

- Markus, Andrew. 'Through a glass darkly: aspects of contact history', *Aboriginal History*, 1 (2), 1977:170-180.
- Marx, Karl. *Grundrisse: foundations of the critique of political economy*. Harmondsworth, 1973.
- Marx, K. and F. Engels. *The German ideology in their Collected works*, Vol. 5. London, 1976.
- Meillasoux, C. 'On the mode of production in the hunting band', in Pierre Alexandre, ed. *French perspectives in African studies*. London, 1973:187-203.
- Pershits, A.I. 'The primitive norm and its evolution', *Current Anthropology*, 18 (3), 1977:409-414.
- 'The evolution of the primitive norm: response to comments', *Current Anthropology*, 18 (4), 1977:731-735.
- Sahlins, Marshall. *Stone age economics*. London, 1974.
- Sharp, Rachel. *Ideology, knowledge and schooling*. (Forthcoming).
- Sinclair, Keith. 'Why are race relations in New Zealand better than in South Africa, South Australia or South Dakota', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 5 (2), 1971:121-127.
- Sorrenson, M.P.K. 'Land purchase methods and their effect on Maori population, 1865-1901', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 65, 1956:183-199.
- Stanner, W.E.H. *After the dreaming*. Sydney, 1969.
- Stedman Jones, Gareth. 'History: the poverty of empiricism', in Robin Blackburn, ed. *Ideology in social science*. New York, 1972: 96-115.
- 'From historical sociology to theoretical history', *British Journal of Sociology*, 27 (3), 1976: 295-305.
- Terray, Emmanuel. *Marxism and 'primitive' societies*. New York, 1972.
- Thompson, E.A. *The early Germans*. Oxford, 1965.
- Ward, Alan. *A show of justice: racial 'amalgamation' in nineteenth century New Zealand*. Canberra, 1974.
- Wild, R.A. 'Social stratification and race relations', *Mankind*, 11 (2), 1977:81-92.

BOOK REVIEWS

The moving frontier: aspects of Aboriginal-European interaction in Australia.
 Edited by Peter Stanbury. A.H. and A.W. Reed, Sydney, 1976. Pp. 160. \$12.95.

The concept behind this book was a wise one. There is a need for authoritative popular accounts of the diversity of Aboriginal culture and its interface with European expansion. Thirteen authors have presented individual essays on aspects including prehistory, environment, traditional economic and social life, cultural factors such as art, music and language, historical and contemporary race relations and the European perception of Aboriginal Australians through the medium of art and literature. The book is clearly printed and attractively assembled on good quality paper. There are contributions from established authorities such as Dr A. Capell and Dr Alice Moyle, but several authors are relatively new to the field. The editor is to be commended for encouraging so many 'nonestablishment' scholars. He also enlisted support from 'outside' disciplines, and Leonie Kramer's short survey of 'the Aboriginal in literature' opens up a neglected area. The volume is innovative in one most positive direction. Terry Widders was asked to contribute thoughts on the predicament of his own people. His insights merit attention and it is to be hoped that he will proceed to a more extended treatment.

The credit balance of this book is unfortunately offset by so many negative features, that it is necessary to emphasise them at some length. The editor must be held responsible for many of them. Uneven and repetitive chapters are included, several of them bearing the hallmarks of hurried preparation. In some chapters factual content is sparse, while other sections are overloaded with personal names or disjointed and bald factual details. There is some blurring between fact and inference. The expectation of audience level evidently varied from elementary school to undergraduate. The editor fails to explain why he exerted such lax editorial control or why he excluded any documentation of illustrations or bibliographic advice. The principles that guided his choice of authors, chapters, themes or illustrations also remain unstated. The dustjacket blurb implies some

BOOK REVIEWS

virtue in a policy of avoiding 'the style of the academic study', but any gains are questionable. They are offset by the fact that a book intended to inform a lay audience becomes dogmatic if all the scholarly apparatus is ignored. 'There is no deliberate propaganda in these pages', the editor claims, 'but merely the facts, sympathy and understanding of the authors'. This bland 'objectivity' is matched by several recent works on race relations, including source books. There is a danger, however, that tolerant editors, such as the one of the book under review, by seeking 'to avoid extremism' (p.5), project just that image disguised with appeals to reason and emotion. These critical and generalised observations may seem both untimely and uncharitable, for the sympathetic humanitarianism of the contributors is evident, and Australian society surely needs education on the subject of these essays. It is commendable that contemporary academics should feel remorse for racial genocide, but the story told is easily distorted.

There is a tendency in some of these chapters to emphasise the perfect harmony between man and nature in pre-European times and to contrast it with the pathetic sequel. The consequential message is of the fall of a race from ecological and spiritual grace to a physical state ruined by shot, disease and alcohol. There is a danger that total acceptance of this 'before and after' syndrome may act to the educational disadvantage of contemporary Aboriginal people. They are presented with a stereotype of what their people now are, a stereotype already accepted by most Europeans; they are left unaware of other dignified but less obvious features of their history since European domination. While it may salve the conscience of the whites, it can do little to assist the recovery of self-esteem and sense of achievement amongst the depressed people to emphasise the paradise lost. This book overlooks many aspects of Aboriginal-European interaction which establish that disintegration was not the only theme meriting investigation and reflection. For example, what of the dignified bearing of tribal elders at the time of initial contact, and the close friendships which they established with men such as William Thomas in Victoria? There is scope for detailed historical evaluation of the role of these men. The fact that there was significant Aboriginal resistance in Queensland is under close investigation by Townsville historians; it is a theme unrepresented here, and so is any reflection on the 'rebellion' at Coranderrk. Aboriginal stockmen adapted to the horse as readily as American Indians; Tasmanians adopted the dog so rapidly that it transformed their social life even as it was under brutal European assault. Aboriginal sportsmen have achieved celebrity in many fields of European endeavour, not least as cricketers in England over a century ago. Many explorers praised the initiative and endurance of Aborigines in the patronising prose of the period; but such guides cannot be dismissed as mere variants of Uncle Tom. Neither can the Gippsland informants of A.W. Howitt or his proud friend Barak, elder at Coranderrk. Those great folk heroes, Burke and Wills, perished in a land of Aboriginal plenty. Forty years later two Aboriginal men from Charlotte Waters accompanied Spencer and Gillen across the continent and returned alone, safely and without fuss. Such subjects are as much a part of culture contact as are the very real and depressing effects. Any Aboriginal (or European schoolchild) who read *The moving frontier* would scarcely learn that reality.

Neither does the selection of illustrations assist. In such a 'factual' survey, where are the maps which tie names in the text to localities? Given the vaunted objectivity of approach, why were so many illustrations culled from the nineteenth century popular press? Why bother to use an illustration, if it is necessary to add (p.23) that 'early nineteenth century Europeans often used more imagination that observation'? Surely scholarship has advanced beyond acceptance of a George Grey Wandjina as typifying 'a Dreamtime superman' (p.21)? The distinguished linguist S.A. Wurm may feel startled to read that he is an archaeologist (p.84); likewise, it is Watkin, not Watkins Tench (p.66). However, misprints are rare in the text, although the single

or two sentence paragraphs which abound render pages staccato and unattractive. Few chapters could be described as distinguished literature. The index is exceptionally bad, for confusion abounds. Presumably the insertion of full page pictures explains why the index is a nonsense around pp. 117-120. Indexing is selective in regard to persons included and, to take examples from 'B', Bellbrook is listed in chapter 7, but not in chapter 13; Bull Cave is something of a feature, being mentioned in three chapters (pp. 114, 119 and 128), but appearing in the index at p.128 only; whether it is illustrated at all is unclear, but perhaps p.119 carries an example of its art. This reviewer cannot accept the editor's inferences (p.10) that this book succeeds in recording past events so that the future may be followed 'with understanding', or that it will assist the process of comprehending Aboriginal identity.

D.J. MULVANEY

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY.

Aborigines in white Australia: a documentary history of the attitudes affecting policy and the Australian Aborigine 1697-1973. Edited by Sharman Stone. Heinemann Educational Books, South Yarra, Vic., 1974. Pp. 253. \$12.50 h.b. \$8.50 p.b.

This book is one of at least four document collections on the history of relations between Aborigines and white Australians published between 1972 and 1975. Their publication illustrated the upsurge of interest in race in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the Australian community, and publishers' desire to cater for the burgeoning market. These anthologies served a useful purpose. They provided the student and the general reader with much historical material that had been locked away in often obscure sources and temporarily filled a serious gap in the historiography of Australian race relations. It was possible to prepare such books quickly and they were often the by-products of other related and ongoing research projects. Several of these documentary collections bore obvious signs of hasty preparation and inadequate editing, while commentary and interpretation was often skimpy. The focus was typically European, the emphasis (as in this book) on white attitudes and policies. To a considerable degree these collections already show their age. They will probably be superseded by a new wave of more serious books which will come out over the next few years.

Sharman Stone's book covers a wide scope — nominally from 1697 to 1973. But Section One, entitled 'The Sailing Explorers', consists of only one page — half from Dampier, half from Cook — scarcely a serious attempt to illustrate eighteenth century opinion. The following 114 extracts in 200-odd pages cover the First Penal Settlement, The Expansion of Free Settlement Beyond the Limits of Location, The Aborigines in the Work Force, The Twentieth Century and a New Deal for Aborigines, Becoming an Australian Citizen. Nearly half the book deals with the twentieth century. The sources are fairly obvious and well known to anyone familiar with the field. For the early period Stone draws on the *Historical Records of Australia*, *Historical Records of New South Wales* and the *British Parliamentary Papers*. Nine extracts in a row come from an 1839 House of Commons Paper, five in a row are taken from the Report of the 1861 Select Committee on the Queensland Native Police. The editor seems a little uncertain about the basis for selection. In a foreword she states that 'the only pre-requisite for selection was that at the time of statement, the views were made readily available to the reading public'. It seems doubtful if this was true of Governor's Despatches or even of many other official publications.

Each of the seven sections is prefaced by an introductory note from the editor.

BOOK REVIEWS

They are short and succinct but provide little of historiographical interest. There are indeed a number of minor slips and inaccuracies. G.A. Robinson was not a Presbyterian missionary, William Lanney's name is spelled wrongly, it did not take eight months to sail to England in the 1830s, the Protectorate was not initiated in 1836, Western Australia did receive convict labour. The standard of editing is below what should be expected from an established publisher. There is inconsistency in the use of capital 'A' for Aborigines, in the use of Aborigines or Aborigines. There is some confusion about the 1861 Select Committee on the Queensland Native Police. It is variously referred to as a Select Committee or a Royal Commission, either in 1861 or 1864. However the index is comprehensive and much better than those in comparable publications.

The book also contains more pictures — 27 plates — than any of the other documentary anthologies. While they are often interesting they seem to be culled from a limited number of collections and are often not directly related to the text. For instance a picture of Coranderrk residents of the 1870s faces a page containing Governor Hunter's despatches of 1797 and 1800. A survey of the pictures raises another question. The text is thoroughly Eurocentric in depicting white attitudes and policies. Yet the pictures are all of Aborigines: they are used as decorations, almost as exotica, rather than as illustrations of the text. Stone has put together a useful, if not distinguished, collection of documents, although I suspect that it is an example of a genre that is already a little dated.

HENRY REYNOLDS JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY OF NORTH QUEENSLAND

World catalogue of theses and dissertations about the Australian Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. By W.G. Coppel. Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1977. Pp. x + 113. \$7.50.

In recent years documentation on the life, death, religion, past history and other unique aspects relating to the Australian Aborigines has been prolific. This in turn has created a demand for bibliographic coverage. However, one immediate reaction to the publication of a bibliography of theses relating to the Aborigines is one of caution, as the approximately 700 theses included here could arguably be better covered from an information retrieval viewpoint as part of a wider listing.

It is now about ten years since the appearance of B.F. Craig's bibliographies (*Arnhem Land peninsular region*, 1966; *Central Australia and Western Desert regions . . .*, 1969; *North-West-Central Queensland . . .*, 1970). J. Greenway's *Bibliography of the Australian Aborigines . . .* covers the period to 1959. These works, however, do not include theses. Despite the Morris Miller Library list (*Union list of higher degree theses in Australian University Libraries*, 1965, supplements to 1974), total bibliographic coverage of theses in Australia in any field is not complete, and bibliographic research success is at times reliant on the grapevine of colleagues. Theses produced by Pass and Honours Bachelors' degree and Master's Qualifying candidates, are not included in the Morris Miller list, nor are many theses submitted to institutions outside of Australia. The value in this present catalogue of including all thesis-type material is great, as frequently such theses may represent the only work which has been done in certain fields. Other bibliographies and catalogues published in Australia also cannot be relied upon to cover theses. My own *Bibliography of the Northern Territory* aims to include relevant theses as fully as possible, but part 3, the one most directly concerned with the Aborigines, will not appear until 1979 or 1980.

Quite obviously the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies is aware of this bibliographic gap, as they funded Dr. Coppel in the work of preparing the present

catalogue for publication. The coverage of this bibliography would appear to be the result of some depth of work, as it includes theses prepared for all levels of tertiary award. One particular feature is that known related published works of any given author are also listed, which can be of value to users without convenient access to or need of a copy of the original theses. Coverage of theses and similar works originating within Australia appears to be excellent. As regards 'world' coverage of theses it is extremely difficult both for the compiler to be certain of universality and for the reviewer to judge gaps in coverage. But, in the circumstances, the mere fact that citations for such a large group of theses have been gathered together in one volume is of itself a contribution of considerable value to the researcher. The text of the catalogue is in alphabetical author order, and is supplemented by a useful subject index, which includes names (with alternative spellings) of tribes and languages, and geographic regions. The text itself is clear and easy to read. Each entry gives details of author, title, thesis level, and when and to which institution it was presented. No advice as to any projected means of updating the catalogue is offered, and as the cutoff point is July 1976, the work is already beginning to date. For the present the A.I.A.S. *Newsletter* will serve as a *de facto* supplement, but over a longer period this has obvious disadvantages. The volume of writing on the Aborigines has now reached a stage where the ideal overall definitive bibliographic coverage of the field could be usefully divided on a subject basis. In view of the accessibility of theses to the experienced researcher, theses would be treated in such a listing as one form of documentation in such a wider listing, but in the meantime, as such a prospect is unlikely, this catalogue is extremely valuable to any reader or researcher in fields relating to the Aborigines. Hopefully a revised edition will appear in due course. This catalogue will also have its uses to the writers of these theses, as increased exposure of their work in an appropriate source could encourage the publication of some works of wider appeal or potential usage.

CAROL M. MILLS

CANBERRA COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

'*These strangers, where are they going?*' *Aboriginal-European relations in the Fraser Island and Wide Bay region 1770-1905*. By Raymond Evans and Jan Walker. University of Queensland Anthropology Museum, Occasional Papers in Anthropology, (8), 1977: 39-105.

This essay is a narrative of the relations between Europeans and Aborigines from Cook's visit to the end of an attempt to conduct a mission for the Aborigines. The authors divide the subject into four sections: casual contacts (to 1842); war (1842-1859); economic and social relationships and mission work (1859-1897); and the Fraser Island Reserve (1897-1905). The essay has been carefully researched and is thoroughly documented. The authors seem to have been exhaustive in their quest and use of sources. This comprehensiveness is perhaps possible only with local studies and it therefore raises the question of what role local history should have in Aboriginal studies. It is not clear from this essay that its authors intended to contribute anything to the wider study of Aboriginal history, or to understanding the general problems of race relations and culture contact in Australia. The effort seems to have been directed more at recording the passing local scene than, say, looking at local variations of general processes. The absence of comparative comment or analysis is a disappointment in what is otherwise a well executed piece of research. For example the narrative of depredation and reprisal is interrupted in an unduly discreet way to suggest that 'European retaliation against Aborigines throughout south eastern Queensland, extending over many months, was massive,

BOOK REVIEWS

indiscriminate and unrelenting and nowhere does it seem that the response was so viciously unrestrained as in the regions of the Burnett, Wide Bay, and their hinterlands . . .' (p. 57).

There should be no need to justify local history, but it is less likely to interest anyone but locals unless statements like these are made; but they must, in addition, be examined and supported. Every local historian thinks his area is 'special', but if the statement quoted above is true, then it must have more than local significance. Generations of white Australians have thought that the Aborigines do not have a history; that view has been superseded, whatever its numerical following. It now needs to be established whether the Aboriginal experience of Europeans was homogeneous, or whether there were important regional or social variations. If some areas were more violent than others, can the difference be explained?

A second historiographical problem is contained in the second half of the essay. The authors betray some ambivalence about the extent to which the Aborigines were adaptive or passive in their response during the post-violence period. The short answer would be that they were both, and the authors present evidence for both; but they are apt to see the situation in perhaps overly sympathetic terms as a combination of exploitation and rejection. The problem here is that since Evans and Walker claim that the Wide Bay region was more than usually violent, and that the violence stopped fairly suddenly in 1858, then how should one explain the very considerable amount of work done by Aboriginal employees for the settlers before 1858? (p.61). The Aboriginal response, and therefore the question of adaptation, appears to be more complex than the interpretation offered here allows.

A third historiographical problem implicit in this essay is the possibility of countering the inevitable Eurocentric bias of written sources, to attempt to write history from 'the inside'. In the first half of the essay the authors make plausible attempts at such reconstruction, but the attempt is not sustained throughout. This problem is inherent in the sources, and not the fault of the authors, who are obviously aware of it. Perhaps European written sources contain biases which cannot be overcome in writing 'inside' history. These remarks are made not to denigrate local history, or this essay in particular. The answer to these problems is to be sought in more local history, not less. The time has come, however, for such studies to be done in a comparative, problem oriented framework.

The virtues of this essay, as well as its limitations, are those of local history: detailed information, close documentation and careful exposition. Aboriginal perceptions of Europeans, the nature and success of Aboriginal resistance to invasion, the arrogance and hostility of white townfolk, the gross exploitation of Aboriginal labour, the contradictions of missions, the brutality of ill-conceived philanthropy, the futility of paternalism, official indifference once white lives and property were safe, are all there. One thing that is missing, however, is a location map: the only map is of Fraser Island and the details are not particularly relevant to the essay. To avoid the appearance of disjointed narrative and contrived argument the inclusion of a map of the Wide Bay region, with all relevant detail, is essential. For readers wanting a relatively brief but authoritative account of a case study in the sequence of events from first contact to indigenous pauperization or extinction, this essay meets a need. It is unfortunate that published in a series of Occasional Papers in Anthropology it might find a smaller audience than it deserves.

IAN CAMPBELL

UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

'Taming the wilderness': the first decade of pastoral settlement in the Kennedy district. By Anne Allingham. Studies in North Queensland History No. 1, History Department, James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville, 1977. Pp. xiv + 238. \$3.50 plus postage.

. . . We thoroughly enjoyed those days of wild romantic life, with our horses and our gun, swimming flooded rivers and the danger of being dragged under by undertows or swept under driftwood, and always the danger of being speared by some blackfellow ambushed under cover, so we had to be ready to protect ourselves and keep our powder dry. (Memoirs of Marmaduke Curr quoted p.179.)

Passages such as this carry the myth of the pioneering pastoral frontier in Australia from generation to generation. Examining the myth's reality, and the establishment of the pastoral industries vital to Australia's early development are challenges often ignored by Australian historians. As with the history of exploration the romantic aura itself acts as a barrier. It is, as Allingham puts it, a 'traditionally misrepresented, and latterly disregarded field, which is so fundamental to Australian history' (p.xiv). So it is a pleasure to see this book, a study of the pastoral frontier in the Kennedy District of North Queensland in the 1860s. The book is produced by the James Cook University as the first of their series *Studies in North Queensland History*, and is based on the writer's BA Honours thesis for the History Department of that University. It suggests a developing school of regional historians there; let us hope the series continues.

The Kennedy frontier of the 1860s was a 'hard frontier', pushing the bounds of sheep production far into the tropic north where climate, terrain and vigorous Aboriginal opposition to settlement all combined against the grazier, especially one who hoped to produce fine wool. The lesson that cattle were better suited to tropical climate, steep terrain and spear-grass country was imprinted by bitter experience. The depression of the late 1860s with the collapse of the wool industry reinforced the message, while the mining rush of the following decade added new dimensions to the Kennedy frontier and its problems. Allingham gives balanced coverage to the history of pastoral settlement in the Kennedy district ('this upside down, outlandish place') during its first decade, with the emphasis on social history. The writer is convinced that such studies are important, and as relevant to the mainstream Australian history as its politics, racial and class tensions:

. . . one suspects that squatting is considered by comparison to be irrelevant, predictable and somewhat unstimulating. Moreover the celebrated squatter of the earlier historical era is now seen as frontier tyrant, in the light of Aboriginal and frontier conflict studies. But in the interests of balanced history it is desirable to research anew the squatter; stereotype images require questioning, and the pastoral pioneer must be appreciated amidst the guiding and motivating forces of his era and also in all his complexity. . . . I would urge as a further progression of current race relation studies, the integration of both Aboriginal and European research, with the ultimate aim of comprehensive frontier history (p.xi).

The study carries this aim of balanced coverage into effect. It also achieves even weighting of the minutiae of regional and local history and the wider issues to which they related. Throughout, the latter are kept in the reader's awareness, but they do not dominate. Critical judgment is displayed in discussion of the grand synthesising models, Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis and Russel Ward's mateship theories.

Allingham sees women and Aborigines as the 'silent parties' in the history of pastoral expansion. She does not explore the role of pioneer women in detail, but, drawing on the work of Brayshaw, Loos and Reynolds, she presents a clear summary of relations between pastoralists and Aborigines during the 1860s and early 1870s.

BOOK REVIEWS

This chapter is of major interest for contact studies, as the Aborigines offered 'effective and intelligent resistance' to settlement in a guerilla campaign of unexpected violence. This campaign had decisive impact on the labour situation in, and development of, the area. Loos and Reynolds estimate that on the European side losses in the north Queensland conflict amounted to some 400 to 450 dead. If, as one observer commented, for every white man killed six 'blackfellows bite the dust' (p.158), Aboriginal losses must have been considerable. The situation was recognised as one of crisis but projected reform policies were rejected by a distant government and a solution was left to local expedient. Some pastoralists, such as Christison, Chatfield and Bode, successfully countered the situation with negotiation and experiments in co-operation. The majority, however, responded 'with lead' or by calling in the Native Police. The grim reality of the 'very jolly kind of life' (p.157) led by this body of troopers is neatly exposed by Allingham. In a perceptive and balanced account of a complex situation she indicates areas where the current models of culture-contact history need modification in the light of regional variation. Allingham also tries to assess 'both sides of the frontier', but her section on Aboriginal society is less satisfying than that on the settlers. References to 'stone age technology' (p.141) and to 'totally unknown' agriculture seem simplistic. Would those who are actively engaged in culture contact studies welcome the title 'revisionist historians' (p.139) reacting to 'tacit silence'?

In concluding, Allingham writes:

. . . In the long term perspective the influence of initial racial conflict has been suggested to have been tragic and pervasive; one wonders what the impact of the frontier has been, socially, politically and economically in the continuing affairs of Northern Queensland (p.221).

Allingham points to areas of regional research which might suggest answers to this question — studies of the bush worker, of pioneering women, of the North Queensland separation movement, of racial attitudes in the coastal towns of the north, and the history of the Flinders district and the Gulf country. Regional histories of this kind, well researched, clearly written and fully documented, investigating local history in its wider context, are important contributions to Australian history. They offer basic building blocks for significant synthesis. It is hoped that further studies follow in this series which has begun so well.

ISABEL MCBRYDE

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

The Black Eureka. By Max Brown. Australasian Book Society, Sydney, 1976. Pp. xviii + 246. \$10.50.

For over thirty years, an Aboriginal community in the Pilbara region of Western Australia has shown considerable ingenuity and organizational innovation in its efforts to survive economically and yet retain a degree of group independence, to maintain significant components of Aboriginal culture, and develop new strategies to cope with the changing situation. The changes have been dramatic, and the Aborigines have been part of the drama, as the Pilbara altered from an isolated pastoral area, with many residual characteristics from its frontier and colonial background, to become a major focus for mining by the multinational companies, and an area dotted with new towns catering for suburban life-styles.

A strike of Aboriginal pastoral workers in 1946 under the guidance of Donald William McLeod, a local European contractor and mineral prospector, and the leadership of Aborigines Dooley Bin Bin, Kitchener, and Clancy McKenna not only challenged the then current low wage levels and meagre amenities for Aborigines on the stations, but also the authority and activities of the Native

Affairs Department which officially claimed to represent the interests of Aborigines. Another outcome was the emergence of the new Aboriginal community which aimed to obtain a pastoral station, not only for subsistence, but as a place for the formal education of the children and the retirement of the old people. Today, after a complicated series of events, the properties of Strelley and Yandeyarra are concrete evidence of these efforts.

The main economic activity of the group has been mining, although a diversity of other ventures such as the collection of pearl shell and buffel seed, as well as the hunting of kangaroos and goats for hides and meat have been some of their other work projects. In mining, the Aborigines used a modification of the traditional wooden dish, the yandy, to separate minerals of different specific gravity. This innovation not only enabled successful competition with European miners on alluvial fields, but was a technology ideally suited to the situation. A yandy could be cheaply constructed from sheet iron, was easily transported, fitted existing Aboriginal skills, and was labour intensive. Further, women were most expert in its use, and so became again an integral part of the Aboriginal workforce. As a postscript, however, it is worth noting that in the late 1970s these Aborigines have been virtually forced out of mining by the large claims and competition from the international mining companies.

In the documentary novel, *The black Eureka*, Max Brown gives a detailed portrayal of the organization of the strike in the 1940s, through to the group's mining successes and the acquisition of Yandeyarra pastoral station in the 1950s. In addition we get two other glimpses of the movement, first in 1953 when Max Brown joined the group at Yandeyarra. This gives some indication of the Aborigines forging a workable organization at a time when there was a rapid influx of new members, including a small gathering of idealistic Europeans. The novel touches on the ambivalence and tensions as well as the appreciative cooperation engendered in the situation. A hint of the coming financial difficulties for the group and the ensuing hardship is also evident. The second brief view is from 1960, when the group went through a leadership crisis which led to a split in the movement, a schism which remains to this day, and is evident in the separate settlements of Strelley and Yandeyarra. The division of the book into three parts reflects Max Brown's two visits to the group, along with his collection of information on the earlier strike period. The central and more lengthy section covers the strike and forms the backbone of the book. Here he has successfully combined the results of firsthand interviewing and data from documentary sources to produce a very readable report. The style of writing in this part is more formal and less personal than in the other sections, as the author stands once removed from his subject, more in the manner of the historian. In the other sections, the detailed reporting of events and description of cultural items is maintained but is not as fully placed in a broad social context. We see more of Brown, the participant observer with his attitudes and foibles, in social relationship with other participants. This is a type of reporting rarely used by social scientists. Bland academic reporting can be more protective of authors, but often less useful for readers in assessing the perspectives, assumptions, and interpretive models used by the writers. In this novel we are left in no doubt about the author's sympathy with the strikers, or his interpretation of wider political events in terms of class conflict. Even so, readers may find the glimpses of the Aboriginal groups' micro-politics in the early and final sections of the book more difficult to appreciate.

The book is certainly an important contribution to the history of race relations in Australia, yet a few of the generalisations are misleading. The claim that it was the first organised initiative by Aborigines in Australian history, or even the inference that it was the first Aboriginal strike, cannot be substantiated. Admittedly, the magnitude of the strike organisation in the Pilbara, and its ramification beyond

BOOK REVIEWS

the district to influence State politics and legislation, as well as the publicity gained both nationally and internationally, makes it a spectacular occurrence. However, we need to remain aware of the long series of conflicts which preceded the strike, some of which are actually mentioned in *The black Eureka*. Also mentioned is an earlier strike over food supplied to the Aborigines of De Grey station. Comparable disputes over wages have been reported from Anna Plains farther up the coast, as well as from other States.

How *The black Eureka* will fare judged in terms of current literary aesthetics is difficult to estimate, in that documentary novels tread the tightrope between adequate historical reporting and literary creativity. I suspect that the general reader without any special interest in social movements, social conflict, or Aboriginal history may at times find the detail somewhat overwhelming: others will commend such detail as an indication of committed scholarship. For myself, I found the strike history impressive, and the descriptions contained in the other two parts certainly complementary to other sources dealing with the social movement of the Pilbara Aborigines.

JOHN WILSON

PERTH, W.A.

Wacvie. By Faith Bandler. Rigby, Adelaide, 1977. Pp. 146. \$7.95.

Wacvie is the semi-fictionalised biography of the author's father. Wacvie Mussingkon was, she tells us, kidnapped from the New Hebridean island of Ambrym in 1883 and brought to slave on Queensland sugar plantations. The story tells of fear and discomfort on the voyage to the colony, and then of hard labour, bad food, harsh punishment and tight social restrictions on the plantations. Wacvie escaped in 1897 and settled in the Tweed district of northern N.S.W. He was one of the approximately sixteen hundred Melanesians who were allowed for humanitarian reasons to remain in Australia when the bulk of their countrymen were repatriated as part of the White Australia Policy from 1907. It is a larger-than-life, morally simplistic tale indicting white Australia for its participation in the system of indentured Pacific Island labour.

Such a picture is at variance with the current scholarly interpretation of the labour trade as a two-way enterprise, if not in its early years then from the 1880s, in which Melanesians participated with a knowledge of the rewards and the dangers of such involvement. This depiction of an active and intelligent role is not welcomed by many Australian-born descendants of the migrants and some critics of our racist past: the 'blackbirding' epithets are a handy stick with which to beat a blunt Australian conscience. Yet whether or not the recruits came willingly does not alter the fact that in colonial society they were an exploitable servile labour force. Both supporters and opponents of the indenture system accepted their (relative) cheapness and inferior position; the debate centred on whether Queensland's tropical development could or should regardless dispense with their services. The 'kanakas' were expendable field workers, not permanent settlers.

Wacvie records the cruelties and indignities to which Islanders were subjected: the occurrence of whippings, beatings, sexual exploitation, the staggeringly high mortality in comparison to the white population. But Ms Bandler, in her crusade, overstates the case. For example, her father tells us that the recruits were forbidden outlets such as fishing, singing, dancing, holding feasts, cultivating small gardens of their own. This is contradicted in the numerous accounts by contemporary observers of such leisure activities; nor would it be sensible policy in terms of a stable and efficient labour force.

Since *Wacvie* is a novel, it cannot be overly criticised for its historical inaccuracies.

As part of an emerging black literature, and as the first work by an Australian-born descendant of the Melanesian recruits, its place is assured. To this reviewer, however, it is something of a disappointment. In describing the life of a black man in Australia, the emphasis is heavily on the injustices done to him and there are only occasional glimpses of the 'other side', of how he reacted to such treatment and managed to carve a niche for himself and his family in a new country. Wacvie Mussingkon was an independent, proud Melanesian, a church and community leader respected alike by Islanders and Europeans in the district. 'The call of village life had faded; home was now here' (p.113). If we had been given more insights into this process of adaptation, *Wacvie* might have made a unique contribution. White Australia is only slowly being drawn into an awareness of the vibrant and functioning sub-cultures in its midst.

PATRICIA MERCER

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Kwork Kwork the green frog and other tales from the spirit time. Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1977. Pp. 48. \$4.95.

The Aboriginal children's history of Australia. Written and illustrated by Australia's Aboriginal children. Rigby, Adelaide, 1977. Pp. 150. \$7.95.

I am eleven years old and now live in Canberra, but for eighteen months in 1976-77 I lived in the Northern Territory with my mother and brother who is two years younger. Most of the time we were at Warrabri which is an Aboriginal Settlement 375 km. north of Alice Springs. We travelled around a lot because my mother was doing research with Aboriginal women. I visited lots of places and went to school with Aboriginal children at Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Warrabri. At Warrabri people speak Warlpiri, Warramunga, Kaiditj and Alyawarra. My teacher, Alice Naparula Nelson, taught us Warlpiri. She showed me how to write Warlpiri sentences. I think it is important for Aboriginal children to be able to write their own stories for themselves in their own language. It is also important that children can write stories for whites to read in English because that way they will learn something of the Aboriginal ways.

Both these books tell about how Aborigines feel about themselves. They make whites think about the beauty of the Aboriginal world and some of the changes which have taken place in the last two hundred years. It is very hard to understand about the Dreamtime which was a long time ago but is still in people now. Some whites think it is just dreams, like make-up things. In some books you can buy about Aborigines, the stories make fun of their way of life. People think it is funny or dirty to eat snakes and lizards. They make the differences sound very big between us. Really there is very little difference because Aboriginal children love to hear stories too. The best ones are the stories about themselves. *The Aboriginal children's history of Australia* is a book which Aboriginal children like because they wrote it and did the illustrations. Some of my favourite authors are in both these books. Geraldine Kerinaiaua, Irene Lama Lama, Dianna Merrkiyawuy, Ancilla Munkara, Dorothy Nurra and Sarah Wolmby have stories and paintings in both.

The story of *Kwork Kwork* tells the way Aboriginal people think of the way the world was made. We sometimes learn about God at school but we all have different ideas and it is good to know what Aboriginal children learn from their parents. 'Blue tongue lizard and the taipan' is about when men and women were animals. This is a bit hard for whites to understand but Aboriginal children know what it is about and the drawings in the book help us to see it too. 'The boy who became the white cockatoo' tells Aboriginal children that they should obey their

BOOK REVIEWS

elders and the law. It also helps warn whites that they should be careful about laws and not laugh at them. 'The river which was made from tears', illustrated by Dianna Merriyawuy, is also in *The Aboriginal children's history of Australia* but the story is told in a slightly different way. It is an important story. All these stories in *Kwork Kwork* come from the Top End (North section of N.T.) and Queensland and, like stories from the Centre, are told over and over again. *Kwork Kwork* is easy to read because I can find out who wrote the stories and did the illustrations, in the table of contents. The print is big and clear and that is important for children who are reading English but speaking another language at home.

I like *The Aboriginal children's history of Australia* best of all the books which deal with Aboriginal stories because you can really tell it has been written by Aboriginal children. They use skin names (sub-sections) and it has the rhythm of English as Aboriginal children speak it at school and at home. Other Aboriginal children will know when they read these stories that they were written by other Aborigines. One problem with this book is working out who wrote the stories. There is no real table of contents, only a list of contributors and the artist's name beside the paintings. This collection of stories has more to do with real problems and the life on settlements, missions, and cattle stations now. Some of these things children see clearer than grown-ups. They tell about grog fights and people who have lost their country. The stories of mining tell how we have ruined the countryside. Maybe people will have second thoughts about destroying the country when they read these stories. My favourite story is about Elkedra Station as told by Doreen Spratt (p.147) because I have also enjoyed that part of the country and understand a little bit about how she feels:

This is our land. It goes back, a long way back, into the Dreamtime, into the land of our Dreaming. We made our camp here, and now all that is left of our presence are the ashes and the bones of the dead animals the young men had killed. Soon even our footprints will be carried away by the wind.

The stories in this history are told by proud people. These two books can be read by children now and in the future perhaps we will have more stories by Aboriginal people.

GENEVIEVE BELL

TURNER PRIMARY SCHOOL

BOOKS RECEIVED

Aboriginal and Islander Identity, January, April, July 1977. Aboriginal Publications Foundation Inc., 971 Wellington St., West Perth, W.A. 6005. Published quarterly, annual subscription including postage \$6, \$8 overseas.

Aboriginal legends: animal tales. By A.W. Reed. A.H. & A.W. Reed Pty. Ltd., Sydney, 1978. Pp. 141. \$2.50.

Aboriginal myths: tales of the dreamtime. By A.W. Reed. A.H. & A.W. Reed Pty. Ltd., Sydney, 1978. Pp. 142. \$2.50.

Aboriginal words of Australia. By A.W. Reed, illustrated by E.H. Papps. A.W. Reed, Sydney, first published 1965, reprinted (this edition) 1976. Pp. 144. \$2.50.

Aboriginals of Australia: a record of their fast-vanishing traditional way of life, featuring over 90 full-colour photographs. By Douglass Baglin and Barbara Mullins.

ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1978 2:2

A.H. & A.W. Reed Pty. Ltd., Sydney, first published 1969, this edition 1976. Pp. 35. \$1.95.

An illustrated encyclopedia of Aboriginal life. By A.W. Reed, illustrated by E.H. Papps. A.H. & A.W. Reed, Sydney, first published 1969, reprinted with corrections 1974. Pp. 175. \$8.95.

The Australian Aboriginal. Text by Roland Robinson, photographs by Douglass Baglin. A.H. & A.W. Reed Pty. Ltd, Sydney, first published 1968, this edition 1977. Pp. 128. \$12.95.

A bibliography of Australian Aborigines. Compiled by Denise E. Quay, assisted by Marilyn Lenton. James Cook University of North Queensland, Aboriginal and Islander Studies, Occasional Paper No. 1, 1977. Pp. 103. [A union list of monographs and other materials held by the Libraries of James Cook University of North Queensland and Townsville College of Advanced Education, as at March 1977.]

The hairy man of South Eastern Australia. By Graham C. Joyner. Available from the author, P.O. Box 253, Kingston, A.C.T. 2604. Pp. iv + 27. \$5.40 including postage. [A collection of 29 documents from the Monaro and South Coast region relating to alleged sightings of 'the hairy man', variously described as a strange animal, gorilla, ape or huge monkey.]

CURRENT RESEARCH

This listing summarises replies to a letter requesting details of current research on Aboriginal history sent to Universities, Colleges of Advanced Education and interested individuals. It is hoped that publication of this incomplete initial listing will encourage others to provide details of their research. A comprehensive listing of current research would prevent duplication of projects and enable scholars to see at a glance where work is being done and where further research should be directed. Corrections, additions and deletions should be sent to: Jim Urry, Aboriginal History, c/- Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History, The Australian National University, Canberra, A.C.T. 2600.

AUSTRALIA (general)

Browne, Richard. Aboriginal boxers from 1930 to the present; Aborigines in sport generally. (History Dept., La Trobe University).

Burke, Catherine. Aborigines as depicted by whites in films and photographs; Ph.D. research. (Dept. of General Studies, University of New South Wales).

Donaldson, Tamsin. Forms of oral literature (N.S.W. and elsewhere). (Dept. of Linguistics, Australian National University).

Kukathas, Chamdran. Aboriginal protest 1965-1972; BA Hons. research. (Dept. of History, S.G.S., Australian National University).

Maher, John. Aborigines and the Australian constitution with particular reference to referenda and government policy; Litt. B. research. (Dept. of History, University of New England).