and most basic casualty of this attachment-minimizing system, while the commodification of the land presupposes an instrumental model of land relationship that makes attachment to place hard to sustain. Since the industrial revolution, attachment to place has been punished in the economic and employment systems of late globalised capitalism, and current examples are either hangovers from an incompletely realised project or practises of resistance. Dominant commodity culture marginalises nature and place, and what measure of land attachment it permits persists in spite of institutions like the market.

It may be vital to love, but in these conditions, individual love for place is unlikely to be innocent, may register false consciousness and be exercised at the expense of other places, and fostering individual attachment must be incomplete as a strategy. So it is crucial for the integrity of place discourse that it give more consideration to its own limits and potential for misuse. Included here is considering the usefulness of indigenous models of place relationship for contemporary western contexts and for ecological concern. Some of these limits of application arise for the west as result of the fragmentation and malformation of place by the mind/body, reason/emotion and respect/use and other splits characteristic of western culture. It is these splits that frustrate place discourse as a genuine ecologically-aware discourse. A more unified place relationship, as in indigenous examples, can be a wonderful instrument or voice for communication with and sensitivity to the earth and other humans. But current proposals (like bioregionalism and self-sufficiency) for reunifying place for the west will miss the connection with environmental problems unless they take
better account of the splits, especially the mind/body split in its place manifestations.

These splits register in the way we try to define or characterise place. Place is thicker and more concrete than mere location, and story helps makes it concrete; but it is not enough to say that place is the intersection of multiple narratives—we can say this of anything at all. I think we need to keep our feet on the ground here (literally), and avoid overly dematerialising place concepts: place can be focussed widely or narrowly in relation to different frameworks, but in a materially-embodied life has ultimately to locate a piece of ground, a piece of the earth. \(^3\) But these problems about place are minor in comparison to those that beset the rest of the place-lovers’ apparatus, the concept of giving honour to place in terms of celebrating ‘one’s own place’ or ‘one’s place’.

Bioregionalists urge that this must be ‘the watershed’, the basic place that commands our identity and loyalty. But we need to be sensitive to the nuances, the kinds of attachment involved. Here I fear that the influence of Heidegger may be sending a promising place critique in the wrong direction, through an excessively singularised focus on a central, set-apart home-place or One True dwelling place, producing a Cosy Corner or ‘Inside the Beltway’ account of place that obscures ecological issues and north/south relations.

The Heideggerian singularity of focus legitimates a narrowing of place relationship to a special place, in a way that supports a concept of the home property of a (national) self that is strongly set apart from and above other places, in terms of care and priority. Centric place ideals of military empire and colonial privilege, as expressed in the motto *Deutschland Uber Alles*, and in the image of the moated or hill-placed castle or the defensively hedged or fenced colonial ‘big-house’, rest on the subordination or instrumentalisation of other places. Perhaps it is less Heidegger’s anti-modernism (as critics like Hay have claimed) we should associate with Nazi ideology than this ideal of a pure home, an ideal, strong hyperseparate seat of self. This One True Place can easily become a national-cultural home, a special place, elevated above all others, whose purification demands the eviction of alien elements. This discourse can legitimate projects of perfecting and purifying home at the expense of other, lesser homes—those of ‘less civilised’ indigenous others who do not ‘dwell’, whose ties to the land do not take the form of cultivation labour, and whose places can be deemed degradable under the guise of improving civilisation.

A One True Place account like this is quite compatible with the dwellers’ continued participation in environmental degradation. Attachment to the One True Place is no guarantee of honour to other places, and certain modes of attachment may even require the degradation of other places. The British Royal Family loves Balmoral, and they see to the protection and improvement of this place, but their care is made possible by the fact that they have their money
invested in a swag of companies that are despoiling systematically other people’s places, and relations of power embedded in the commodity ensure that they need neither know nor care about those places.

For a sounder and more illuminating way to understand ‘one’s place’ or home I think we should listen to some indigenous advice from Bill Neidjie. ‘You got to hang onto this story because the earth, this ground, earth where you brought up, this earth he grow you’ (Neidjie, ‘Story’, 166), and he repeats the point elsewhere: ‘This piece of ground he grow you’ (Neidjie, ‘Story’, 61). This piece of ground that grows you (in the same way, he insists, as it grows a plant or a tree) would also usually be identified by indigenous people as ‘country’, the place of one’s clan or community, is also connected to other countries in various cross-cutting ways. Neidjie’s wisdom reflects a view of nature and place as, to a much greater extent than in western culture, an active agent in and co-constituter of our lives, but also a view of ‘growing up’ as a process in which the energy of others is actively invested. But it also reveals some important ways in which indigenous concepts of ‘place’ or ‘country’ might be thought of as integrated in a way that those of the dominant culture may be thought of as fragmented. The average Australian moves 13 times, and ‘country’ can be multi-sited. Which bit are we selecting as ‘your place’? The answer may be well an abstraction, something like ‘a vaguely identified nation-state’, rather than a specific piece of the earth.

This assumption of singularity can be used to privilege a place of consciousness and self-identity over the materially-supportive but denied places of the other, conceived as absent referent. There are strong resonances of mind-body dualism in these constructions, with their privileging of a mind which is dependent on but unaware of a maternal, material body it is depleting. Such constructions are inimical to any self-reflective project of interspecies negotiation and accommodation.

The most serious problem for the integrity of current discourses of ‘one’s place’ is the split between the land of attachment, one’s self conscious identity place (usually the home), and the economic place, or rather economic places, those places on earth that support your life. Writing the land of attachment, in a recent collection for example, professes a singular ideal of ‘a story alive with one place on earth, a place that calls us home’, ‘I would piece you together from what you tell me of home’ (Tredinnick 31, 28). The editor has sought stories that ‘sing into life a place that is sustaining, sacred, special to a writer who lives in it or remembers it well, a place where deep attachments rest, a storied place’ (31). In the vast majority of cases in the contemporary global context, a singular concept of place has to be a dematerialised and false consciousness of place—hence not an ecological concept of place or self.

The story of One True Place the contributors are required to tell may also be seen as an attempt to bring over into white culture indigenous ideals of country.
The problem is that in the context of the dominant global consciousness, such ideals encourage us to direct our honouring of place towards an ‘official’ singular idealised special place consciously identified with self or soul, while disregarding the many unrecognised places that provide the material support of self, most of which, in a global market, are likely to elude knowledge and responsibility. This split between a singular, elevated, conscious ‘dwelling’ place and the multiple disregarded places of economic support is one of the most important contemporary manifestations of the mind/body split (incorporating also elements of reason/emotion dualism). Thus expressed, the mind/body split permeates the global economy, and is inseparable from our concepts of identity, economy and place.

What makes such a singular discourse of ‘country’ and self-place honest and life-sustaining in the indigenous case and a dishonest and life-defeating expression of false consciousness in the consumerist case is precisely that in the indigenous case the places of attachment that form your country of the heart are the very same places that do ‘grow you’, that support your material as well as your emotional life. In the consumer case they are usually (perhaps even necessarily, to the same extent that production is a degrading process) different places, are multiple. For Neidjie, ‘this ground, earth where you brought up, this earth that grows you’—all these concepts can coincide, be unified, in ‘country’, the place of attachment and mutual life-giving, which eventually even recycles the human as sustenance for other life-forms seen as having a similar relationship to country. The place of attachment, the place of mind and identity, and the actual place of material support are one and the same. For us, they are split along mind/body lines.

It will not do to evade the problem of the split by pretending that we already have a unified concept or can easily get it by paying more attention to or celebrating our places of attachment. Nor will it do to substitute a distant and dubious ideal of self-sufficiency for consideration of the multiple places that support our lives. What is the effect then of starting from the other, materialist end and taking this indigenous concept of country [eg Neidjie’s] as a criterion of ‘your place’, so that ‘your place’ is those parts of the earth that ‘grow you’, that support your life? This seems to correspond quite closely to the recently introduced idea of ‘the ecological footprint’, as all those places that bear the ecological traces of one’s passage, or that carry the ecological impacts of supporting your life. Taking this concept instead of some consciousness-based, singular notion of ‘home-place’ or dwelling–place as basic has some startling consequences, revealing the extent of the false consciousness and fragmentation of place in the dominant culture, and the need for understanding both as an important part of a critical account of place. The indigenous criterion reveals, as denied or shadow places, all those places that produce or are affected by the commodities you consume, places consumers don’t know about, don’t want to
know about, and in a commodity regime don’t ever need to know about or take responsibility for.

These places remote from self, that we don’t have to know about but whose degradation we as commodity consumers are indirectly responsible for, are the shadow places of the consumer self. The places that take our pollution and dangerous waste, exhaust their fertility or destroy their indigenous or nonhuman populations in producing our food, for example, all these places we must own too. We must own to the coral reefs wrecked to supply the clownfish in the fish tank, the places ruined by and for fossil fuel production. We must smell a bit of wrecked Ogoniland in the exhaust fumes from the air-conditioner, the ultimate remoteness, put-it-somewhere-else-machine. On the Neidjie criterion, we would have to accept all these shadow places too as ‘our’ place, not just the privileged, special, recognised place, the castle-of-the-self-place called home.

I am not of course arguing that there’s necessarily anything wrong with loving a special place, or that justice demands that we each love and care for all places equally, any more than it requires that one love one’s child only as much as all other children and no more. But justice does require that we take some account of other children, and of our own and our child’s relationship to them, perhaps even that we not aim to have our child thrive at the expense of these other children. In the same way, in the place case, I think we may have to start the process of recognising denied places by owning multiplicity, envisioning a less monogamous ideal and more multiple relationship to place. An important part of the environmental project can then be reformulated as a place principle of environmental justice, an injunction to cherish and care for your places, but without in the process destroying or degrading any other places, where ‘other places’ includes other human places, but also other species’ places. This accountability requirement is a different project, and much more politically and environmentally demanding project, than that of cherishing one’s own special place of dwelling. It is a project whose realisation, I would argue, is basically incompatible with market regimes based on the production of anonymous commodities from remote and unaccountable places. A practice that requires a multiple place consciousness can help to counter dematerialisation and remoteness.

Reworking Bioregionalism

The emphasis on singularity of place usually leads those who have got this far in the ecojustice critique of place to advocate some form of bioregionalism or localisation devolving economic production to a single, small, unified ‘home’ community as a way of healing the fragmentation of place. There is likely no unique solution to the problem of recognising denied places, but we can suggest some general principles in terms of parallels with other mind/body resolutions. Think what it would mean to acknowledge and honour all the places that support you, at all levels of reconceptualisation, from spiritual to economic, and to honour
not just this more fully-conceived ‘own place’ but the places of others too. Such a program is politically radical, in that it is incompatible with an economy of privileged places thriving at the expense of exploited places. Production, whether from other or self-place, cannot take the form of a place-degrading process, but requires a philosophy and economy of mutual recognition.

What is valid in bioregionalism is the demand for place honesty and responsibility, which involves countering remoteness and denial. Filling these out requires an ethics of place and a politics of place. Their development is stunted because the ideal is so often automatically identified with living in One True place, with living in a self-sufficient household or community, or in a single watershed. But we could draw another lesson from the indigenous model—*that we need to develop forms of life and production where the land of the economy (production, consumption, and service provision) and the land of attachment, including care and responsibility, are one and the same.*

This means that there are two basic routes to restoring place honesty: we can retain highly singularistic ideals of place and try to reorganise economic life to fit them—the self-sufficiency route—or, alternatively, we can recognize the reality of multiple relationships to place but insist that they be reshaped as meaningful and responsible. The last is the suppressed alternative, the ecojustice route to dealing with the mind/body splits of place. I am tempted to swim against the current of the self-sufficiency tide and point out the virtues of this different route to honesty, fearing that the return to the small, wholesome, pure community is a cup western culture may have poisoned forever. In a colonising and dualistic culture, advocacy of singularistic allegiances to place is likely to express or encourage false consciousness. In western culture, so strongly drawn to and corrupted by the patterns of mind/body dualism which deny or devalue a supportive material order conceptualised as other, the self-sufficiency route courts trouble in the form of denial of dependency on an inconsiderable, inferiorised other that is outside the system of privilege and self-enclosure. Ideals of self-sufficiency can idealise a ‘community’ version of individualism which does not envision the community in relationship with others and which thus neglects or suppresses the key justice (north/south) issue of relationship with other communities—downstream communities especially. Taking responsibility for remote places requires strong institutional and community networking arrangements.

Of course we can also mix these strategies, and a judicious combination of local and non-local production and care seems the most likely as well as the most sustainable outcome. This means sourcing more of our needs from local land, using forms of discount for the local perhaps, and extending public and political forms of care and value to those non-local areas our production and consumption impact upon—for example by giving value and standing to distant land and its
ecological services and taking some social responsibility for its maintenance. But we have many options other than self-sufficiency for the mix here. To envisage these options, think about the difference between the ideals of growing all your own vegetables in your own garden, versus participating in a community garden, in Consumer Supported Agriculture, or in a cooperative working for trade justice, as contrasting and potentially complementary routes to place accountability.

An ecojustice ideal of this kind for an ethical politics of place is not incompatible with and can even support some limited forms of self-reliance, but it is clearly not the same as, and does not imply, any ideal of self-sufficiency based on a relationship to place so singular that it would exclude exchange. The responsibility principle is compatible with some forms of exchange, and with the desirability of some exchange of goods and bads between places, provided this meets the ecojustice criterion of making one or both places involved in the exchange better and no places worse. Is it not perhaps poorly accountable commodity systems of exchange at whose door we should lay much of the blame for the contemporary fragmentation of place, rather than the existence of exchange itself? Exchange could also have at its core celebration and exchange of place and place knowledge, and take place under conditions of connection, knowledge, care and responsibility. If unity versus dissociation are not the only options for relationships with place, a critical sense of place based on knowledge and care for multiple places could be the form of place consciousness most appropriate to contemporary planetary ecological consciousness.

Val Plumwood (1939-2008) was a founding intellectual and activist in the global movement that came to be known as ecofeminism. She published three major books as well as over a hundred articles and encyclopaedia entries, and her work has been translated into numerous languages. In February 2008 she died of a stroke at her home in the bush, aged 68. Please see Deborah Rose’s obituary tribute in this issue.

Works cited


Notes
1 I do not want to say however that all important place relations reduce to the north/south set, or that these concepts always offer the best analysis. I do not think different kinds or dimensions of privilege or oppression can be reduced to one, although those with sufficiently common logic may come together with useful parallels in ‘the master subject’, outlined in Plumwood 1993.
2 See the discussion in Rose, ‘Reports’, Chapter 2.
3 Thus Bill Neidjie: ‘This piece of ground he grow you’ (Neidjie, ‘Kakadu’, 166).
4 ‘Country’, as Rose, ‘Dialogue’, points out, can nurture you, call to you, and take up other very active roles.
5 This suggests a parallel with Teresa Brennan’s maternal energetics; see Brennan.
Val Plumwood (1939-2008)

Shortly before this issue went to press we learned the sad news that Dr Val Plumwood had died suddenly at her home in the bush at the age of 68 as a result of a stroke. Val was a founding figure in the global intellectual movement aimed at reconfiguring western philosophy, seeking to move it from human-centrism and toward eco-centrism. She brought a feminist perspective to this work and was foundational to what came to be known as ecofeminism. In recent years she has been a leading figure in the ecological humanities and has contributed to the Ecological Humanities Corner both directly, through her own publications, and less directly, through her role as referee and provider of stimulating ideas.

Amongst the general public Val was well known for a number of reasons, all of which stem from her commitment to living her philosophy, not just thinking it. She was a forest activist and a public intellectual. Perhaps most iconically, she survived being grabbed by a crocodile that pulled her into the death roll. Her nearly completed, and long awaited book, *The Eye of the Crocodile*, was her exploration of the philosophical implications of the experience of being prey, and thus of being a participant in ecological relationships that expose human vulnerability.

Val was a Fellow at the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies at The Australian National University for a number of years, first as an ARC fellow and later as a Visiting Fellow. In recent years she had also held Visiting Professorships at a number of universities around the world, including University of California Berkeley, University of Lancaster, McMaster University (Ontario), and University of Frankfurt.

She was a prolific author, with three major books to her credit, and translations into numerous languages including Chinese and Turkish. As well, she authored over a hundred articles and encyclopaedia entries. She is featured in Joy Palmer’s volume *Fifty Key Thinkers on the Environment* (Routledge 2001), along with Buddha, Gandhi, St Francis of Assisi and others. We are honoured to publish one of her most recent papers in this issue of *Australian Humanities Review*.

Deborah Rose, 10 March 2008