The purpose of J.J. Healy's *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia* is to describe and evaluate the attempts of our writers from the beginnings of settlement to 1975 to bring the Aboriginal within the bounds of their imagination so that he might become part of their consciously created world. The questions asked are: What image of the Aboriginal did successive writers have and how close was this image to reality? A third question which occurs to the reader's mind: what bearing did any of this have on lessening the distance between blacks and whites becomes explicit only occasionally. This last question is probably the most interesting to the general reader, but there are several reasons why the answer cannot be found here. In the first place, the definition of literature is too narrow. It covers only poets and fiction-writers and hardly mentions drama at all, and no works of non-fiction are examined. Secondly, the book deals with a country not renowned for its knowledge of or its interest in its own serious writers, so that it is unlikely that any of these would have had much influence outside small literary circles. For example, Furphy is discussed at some length, but Lawson is not mentioned. Yet Lawson was and probably still is known to hundreds, even thousands, who never heard of Furphy. Thirdly, there is no mention of 'popular' literature, such as women's magazines or *The Bulletin*. The last is a serious omission since Healy states in his Introduction, that when national self-consciousness 'was developed at the turn of the century the ground was prepared for a re-examination of the relationship of the new Australian community to the dispersed community of Aboriginal Australians'. Yet as late as 1949, *The Bulletin*, that trumpeter of national virtues, could use its customary abbreviation 'abo.' when describing the work of A.P. Elkin, in a paragraph the tone of which implies that it was nice for him to have such an interesting hobby. *The Bulletin*'s image of the Aboriginal would richly repay investigation.

However, no one man can do everything, and the value of Healy's book is that it raises so many questions. The fact that a task which should have been undertaken in this country long ago has been left to an English-born Canadian scholar is a comment in itself. Only three of Healy's references are to previous work in this field; two are unpublished theses by university students, both dealing only with fiction and one is an article by the novelist Randolph Stow. All of them were published as late as the 1960s.

Healy's approach to his task makes him able to suggest that there has been a kind of linear progress towards increasing clarity in the literary vision of the Aboriginal, the fullness of which is to be found in Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*; early writers, like the rest of their society, did not know enough to cope with the tasks of understanding. That excuse certainly will not wash today, and there is some doubt about how far back it should apply. According to W.E.H. Stanner, by the 1830s 'there was enough good information at hand to have made a difference if the compulsive structure of Australian interests had been open to it'. If the definition of literature is widened, Stanner's view is the more credible. It is doubtful whether later writers have grasped any more clearly the fundamental issues underlying the encounter between two opposite traditions than Alexander Harris in the 1820s and 1830s; or that they have been any more unselfconsciously delighted in their acceptance of tribal Aborigines as they were, than Jack McLaren (1926); or that they have written of Aboriginal problems more forcefully and beautifully than Paul Hasluck (1942), or Stanner (1968). If *Settlers and Convicts, My Crowded Solitude, Black Australians and After the Dreaming* are not works of art, there is something wrong with the definition of art.
Healy is on safer ground when he makes it clear, as his tale unfolds, that poets and fiction-writers as a group find it no easier to transcend the self than simpler souls; there is even perhaps a suggestion that their greater share of introspection and need of self-expression make it more difficult. Subconscious demands and desires condition what is perceived by even the most sensitive and imaginative of men. The clarity with which Healy himself observes this subjectivity wavers a good deal. He takes proper account of it in his careful and interesting analysis of the 19th century novelist Mrs Campbell Praed, noting the complicated responses to the Aborigines dictated by her contradictory childhood experiences of them, fused with the sexual fears which surfaced during her unhappy marriage and further confused by her vulnerability to the ignorance and prejudice around her. But he pays no attention to the part played in Katharine Prichard’s writing by her equally difficult sexual history, by her confused ideas of sexual roles. He praises the short story ‘The Cooboo’ even more than most critics, but overlooks the strong element of projection in it, which makes one hesitate to accept it unreservedly as a faithful picture. He applies similar sweeping superlatives to Patrick White’s portrait of the Aboriginal artist Alf Dubbo in Riders in the Chariot. White’s generosity, he says, in choosing Dubbo as the vehicle of the difficulties of his own creative effort as an artist ‘marks the highest point in the European consciousness of the Aborigine in Australian literature’. The conclusion seems to overlook the implications of the word ‘generosity’ and more importantly, the symbolic function played by Dubbo in White’s Blakean psychological scheme. White is primarily interested in Dubbo because he is an artist, and Dubbo’s blackness is necessary to his concept of the artist, not there for its own sake.

Healy’s story begins with some fascinating thumb-nail sketches of random early encounters between Aborigines and white invaders, a straggling sailor from Cook’s crew, escaped convicts who became ‘white blackfellows’, a policeman, an explorer and a squatter, from which he draws the conclusion that ‘very little understanding of the Aborigine communicated itself to Europeans in the first half century of settlement’. Given the time at which settlement took place, the nature of the first settlers, the mixed and dubious motives for which the settlement was founded, the new attitudes to race beginning to percolate through the European consciousness from German philosophy, this was not surprising, though Healy does not take much account of such matters. Each of his chapters, nevertheless, contains valuable additions to the literary background, particularly that dealing with the attempts made in the 1870s and ‘80s by Rusden and George Gordon McCrae to use mythology as ‘a point of entry into Aboriginal consciousness’. The Jindyworobaks of the 1940s were not the first in the field, though their contribution was more influential than Healy admits.

He devotes most of his attention to Xavier Herbert’s work, and his careful analysis of Capricornia illuminates its structure even if he is reticent about its effects. He is certainly right to emphasise, in opposition to Vincent Buckley, that ‘the impression of social injustice to the Aborigines has precedence over the cosmic injustice to all men’, but we are left wondering whether he himself believes in a cosmic injustice. The idea would be perhaps as strange to Aborigines in their natural state as it appears to a Western logician or a Buddhist. The chief defect of this part of the book is the quite misleading summary of the Tuckiar case.

That Poor Fellow My Country has ‘brought the Aborigine into full focus’ in white fiction is probably true; whether Herbert has achieved this feat without detriment to the novelist’s art is a matter for debate of more significance than Herbert’s admirers are prepared to admit. Healy’s account of it is detailed and persuasive, but the sheer size of the novel and the ubiquity of the central character, a thin disguise for Herbert himself, infatuated with the sound of his own voice, make one hesitate. What are the hidden motives for such verbosity, even if the
author himself finally sees through it? There are all sorts of reasons for colonizing with words, as the Aborigines themselves have discovered. There are objections also to Herbert’s handling of religious issues, which Healy fails to make clear; at times Herbert reminds one of a curious and intelligent child discovering exciting ideas for the first time.

The chapter on Western Australian novelists is full of interest, and so is the assessment of Brunton Stephens and Kendall, who, Healy says, institutionalized and consolidated the Aboriginal as a topic for satire. He also draws attention to Harpur’s view of the European in Australia as part of a ‘disturbed moral order’, of which the killing of the Aborigine became the emblem, as with the Ancient Mariner and the albatross. It is a pity he did not mention Penton’s *Landtakers* in this connection, a book which dramatizes this same idea and opens up the vista of moral corruption which too often accompanied the squatters’ search for new frontiers. Healy seems aware of the part played by some of these men in spreading racist ideas throughout the country, but does not really explore the theme.

The chapter on Furphy and Grant Watson is less successful. He does not take seriously enough Furphy’s view of the part played by Aboriginal conservatism in contributing to the downfall of tribal life. This is odd in view of his quotation of D.H. Lawrence’s remarks on the rigidity of tribal conventions, in the same chapter. The repressiveness of traditional Aboriginal society, especially for women, is too often explained away by those who are in no danger of having to suffer from it. Healy’s whole discussion, during the section on Grant Watson, of the ‘range of human choice’ is superficial. He has not read enough of Grant Watson fully to understand him and he makes a number of factual mistakes about him, which there is not space to enumerate. The section on Judith Wright is inadequate and out-of-date; he does not mention later poems like *Two Dreamtimes*, addressed to the Aboriginal poet Kath Walker, which puts in poetic terms the point made long ago by Hasluck, when he traced the declining belief in principles of justice to the exigencies of the pastoral industry: in other words, the white man also lost his dreaming.

The most important omission, however, in the area Healy has defined for himself, is Alexander Harris, who, besides *Settlers and Convicts* (1847) a mixture of fact and fiction, wrote a novel which should have been of interest to Healy, *The Emigrant Family* (1849). Harris spent sixteen years in the colony working at various occupations on the land. His first book in particular contains the substance of most of the difficulties in black-white relations which have not been given a thorough hearing again until modern times. Harris had no colour prejudice at all. His definition of the word ‘native’ was simple: it meant anyone who was born in Australia. Black men and currency lads were Australians and all others were emigrants or new chums. His second book uses a Negro born in Australia as its central character, and one might argue that this man, Martin Beck, and his white fellow-Australian, Reuben Kable, represent the two potentialities of the emerging Australian character, the acquisitive versus the just soul, who loves his neighbour not more than, but as himself. Harris is absolutely fair to Beck, whose avarice he sees as having been fostered by his unfortunate childhood; he gives him his high moment of magnanimity, reserving his contempt for a white man with a similar warped character. His attitude to the Aborigines may appear to a superficial reader to have hardened between the two books, but it is explicable in terms of the viewpoint of the characters. In *Settlers and Convicts*, he addresses himself directly to black-white relationships and his approach is even-handed. His own feelings towards the blacks were full of friendliness and trust, and he reveals a considerable knowledge of their customs and capabilities. He was present in the colony during the Myall Creek murders and the subsequent executions, and was
dubious about the efforts to force British notions of law upon Aborigines all at once. The confusion, he feared, would lead to further violence from irresponsible whites. His argument here is closely reasoned and needs to be read in full, if it is not to be misinterpreted.

Behind his argument is the conviction that the main issue between the two races is the right to land, but he does not evade the ethical question which is too often ignored: whether a small people, simply by virtue of immemorial occupation, have a right to occupy land permanently, when it will support greater numbers who are in danger of starving if they do not emigrate. He freely admits the initial wrong: that the British are robbing the Aborigines of their land and that 'if we want a league of peace on equal terms, there is no road to it but we must give up our land and forsake their country', but he sees at the same time that 'it is rather the mode in which we seize and hold the soil that does the mischief than the act itself'. His suggestion for a way out of the intolerable dilemma was to identify the interests of the blacks with the small settlers, to encourage the amicable relations which establish themselves more easily with that class than with the squatters. The bitterness of the blacks, he argues, comes from the fact that they see the whites 'robbing out of mere wantonness, not from the pressure of necessity'.

They understand no theories about capital and labour, and pauperism and emigration; all they feel is they are wronged; all they see, the fact that it is done by those who are rich already, and do not want the soil for subsistence; not by the poor, who might be justified.

Harris was a firm Christian, but believed missionary efforts useless and absurd at that time. The subject arouses him to a pitch of eloquence when he imagines how an Aboriginal sees these efforts:

"You!" he says,"you, who tie one another up and flog one another within an inch of life, for one little hasty word; you, who begrudge one another enough to eat; you, who deprive me of my hunting-grounds, only to increase possessions for possessions' sake; you, a people divided into two classes, the one hateful, the other contemptible, the tyrant and the slave; you, who keep and clothe and train men to slaughter as to a trade — you teach me to be better! Me, who walk the forest free, who appropriate no more than I need, who never fight but as a deeply injured man, who would not lay your bloody lash upon my dog, much less my brother, who in wrath remember mercy and give even the public culprit against whom I am to direct my spear at the command of the tribe, his shield to defend himself with — you convert me! Preposterous."

Everything that Harris has to say on the subject bears out Stanner's opinion over a hundred years later: 'that the Aborigines have always been looking for a decent union of their lives with ours, but on terms that would let them preserve their own identity'. Since the referendum of 1967, this possibility has depended on a change of attitude in white Australians, for as Healy points out: 'Laws that die in the books continue to live until they have died in the hearts of men'.

It is not possible to do justice to his book in a summary except to say that it is a valuable and stimulating introduction to the subject, intended primarily for a literary audience, though it will appeal to a general reader interested in Aboriginal affairs as well as literature. It is lively reading except for a few stylistic mannerisms and occasional precious allusions. Why call upon a German social philosopher to make a point which has been a commonplace in English literature since Wordsworth, for example? What makes one hesitate to accord the book a more definitive status is the absence of any firm theoretical foundation, and a tendency to use superlatives which cannot be substantiated. In his Conclusion, Healy notes the 'deep pessimism about the foundations of Australian civilisation' but does not analyse its causes, or confront the ethical dilemma posed by the existence of a
large continent inhabited by a few people — a dilemma still present with Australians today. Again, it would be true to say that 'much of the energy of Australian literature in the twentieth century has been directed towards the recovery of the Aborigine by the Australian imagination', but it is not true to say that the 'dominant energies' have been so directed. The twentieth century includes Richardson, Brennan, Boyd, FitzGerald, Hope, Slessor and many more, none of whom were interested in the question, in their writing, at any rate.

One can however heartily agree with Healy when he says that the next move in the attempt of literature 'to grasp the phenomenon of man in his Aboriginal guise is likely to be made by the Aborigine himself'. One looks forward to Healy's expanding his brief review of Aboriginal writers in English, and hopes he will be joined by Aboriginal literary critics who will look back at the picture he has made and paint their own version of it.

DOROTHY GREEN


A number of excellent works on individual Australian explorers have appeared over the last few years, but this book stands out from amongst them as being a uniquely handsome production: it deals with the work of the man who was appointed as 'artist, naturalist and geologist' to the Burke and Wills expedition.

Marjorie Tipping is the author of a thesis and also of several articles on Becker; she had become an authority on Becker even before the present major work and shows great knowledge and understanding of the artist's life and times.

The present work consists of a number of distinct parts: it begins with a detailed biography of Becker, supported by archive investigations in both Germany and Australia. There follow excellent prints of all the drawings and water-colours that Ludwig Becker contributed during the course of the Victorian Exploring Expedition of 1860-61. Incredibly enough he created these fine works amid the hardships which resulted in his death on the 29th of April 1861 on the Bulloo. The book furthermore contains a map of all Becker's overnight camps on the journey north, his letters and the scientific reports written during the expedition, and also a note on Hermann Beckler, the medical officer with the expedition who tended the dying Becker. Throughout the present work Becker appears as a scholarly and gentle man, enthusiastic about the beauty of the Australian outback.

There are no major criticisms at all that one could make of such an outstanding and sympathetically written work, but there are one or two minor points that call for comment. The translations from the German that are given in the text could be more literal: the moving tribute to Becker that is quoted (p.32) from the *Australische Monatzeitung für die Colonieen und Deutschland* (Feb. 1862) says that Becker has an honourable grave in the silence of the desert through 'der Götter Wille'. This is rendered as 'the will of God', a translation which completely loses the romantic-archaising atmosphere of the little poem which speaks of 'the will of the gods'.

By publishing the drawings and the accompanying comments of Becker, Marjorie Tipping has made a valuable contribution to Aboriginal Studies. Becker was in some ways ahead of his time: it is evident that he felt he was privileged to see the outback and the Aborigines. Marjorie Tipping conveys this very well except for the one unfortunate expression (p.34) where she refers to 'the bewildered
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primitives of the outback'. Becker's notes show more admiration for the Bagandji guide 'the brave and gallant Dick' than for anybody else on the expedition. Seeing that he had good contacts with the Aborigines, Becker obviously listened to Aboriginal speech more carefully than others of his time. Some of the words that appear in his notes, such as 'curali, white-winged chough' (p.102) and 'bounno, gecko' are good transcriptions of Bagandji words, as is proved by recordings of Bagandji made by the reviewer over 100 years later. The name of the vast Torrowotto swamp was heard by Becker as Duroadoo (p.178), which is much closer to the traditional Maljangaba name Duru-gadu 'Snake's windbreak' than the standard rendering. But Becker's sensitive and beautiful drawings do even more justice to far western New South Wales and its original inhabitants than his rendering of names.

There are one or two technical linguistic matters that need amendment. The contention that W'anjiwalku and Maljangaba are the same language (p.124) is in contradiction with the evidence given by the late George Dutton (see J. Beckett 'George Dutton's Country' Aboriginal History vol.2, 1978, p.9) as its name even indicates: (balgu, walgu means 'speech' in Bagandji). Mootwingee, Becker's 'Mrtwanji' means not just 'green' (p.124); mutu means 'grass' and windji 'fresh'.

Both the author and the publishers are to be congratulated on this outstanding work.

LUISE HERCUS AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY


Pp. xv + 389. $25.00

An author, even a distinguished anthropologist, and man of affairs like Professor Stanner, who can publish 18 essays written over 35 years and can show in them consistency, the deepest perception, and the willingness to try to inspire an intelligent policy towards Aborigines and to spread an appreciation of their quality and thought life must have great confidence in what he has written to publish it now. Administrators of Aboriginal Affairs would repudiate or wish to forget many of the presumptions of their policy of 35, 25 and 15 years ago. Professor Stanner in 1979 would need, I think, to repudiate none of these essays, nor the thinking in them.

They are beautifully written, but they are not easy reading, for they demand concentrated thought to follow their deep insights.

In his essay 'Caliban Discovered' (1962) Professor Stanner looks at 'seven or eight fairly distinct views which can be labelled, with little more distortion than is inevitable in putting a tag on any dominant tendency. They were visions of Caliban, of The Noble Savage, of The Comic Savage, of The Orphan or Relict of Progress, of Primal or Protozoan Man, of The Last of His Tribe, of The Ward in Clancery, and of The Reluctant European. These phases of Australian misunderstanding of Aborigines have been the problem. What Professor Stanner is battling for in human understanding seems to be expressed in one of his passing sentences —

To understand Aboriginal culture, the customary way of life, is to see that it had its own civility and that, in particular matters, it was touched by genius. These facts are being recognised only now, after an intellectual psychological and moral struggle of the utmost difficulty.

Since 'now' in this passage was 1962, Professor Stanner cannot be accused of pessimism. The struggle is still on in 1979, and Professor Stanner is identified at
present with a battle to recognise the distinctive Aboriginal 'civility' by a treaty of official Australia with a distinctive people — the Aborigines.

In his essay 'Religion, Totemism and Symbolism' Professor Stanner deals with the once powerful idea that the Aborigine 'had no religion'. I cannot begin to convey the thought of this beautifully expressed essay, but it does fully explain two of his penetrating observations. The first 'There cannot have been many primitive rites which so strongly suggested a conscious attempt by men to bind themselves to the design in things they saw about them, and to the enduring plan of life as they experienced it'. The second, that in Aboriginal thinking 'man's of value in himself and for others, and there are spirits who care. That, by any test, is a religious view of man'.

Professor Stanner is not a sentimentalistic, for he notes that 'the worth of infants and the very old was notoriously held of small account' by Aborigines: in desperate circumstances both were left to die . . . Almost universally the valuation of women was low in respect of their personal as distinct from their functional worth'.

The essays range from scientific anthropology (rendered popularly intelligible in beautiful prose) to the implications of the awards that gave Aborigines equal pay before the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission hearing in the Northern Territory in 1966. Curiously, although some thousands of Aborigines were then employed, all the arguing about them was done by Europeans — the representatives of the Commonwealth, the Cattle Producers' Council and the Australian Workers' Union. It is symptomatic of Professor Stanner's practical approach that he made the discussion of this case his Presidential Address to the Canberra Sociological Society. And he foresaw the practical consequences of the decision pretty well.

I profess no expertism, but having travelled 32,000 kilometres in Australia with a Committee which heard evidence, through interpreters in some cases, from a great many Aborigines, I can endorse a comment of Professor Stanner in his last essay 'Aborigines in The Affluent Society' (1973). Writing of Aboriginal requests he notes:

But widely the expressed wants are now more elaborate and far reaching. They amount to a demand for the delivery to the grass roots of Aboriginal Society of more of the valued goods and services by which we live, especially perhaps the services: technical, educational, health, housing, communications, commercial and even banking services . . . The idea of a single package deal for the whole of Aboriginal Australia is an illusion.

One essay is on a straight Party political controversy. 'Land for Aborigines: Mr Hunt's Criticisms Examined' (1973). It followed an announcement by the then Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, that Aborigines on Northern Territory reserves would be given legal title to their traditional lands, that rights to timber and minerals would go with the titles, and that ways would be found to give Aborigines off the reserves effective association with the land. They now own land in the Northern Territory about equal in area to Victoria.

This land question is a continuing controversy in Australia, notably in Western Australia and Queensland, where the State Governments reject those concepts stated by Mr Whitlam and adopted substantially by the present Commonwealth Government. Professor Stanner pointed out in this essay that Mr Whitlam said three things never before said by any Australian Prime Minister —

- that in settling and developing Australia we had in many places destroyed Aboriginal society completely.
- now conscience, justice and humanity demand that we protect the rights of those whose links with their traditional land were still unbroken.
- these rights will be granted by the Commonwealth.
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These decisions cut at the nerve policy of centuries of Anglo-Australian history, from the enclosure movements of England, Scotland and Wales to Australian land settlement. This is simply that the powerful should take and keep the land. It was the policy of the dominant class at home in England — a fact often forgotten.

- Professor Stanner's book is designed in all its component essays to help us understand Aborigines. It also helps us understand ourselves, for it is, in his words, 'an encounter of two peoples who in general have failed to comprehend the ethos and structure of each other's lives'.

KIM E. BEAZLEY

PERTH

Pp. ix + 250. $6.95

and

Pp. x + 250. $18.50 h.b. $9.95 p.b.

Both these books are valuable contributions to the continuing argument about policy and administration affecting Aborigines. They also deserve serious attention because of the standing of their authors. C.D. Rowley was director of the Aborigines research project of the Academy of Social Sciences and made the most comprehensive study yet undertaken in Australia of contact between whites and Aborigines. The highly practical intelligence of H.C. Coombs has been applied eminently for nearly forty years to several phases of policy formation and public administration in Australia and he played an influential part in shaping comment and policy on Aborigines during the nineteen-seventies.

Nevertheless, reading these volumes, one is reminded of the cynical remark that theological studies do not lead to fuller understanding of what God is but only add to one's knowledge of the arguments that men have used about God. In a similar sense these books are not Aboriginal studies but an account of arguments and controversies and different points of view among a white majority about what should happen or might happen to a coloured minority in Australia. The sub-title of Kulinma is Listening to Aboriginal Australians. That may be true for the author but the reader feels he is listening to Dr Coombs and learns more about the growth of his interest and ideas on this subject than about the mind of the Aborigines.

Both authors say with confidence what the views of the Aborigines are and perhaps, because of their close and assiduous attention to the subject, it is excusable that they should make some claim to know better than most of us what the Aborigines want. Below this is a basic thesis that the Aborigines should choose their own future and that their choice can be effective. Every now and again however a reader feels some doubts. One early cause of doubt arises when it seems that the Aborigines always seem to want what each of the authors thinks could be best for them to want. The account given of the thoughts and feelings of Aborigines usually reinforces the arguments of these two debaters. The reader begins to wonder whether they reached a conclusion by deduction from accumulated evidence of Aboriginal opinion or are reporting those expressions of opinion by Aborigines which accord with their own presentation of a case.
A more serious doubt persists when, after reading what this or that Aboriginal man told them, one reflects on the qualifications of any Aboriginal 'spokesmen' or witness to tell truly the mind of an inarticulate crowd. Mass observation is a tricky business even in a community of which the reporter is himself a member. In social history the 'voice of the people' often appears to have been the subsequent response by the crowd to the persuasions of a single reformer or even the outcome of a promoted campaign. Agitation — and the word is not used here in any condemnatory sense — is a stirring up of the many by the few and the few are not necessarily part of the many. Moreover organised movements for change or for assertion of sectional claims tend to produce their own functionaries. Even in the long-established field of trade unionism in Australia one sometimes has doubts whether the declaration of the militant president of a union always expresses exactly the wishes and views of the main body of workers. Similarly the movements in recent years for the advancement of Aborigines and the provision of special benefits for them have produced the Aboriginal functionary — a person who might be termed without offence a 'professional Aboriginal'. Some of those 'professionals' who are vocal today previously had little knowledge of and limited association with those whom they now call 'my people' and had voiced none of those views on land rights, sacred sites and other topics that they now assert with confidence.

These doubts about pronouncements, either by their own 'spokesmen' or by white debaters, on what the Aborigines themselves want are also conditioned by the diversity one finds in the group of people now identified as Aborigines. Thirty or forty years ago there was a tendency to differentiate between tribal Aborigines, partly de-tribalised Aborigines and those part-Aboriginal people who were living in various degrees of contiguity to and absorption into the general Australian community and to assume that what suited one group might not suit another. Nowadays the fully tribal desert nomad and the person with tertiary education and only one Aboriginal grandparent are both regarded as 'Aborigines' having a common voice and a common future. Policy for Aborigines nowadays covers a population that is large and diverse whereas it used to cover a smaller and more narrowly defined population that was nearly homogeneous.

Rowley, much more so that Coombs, is aware of the highly significant fact that historical change has taken place and is still taking place among all these people and that the tribal Aborigines in respect of whom policies were shaped forty years ago are in a vastly different situation and social and personal way of life today than they were then. In ten, twenty or thirty years even greater changes are likely to occur.

Many of these changes have taken place, not as a consequence of policy, but by reason of forces and influences which appear to be at work in all social situations. By and large, using broad and unscientific terms, the observable changes in the last thirty years have made the Aborigines more like Europeans than they used to be, in habit, outlook and method.

Leaving aside any question of whether this has come because they chose to change in this way or because they could not resist change, the central question is whether or not this gradual weakening of an old way of life and this move into a new way of life is at the heart of the problem of what is to become of the Aboriginal people in Australia. The Australian situation is not novel. Something similar has happened in many ages in many lands, where minority groups in a community have gradually changed their customs, lost their identity and either disappeared by merging with a majority or accommodated themselves to the larger community. In debating the future of the Aborigines we are not making plans for an unchanging situation or a stable community. Every decade the meaning of 'white' and 'coloured' in Australia is different, and the relationship is being affected by new influences.
In the light of history and current changes we may need to re-examine some of the assumptions which now underlie the policies which found favour in the nineteen-seventies, and especially the assumptions about separate development in a multi-cultural Australia. Can we accept separateness as one of the constants in the social situation both now and in the future?

The two authors appear to have fairly clear ideas about what should be done. Indeed, although 'paternal' is a word usually applied to the policies of half a century ago, the policies of today are much more definite on what should be done and what should not be done than they used to be and make less allowance for variation. This is in keeping with current ideas of social engineering in contrast to any idea of letting history happen — a purpose to control and even create the forces of change rather than to accommodate oneself to them in such a way as to minimise injury or injustice to anyone. The social engineers would not admit that the wisdom of political experience is to learn to roll with the punches. Social engineering itself is a concept which may need re-examination.

These general remarks on a changing situation need not detract from the merit of the two books under notice, even though the self-confidence of the authors may have provoked them. The merit of both books is a clear and reasoned exposition of white men's arguments about a major current controversy and some account of recent events in that controversy. Rowley is more comprehensive and more widely informed and has the authority of an acknowledged research worker in this field. Coombs yields much information about the development of his own interest and his own ideas on the subject, and indeed the fact that all except two of his chapters are a reprint of a succession of addresses or papers he prepared when officially concerned with Aboriginal affairs adds to the impression that this is primarily a record of his own growth. Both books make a valuable contribution to the discussion of recent events and to an understanding of arguments bearing on current controversies. They are frankly partisan but all the more readable and useful from that fact. They are not Aboriginal studies in the strict sense of that term, nor are they historical studies even though they yield some interesting material for further historical work.

Rowley recounts and discusses a number of situations relevant to his theme that the Australian institutions for law and order fail at present to ensure justice for Aborigines. He also relates his observations to wider experience in other parts of the world. He recounts those events which lead to his satisfying conclusion that 'at last Aboriginal man has begun to defend himself by acting like modern political man'. He adds that it is a challenge to the Aboriginal to surmount these hindrances and, 'for the benefit of the rest of us, as well as his own, retain those essential qualities which are Aboriginal'.

This reads rather like a theory that a group can enjoy the benefits and protection of a society without accepting full conformity to it. That is a proposition which also calls for re-examination. The phrase 'multi-cultural society' is being used rather loosely today both in this and other contexts. Does it mean little more than that Jews or Moslems can worship as they please and the Scots can wear kilts at Hallowe'en without ceasing to be responsible members of the Australian community; or does it mean that groups can live in one community while belonging to a separate social system, pressing separate claims to rights and observing separate laws? Or is it just a fashionable label about whose meaning many of those who use it are not clear?

PAUL HASLUCK

PERTH
This book is about the destruction of the tribes of the Sydney region. It is good to see an increasing number of publications which trace the darker side of Australia's early history. By now many Australians know at least one version of the recent history of the Tasmanian Aborigines; and find it shameful. This book shows its readers that the same pattern of destruction and near extinction is not unique to Tasmania, but occurred throughout Australia. As in the Sydney area, whole tribes, different language groups, were exterminated. By its sheer weight of evidence, the book documents this process convincingly. It is a most useful source book, which provides much information about black-white relationships in early Sydney. Much of this information was previously unknown to, or not obtainable by, the general reader. A major virtue of the book is that it is available and readable.

However, partly because the book is aimed at the general reader, and will undoubtedly be used extensively by educators, it is important to draw attention to some of its factual and interpretive problems.

The book is poorly organised, repetitive and rambling, which makes it annoying to use. More importantly it is sometimes misleading. The first chapter is a very unsophisticated pastiche of the ethnographic and prehistoric sources, which includes out-of-date and dubious information, taken at face value. The author says, of the ancestors of the 1788 Sydney tribes — 'as they spread through the southern continent, they absorbed or exterminated the original inhabitants until only pockets of the first Australians survived in Tasmania, and in the dense rain forests of North Queensland' (p. 14). It is a pity that this sort of prehistoric mythology is still being retailed, especially with assistance from the Aboriginal Arts Board.

It is also curious that the writer, apparently accepting as a fact this 'invasion' theory of the colonization of Australia by modern Aborigines, does not comment on it, or condemn it; since the rest of the book consists of a graphic account of the sins of a later set of invaders which wrought havoc on their predecessors in turn.

The book shows a less than adequate knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal culture. On one level, this produces puzzling statements such as 'The Aborigines' own dogs, like the dingo, did not bark' (p.122). On another it leads to naive or misleading statements concerning Aboriginal behaviour. There is often little recognition that Aborigines are probably reacting in intelligent and calculated ways, in accordance with their own well established cultural patterns. A complex exchange, in which the Aborigines show the English how to locate water, is said to be due to their 'innate good nature overcoming any consideration of their own best interests' (p.67). This commentary hardly fits with another quoted description — that of the Aborigines taking by force a part of the fish caught in nets by the settlers (p.71). We learn also of an Aboriginal who had 'come under a safe-conduct given by the tribes south of Broken Bay to see the wonders of the settlement and show his fighting skill' (p.152). Apart from the fact that these tribal territories are elsewhere (p.208) described as 'inviolable' this statement paraphrases a contemporary European interpretation of Aboriginal behaviour, with no hint of the possibility of quite different Aboriginal motives for such a journey.

In short, the European colonists are quoted and paraphrased extensively, and this is not balanced by sufficient informed, intelligent comment on the situation as Aborigines might have seen it. In this regard the book can be compared unfavourably with W.E.H. Stanner's article 'The History of Indifference thus Begins' in Aboriginal History, vol.1, no.1.
This superficial understanding of Aboriginal culture, along with the sheer volume of quotation from 18th century European authors, gives an 18th century view of Aboriginal culture despite the author's undoubted sympathy for the Aborigines and their way of life. The book has a curiously old fashioned flavour; the author himself sometimes reads like an 18th century observer of quaint savages. He says of the colonists: 'A longer sojourn in the country usually brought a heightened appreciation of the black women's charms' (p.79), and of the Aborigines: 'Plenty of evidence emerged that Aborigines could learn a useful trade and the rudiments of reading and writing' (pp.211-12). Yet he himself quotes an example of an Aboriginal girl who won the first prize for scholarship in an open competition in the colony (p.19), an achievement rather more impressive than acquiring 'rudiments' of reading and writing.

The book, despite its great richness of source material, does not give us a clear picture of two distinct cultures, each of which lacks the facility to appreciate the other and each with its own imperatives. The Aborigines suffer, since they appear as stereotypes.

Despite this, the book has much to offer. For many it will be the first account of extermination of Aboriginal tribes on the mainland of Australia, and the first insight into the values and consequent actions of our ancestors which caused this tragedy. This is an important learning experience, and it is to be hoped that it will direct the presently prevalent but undirected guilt feelings of today's Australians into a less self-indulgent, more reasoned understanding of the processes of colonization in Australia, and their ongoing results.

SHARON SULLIVAN
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This book is straightforward and orthodox. It begins with a survey of Aboriginal culture followed by an account of the arrival of Europeans and the impact they made upon Aborigines. The nature of Aboriginal resistance to the taking of their land, and the destruction of Aboriginal society is then examined. Next comes a discussion of the role of the 'enlightened colonists' — administrators, protectors, missionaries, churchmen. The book ends in the mid-1880s by which time Victoria's Aboriginal population had been reduced from about 11,000 to some 800, and these survivors came under the provisions of the 1886 Aborigines Protection Act.

The book is nicely produced and lucidly written yet there is so much déjà vu: the Aborigines living in harmony with nature in pre-European days; the racial superiority and brutality of the colonisers; the relative strength of Aboriginal resistance; the difficulties and weaknesses of the protectorates; the inherent contradictions in humanitarian policies which hastened rather than hindered the destruction of Aboriginal peoples and their culture; the reservation policies and the 1886 Act which was designed to protect Aborigines 'physically and morally' but which destroyed their 'rights and freedoms'. In every chapter there are loud echoes of Berndts or Blainey or Corris or Foxcroft or Hassel or Hasluck or ... Reece, Reynolds, Rowley especially, and many more. The author's main problem, it seems, was deciding where to draw the line between generalizing about Aboriginal-European relations in Australian colonies as a whole, and examining Victoria
in particular. Change the names, dates and places and this study could just as easily be of New South Wales, or Western Australia, or South Australia, or all of them put together. It might be argued that this is the 'fault' of available material and that the author's conclusions must necessarily be the same as those of other writers. Yet perhaps it is because he asked the same questions and therefore got the same answers. Or was it that he gathered Victorian material to support (albeit unconsciously) current orthodoxies? Either way the chance to say something new, to examine, say, Rowley's (or others') overviews in detail at a regional level is lost. Indeed what is the justification for selecting Victoria in the first place? It had no particular European or Aboriginal cultural coherence, no specific geographical character, and even its own constitutional identity was non-existent until the 1850s when it ceased to be part of New South Wales. This is not to say that Christie should not have chosen to study this part of the continent, simply that he should justify doing so.

There are numerous topics the author might have examined in order to give a regional or local flavour to his work. He mentions, for example, that some Aborigines (before much European contact) wore clothes, built canoes, lived in villages, and had acres of trenching designed to help catch fish. Well, were not these the very signs of 'occupation' of the land and even nascent 'civilisation' that Europeans elsewhere in Australia said were absent and so justified their taking of 'waste land'? Did any Europeans in 'Victoria' make any distinction between such Aborigines and those in drier climes who conformed more readily to the stereotype nomad? And if so did any of them consider the legal and other implications? Were Aborigines always lumped together in the 'colonial mind', were local or district distinctions never made? Christie has not done so himself. He writes about the various types of colonists with their particular and often conflicting interests, but Aborigines are never so examined, they are always in the one category.

Another closely related topic that is worthy of much more detailed investigation is the Native Police Force. Christie makes no effort to explain Aboriginal troopers' effective brutality beyond mentioning that they were sent into enemy territory. He says that European officers deliberately exploited tribal enmities as a means of dividing and ruling Aboriginal groups. This suggests that at least some Europeans knew something about local Aboriginal 'politics' but Christie does not follow this up and so a whole dimension of the story is ignored. He examines the reasons why Europeans murdered Aborigines and vice-versa, but why should one group of Aborigines so ruthlessly destroy another? The activities of the Native Police Force suggest that frontier violence is inadequately explained simply in terms of racial/cultural differences. Here then was an excellent opportunity to investigate aspects of Aboriginal inter-relationships. Were any groups more keen to enlist than others, and why? Indigenous rivalries have long been seen as explanations why Pacific or African societies reacted as they did to European presence. While it would obviously be more difficult to do for Aborigines, the attempt should at least be made. After all, the book, according to its title, is supposed to be about Aborigines.

This study will be a useful introduction for those readers who know little or nothing about recent historiography of European-Aboriginal relations. Beyond that it is disappointing in its failure to examine a region in convincing enough detail to add to or subtract from what has been said many times before.

This book, the winner of the South Australian Biennial Literature Prize, is an account of the extended contact between European settlers and the Ngarrindjeri people of the Lower Murray Lakes area of South Australia. It includes a comprehensive study of the original culture of the Aboriginal people, their initial response to European encroachment, and their interaction with the new culture over a period of 140 years.

In some respects, the history of the Ngarrindjeri differs from that of other Aborigines. For one thing, they demonstrated a better-than-average ability to integrate with European culture, acquiring land, working as farm labourers, and winning important friendships among whites. For another, until the 1960s, they managed to retain a large part of their linguistic and cultural identity, in spite of close contact with a developed European community. This latter fact alone is sufficient to single them out as a worthwhile subject for study. In addition, especially valuable records exist of their relationship with the white community — records that include church and government documents, the minutes of the Aboriginals' Friends' Association of Adelaide, and the writings of the Reverend George Taplin, founder of the Ngarrindjeri Mission at Pt. McLeay. The detailed journals of Taplin (1859-1879) provide the historian with an approximation, at least, of the Aboriginal perspective on events; thus this study adds a valuable dimension and depth to our understanding of early contact relations.

The Conquest of the Ngarrindjeri succeeds in a number of respects: it is attractively written, carefully researched, and thoroughly documented. It is enlivened by a sensitive selection of detail and anecdote that reveals the character, courage, and ability of individual Aborigines. Much of the appeal of the book, in fact, derives from Mr Jenkin's personal commitment to the Ngarrindjeri people. Unfortunately, this commitment is also responsible for a number of shortcomings in the book as a piece of historical research. Mr Jenkin, like his predecessor, George Taplin, is at his best dealing with the flow of events and the details of personality. When he introduces comment and analysis his performance is uneven: objective, perceptive interpretation is interspersed with sweeping generalisations, inappropriate analogies and exaggeration. These deficiencies are not sufficient to destroy the book; they occur most frequently in the early chapters, and are offset by a great deal of admirable, carefully documented interpretation and comment. It is possible, perhaps, to make too much of the weaknesses, given the very great merit of the work as a whole. Nevertheless, deficiencies of this sort are important enough to require discussion at some length.

Some of the book's failings as history derive from its major source, the writings of Reverend George Taplin. For the last twenty years of his life, Taplin devoted himself to caring for, and writing about, the Ngarrindjeri people. Besides providing a daily account of the life of the settlement, he translated material for worship, and produced an anthropological and linguistic record in The Folklore, Manners, Customs and Language of the South Australian Aborigines (1879). Mr Jenkin assumes that Taplin's information is reliable, on the theory that he was present at the critical time and that he had 'no barrow to push'. But it is one thing to be free of anthropological and linguistic bias, and quite another to be a reliable source. Even though Mr Taplin must be credited with a large role in the preservation of Ngarrindjeri culture, he was a man of limited vision (a fact noted several times by Mr Jenkin). Where Taplin sticks to facts and events, there is no reason to doubt his accuracy, but where he attempts to investigate and interpret, there is every reason to suspect him. Even at the time, there was criticism of his anthropological work. Thus, a review in the Journal of the Anthropological Institute
commented, ‘It is not for theories that this book will be valued and consulted’. In the Revue d’Anthropologie of the same year, a reviewer said of his anthropological questionnaire:

Ce questionnaire est insuffisant et répond évidemment à un point de vue particulier, probablement celui du Dr Bleek et du Révérend Taplin. Il ne s’inspire pas des besoins en général de l’anthropologie et est personnel.

Equally, Taplin’s linguistic work is amazingly lacking in insight and accurate observation, especially when compared with that of the Reverend Meyer (1843), who stayed only two years with the Ngarrindjeri. Most of the really useful linguistic material provided by Taplin was already recorded in Meyer’s grammar and derived from it — Taplin’s contribution was mainly in the area of vocabulary. The lesson to be learned from this, then, is that Taplin was a dedicated recorder of detail, but a faulty and unreliable source of comment. Yet Taplin’s theories and interpretations appear to have had considerable influence on the judgments offered in this book.

Mr Jenkin is at pains to establish two main points: that Europeans were at best clumsy and indifferent, at worst callous and greedy, in their dealings with the Ngarrindjeri; and that the Ngarrindjeri were a unique, resourceful, and adaptable group of Aborigines. There is considerable truth in both these assertions, the first being the more regrettable in the light of the second. Both of these points could have been argued quite reasonably, from well-established evidence. Unfortunately, Mr Jenkin often overstates his case.

Aboriginal society, he says, differed from European society by having principles and practices ‘consonant’ with each other. The Ngarrindjeri were ‘an example of refined egalitarian socialism’, a people who ‘showed the world that it was possible for socialism and the aristocratic life-style to be married harmoniously’. Such lofty analogies, drawn between Ngarrindjeri customs and institutions and those of advanced industrial societies, are both simplistic and misleading. They reflect an inexcusably Utopian view of primitive society, based on nothing more than extensive descriptions of a primitive economy. The natives’ early kindness and lack of resistance to Europeans, presented as part of the ‘noble savage’ theme, might equally be attributed to antagonisms and divisions which appear to have existed between the tribes of Aborigines. There is ample evidence from the 1840s, for instance, of considerable conflict between the Milmenrura people and other ‘Ngarrindjeri’ groups. This conflict has considerable bearing on the behaviour of the natives after the incident of the brig ‘Maria’. Mr Jenkin claims that the whites arbitrarily selected two native scapegoats and, in an act of outrageous inhumanity, hanged them for the massacre of the ‘Maria’ survivors. He does not account at all well for the equanimity with which the natives accepted this action. In another fairly full account of the incident, however, John Bull (1884) claims that the natives selected the victims, and that the hanging almost certainly prevented massive reprisals by the settlers. Other accounts of the time point to a considerable lack of concern amongst other Ngarrindjeri for the Milmenrura people who were involved. In short, the events were more complex, less black and white, than we are led to believe.

This practice of interpreting events and customs from a simplistic or pre-conceived viewpoint is carried to considerable lengths. Noting that the Aborigines prohibited certain foods to young men and boys, Mr Jenkin ascribes this to two possible motives: it either conserved certain species against over-exploitation or it preserved the more easily-caught species for disadvantaged members of society (or both). This interpretation implies that the Ngarrindjeri had very enlightened attitudes. But it is unlikely that the Ngarrindjeri would have seen the food taboos as conservationist, even if that was one of their effects. There is no evidence of conservationist mentality among the Ngarrindjeri, particularly after they acquired
guns in the 1840s. According to John Lewis (1922), the Coorong people he knew in his youth shot animals and birds indiscriminately, regardless of need. At the very least, Lewis’s observations suggest a lack of ‘consonance’ between native social principles and individual practice — a lack characteristic of most human societies, but not postulated for the Ngarrindjeri. Furthermore, it is likely that the Ngarrindjeri adhered to the usual Aboriginal food-sharing practices, which provided adequately for all disadvantaged people. There would simply be no need to retain certain easily-caught species for the infirm. Mr Jenkin’s interpretation, then, implies more than it should, and consequently contributes more than it should to the idea that the greedy, exploitive capitalism of the whites compared very unfavourably with the harmonious, egalitarian socialism of the natives.

Mr Jenkin notes a distinct European reluctance to grant power to Aboriginal leaders, in spite of their demonstrated ability. Yet he makes no mention of the divisions and jealousies within the Aboriginal community over those leaders. The community at Pt McLeay was heterogeneous, to say the least. It consisted of groups of Aborigines from all over the area, speakers of numerous dialects thrown together and cut off from their traditional sites and customs. The largest group appears to have been Yaraldi-speaking. A linguistic informant of the 1960s, a member of this group, commented on his resentment against ‘foreigners’ like James Ngunaitponi (one of the talented leaders), who came from another group and spoke a ‘strange’ tongue. It would be odd indeed if such a community could have achieved the harmony and unity of purpose they are credited with. The Aboriginal leaders’ failure to be more effective could derive from the antagonisms and divisions prevailing at Pt McLeay, as well as from the undoubted misjudgment of Europeans. For, despite the picture presented by Mr Jenkin, the Ngarrindjeri did not consider themselves one people; their adjustment to each other had to proceed alongside their adjustment to Europeans.

Mr Jenkin argues at length that the Ngarrindjeri were a unique people. It is not easy to determine his reasons: the record of events would have more to say to us if the Ngarrindjeri were not unique, but had much in common with other Aborigines. It is very likely that the influence of Rev. Taplin is decisive here. Taplin believed the Ngarrindjeri to be very different indeed — to be comprised of two mingled races, one of Polynesian origin. Without mention of that theory, Mr Jenkin adopts the ‘uniqueness’ theme, noting as evidence the robust Ngarrindjeri culture, their social cohesion, their linguistic distinctiveness, and their particular physical characteristics.

While it can certainly be argued that the Ngarrindjeri constituted a distinctive group in a number of respects, they were neither as different from their neighbours nor as exceptional as we are led to believe. The River Murray people were a husky, hirsute group, styled the ‘robust Murray people’ by early anthropologists. These characteristics, according to Mr Jenkin, differentiated the Ngarrindjeri from other Aborigines and were especially notable on a continent displaying great physical homogeneity. But it is not clear that the Australian Aborigine demonstrates remarkable physical homogeneity: Mr Jenkin’s anthropological sources could easily be challenged by others that note the physical diversity of the Aborigine and the existence of other enclaves of distinct physical types. Furthermore, the particular characteristics of the Ngarrindjeri were not confined to the one group, but extended up the Murray as well.

Linguistically, the Ngarrindjeri were certainly different from their neighbours to the west, as Mr Jenkin notes. But they were clearly related linguistically to their neighbours up the Murray River, which Mr Jenkin does not mention. In fact, their language, and undoubtedly their culture, have a great deal in common with other Murray River tribes, the ‘Meru’ group, the Ngintait, the Kureinyi, and the Yita Yita. With the closest people, the Ngayawung (Meru), the Ngarrindjeri...
shared only a small amount of vocabulary (about 20 per cent); but with the farthest tribe up the Murray, the Ngarrindjeri shared 61 per cent common vocabulary. On the linguistic evidence it may be postulated that the Ngarrindjeri originated up the Murray River, moving to their present location at the mouth at some later date. This theory is supported by the study of other linguistic affiliations up the Murray, and by Ngarrindjeri legends of emigration recorded in the 1960s. Thus there is evidence of linguistic distinctiveness in the immediate region, but not overall, and not of the order suggested by Mr Jenkin.

The case for advanced cultural development and social cohesion amongst the Ngarrindjeri, once again, undoubtedly has a basis in fact. The Ngarrindjeri lived in what anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown (1918) described as 'the most densely populated area on the Australian continent'. With an abundance of game, fish, fowl and vegetable food, this area was magnificently endowed for people living in the manner of the Aborigines. Thus it would not be surprising if the people were robust, their culture well developed, and their level of social cohesion above average. Their legendary history of battle and emigration might even argue for a higher degree of unity and social dynamism than the average. But there are no grounds for most of the extraordinary generalizations made by the author.

Perhaps the most important of these generalizations postulates a 'Confederacy' of the Ngarrindjeri. This term originated with Rev. Taplin, who neither defined his term, nor possessed the qualifications on which to make significant political judgments. Mr Jenkin adopts the term without defining it either, other than to describe the ways in which the Lower Murray tribes constituted a 'nation'. None of the ingredients of unity that he cites, however, include common political or social institutions, other than the 'Tendi'. In a rather dubious comparison, Mr Jenkin describes the Tendi as the 'High Court', the dispenser of the nation's justice. Since much of the dispensation of justice was done on a tribe and horde level (according to informants), we might well ask what kinds of judgment were made, how they were enforced, and where the laws originated. In place of this vital information, we are assured that, 'the Ngarrindjeri possessed a purely democratic form of government antedated the evolution of European democracy probably by thousands of years'. The only piece of evidence adduced for this latter statement is the fact that men were elected to the Tendi from the various tribes.

The anthropologist Tindale did not mention a Ngarrindjeri 'nation' at all in his study of Aboriginal tribes and territories in the 1930s. This is quite in keeping with the evidence, since no such nation is mentioned in any early writings other than Taplin's. The silence of Rev. Meyer on the subject of the 'nation' is particularly curious, given his many valuable comments on the culture of the Ramindjeri people. Furthermore, the word 'Ngarrindjeri', adopted by Taplin to refer to the assortment of people who congregated at Pt McLeay, did not originally apply to any particular group of Aborigines, but was used for any 'black-fellow' whatever, according to all early vocabularies. There was no term of the 'nation' as a whole; the groups and their various languages were distinguished by tribal names. For example, 'Yaraldi Kald' was the 'tongue' of the Yaraldi people. Although the different groups spoke dialects of the same language, intermarried, possessed similar cultures, the linguistic informants of the 1960s were inclined to emphasise their differences rather than their similarities.

Thus, although it is impossible, and undesirable, to dismiss the idea that the Ngarrindjeri possessed a noteworthy level of social cohesion, it is equally impossible to determine how significant it was, and certainly undesirable to use terms that presuppose a particular type of social and political organisation.

In attempting to redress the historical balance, then, Mr Jenkin sometimes loses sight of the most desirable methods of historical research. When he overlooks complexity and idealises the Ngarrindjeri, Mr Jenkin uses the same methods as early
apologists of white expansion and domination, with equally regrettable results. This is particularly unfortunate in this case, as all the points he makes have a basis in fact, and the study as a whole is an extremely valuable contribution to our knowledge of the impact of white policies and attitudes on Aboriginal people. It is a pity that high school and tertiary students, who have the most to gain from this very valuable book, are also those who should least be exposed to its shortcomings.

MARYALICE MCDONALD

RACE RELATIONS IN NORTH QUEENSLAND

Race relations in North Queensland. Edited by Henry Reynolds. History Department, James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville, 1978. Pp. viii + 365. $4.00

This is a collection of sixteen essays by ten authors, all staff or students of the department publishing the book. Although some of the material has been published before, such as Henry Reynolds' article on 'The Other Side of the Frontier', it is useful to have it readily available and put together with much new work. The essays range from general discussions of a theme with examples drawn from a wide area, such as Reynolds' 'Townspeople and Fringe-Dwellers', which contains material from all over Queensland, to detailed local studies such as Noel Loos on Port Denison and Anne Allingham on the Burdekin Valley. About half the book is devoted to European-Aboriginal relations, followed by two pieces dealing with Melanesian labourers and their descendants, three essays on the Chinese in Cairns and on the Palmer River, a general summary of European attitudes to Aborigines and a particular study of European attitudes to Melanesian labour and, finally, a discussion of local attitudes to Italians between the two World Wars. The general themes coming out of the papers will not be new to anyone familiar with recent literature on the history of race relations in Australia, but these studies allow one to penetrate beneath generalizations spanning the generations and the continent. As pointed out in the Introduction, it was of interest for local students to see how 'national issues had worked their way out locally'; for students elsewhere, it is enlightening to see the variety of local experience. Local history properly explored runs no danger of parochialism.

As in all collections, the standard of contributions varies, but what is most striking is the common methodology of the authors. All the papers are firmly based on detailed, primary research, chiefly in written records such as newspapers and government documents. Only Trish Mercer and Clive Moore in their chapter on 'Australia's Pacific Islanders, 1906-1977' make substantial and successful use of original oral material, and that is very much in the context of a general essay rather than the comprehensive work on which both are currently engaged. Taken as a whole, the book represents a fairly conventional historical approach. I would not want to criticize it for this and, indeed, the work on the sources has been thorough and imaginative. However, the approach does have two apparent, though not inevitable, consequences. Firstly, it tends to impose structures which derive from white Australian experience. The clearest example is the separate treatment of European-Aboriginal relations and European-Chinese relations on the Palmer River Goldfield in two papers by Noreen Kirkman. More subtly, virtually all chapters accept descriptions of Aborigines, Chinese, Melanesians or Italians in terms of their relationship with a town or administrative area. Without underestimating the difficulties of sources and cross-cultural understanding, I believe that it is possible to give more attention to the non-white Australian side or sides of relations.
Secondly, the approach leads to a concentration on the period from the middle of the nineteenth century to about 1920. The main exceptions to this are concerned with Melanesians and, of course, the Italians, but Janice Wegner’s paper on the Aborigines of the Etheridge Shire from 1860 to 1940 is more typical. Less than a page is concerned with the last two decades of the date range. It is worth recalling that work on Papuan contacts down Cape York Peninsula or American servicemen, especially black servicemen, in the area during World War II could fall within the scope of the book’s title, to say nothing of the recent history of Weipa or Palm Island. A notable absence is the lack of any paper concerned primarily with a mission.

These comments are no criticism of the valuable work reported on in these papers, but rather make the point that the training and approach of the researcher affect the shape and dimension of his or her conception of the past. It is instructive to compare this volume with Isabel McBryde’s *Records of Times Past*, which represents the University of New England’s attention to similar themes in local history. As the authors would probably be the first to recognize, these north Queensland essays by no means exhaust what is clearly an exceedingly rich field. Yet they mark a worthwhile stage towards a more comprehensive understanding.

In another sense too, the book represents only a stage towards what is possible. It is very modestly produced in a typed format — and is refreshingly modest in price! — but even in this form the material deserves rather more vigorous editing. There are some brief introductory comments by the editor, but the material itself appears to have been left in the form submitted. This leads to some repetition, such as the treatment of events at Battle Creek on pp. 105-7 and pp. 124-6, and Cathie May’s two papers on the Chinese in the Cairns district could have been combined with advantage. The lack of an index is serious in a work of this kind. Some of the writing is still fairly raw (Is ‘non-assimilatable’ on p. 327 really needed?) and there are more than a few typographical errors. At least these shortcomings serve to show students how much is involved in editing, and they do not seriously obscure the content of the book.

In the end, it is the content that matters, and what this book (and the other related work of the contributors which is helpfully listed) demonstrates very well is the deepening exploration of some new dimensions in Australian history. Not all Australians are white and British, not all have their past in temperate Australia and that past is not necessarily a comforting saga of progress. (The discomfort is not all past, for the invasion of Aboriginal Australia continues and ‘pragmatic racism’, to use Noel Loos’ term for frontier attitudes has only changed its form in many boardrooms, government offices and country towns of 1980.) It is fitting that this part of our new understanding comes from Townsville. There are still some battles to come before Australians come to terms with their past, and their present, and this book is valuable ammunition. May there be much more of it from north Queensland.

C.C. MACKNIGHT
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Pp. xii + 340. $14.95

The words pioneer and frontier carry with them their own future sense. Frontiers become filled, pioneers are joined by settlers and become oldest residents. Yet
what word would we use for a pioneer who selected a frontier which never became popular; a person who did all the right things for a pioneer to do and yet never became revered because no one came to join him?

David Moore's book, *Islanders and Aborigines at Cape York*, is a pioneering publication. He has produced a work of creative imagination which straddles a frontier of historiography in Australia. Yet I am not hopeful that this book will be followed by others, that David Moore is at the head of a frontier of change.

Not long ago I informed one of our distinguished professors that I had been in Torres Strait with a view to studying its history. 'No', he said, 'That's not us. We are Australian history. That's more Pacific history.' Yet Moore is firmly within Australian Studies. His main characters are the Europeans who recorded Cape York events. He provides us with Oswald Brierly's written reactions to the adventure of meeting Barbara Thompson, a girl from Scotland, who was in 1849 ending some years unwitting residence up there, beyond the bounds of settlement. Later in the book he includes the 1860s descriptions by S.P.G. missionaries, Jagg and Kennett, to throw light upon the early years of European control at Somerset, that first outpost of the southern invaders.

These sources are regular ones, firmly in the tradition of Western historiography. Yet Moore's work differs in that he uses the European evidence in order to consider the mid-nineteenth-century manners and customs of the indigenous people dwelling about Cape York.

He does not labour the point that these tribes lived precisely on the most interesting ethnological meeting-place within Australia. The Aboriginal Gudang families shared life, usually amicably, with the Melanesian Kaurareg; the archetypical hunters related to people who represented the gardeners. In the loose thinking of ethnographic tradition the most primitive of mankind witnessed daily the example of men who had risen beyond mere hunting upon the first rungs of the ladder of human progress.

Moore reveals himself as having more complex interests and skills than most historians. He first visited Northern Australia as a prehistorian, carrying out field work at Cape York in 1971 and 1973. His bias is still towards the amassing of small detail which is the method of that discipline. He claims, in this book, to have left out all 'Passages having no relevance to the ethnography of the region ...'. Conversely he has also left out nothing which may be of the slightest detail. He has made use of his opportunity of getting Brierly's journals into print to include anything he has been able to find, in whatever other sources, about the way of life of these people. The book includes not only a glossary of the languages but also Moore's summary of the accumulation of our knowledge of their social organisation, economy, mythology and ceremony.

And the information presented to us in this manner is rich with potential. There is, for example, new insight upon race relations in the suggestion of the whole story awaiting a writer concerning what went on between Somerset magistrates, native policemen and the local tribes. Also a reader begins to form an idea of the rhythm of everyday life among the indigenous Australians. The mobility of people is much in evidence, their sense of place and ideas of far-away places and peoples comes across more richly than in any similar material I have seen. Alongside this one learns about trade relations across this sea and island world and, of course, about food, about choices of activity, gathering or gardening; about special treats and regular diets, and the good sense and practicability of the camping way of life becomes clear. Many researchers will be able to use the material presented in this work to form answers to their own, individual questions.

The Aborigines come through as estimable individuals revealed by name and seen, not merely through undiscriminating European eyes, but through vision informed of individual character and worth. Dowathoo, aged 23, is a model husband of 'Old Baki'. He is a pattern for husbands all over the world in the way he
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will regularly carry the firewood, dig the yams and collect the mangrove shoots to please his wife. Meanwhile Baki herself gives hint of previous and unrecorded white contact, referring to herself as 'Queen Woman Baki' opening the page a little to the question of how much adjustment to accelerating change these Aborigines had already made.

The effect over-all is to substantially shift the viewing point from that of the nineteenth-century European peering dimly through his prejudices to that of a picture-gazer seeing Aborigines and islanders as well-rounded individuals operating within a social network of tribes across an extensive area of landscape. We see them at ease within their environment and sense the continuity and stability of the balance achieved which initiates in the reader the beginnings of the nostalgia represented in the artists impression of the front cover. It is Moore himself, in his editorial comments, who reminds us that the picture is a still from a cine. The very contacts which produced Brierly's journals were among those which ended the sufficiency of local responses to natural challenge; the local inhabitants themselves being eager participants in the process of change and actively seeking relationships with the strangers.

Perhaps it was at this point that Moore stepped back from the bold step. Scarcely in this book are we given a historian's summary interpretation, either of a departed community or of a series of events. Rather has Moore provided a smorgasbord from which any reader can construct his own repast. Maybe this is omission only in so far as it makes fallacy of the dust jacket statement that the volume contains an ethnographic reconstruction. Had reconstruction been attempted Moore would have closely approached the regular stance of historian, even though his interest is in a prehistoric people. In not making that commitment, to my mind the crucial one in the development of a tradition of Aboriginal History within Australia, he has chosen to remain on the edge; not historian but provider of documents, albeit fascinating ones, to the historian.

Probably the historian's role was too daunting. For a history, properly-so-called, of Cape York Aborigines and islanders fits into no academic tradition within Australia. Despite what we like to think of as the general liberality of their private attitudes Australian historians are a conservative force within the nation. Their proper study is still the unfolding of the local variant of the English-speaking culture; minorities become of interest only as they are in process of being caught in the main stream, the main strength of Anglo-Saxonism with grudging admission of the Celts.

Yet this historians' view of the Australian nation is wrong. Multicultural influences have now reached the stage of commonplace within the street-life of our communities. If it will take another decade for the same to be obvious in national circles of power, it appears it will take at least as long for the thinkers of Australia to grapple with the realities of their new community which is in the making.

By that time descendants of the Cape York Aborigines will be living and working in their thousands in our East Coast towns and cities. Thoroughly Australian by any test we can apply, some of them will be reading Australian History at school and college. We can guess already what the text books they read will suggest is 'real history' to these our Aborigines. By then I am afraid that David Moore's Islanders and Aborigines at Cape York will still appear a pioneering work waiting vainly for the mainstream of historiography to catch up with it. I hope I am wrong.

PETER BOLGER

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Black Reality describes the problems of Aboriginal housing policy, its failure and the factors which should be considered when developing housing policies for remote Australia. It is a study of a number of Aboriginal societies, which should not only be read for its own sake because it is well written, readable and thought provoking. Those who are associated with the development of housing policies for Aboriginal people in remote areas ought to have it to hand and take its lessons to heart.

The book consists of ten essays. The introduction and epilogue are by Dr Heppell, the editor, and eight others are essays by people who have made exhaustive studies of particular Australian Aboriginal communities and their housing problems; problems created by the policy makers, the administration and the builders, not by the Aboriginal people.

It is not the business of a review such as this to examine literary qualities, except to state that the book is well written and well produced. The plates and figures are very informative. The Index appears complete, but strangely does not include mentions of Ministers' names, but does include others. Is there a political inhibition, which afflicts academia perhaps? The maps are helpful, although I think that for most readers the general map on page 4 could be more detailed. There is a substantial bibliography, listed as references with a number of the essays. I propose to consider the book's contribution to the understanding of the Aboriginal situation and examine its judgment in areas in which I can claim to have some experience.

Every so often I make a firm decision not to read one more description of the Australian Aboriginal situation. It is too dispiriting. After all the effort, after all the studies, after all the speeches and, for the taxpayer, after all that money, we seem to have made so little progress. Progress is, of course, a matter of value judgment; but we seem to have gathered so little understanding, and the physical and psychological situation in which the Aborigines of Australia find themselves over most of this continent, remains unsatisfactory in the extreme. In fact, it is degrading, not only for the Aboriginal people, but for the society which allows it to persist.

But this book is not concerned with housing in Bourke, Redfern, Fitzroy, South Brisbane or South Perth; it is concerned with that large part of Australia that lies west of Bourke, east of Meekatharra and generally, but not exclusively, north of Capricorn.

Have you ever considered what administrative effort and visionary understanding is necessary to deliver a major design, construction and social product to approximately 200 widely scattered disparate communities, many of them beyond the limits of ordinary transport services?

The book does not aim to discuss this subject, but it is central to the whole question and should be the subject perhaps of another book.

In general, unless it is just my sensitivity, the book appears more critical or sceptical of Labor policy than it does of that of non-Labor governments. Two quotations from Dr Heppell's introduction, pages 20 and 21, illustrate this point:

One cannot help noting the contradiction between the thread of the Labor argument and the notion of self-determination. It was assumed that all Aborigines would enter the mainstream of Australian life. The thrust of the policy was to provide education, teach domestic skills and encumber the 'breadwinner' with the European obligation to have to go out to work in order to retain his house. How 'Aboriginality' would be promoted under such a scheme is not at
all clear. For Labor the designation of Aboriginal poverty appeared to be based on conventional economic wisdom. It made no allowance for fundamentally different cultural and economic forms.

It also suggests an inability on the part of the Labor government to come to grips with the extent of a problem which, by promising immediate housing to a number of remote Aboriginal groups, it had largely created for itself.

This is not to say that the Liberal and Country Party governments emerge unscathed from the book.

Three of the essays are papers delivered to the ANZASS Conference in 1975 and Labor policy was more topical at the time of their writing. The Labor Party became active in Aboriginal advancement in the fifties. Many members of the party and within the trade union movement joined advancement organisations. They joined members of all political parties, the churches and socially oriented organisations. A coalition of all shades of political opinion worked together to produce the overwhelming ‘yes’ vote for the Constitutional Referendum of 1967. Meetings in which prominent members of the Communist Party, the D.L.P., the Liberal Party, the Country Party and the Labor Party were involved were common. During the period 1963 or thereabouts to 1972, there was a gradual gathering of public concern and it made an impact upon the Government, which resulted in an increased effort in the area of housing. Compared to the needs of the time, it was still minimal, but it was apparent. However, as Dr Heppell points out, it was still European housing.

The book makes it clear that the Aboriginal people have a different view of what housing is from that of most other people in the world. There are very few people in the twentieth century who do not live in fixed abodes. There are lots of wanderers, caravanners, campers and people who live no-where, but the great proportion of the mass of society ‘from Greenland’s icy mountains to India’s coral strands’ live in fixed housing.

The Aboriginal people of Australia have not done that in their 30,000 or 40,000 years of occupancy of this continent.

I, for one, can’t see the difficulty in meeting their needs. I agree with the points that are made, that there are no simple solutions, but there is no reason why there shouldn’t be countless individual solutions. I write as one who spent a long period in the Australian Army, with one’s home on one’s back. We became trained, even highly trained, at being if not comfortable, at least covered or completely sheltered, no matter what the situation, with what one could carry. It is astonishing that Australia, where so many people take to the roads with caravans, campervans and tents, and do it comfortably in a nomadic way, has not been able to find an answer to the simple question: ‘How do you supply the Aboriginal people with the means of adequate shelter in a country, in which their activities have become increasingly circumscribed?’

The needs are well expressed in Dr Heppell’s introduction:

In summary, two important features of an Aboriginal camp are its openness and the internal mobility of elements within it (p.55).

J.P. Reser’s essay, ‘A Matter of Control’:

A traditional Aboriginal moving into a European house might well be expected to experience an immediate and direct loss of control over his physical surroundings and circumstances. He has far less control over where he lives — he did not site the house himself and cannot move it. He has little control over who his neighbours are (p.67).

The contrast here between the traditional camp situation and the European planned Aboriginal community is quite marked — particularly in terms of scope for individual control of one’s circumstances (p.69).
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It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of a working fit between physical setting and behavioural norms (p.76).

So, firstly, the book is best described as setting out the ingredients of the cake, without giving the instructions for cooking. What can be done about the administrative impasse? Why is it that the good intentions of governments pronounced with fervour in Canberra end up being failures north of Capricorn? After some experience in government, I think I can give one reason. There is no continuity of political direction. In the last ten years there have been seven different Ministers and the result has been that no policy is pursued vigorously for enough time for errors to show up, changes to be made and for new directives to be given. The complexity of Australian administrative arrangements in an area which still has both a Commonwealth and State input just cannot be untangled without persistent and unrelenting pressure at the ministerial level.

The book would have been even more useful if it had a section devoted to the policy-making morass with which the Aboriginal people have to contend. A study of the administration of Aboriginal Affairs could be a companion volume and should give due weight to the political factor.

Dr Heppell sets out the problems created by such terms as 'assimilation' and 'integration' in developing policies, and the inability of the Government to recruit people sensitive enough and patient enough to be able to determine what the Aboriginal people really wish in any situation. No matter what the goodwill might be at the political end, the administrative apparatus has to satisfy the demands of the Auditor-General, the Treasurer, the Department of Construction, State Housing authorities and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and municipal authorities, but rarely, perhaps never, the Aboriginal people themselves. That is the overwhelming message of the book. The book is a very useful contribution to the understanding of the necessity to establish methods by which Aboriginal people should be able to decide their own environment and the fundamental difference between the way in which Australians of European origin and Australians of Aboriginal origin look at housing. Aboriginal people must not be circumscribed by walls.

The authors are rightly scathing in their criticism of what is termed 'transition-al housing'. I recall my first visit to a Northern Territory settlement about twenty-two years ago. I saw these aberrations, line after line of them, and was told by the officials that it was a hopeless task. 'You build these places for the Aboriginal people and they lock their dogs in them and sleep out under the trees'. I remember at the time, my remark: 'That is pretty rough on the dogs'.

We have gone through cycle after cycle determining need, setting up a program and then building the same unsuitable accommodation. Little appreciation is shown by officials on the spot. The average Australian house is a complicated living machine — it is difficult enough for many urban Australians to manage it, and coming to terms with it is impossible for people whose whole philosophy is based on a different view of their environment.

Noel Wallace's article, 'Pitjantjatjara Wiltja or White Man's House', points out (p.149) that the errors stem from the failure of the administration to understand the psycho-religious element and concentrates on the physical:

The plain facts are that, so long as the Aboriginal peoples' philosophy is non-materialistic, no form of European-style house will be acceptable (p.151).

I cannot understand, after all these years, why we have not been able to resolve the problem in the way the average Australian approaches a camping holiday for the family — a mobile, disposable home, adjusted to suit the whims of the climate, the changes in the weather and the requirements of the family as it also changes.
It is unfair, of course, to lay all the blame on officials on the spot. They have to take what they are given and make the best of it. Consider the Pintupi: In 1973, there were nearly a thousand Aboriginal people at Papunya, some 600 of the local residents, plus some 300 or thereabouts of the Pintupi, who had come in from the west and settled on the edge of the town or settlement. They were not welcome. In mid-1973, they became restless and packed up and went out to Yaiyai, some 30 or 40 miles to the west. It was not long before their physical situation caused a public outcry. Despite departmental objections, tents from the Army were flown to Alice Springs and taken out to the Pintupi, who established a tented camp. The departmental objections were that they were a fire hazard — they would be careless of them. My own view was that the tents were expendable in the search for an answer. On the long road towards solving the problem by the Aboriginal people themselves, a tent here or there was of no great significance. This was not because I didn't care about money, but I did know that Australian Housing Commissions spent somewhere between three and four years' salary on the housing of any other Australian family. It made a useful contribution to the comfort and convenience of the Pintupi. It was piquant, even poignant, that a few weeks later, when I met some of the Pintupi people in Alice Springs, their leader said to me: 'Minister, this new idea of tents is a great thing'. Why have we not used tents more effectively? I recall that at the time I discussed with the Commander of an infantry battalion the feasibility of his unit sending some people out into the desert, near Aboriginal settlements, to demonstrate the equipment that Australian soldiers use to make themselves comfortable and well fed in such situations. They would remain far enough away to be unobtrusive, but near enough for groups of Aboriginal people to visit and study the use of small portable cooking and camping equipment. Unfortunately, I was changed in my portfolio before there was time to try this experiment.

My own strongly held view was, and still is, that the Aboriginal people, given any reasonable opportunity to do so, would resolve the situation themselves, as long as they had sympathetic, patient people who could interpret their wishes and help bring them into administrative being. The one difference I have with Dr Heppell's introductory essay is that he presumes that the word 'housing' in the Labor Party policy, and as I pronounced it myself as Minister, means the triple-fronted brick veneer of Australian suburbia. Housing to me was whatever a person meant it to be — 'habitation' is possibly a better term. It is the right housing when one calls it 'home' and feels at ease with it!

On the other hand, the book is a very valuable contribution to the understanding of the Aboriginal thought processes, and the difficulty we face in arriving at political decisions to understand and incorporate them in housing programs. The 'problem' can be simply stated: Deliver to each Aboriginal family the right to determine its own priorities and set its own specifications. The supply of materials necessary in a physical sense is complicated, but not difficult. The funds required are large, but not prohibitive in a $35,000 million budget. The political will exists, but has no imperative. It will act if the administrative processes are apparent. What prevents progress then?

My view is that it is the result of the tangle of administrative systems, with which we have suffocated this continent. A powerful business corporation can overcome this by circumventing it. A Commonwealth Government can call up powerful resources and overcome the administrative difficulties, given the will; but the climate of the new federalism will put the Aboriginal people's needs in limbo forever as they encounter a labyrinth of administrative obscurantism.

There are a number of pre-requisites established by the authors, which must be adopted if we are to have effective implementation of Aboriginal Housing policies. Several are defined by implication — consistent political direction and clarification
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of the administrative process are obvious needs. Dr Heppell defines others in his introduction. Housing policies must be Aboriginal-oriented, rather than administratively convenient, and an understanding of, and sympathy for, the communities' social structure is essential.

If I may make a political comment, in some areas the present Government has been long on expressions of aspiration and short on the application of funds. One of the greatest inhibitions against the development of effective Aboriginal policies has been the very strident campaign alleging extravagance and waste in Aboriginal affairs. This rose to a crescendo during 1974/75 and was aggravated by the Public Accounts Committee Enquiry, by press reports of the enquiry and by general allegations of waste. This has been a weapon, with which the Government has delayed Aboriginal advancement programs.

Further, the writers of the book appear to accept the financial clichés of the times, such as: 'In view of the shortage of funds and the economic crisis in the period 1973-79', as an excuse for government inaction. The Australian Gross Domestic Product grew from $40,000 million to $100,000 million in this period. We live in a community, in which very large sums of money can be allocated to every other form of human endeavour, as shown by $3 million weekly prizes in Melbourne Tatts Lotto. The attempt to catch up on 200 years of neglect should not be inhibited by financial policies tailored for affluent Australians. In Aboriginal affairs, financial stringency is no excuse.

The Editor expresses cynicism about government policies, particularly Labor Government policies. Policy was not just the prerogative of the Minister. The Party's Aboriginal Affairs Committee, a Caucus Committee with Senator Jim O'Keeffe as Chairman and Mr Manfred Cross, M.P. for Brisbane, as Secretary, was deeply involved in all major decisions. Aboriginal people and departmental officers were also involved. The National Aboriginal Consultative Committee was to be a vehicle by which the Aboriginal voice was heard in the Minister's office. It is gratifying that it is still in existence. It is mortifying that it has less status than it deserves.

An example of the need for Ministerial intervention is the history of the outstation movement as outlined, on page 171, in Dr Biernoff's paper on Eastern Arnhem Land. By late 1972 it had made little progress, but it gained impetus in 1973, when the Government directed the Department to encourage it. The natural administrative reaction was that if a group moves away from the established settlements they will be more difficult and expensive to service. Since the beginnings of settlement in Australia, small settler groups, no matter where they were on the continent, received as much benefit from government action as could be delivered to them. Schools, postal services and other amenities followed the movement of people, and it is not long since there were hundreds of schools in Australia with no more than ten or eleven pupils.

The book highlights the need for a detailed examination of the complicated process by which Australian Governments implement their policies in the States, and it is essential reading for all those involved in Aboriginal affairs. The work is about remote Australia, but the intensity of the problem is the same for almost all Aboriginal people. The detailed studies of the remote areas are a valuable addition to our knowledge and are written in language which makes sense to the lay reader.

Secondary schools requiring a reference book on family relationships and Aboriginal social organisations should add it to their shelves.

I consider A Black Reality: Aboriginal Camps and Housing to be the most informative and useful study of this subject inside one cover, and I congratulate

The cover note accompanying this book states 'This book provides a survey of studies so far made on various aspects of current Aboriginal economic life in different environments and raises questions of economic policy which follow from their results'. However, a precursor to that comment in the cover note also states that it is a synthesis of the available information on the economic status of Aborigines in Australia.

Whilst one cannot doubt the latter comment, as the authors take the reader through a bewildering patchwork of snippets of information which pass for Aboriginal statistics with a considerable degree of professionalism, the suggestion that 'questions of economic policy' are raised does not as adequately match the publicity announcement as it does the reference to the synthesis of available information.

In reading this book, one becomes impressed with the total inadequacy of the provision of statistical information on the social and economic condition of Australian Aborigines. This factor, alone, is the major reason why the book fails to provide the comprehensive outline of policy which one would expect from such a vainglorious preamble.

Be that as it may, I do not think that one should let the authors off lightly. This reviewer has frequently been critical of what he calls the descriptive school of economics. These people, in his mind, assault the reader with a plethora of information ranging over an almost incomprehensible range of subjects and, in the main, leave the reader to draw his own conclusion. In this way, economic analysis is supposed to be supplanted by the replication of figures. All that this technique does, in fact, is to blind one to real purpose for the figures being there in the first place.

Figures, in themselves, have little value except, perhaps, that comparative studies increase the pathos with which we can view suffering. However, what people want to know from economists is how do we get ourselves out of the mess. The reiteration of partly developed statistics (and I do not blame the authors for this) only tends to lead to greater despondency and an encouragement of the belief that the problem defies solution. This, in turn, tends to reinforce the ad hoc policies which have marked governmental approaches to Aboriginal affairs over the past century.

But is the condition of our knowledge of Aboriginal affairs such that it defies integrated analysis? I do not think so, although I have never had the courage to put forward any broad 'global' approaches. I believe, however, that they can be devised and have supported many of the policy suggestions of more knowledgeable analysts than myself; notably, Dr Coombs and Professor Rowley.

My disappointment in this book, then, relates more to the failure of the authors to capitalize on the access to such a broad conspectus of information without honing it for the benefit of the reader to tell him where we should now go. Indeed, I might even say that there appears to have been a reluctance on the part of the authors to do this as they managed to review the economic status of Aborigines without discussing national economic policies/priorities and/or expenditures in any comprehensive way.
To make this comment is not to encourage short term sojourners into the field to come to rapid and quick conclusions about Aboriginal policy matters or, indeed, to suggest that national policies should be designed without the participation of Aborigines themselves.

My caution in this respect was enhanced by a rather cursory reading of what might be considered a somewhat competitive survey of the Aboriginal condition in the Northern Territory by Shann Turnbull entitled *The Economic Development of Aboriginal Communities in the Northern Territory*. In that study, Turnbull envisages the economic self-sufficiency of Aboriginal communities within the time span of some 20 years. This prediction is as optimistic, surely, as the pessimism of the present authors' comment: 'There are some links between the above explanations (their analysis) and the way in which even those developments which have failed to spark off processes of cumulative expansion (amongst Aboriginal communities)' (p.187).

Good economic analysis needs to be a little more positive than that. Where I believe the authors of *The Economic Status of Australian Aborigines* fail in their objective might be best illustrated by juxtaposing a warning contained in the early pages of their study that 'the Aboriginal population will double by the year 2000' (p.8) with the official commentary contained at the back of the publication that 'massive Ministerial initiatives' (p.190) have been undertaken to reverse the oppressed position of Aborigines in Australian society.

Nowhere in this study do we get the impression that far from being improved the Aboriginal condition, relative to that of other Australians, is actually deteriorating. This was spelt out by an official publication which was available to the authors but which put their case in more simple terms:

- Over half of the non-metropolitan Aborigines have no employment opportunities and are, in fact, out of work.
- Nine per cent have no electricity supply, 12 per cent have no sanitary services and 5 per cent have no running water supply.
- Twenty-eight per cent of all Aborigines live in improvised dwellings.

This is the simple challenge and is surely one easily overcome in a country as wealthy as ours is supposed to be and when the client community makes up less than 1 per cent of the national population.

If it is the product of 'massive Ministerial initiatives' it is time we were able to inform those responsible where they have gone wrong. These two prominent economists had the opportunity but failed to grasp it.

Maybe it is time for another national conference to review the priorities which have contributed to the current expenditure patterns and objectives of the 'massive initiatives'. I am grateful to the authors for bringing this to my attention. They have done it with skill but not with what this writer believes is adequate purpose.

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Pp. vi + 118. $2.50

Tatz's book examines how contemporary political and legal policies affect Aborigines, particularly their effort to define and achieve their own aspirations.

The book begins on a pessimistic note when Tatz, using his previously published work, argues that race relations in Australia will inevitably get worse because whites are unable to deal directly with, or empathize with, Aborigines, and because whites persist in blaming the Aboriginal victim, yet oppose 'voluntary
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separatism' which he feels is a strategy Aborigines must use if they are to develop their own sense of identity. The crux of the identity question lies in the Aboriginal need to throw off white definitions of Aboriginality and develop their own definition of self. Self-definition, Tatz states, is the prerequisite for economic, political and legal power.

This leads to his main thesis, namely; that Aborigines have more hope for gaining power through the legal arena than through the political arena. He begins by examining the extent to which established political institutions (e.g., parliament, political parties, and the franchise) have served Aborigines, concluding that although Aboriginal participation has increased in these institutions, the institutions themselves have a limited role in the overall governing process. Secondly, he looks briefly at Aboriginal political structures (e.g., settlement and mission councils, the National Aboriginal Conference, and the councils likely to be empowered under the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976), again concluding that these are generally ineffective instruments because they lack real authority and autonomy. Finally, he turns to the Commonwealth government's role in representing Aboriginal interests against those of the states, and after summarizing the Aurukun-Mornington Island affair in Queensland, he concludes that the federal government will readily sacrifice Aborigines for political expediency in its relations with the state governments. However, Tatz sees some hope for emerging Aboriginal leadership, exemplified by the chairman of the Northern Land Council, and he acknowledges some gains through pressure group activities, primarily those of FCAATSI, not those of government created groups like the National Aboriginal Conference.

The legal arena, where Tatz sees the greater power gain for Aborigines, is described in terms of 'positive' and 'negative' law, the latter meaning legislation which impedes Aboriginal aspirations because, among other things, it legitimizes prejudice (e.g., Queensland's Aborigines Act 1971) or because it is too vague and toothless to be meaningful (e.g., the Commonwealth's Racial Discrimination Act 1975). The answer lies in positive law which is specific about Aboriginal entitlements, is precise in formulation and is backed by powerful sanctions. An example is the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 which created the Land Councils and provided them with real authority and autonomy. These are seen as effective political instruments because they are embodied in law and cannot be readily disregarded by white interests. Tatz concludes his thesis by stressing that there is a small but 'convivial' body of law, both in Australia and internationally, which Aborigines should use and develop as a means of gaining power and protecting their interests.

In his final chapters Tatz states that like convivial law, Aborigines have not tended to use violence or to seek international support to further their interests although each can be a useful strategy.

This is a difficult work to review because, as Tatz acknowledges in his preface, it is 'an irregular undigested piece' designed to provoke debate and thought. The book's chapters are not separate articles standing on their own merit, nor are they explicitly linked by a flow of argument; the reader (and the reviewer) must piece the threads together for him/herself. Many of the issues Tatz raises — which are highly relevant to contemporary Aboriginal politics — are not clearly conceptualized or consistently developed. For example, after arguing that the regular political institutions are not productive avenues to power for Aborigines, he concludes that 'the bureaucracy' is the institution that counts, but he does not explain why this should be, or to what extent Aborigines have tried to use it or participate in it. Another illustration stems from the generality and the substantiation of his thesis that Aborigines can 'win more' from civil law procedures than from any political process. His thesis might well be questioned in the light of pressure group activities.
by the land rights movement and by the Aboriginal legal and medical services during the period he is describing (the late 1960s to the present). There is enough evidence to suggest that pressure group behaviour led to power in the political arena, and that this in turn resulted in significant laws for Aborigines (e.g., the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976). Thus the relevant question seems to be not which arena (political or legal) is most productive, but what is the relationship between the two arenas, and how and when do Aborigines use them and to what effect. In short, I believe Tatz’s goal of showing how political and legal policies affect Aborigines has evaded him because he has over simplified the framework for his analysis.

Despite these shortcomings, the book has positive qualities. Its description of contemporary issues, particularly the Aboriginal franchise problems in the Kimberleys, Western Australia, and the Aurukun-Mornington Island affair in Queensland, makes the book a useful teaching resource. Its discussion of violence and international politics provides some comparative reference to indigenous minorities in other countries and underscores the magnitude of racism on an international scale. But the major contribution of the book will be the debate it fosters on whether indigenous ethnic minorities, like Aborigines, can establish their own definition of ‘Aboriginality’ in a way that compels the state to subscribe to it, or whether, as Robert Paine and others currently argue, ethnicity is largely a white ascribed definition, the result of the politics of culture. If the latter turns out to be the case in Australia, then the implications of this for Aboriginal political development are enormous for, among other things, it means that whites, who hold the defining power, can shift the definition of Aboriginality and continue to delegitimize emerging Aboriginal leadership.

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With the recent enhancement of the Northern Territory’s constitutional status and consequential political developments, there has been a marked rise in academic interest in the region by students of politics. The emergence of other issues of major political import — in particular, uranium mining and Aboriginal land rights — have also contributed significantly. The monograph under review is one of the products of that interest.

Initiated as the first project of the North Australian Research Unit of the Australian National University, the original intention was to analyse the inaugural election of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly in 1974. Subsequently, due to a number of delaying factors, the coverage was extended to include the 1977 election. The title, however, is somewhat misleading in that, although the two elections provide a central focus, the study is intended to be a record of political and constitutional development and an analysis of political behaviour in the 1970s.

One of the co-editors acknowledges that the book ‘is far from a definitive study of the politics of the Northern Territory’ and this reviewer finds it difficult to disagree with that assessment. Although the editors have made a respectable attempt at ordering and refining the material, at plugging gaps, and at extending the time-scale, their efforts were not entirely successful in overcoming basic problems with the original fieldwork. The major shortcoming is the obvious unfamiliarity of most of the contributors with Territory conditions, a feature which is
particularly evident in the opening chapters which purport to set the social and economic background and in those sections which deal with the 1974 election in the 'Top End'. The notable exception to this criticism is Dean Jaensch whose (non-editorial) contribution, happily, amounts to over half the text. Yet, even he, especially in his general summaries of the elections and in his comments on constitutional and electoral matters, seems at times quite remote from the reality of Territory politics.

Compounding the unevenness of the contributors' work is the lack of balance in the subject-matter. The 1977 election, on all counts more significant than its predecessor, is very superficially covered. Given the meagreness of detail and analysis on that election and the inadequate treatment of the inter-election period, one wonders if, except on the grounds of topicality, the decision to extend the project was warranted. The problem of balance is also noticeable in both the selection of regions and electorates for intensive survey and the level of analysis accorded to them. Moreover, although there is little overt bias, the A.L.P. receives a disproportionate share of attention; the other electoral contenders (the Country-Liberal Party, the minor parties, and independents) emerge largely as foils for the political activities of the A.L.P. A final general criticism is the large number of factual errors and ambiguities in the text. Thus, except for the technically competent statistical summaries, the quality of the book, at least to this reviewer, is disappointing.

Students of Aboriginal politics, however, will be better satisfied not because that dimension is free from the broad criticisms outlined above but because, for the first time, an assessment of Aboriginal participation in a Territory election (1974) has been undertaken in some depth. Although the conclusions on the level and nature of that participation may be depressing to those who search for evidence of an increase in general Aboriginal political consciousness and interest, the recent Territory electoral experience has emphasised the actuality and potentiality of Aboriginal influence.

In other geo-political divisions in Australia, few electorates can be affected by Aboriginal votes but, in the Territory, the size of the Aboriginal population and its concentration in non-urban areas make its influence far more widespread and crucial. Of the nineteen Assembly electorates, two are basically Aboriginal and six others contain large numbers of traditional Aborigines. That influence, of course, has been restricted by the voluntary enrolment provision and the low turnout of voters, some indication of which is given in the chapter by Hilary Rumley on Aboriginal participation in the 1974 election. It is a pity that a similar exercise was not attempted for 1977 thus making a direct comparison impossible. However, it is clear that, mainly through the efforts of the A.L.P. and Aboriginal pressure-groups, total enrolment did increase significantly between 1974 and 1977. It has been estimated that, by 1977, valid Aboriginal votes had risen by over 40 per cent. With the change in legislation in 1979 to require compulsory enrolment, another sharp increase can be expected in the 1980 election even if turnout rates do not improve.

A marked change in party-support in the Aboriginal vote also occurred. In 1974, the C.L.P. received nearly 50 per cent and the A.L.P. about 40 per cent; in 1977, the comparative figures were 22 per cent and 70 per cent. As a result, three rural electorates were won by the A.L.P. Even in the more extensive treatment of the 1974 election, the analysis of Aboriginal voting behaviour is couched at a very general level with emphasis being given to the manipulative role of missionaries, pastoralists, political parties, and pressure groups. Although the conclusion that 'there (was not) any evidence that Aborigines were participants at any level beyond that of voting' probably is appropriate for both elections, its force
is weakened by the absence of any thorough examination of Aboriginal perceptions of issues, personalities and parties, or of the organization of their vote. Regardless of the reasons, however, the consequence of the shift in party-support by Aborigines by 1977 was certainly significant not only in the outcome of that election but also to party activities and attitudes in future elections.

It is easy to point to deficiencies in the treatment of the Aboriginal role in the elections but they are to be expected in an area so uncharted and inherently difficult to study. What has been done, particularly in respect of the 1974 election, on participation at the candidate and voter levels is instructive and will provide some sort of benchmark for later analyses of the electoral involvement of non-urban Aborigines. If for nothing else, the sections pertinent to these subjects make the book worth consulting.

ALISTAIR HEATLEY DARWIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE


Somewhere Between Black and White is the third documentary novel in which the story of the pastoral strike in the north-west of Western Australia is central. Previous works (Aboriginal History Vol. 2, 1-2:1978, p.179) mention Clancy McKenna, a man of part-Aboriginal (Nyamil mother) and part-white (Irish father) descent. This book is not a history of the strike, however, it is more a biography of Clancy and, as the title implies, it focuses on the implication of being neither fully black or white in contemporary Australian society.

Kingsley Palmer wrote the story from taped material told to him by Clancy during the course of Palmer's visits to the Pilbara, largely at the Aboriginal cattle station, Yandearra, and also during extended visits to Perth when Clancy had his sight restored by the removal of cataracts. He stayed at the Palmer home during most of the recuperative periods succeeding each operation, but he would periodically go off to a hostel (which he detested) because, he said, Kingsley and his missus would get sick of him if he was with them all the time. There was truth in that, of course, although it would have had more relevance to most other people, black or white, than Clancy. In brief, he was a charming, sensitive and intelligent man, a great raconteur with a strong sense of humour. He was vastly more a friend than an object of research to Kingsley Palmer, and that is how Palmer has written about him. The reader can feel sympathy perhaps, anger certainly, for the sheer injustice of Clancy's life, but never pity. The book succeeds in portraying a man who lived in full despite the constraints imposed by the wider society and who achieved a degree of contentment at times if, understandably, solace was ultimately too frequently found in a bottle.

In his introduction Palmer briefly recounts the social conditions giving rise to the numbers of people of mixed race living in the Pilbara area of Western Australia today and raises a number of issues that somewhere deserve detailed treatment, including the abject failure of successive government policies aimed at serving the interests of Aborigines but usually only serving vested white interests. Clancy had many reasons to be bitter about the way he was treated in life, a subject that he seems to have both comprehended and articulated more clearly in later years as he became increasingly aware of and reflective about the non-Aboriginal component of his parentage. Like his contemporaries he was raised as an Aboriginal, spoke and presumably thought in Nyamil and Nyangamada, depending on circumstances.
His learning to read, virtually a self-taught process, evidently had a big bearing on his attitudes of later years in which he sought to reconcile his position and try to understand the extent to which his mixed parentage had patterned his life. That he had a white father gave rise to vocal calls for equality, or at least a pro-rata degree of justice in his treatment by whites to the point of getting him into trouble at times. Clancy once met the Commissioner (Native Welfare):

“Well, what I want to know is this. How can I have the same rights as some of the others, living up at the One Mile. You see if I have a case of beer and the police come along, it won't be any good, will it?”

“No,” said the Commissioner, looking with interest at Clancy. “You've got to apply for your citizenship first.”

“Well, you see, I thought I was born a citizen.”

“And what makes you say that?”

“Well, white man first brought me into the country. I reckon I born with the full citizen.”

The passage shows that although Palmer used tape-scripts as a basis for the book he has linked the material together in a literary style. That is at once open to criticism if considered from a strictly scientific standpoint. The writer could not be sure that on a certain day many years ago 'it was hot in the sun and the wind blew from the east, hindering progress when the road turned towards the river'. Yet without that degree of literary license the book becomes unimaginable. It is essential in comprehending Clancy's life to become aware of the environment in which he lived: the torrid heat, the dust and dryness, the sporadic violent rains and the interminable cycle of cattle station life, mustering, fencing and living in a proximity to the elements in a manner quite unknown to the majority of city-dwelling Australians. None of that could come alive in a prosaic rundown of average climatic factors.

Nevertheless the book is written with a substantial experience of the Pilbara on Palmer's part in addition to the many and colourful descriptions provided by Clancy. To me, having also spent much time in the area and knowing Clancy McKenna personally, it has an authenticity that I believe does justice to the people and their land. In being eminently 'readable' it provides a fascinating and sympathetic insight for readers with no knowledge of the Pilbara or its people; at the same time it is useful reading for those who know something of, but wish to understand more of, the dilemma of being part-Aboriginal in Australia — although scholars may grumble at the lack of historical detail and absence of analysis.

W. DIX AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL STUDIES

The need for interpreting and translation services for Australian Aboriginals with special reference to the Northern Territory — a research report. Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra, 1979.
Pp. vi + 57.

This excellent and thought-provoking report was commissioned by a Planning Group on Special Interpreter/Translator Needs, set up by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in early 1978, following a recommendation of an Inter-Departmental Working Party on Interpreters and Translators. Gloria Brennan, a member of the Research Section of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, is a native speaker of the Western Desert language and has a BA degree from the University of Western
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Australia with majors in anthropology and linguistics. The report shows her to be a sensitive and concerned person, but in addition a sensible and practical one, eminently suited to undertaking a study of this nature.

Ms Brennan has deep personal experience of the lack of communication between black and white in Australia; if she and her fellow-students spoke their own language when at school, they were ordered to 'stop speaking gibberish or you will be caned'. In compiling the present report Ms Brennan consulted with many Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, with educational, judicial and other government bodies, and with linguists in the School of Australian Linguistics and in southern universities.

The difficulties of translation are illustrated by the Prime Minister’s visit to Alice Springs in April 1978. Mr Don Ferguson, translator for Pitjantjatjara speakers, commented as follows:

‘He said it was often necessary to give background to explain fully the meaning of one word or another. For example, a word such as “policy” would have to be explained culturally — through an example or two — before its semantic meaning could be explained. He had to go into some detail as to how the policy of the Prime Minister is implemented by his servants, which meant making the distinction between his personal staff (like secretaries, speech writers, etc.) and the Public Service (which required a further distinction to be made between the different departments involved, e.g. D.A.A., Prime Ministers and Cabinet). He had to explain that the Government had changed, that Gough Whitlam was no longer the “Boss man” and that this party was voted out, and that this lot were a “different mob”. He then had to draw parallels to show that it was similar to the operations of an Aboriginal Council and to show its relationship with an administrative body such as The Central Australian Aboriginal Congress. He then had to (truthfully) tell the Pitjantjatjara that the Prime Minister’s speech was “not clear for him to understand” because the English language was obscure. He also had to pause at intervals to get an indication from his audience whether or not there was any point in continuing to attempt to translate something which was so difficult (impossible?) to do in the time available.

‘As is the custom, Don Ferguson also had to explain in narrative style how the Prime Minister travelled to their country . . .; whether he asked permission to go to other people’s “ground” and whether he intended to come back again to visit them . . . He had to also explain the Prime Minister’s style of delivery of his speech, that speaking by “throwing his voice” over everyone’s head, without addressing anyone in particular is an acceptable speech style in white man’s terms . . .’

Brennan emphasises that ‘Aboriginal interpreters are not just people who know two languages. They should be seen as communicators, people who know two sets of culture and tradition, much of which is not just language, and who can effectively explain each to the other’. But a competence in two languages — and knowledge of two cultures — does not bring with it an automatic ability to translate between the two languages. Translating is a skill requiring definite training; a high priority must be attached to setting up appropriate training courses.

The need for more and better interpreting and translating services was emphasised by almost all the people involved in Aboriginal agencies to whom Brennan talked. ‘There is a desperate need for both interpreting and translation services in the NT. Trained, highly qualified, specialised interpreters should be obligatorily attached to all hospitals, courts (magistrates and Supreme), Police Stations, Post Offices, Banks, Government Offices such as Social Security, Social Welfare, Employment . . .’. In addition, radio stations should employ people fluent in the local languages, and a proportion of broadcasting time should be given over to programs in Australian languages.
Brennan gives examples of white translators who just render those parts of a long speech by an Aboriginal which they (in terms of their white cultural values) consider to be important. An elder who spoke at length at a land rights meeting about his deep feeling for his homeland had his moving plea boiled down to: ‘Harry X spoke about his desire to return to the land’.

When Brennan asked people how they went about finding an interpreter she was most often told ‘one just asks around’. The competence of people put forward to interpret is seldom checked (Brennan could find only one instance of this happening). There is urgent need for — in each local centre — a register of competent interpreters, with their proficiency and reliability being verified, most especially by the Aborigines who may have to rely on them. When Brennan asked her own Ngaanyatara people who they would regard as being ‘well qualified — fluent and trustworthy — to act as interpreters/translators’, she was given a list of nine people from a number of nearby communities; she was surprised at the omission of one person who she knew to be fluent in both English and the Western Desert language. The people said that he was a show-off, an unreliable person who would try to make himself the centre of attention in the court and attempt to impress the judge, rather than ensure that the defendant received a fair hearing. (And one can’t help but speculate that someone of this type might be likely to impress white officials, and to be called on to interpret, if the decisions about who to use were made exclusively in that quarter.)

The report mentions a Certificate in Translation/Interpreting, which is proposed by the School of Australian Linguistics. It commend the work of the SAL (a part of the Darwin Community College) — which has the brief of providing training in all aspects of linguistics to native speakers of Australian languages, from all parts of the continent — and also of the Institute for Aboriginal Development. IAD has done a great deal of important work on the languages of the Alice Springs area, and is also developing courses in interpreting and translating. Brennan suggests, as a long-term goal, the setting up of a number of local ‘Institutes of Aboriginal languages’ — something like IAD — in areas in which Australian languages are still strongly spoken. These should be managed ‘by and for Aborigines’; they should look after interpreting/translating needs, and their staff should produce grammars, dictionaries, collections of traditional and contemporary literature, literacy materials, and so on, which would be printed and published by the local Institutes. This, the most important recommendation of the report, deserved to be considered very seriously by the government. As Brennan points out, there are thriving Institutes of this sort in comparable situations overseas.

As an important short-term aim she puts the proper remuneration of trained interpreters and translators. And it is suggested that local officers of DAA, and schoolteachers in predominantly Aboriginal areas, should be expected to learn something of at least one local language. There is a strong case for introducing incentive payments for such skills. Brennan draws analogies from New Zealand, a country that has set an example in this area which we should surely follow.

In his preface to the report the Director of the Research Section of DAA comments that ‘as an official [Ms Brennan’s]main concern is that policy may fail to reach its objectives as long as there are major communication difficulties between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals which could be alleviated/overcome by a greater use of interpreters and translators’. One can only hope that, as communication is improved, not only may Aborigines know better what policy is, but they may also come to have more of a hand in making it.

One of Brennan’s most powerful paragraphs is: ‘Few non-Aboriginals seem to question the quality of the channels used in consulting Aboriginals. Aboriginals are rarely asked whether they need an interpreter. It is generally assumed that the more powerful of the two parties will get his message across. The government’s
policy of consultation requires that the message be transmitted and implemented; so far it lacks any requirement that the message is conveyed to recipients in a meaningful way.'

The most important point which comes across in this report is that 'Aboriginal' people throughout the Northern Territory express a strong determination to say something about their lives and their future. Community councils want to manage their own affairs by having a voice in any Government program whether it be the education of their children, or land, all of which they consider vital for their future. All discussions of interpreter/translator needs were preceded by comments on current Aboriginal affairs with complaints of "ill-informed programmes conceived and implemented by public servants down south". Aboriginals maintained that very few government officials were able to find out how Aboriginals really thought, how they lived and what they wanted, much less heed what they said. Interpreting/translating services do stand in urgent need of improvement, partly so that Aborigines may get fair treatment when they are tried according to an alien legal code, in European-style courts. But also so that Aborigines may hold a dialogue with the government and state the ways in which they wish to make their own decisions about their future. They are ready to talk. There is need of someone faithfully to interpret what they say. And someone to listen.

R.M.W. DIXON AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY


On Social Justice Sunday late in 1978 I attended Mass in one of the more comfortable of Canberra's numerous comfortable suburbs. (Academics commonly reside in such localities). The parish priest announced that he had to bring the congregation's attention to a statement by the Catholic Bishops' Commission for Justice and Peace deploiring the sad plight of Aborigines, copies of which were available at the Church door. He then apologised that he had to make this announcement and said that he disagreed with the statement. Aborigines, he felt, had not been treated illegally and there was therefore, no reason why his superiors should get so concerned about them or why his congregation (themselves living on A.C.T. residential leases) should be made to feel guilty about the Aborigines' lack of land-rights or limited access to social services. The Church should stick to its spiritual ministry and not get involved in such mundane matters. No one voiced dissent, most seemed to agree.

This story indicates more than that Catholics are pretty indifferent to the misfortunes of the Aborigines. It shows that in that indifference, as in so many ways, Australian Catholics tend to share the views and values of most other Australians. Yet, as the bishop's statement shows such indifference is not absolute. Nor, as the special issue of the journal under review shows, has it ever been. There has long been a redemptive leaven of pastoral concern, at least among individuals within the Church. Still, it must be conceded — and lamented — that its influence was rarely strong enough to do the Aborigines much good. The few 'success stories' from Western Australia, that of the Benedictine abbey at New Norcia and of the Pallotine mission in the Kimberleys are well known. It is the virtue of this collection of articles to demonstrate that some consciences were at least stirred and some efforts were and are also being made elsewhere.

Sister Gregory Forster discusses Bishop Polding's efforts on behalf of the Aborigines. Since his main mission was to the scattered Irish settlers, and that was
work enough, it is commendable that he should have attempted also to embrace
the native settlers — whose way of life had already been destroyed in much of
New South Wales by 1820 when the Catholic Church was officially allowed to
function. It had suffered much more damage by 1835 when Polding reached
Sydney. While he was unable to repair the damage he at least made his views on
the moral responsibility of white Australians so clear that even in 1978 the
Catholic bishops considered them 'radical'. Dr Kevin Livingston puts Polding in
the broader context of 'voices in the wilderness', discussing his protestations at
the treatment of Aborigines in conjunction with those of William Ullathorne,
Columbus Fitzpatrick, J.H. Plunkett, Duncan McNab, Donald McKillop of the
Jesuit mission at the Daly River, Joe McGovern and John Healy. They are a noble
line of protesters, delivering their message from 1837 to 1948, but not finding a
large audience.

Coming to more recent times, words have been turned into actions. Fr Bernard
Flood describes the mission to the Aborigines begun in the Armidale diocese
under Bishop Doody in 1954. Dr Eugene Stockton surveys the efforts to assist
Aborigines within the Sydney Archdiocese between 1968 and 1978. And Fr Ted
Kennedy of the Redfern parish presents a sensitive and personal, yet humble, de­
scription of his ministry based on 'seven years' close association with aboriginal
people'.

This journal is far from providing a complete account of Catholic interest in
and dealings with Aborigines. Even so, it is a valuable contribution not only to
church history but to Aboriginal studies. More importantly, it is an encouraging
sign that one of the most influential institutions in Australian life is likely to take
an increasingly helpful interest in Aboriginal affairs.

HUGH LARACY

Australian Aborigines, Shadows in a Landscape. Photography by Laurence Le Guay
Pp: 129. $15.95

Australian Aborigines, Shadows in a Landscape, purports to further our under­
standing and to offer a tribute to a 'gentle and joyous people' in a series of
impressions. Unfortunately, the visual images and text are neither well matched,
nor fitted to such an ambitious purpose. Journalist Suzanne Faulkiner has con­
tributed three biographical sketches of well known Aborigines, glimpses of life on
a cattle station and a settlement and several pages of potted history and pre­
history, while photographer Laurence Le Guay has contributed both colour and
black and white images of Aborigines, Australian flora and fauna, landscapes and
scenes of development in northern Australia.

One disappointing feature of this book is the poor integration of text and
image. Documentation of several of the photographs could have brought the
'shadows' to life. The Aboriginal women who are painting up, dancing and dis­
playing their painted bodies deserved to be named. Here we have Aboriginal
artists displaying their symbolic representations of the travels of the ancestral
heroes and re-enacting in ritual the dreamtime experience, but as it stands, the
reader knows nothing of this. Similarly, the text requires visual images to bring it
to life. Where are these great characters of the North? The images, written and
visual, are in different styles and rather than complementing each other, they are
often at cross-purposes.
I found many of the captions facile and offensive. While it may have been necessary to suppress the name of the cattle station 200 km north of Alice Springs (Anningie?), one wonders why the locations of several landscapes are omitted. Captions, such as ‘emu’ and ‘kangaroo’, add little to the photographs, while ‘full blood male Aboriginal’ is likely to offend many.

Many of the photographs lack vitality, and I wonder why some were included. The mother and child on page 39 has real warmth and captures something of the joy of family life and personal bonds which are so central to Aboriginal people, but most of the studies in this book are static: they are of shadows, not of a living and proud people. I would query the propriety of including the photograph of a boy’s initiation in a book designed for a wide mixed audience. Although there appears to be nothing sacred revealed in the photograph, it does portray a segment of ritual which is usually restricted to adult males. Certainly, it is in poor taste to have this photograph facing one of a Redfern Street (Sydney) scene. The comparison of the activities of youth may be drawn, but such a juxtaposition is more likely to damage the image of the ‘gentle people’ than to further understanding.

The text is in the racy style of the journalist into a story. It is mostly anecdotal and is as likely to confirm racial prejudice as to dispel it. Had the final chapter, which contains useful information on the dispossession of Aboriginal lands and the colonization of Australia, come at the beginning of the book, the tales of abuse of Aborigines, of violence, prostitution and alcoholism would have been set in an historical context. As it is, the explanation comes too late; the reader is already wondering whether Aborigines are really human.

There are errors, poor quality reporting, some interesting information and several nice pictures, but overall the book lacks style and I wonder for whom it is intended. Faulkner and Le Guay state it is not for the specialist, but even the layman deserves to know what he is looking at.

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