

## Reviews

*Never Trust a Government Man. Northern Territory Aboriginal Policy 1911–1939.* By Tony Austin. NTU Press, Darwin, 1997. Pp.336. \$19.95 p.b.

The Commonwealth Government's administration of the Northern Territory began badly—by starting ten years later than it might have done—and was for years handicapped by the effects of those great world events in the first half of the century which ensured that the necessary financial and human resources were mostly unavailable. The world wars and the Depression certainly had decisive impacts on Aboriginal administration and not a lot was done in the first thirty years covered by Tony Austin's history of Aboriginal policy. This inactivity should have come as no surprise to any who heard the debates in the Commonwealth Parliament in 1902 and 1909 on the proposed transfer of responsibility for the Territory from South Australia. Almost all who spoke were concerned only about prospects for development and the likely costs and benefits of completing the north–south railway line. The one exception was Alfred Deakin, though he was an influential enough figure to have encouraged hopes that Aboriginal needs might be given some priority. It was during Deakin's second term as Prime Minister that Papua had been transferred from British to Australian control and in his third term that South Australia finally agreed to cede control of the Northern Territory, and Deakin intended that these changes should serve the interests of the indigenous people who in both places made up the overwhelming majority of the population. For Deakin one of the 'desirable features' of the proposal that the Commonwealth should take over the Northern Territory had been that it 'might be able to secure to the last remnants of the aboriginal races that better treatment which every civilized people must feel is part of the "white man's burden" cast upon us when we exploit the lands of native people'. Deakin had also drawn attention to the constraints on Commonwealth revenues and this remained the chief obstacle to any development of an active and interventionist program in Aboriginal affairs. Whatever was done had to be done on the cheap and there was never any prospect that the development of the Territory would be designed primarily to benefit the indigenous people.

Nevertheless the Fisher Labor government in 1911 had high hopes for the Territory's development and a vigorous and capable minister in E.L. Batchelor who was keen to 'ameliorate the present conditions' and help 'the preservation of the native tribes'. He appointed as chief protector and chief medical officer an apparently highly qualified and well informed young man, Dr Herbert Basedow, but he promptly resigned within two months of arriving in Darwin and two months later Batchelor had died at 46 of a heart attack. The appointment of Professor Baldwin Spencer to replace Basedow was an attempt to compensate for these setbacks but he could not stay more than twelve months. The nascent Aboriginal affairs unit dwindled away under acting

and otherwise engaged chief protectors in the war years and after, when it became a responsibility of the police chief.

The second full-time and reasonably well qualified chief protector and chief medical officer was only appointed in February 1927 when Dr Cecil (Mick) Cook was given the job—at least in the northern part of the Territory, since from March of that year the administration was split and the police sergeant at Alice Springs was transformed into Commissioner of Police and Chief Protector of Aborigines for Central Australia. Evidently someone in Melbourne thought the chief protector's job was one for a young man, for Cook was, like Basedow, not yet 30 years old when appointed. But within the year, having failed to win the agreement of the States to a national inquiry into Aboriginal affairs, the government engaged a much older man, the Queensland chief protector, JW Bleakley, to report on 'the status and condition of aborigines' in Central Australia and North Australia and to advise how to improve things. This was not a move calculated to reassure Cook that he had the confidence of the government that had appointed him.

The Great Depression meant that for most of Cook's twelve year term the government was reducing expenditure and was only rarely persuaded to add to his small staff. Apart from a handful of medical officers, his only field officers were police whose multitude of duties included serving as protectors of Aborigines. Law enforcement was their first priority and on several notable occasions police disgraced their service by behaving as violent oppressors rather than protectors. Between southern critics, unsympathetic administrators and judges, and ministers mainly concerned to dodge press criticism, the chief protector was never going to have an easy time and Cook was always outspoken and acerbic, never a cautious 'bureaucrat'.

Austin's history of these somewhat barren years is a good deal more than an account of Aboriginal policy, telling us much about how policy was (or was not) implemented and about incidents that helped to shape public opinion, policy and practice. He has mined both public and private archives thoroughly and has also drawn on the recollections of some participants in producing what is indeed 'the most detailed account yet' of Aboriginal administration in the Territory up to 1939. Some of his eleven chapters read rather as separate essays than as sections of the 'coherent account' he promises his readers. In the first, 'Creating the Inferior Race', he provides a confused and confusing overview of attitudes to and opinions about Aboriginal people during the whole period. He introduces the term 'progressivist' here but his 'general reader' has to wait until Chapter 6 to find any sort of explanation of the term. The next three chapters provide a mainly chronological account of the years to 1927, and the fifth deals with Bleakley's 1928 inquiry and report. The next, entitled 'A Progressive in Capricornia: Chief Protector CE Cook', takes us back two years to Cook's appointment to outline his views, then deals, much in the style of Andrew Markus's 1990 book, *Governing Savages*, with the Administrators of the Territory in Cook's time; with Joe Carrodus, 'the Commonwealth bureaucrat'; with ministers; with 'the humanitarians' (mainly Professor AP Elkin and the Sydney Association for the Protection of Native Races); with 'the southern Aboriginal lobby'; and finally with 'the northern bureaucracy'—Cook's small and always inadequate staff. (Austin in his introduction writes that his 'perspective throughout is...more northern, less southern' than Markus's.) Successive chapters then outline Cook's handling of issues relating to missions; to 'half-castes'; to the judicial

system; and to employment. A final chapter, '1937', covers the important events of that year and the next, leading to John McEwen's announcement of a 'New Deal' early in 1939, and to Cook's departure, and concludes with a summary account of the work of Cook's successor, EWP Chinnery, in the years up to the outbreak of war in the Pacific.

Austin's title 'Never Trust a Government Man' provides a fair indication of his point of view. (We are told that it is taken from 'a remark by an Alawa man: "Never trust a government man or an Aboriginal from Queensland"' but are left to speculate which government men and Aboriginal Queenslanders might have betrayed that Alawa man's trust, and how.) Southern politicians ('remote and inept political masters') and officials (mostly referred to as bureaucrats) are the whipping boys in this account. It is the indifference of politicians—not of voters—that Austin holds primarily responsible for the lack of action to improve conditions for Aboriginal people. The 'southern humanitarians' do not fare much better: their views too were 'confused' and 'paternalistically racist'. Austin does show some sympathy for the 'handful of frontier bureaucrats grappling with the "Aboriginal problem"' and gives Cook credit for his efforts. He can be remarkably generous, forgiving Basedow his proposal for 'a permanent tattoo for the purposes of easy identification' as 'part of what passed for enlightened humanitarianism at the time'. But more often we read of 'official apathy', 'bureaucratic procrastination', 'negativism', and 'a mixture of staff shortage, incompetence and lack of genuine concern' in the Territory administration. Other obstacles like the 'powerful pastoral lobby', entrenched prejudice in the north, and general indifference in the south, are also mentioned.

The politicians and public servants of earlier times than our own are easy targets, and Austin's tone of condemnation will appeal to many readers. But perhaps, after thirty years of very much more active interventions by government, producing many disappointments and unintended consequences, it might be time for a cooler, less judgmental, look at the difficulties, dilemmas, and doubts that troubled policy makers and administrators in this period when government was much more severely constrained than in our time.

Jeremy Long

*Karajini mirlimirli: Aboriginal histories from the Pilbara.* Edited by Noel Olive, Fremantle, 1997. Fremantle Arts Press. Pp 254, \$19.95

I worked in the Pilbara during the second half of the 1980s, eventually establishing Wangka Maya, the Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre in Port Hedland, after discussions with many Aboriginal people in the region. The role of the centre was (and I think still is) to record as much as possible, to store that and previously recorded material, and to train local people in these tasks. Much of the material was recorded in Aboriginal English and in local languages. Wangka Maya also ran an oral history project and participated in the Western Desert oral history project.

The Pilbara is even more of a Terra Nullius for Europeans than is the rest of Australia. It is somewhere 'over there' in the west for most easterners. If we know something about it, maybe we know about the stockman's strike and the Strelley mob. Otherwise we know the iron ore history, development with a capital 'D'. Few know

about the indigenous story of the region, or that it is home to the largest collection of rock-engravings in the world. Like most parts of Australia it has a rich indigenous history, and like most parts, this history is virtually unknown outside of the local Aboriginal community.

For these and other reasons I looked forward to this collection of stories, each told by one of the thirty-nine mainly Punjima and Yinhawangka (but other language groups as well). There are stories by old and young people which give a sense of the lives of people of the region, with the recurrent themes of working as stockmen, living on stations, children taken by welfare, the opposition of Aboriginal law with European law, relationships, travel, the good old days, and the problems facing Aboriginal people today: employment, alcohol, women's status.

While it is clear that Aboriginal people are talking (their photo appears at the beginning of each chapter), their voices appear to have been edited away, or, as the introduction puts it:

The process was to record an interview on cassette, then reduce it to a statement by eliminating the interviewer's questions and comments, or minor matters which detracted from the story's flow (p. 13).

Reduced, the key term here, tells us that we are getting less than what the speakers gave. It is an issue for oral histories such as this one, in how to represent the language of the story tellers. It is an issue that has been struggled with by others, and by others working not too far from the Pilbara. Stephen Muecke's representation of Paddy Roe's stories (Benterrak, Muecke & Roe 1984) is an example; the Western Desert oral histories, opting for a bilingual rendition, is another (Western Desert Puntukurnuparna and Wangka Maya n.d.). Perhaps the best representation of oral accounts today is to use multimedia, as in *Long time, olden time* (Peter and Jay Read 1993), presenting the written form together with the audio or video of the speaker, allowing the reader to appreciate that the language being used is different to middle-class Australian English (not the impression you would get from the present work). How to represent Aboriginal English in written texts has been discussed publicly in an exchange between Patrick McCornell and Bruce Shaw (*Australian Aboriginal Studies* 1985, No. 2: 74-78). Despite the bourgeoisification of the *Karjini* texts, bits of Aboriginal English are occasionally allowed to slip by ('In those days there wasn't any schools' (p. 32), 'The father belong to Slim Parker' (p. 103)), but generally this difference has been ironed out.

Noel Olive, the editor, is omnipresent in the stories because his guiding principles, set out in the introduction, serve to render the English as middle-class English. 'Written Aboriginal language is a non-Aboriginal construct'... 'The sooner the Aboriginal people take charge of their language and declare how it shall be written the better the chances of its preservation' (p. 13). Just as writing was non-Aboriginal (but presumably has become Aboriginal in the way that other cultural traits are appropriated as necessary), so surely is book-production, reading and recording stories. Aboriginal people have taken up language work, but it is a skill that needs to be learned and developed.

Why do we expect that Aboriginal people will have the expertise to decide on spelling systems for their languages? They need information so that the spelling system works and can be agreed upon by all speakers of the language. The local Aboriginal controlled language centre has consulted and run workshops on spelling systems for the region. It is doubtful that writing the language has any effect on its preservation,

except as a record in an archive. Languages must be spoken if they are to survive. And when the language is not used in oral history projects and even the distinctive use of English is not presented to the reader, we see yet again the privileging of the dominant variety of English at the expense of the vernacular (be it the local variety of Aboriginal English or the indigenous language). Even more disturbing, then, is the claim that: 'Every effort has been made to preserve the cultural idiom of the contributor's language in the course of the recording, in order to ensure the integrity of the message' (p. 14). The contradiction between the position of 'preserving the cultural idiom' and rendering into middle-class European English (what Olive calls 'conventional English' (p. 13), amounts to a mis-representation of the Aboriginal vernacular.

There is a debate in the art world about what is 'good' Aboriginal art. Is there an objective sense in which we can say that art is good art and not accept that all things Aboriginal are therefore necessarily wonderful? This same debate needs to extend to other aspects of Aboriginal cultural productions. We need to know a great deal more about the indigenous stories of Australia, but we also need to develop more sympathetic ways of hearing these stories, mediated by representations that deliver more of the 'cultural idiom' than we get in the present work.

## References

- Benterrak, Krim, Stephen Muecke and Paddy Roe (1984) *Reading the country*, Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Press.
- Read, Peter and Jay Read (1993) *Long time, olden time* (CD multimedia), Design Western Desert Puntukurnuparna and Wangka Maya (n.d.) *Yintakaja-lampajuya*, Port Hedland: WDPAC.

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*Aboriginal English: A Cultural Study*. By J.M. Arthur of the Australian National Dictionary Centre. Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1996. Pp. 264. ISBN 0 19 554018 2 \$24.95

This attractive paperback book (attractive both in its cover and texture) exemplifies and explains many expressions common in various Aboriginal Englishes throughout Australia, as they have been recorded in print, either in newspaper items, novels, studies of Aboriginal English or in other books and manuscripts. There is an alphabetical index of all forms included, but the bulk of the book has the forms collected into chapters which illustrate and clarify Aboriginal concepts of culture, kin, interaction with whites and with the land, and the issue of survival of the culture. I am sure other readers will enjoy dipping into it as much as I have done and continue to do. Where the origin or first recorded use of a term is known, it is given, and the meaning and connotations of terms are briefly given at the introduction of the term.

The Acknowledgments state:

The work on the book was begun and funded almost entirely through the Australian National Dictionary Centre. Dr Bill Ramson, the first Director of the Centre,

agreed to support this project, at a time when Aboriginal English was receiving little attention, either in the scholarly or general community.

This work is much indebted to those Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authors and editors, who, often against current publishing practice, insisted that their own words, or those of the oral testimonies they were editing, should remain in the language in which they were written or spoken—Aboriginal English. This book is a testament to their determination, and to all those authors who cared enough for language and for Aboriginal culture to record this distinctive speech.

Usages recorded are all referenced to their source and geographical placings as far as known. After an Introduction, which has short sections on a history of Aboriginal English, its status, the purpose of the book, sources, evidence, Aboriginal English and Aboriginal languages and the structure of the dictionary, there are eight chapters, a select bibliography (listing major sources, and an alphabetical index of all forms discussed and exemplified. the eight chapters are:

- 1 Always was, always will be
- 2 Kin
- 3 Us mob
- 4 Country
- 5 Living with whitefellas
- 6 The quiet run and the wild bush
- 7 Aboriginal way
- 8 Survival

Organising the usages into general areas based on the experiences of Aboriginal peoples is a serendipitous way to organise the material. Readers have no doubt come across dictionaries of Australian slang or similar compilations from elsewhere, which are also of great interest to browse through, but when all terms are organised alphabetically without subcategorising, there is more jumping from topic to topic. Within each chapter in this book, the words are organised alphabetically, but with each chapter taking a particular theme, there is more cohesion. Of course there are many terms which could belong in more than one of the above chapters, so Jay Arthur and those working with her no doubt had some difficult decisions to make. Also, as the Introduction states, no compilation could be exhaustive. As I read I occasionally came across words which reminded me of others, equally well known in the geographical area from which they came, which could have been included, but were not. However the book's purpose of giving the reader a broad across-the-country view of Aboriginal English usages and the cultural field behind them is well achieved.

My minor regret is that there is no pronunciation guide for the items included. For many words this is no problem at all—they are words any reader of English would recognise. However a number of words, mainly from traditional languages, really need a guide to pronunciation. Naturally I had no trouble with words from areas I have worked in, and in some cases variant spellings in different sources, if inspected judiciously, can help the reader deduce the correct pronunciation, but there remain a number for which a guide would be of great help. It could be that the information was not always available to the author and her team, but where it was accessible, it would have been good to include it.

To illustrate the style of entries, I include at random a couple of sample entries.

From Chapter 1:

**photo** *noun* [north-west NT] A rock painting.

1992 D.B. Rose *Dingo Makes Us Human* p. 107 [north-west NT] **Photo** [rock art] there all around Daguragu.

From Chapter 4:

**right through** *adverb* (Of a ritual, dreaming, or a song) completely mapping the span of its geographical relevance.

Aboriginal narratives often have a logic that is based on place rather than the internal logic of the narrative, because they belong to particular places and the connections between the places provide the connections in the story; the story is there to explain the landscape so that the shape of the landscape is the shape of the story.

1985 E. Malpangka *Aboriginal Women* p. 10 [NT?] But this land is our grandfathers' and grandmothers', their law, their dreaming goes **right through** strong, its our land. 1986 B. Shaw *Countrymen* p. 147 [Kimberley] He'd sing that one **right through** down and get another one and run it this way now to Halls Creek. 1990 P. Austin et al *Lang. & Hist.* p. 254. It's a long corroboree. Charlotte Waters that's the middle bit. They're Dreaming people blackfellers and women. I can sing it **right through** to Napperby from Riley Creek down from Napperby not far.

From Chapter 7 (p. 211):

**now** *adverb* A marker in a narrative of a sequence of events, either in the past or in the present, so it can sometimes be equivalent to *then* or *at that time/point in the narrative*.

While often adverbial, this is one of a series of punctuation terms used in oral narratives to mark changes in the narrative. See also ALL RIGHT and the introduction to this chapter for further discussion. (etc.)

Each chapter has a brief introduction of about a page, giving a background to the coverage of the chapter, sometimes giving a few words central to the thrust of the chapter. Thus in Chapter 1, **law**, **dreaming** and **culture** are highlighted. In the introduction to Chapter 4, Arthur states:

The country may be **mother** or **grandfather**, which **grows** them **up**, or is **grown up** by them. These kinship terms impose mutual responsibilities of caring and keeping upon the land and people. The terms **own** and **owner** are transformed in Aboriginal meaning into mutual interdependence rather than exclusive control.

The final chapter has words which are

manifestations of aspects of the indigenous Australian culture of the later twentieth century. They are the words of a people who have been confronted with violent change, and who, out of a struggle for survival, have created new concepts of Aboriginality.

The chapter includes the many regional words which are proudly used to denote Aboriginality in groupings larger than the pre-invasion clans or 'tribes' or 'language groups', and many words covering present and past living conditions, learning, toys and equipment. Words recorded that denote an Aboriginal person or people of specific areas, are:

**Anangu** (Central Aust., **Bama** (north Qld), **Goorie** (northern NSW), **Koori** (NSW) **Koorie** (Vic.), **Mardu** (north-west WA), **Murri** (southern Qld and northern NSW),

**Nunga** (southern SA), **Nyungar** (south-western WA), **Palawa** (Tasmania), **Warbo** (the Warburton Ranges), (the Gascoyne and Murchison Rivers region, WA), **Yolngu** (eastern Arnhem Land and nearby areas), and **Yura** (the Flinders Ranges area of northern SA).

This list is a salutary reminder to those who would promote Koori as an all-embracing substitute for Aboriginal. One cannot help feel that the populous south-east coast of Australia is as much insensitive to the views of those from elsewhere, whether the east-coaster is white or Aboriginal!

Other words and phrases include: **Baryulgil Square Talk** or the **slang** (English used at Baryulgil, northern NSW), **B.C.** (before Cook), **black**, **bush school**, **concentration camp**, **Jambun English** (English of the Jambun people, northern Qld), **knockout** (a rugby football competition—NSW), **Kriol** (the creole language spoken widely in north Australia), and **pay the rent** (a catch phrase from south-east Australia recognising and asserting the original and continuing ownership of Australia by Aborigines, and the obligation owed to the original owners by those who now hold control), and many others. Some, such as 'knockout' have negligible lexical meaning difference from the usage in mainstream English, but an enormously heightened connotative load.

I highly recommend this book.

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*Wandjuk Marika: Life Story (as told to Jennifer Isaacs)*. By Wandjuk Marika, edited by Jennifer Isaacs. University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1994. Pp.176. Preface, notes, index, map, colour and black-and-white plates. \$34.95 pb.

Wandjuk Marika, who died in 1987, was an elder of the Rirratjingu *mala* ('clan') who, with Gumatj people, were centrally involved in the struggle over bauxite mining on the Gove Peninsula. Dividing his life between Yolngu (Aboriginal) and Balanda (White) worlds, in the former he was a religious leader of Rirratjingu people, while in the latter he was known as an art administrator and artist, didgeridoo player, actor, and enthusiastic traveller. The bridging of these two worlds, which included his marriage to Jenny Home, a Balanda woman, is a theme that pervades the work.

The book is a compilation of reminiscences in Wandjuk Marika's own words, preserving his own variety of English, recorded by Jennifer Isaacs during his frequent visits to Sydney over the course of three years. The chapters, each of which has a dominant theme, have been arranged roughly chronologically by Jennifer Isaacs. They begin with his place of birth, identity, and his group's ancestral traditions and country, through memories of life at Yirrkala mission, his work on the Aboriginal Arts Board and work in film. The book is given some unity by the pervasive theme of learning from one's parents and other relatives, and teaching one's children. Wandjuk expresses, too, the often stated Yolngu ideal of education in both Yolngu and Balanda ways. At the end of each chapter Jennifer Isaacs has added explanatory notes.

The book is most obviously of relevance to Wandjuk Marika's family, but it has a lot to offer to others. It is refreshing to see in print a Yolngu person's own account of their beliefs about healing, sorcery and second sight. The non-Aboriginal reader will be



struck by the passages on love magic, where Wandjuk explains how two women kept appearing to him and invaded his body during a journey by road, and how he was cured by a *marrngitj* healer. I was interested in Wandjuk's account of the making of a film by Werner Herzog in which fictional ancestral beings were related to Wandjuk's country, and his resulting outrage. In such a representation, as in some ethnographies, Aboriginal culture of a region is treated as generic rather than specific.

Jennifer Isaacs' notes are careful and informative, and she has taken trouble over details, such as the spelling of Yolngu words. However, some aspects of the text will be obscure to those unfamiliar with Yolngu culture. For example, the use of 'clan' names in the text is often unexplained. An irritating aspect of the editing is the setting out of chunks of text as if they were poems, which has the effect of lessening rather than enhancing readability. As the result of the manner of the book's compilation, there is quite a lot of repetition. Nevertheless, the book is attractively designed, with copious colour plates as well as black and white photographs, including several illustrations of bark paintings. The book is a fitting tribute to a man whom many remember with fondness.

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*Australian Race Relations 1788–1993*. By Andrew Markus, Allen & Unwin, 1994. ISBN 1 8637 3554 2, pp.226, \$24.95.

Andrew Markus has written a challenging overview of race relations which describes the position of British colonists and indigenous populations within Australia. He successfully broadens this perspective to include immigrants from south China and populations which migrated to Australia following the Second World War. His central thesis asserts that our European centric concept of race governs how we treat both indigenous people and migrants who have origins which are different from those of the dominant British culture.

*Australian Race Relations 1788–1993* provides a perspective of the legislative and social processes which operated to isolate and suppress Aborigines within British colonial society. The author discusses both the broad national context of race relations as well as offering specific examples which characterise the social values of the last two hundred years. The opening chapter discusses 'the idea of race in western culture'. Subsequent chapters treat 'dispossession', 'non-European immigrants', 'racial segregation', 'white Australia', 'assimilation' and 'the end of racial discrimination'. The reader is challenged by the author's association of government policy towards Aborigines with the treatment offered Chinese populations in their attempt to migrate and remain in Australia. Markus expresses some caution, but perhaps not enough, in the projection of specific case studies to the broader Australian community. It is maintained by the author that throughout Australia, British colonists did little to ensure the continuation of Aboriginal culture and in many instances they employed whatever means were at their disposal to eradicate the bearers of indigenous culture.

In the closing chapters of the book, shifts in the Australian post-war immigration policy are identified. During the period from 1965 to 1972, assimilation policies were

replaced by 'integration goals'. From 1973 to 1980, found overt racist policies unacceptable. Between 1980 to 1986, Markus identifies an attempt to slow down the rate of change and to reaffirm established Australian values as well as to modify immigration rules to favour those with European backgrounds. And, beginning in 1987 there was a strident attempt to address issues of access and equity as well as treat with Aboriginal matters within the framework of the Mabo High Court decision. Markus gives some thought to why, given that there has been so much change from a white Australia policy to a welcoming of a broader cross-section of foreign nationals, has the disadvantages faced by Aboriginals continued. Many immigrants to Australia encountered coldness and physical hostility. To some extent the success of immigrants was based upon their previous economic condition with generally speaking an improvement in the condition of the children of migrants. Yet, the situation as presented by Markus throughout the 1980s did not improve for indigenous people. Racial discrimination continued and poverty, poor health, early mortality and high levels of incarceration became a persistent feature of Aboriginal lower-class life. Change where it occurs is seen by the author as minor with racism continuing to be manifested by both mainstream society and its leadership.

On the whole the book is well conceived. The questions arises as to how much of the treatment of Aborigines was due to their being physically and culturally different from the British settlers and how much was due to their possessing a landscape which the invaders wanted. Having a belief system which is ethnocentric seems to fuel a righteous greed within humankind which denies those who are different from ourselves civil rights, ownership of property, status within the human community and ultimately the right to life itself. Perhaps the Australian experience had little to do with ethnicity, culture and race but everything to do with greed disguised in a racist paradigm which continues to be manifested today by our mean-spirited society.

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*Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines under the British Crown.* Edited by Ann McGrath. Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1995. Pp. xxxi + 415. \$29.95.

*Contested Ground* is a large, well illustrated book of over 400 pages, comprising the state histories commissioned by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, with additional material by the book's editor, Ann McGrath. A Preface by Paul Behrendt, Director of the University of New South Wales Aboriginal Research and Resource Centre, introduces to an Aboriginal audience the white historians who wrote much of the book. We are informed by McGrath that Aboriginal authors were approached to undertake work for the Commission's History Project but with one exception they declined: had they found time to accept, their writing would, in all likelihood, differ markedly from the present volume.

The book contains chapters on each of the mainland colonies/states/territories—Heather Goodall on New South Wales, Richard Broome on Victoria, Henry Reynolds and Dawn May on Queensland, Peggy Brock on South Australia, Sandy Toussaint on Western Australia, Peter Read on the Northern Territory—and two chapters on Tasma-

nia, one by the Pallawah writer Maykutenner (Vicki Matson-Green) and one written by McGrath, prepared when it seemed that Maykutenner's chapter would not be completed. Authors were selected on the basis of their expertise and past records of engagement in Aboriginal political issues and of working with Aboriginal communities and organisations. We are not informed as to the brief presented to individual authors, nor the words allocated, although it is noted that the chapters have been substantially rewritten for this publication. A common approach is apparent, following the themes introduced in McGrath prefatory 'national story'. Most chapters begin with a brief consideration of pre-contact society and estimates of population size and provide substantive discussion of the process of dispossession, Aboriginal place in the European economy, the law and its administration, and resistance to European rule.

As with all such collections, the chapters are of uneven quality. At one extreme, the longest by Heather Goodall presents the yield of years of intensive research and reflection, a concise statement of arguments incorporated in her more recently published *Invasion to Embassy*. At the other extreme are bland summaries of published works. Sandy Toussaint's Western Australia focuses largely on governmental inquiries, legislation, and examples of impact on Aboriginal lives. Maykutenner's chapter sits oddly in this collection—in large part direct condemnation of government policies, drawing heavily on family recollections, loosely edited with meaning at times left obscure. It is not readily apparent, for example, why a government definition of Aboriginal based on self-identification, descent and community recognition gives power to determine who is and who isn't an Aborigine to the dominant class'.

The aim of the book to present readily accessible state histories, detailing current understandings of government impact on Aboriginal lives, has been largely met. We now have within the one cover 'the first colony by colony, state by state history of white-Aboriginal relations'. In terms of its contribution to the historiography of the subject it is, however, a missed opportunity. Some of the authors seek to do more than present narratives. Broome engages in a well-considered discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of different historical approaches in his Victorian chapter. Brock is concerned to specify patterns in the contact experience and to identify similarities and differences between South Australia and other states. Had the identification of variables been a major aim of the research project, with opportunities for the writers to engage in discussion with each other—assuming that this did not take place—then the book would have made a major contribution to historical knowledge. McGrath observes that the book highlights the need for further comparative analysis—one wonders when there will be a better chance for a team of leading scholars to engage in such a project.

After twenty-five years of intensive research we now have much detailed knowledge, but inadequate understanding of variation. McGrath takes up a number of important themes in her introduction, not least her excellent discussion of the administration of the law, but fails to justify the approach of the book. What is to be gained from a general state by state approach, rather than a study of regions? It cannot be assumed that the one law translated into uniform administrative practice within state borders. How significant, for example, was the difference between the impact of government on the lives of Aboriginal people in different regions of Queensland at various points in its history? What commonality is there in the experiences of Aboriginal peoples in the cattle country of various states? Given the very small post-contact indigenous populations of

Victoria and Tasmania, why allocate as much space to these states as to Western Australia and Queensland. Would it not make more sense to devote, for example, double the space to Western Australia, with separate chapters on the south-west and the north?

The concluding chapter fails to address these important issues. Rather than drawing together the major findings of the contributors, McGrath presents a revised English translation of her historiographical review first published in the French language journal *Le Mouvement Social*, which she concedes could well be read as an introduction. This final chapter should have been better directed to the needs of the present publication.

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*Justice All Their Own: The Caledon Bay and Woodah Island Killings 1932–1933.* By Ted Egan. Melbourne University Press 1996. 244 pp. ISBN 0 522 84693 9. \$44.95.

In the course of one year in the early 1930s a few Yolgnu men killed eight foreigners whose presence had become unwelcome in their country. The first killings occurred on 17 September 1932 when five Japanese fisherman working the trepang beds at Caledon Bay on the north-east coast of Arnhem Land were speared to death. Japanese trepangers had been a regular and increasingly unwelcome presence on these coasts since the late 19C. In this case the behaviour of the fishermen had seriously affronted the fairly minimal social expectations of their hosts. The Yolgnu retaliated by deputing three young men to kill them. This was not the first time that Japanese fishermen had been killed in Arnhem Land. On this occasion however the actions of the Yolgnu were uniquely susceptible to intervention by the official legal system. One of the Japanese, Kinjo, had fled from the scene and lived to provide evidence of the deaths of his companions. By happenstance an Englishman named Fred Gray had also been present at Caledon Bay when the Japanese were killed. Gray only witnessed the aftermath but through his friendship with the local tribespeople was privy to all the circumstances. The Darwin authorities were presented with *prima facie* cases of murder when the accounts of Kinjo and Gray became publicly known.

About six months later other Yolgnu men killed two transient white men on a boat near Woodah Island about 75 km south-west of Caledon Bay. News of these killings did not however reach Darwin until late in 1933. The Caledon Bay killings had by then already prompted official decisive action. The fact that the criminal law appeared to have been broken was one causative factor. The central government had however also been drawn in. It could not be seen to allow the murderers of five citizens of an allied power go unpunished. The killings had also acted to inflame the antipathy towards tribal Aboriginals which was endemic in the local white community. Added to these influences was the frontier zeal of the Northern Territory Mounted Police. It was this official response which led to the last of the eight killings. In late July 1933 an armed party of Mounted Police entered Arnhem Land near Blue Mud Bay. A few days later Dhakiyara Wirrpanda speared and killed Constable Albert Stewart McColl who was detaining one of his wives, Djaparri, and three other Yolgnu women.

The response of officialdom in the Northern Territory in the 1920s and 1930s to the killing of whites by Aboriginal assailants was often brutal. In 1928 for instance

Mounted Police had massacred at least 31 Aboriginal people at Coniston north-west of Alice Springs in reprisal for the murder of one white man.<sup>1</sup> In this context the reaction of the authorities in Darwin to the Arnhem Land killings was not unusual. It was however especially determined because of their desire to punish the Yolgnu for the death of McColl who was officially at least one of their own. The Administrator and the Mounted Police made preparations to undertake a punitive expedition against the Yolgnu. Their plans were vocally supported by the local white and Asian community in Darwin and elsewhere in the north. The Administrator asked Canberra to send 20 rifles, 12 revolvers, 4 shotguns, 4,300 rounds of ammunition, bandoliers and field glasses. Canberra agreed while at the same time intervening to restrain the forces of retribution. The Coniston massacre and like events in the 1920s had already attracted international criticism. These critics were now joined by Australian religious and humanitarian leaders who protested to the Prime Minister, Joe Lyons, about the punitive intentions of the Northern Territory authorities. The Prime Minister and several senior public servants were concerned to ensure those responsible for the Arnhem Land killers were apprehended and treated humanely and according to law. In other words, that another round of 'official' reprisal killings did not take place. They began to seek a practicable and peaceful alternative to the re-entry of armed police into the Yolgnu country. Canberra's efforts proceeded in the face of open local hostility, scepticism and disgust. In any event in late 1933 the Prime Minister commissioned two Anglican missionaries to make contact with the Yolgnu people at Caledon Bay and investigate the killings. The missionaries did so, and were successful. In early 1934, with the assistance of Gray, a promise of safe conduct and the aid of the local Yolgnu leaders, they gained the agreement of the five killers, Dhakiyara, Mirera, Mau Mununggurr, Natjelma and Narkaya, to travel to Darwin to be reconciled with white authority.

When the five Yolgnu men arrived in Darwin Harbour on 8 April 1934 they quickly learned the official criminal legal system had no place for 'reconciliation'. They were arrested and imprisoned. A few days later all five were charged with murder. In August Mau Mununggurr, Natjelma, Narkaya were tried and convicted of the murder of Tanaka who was one of the dead fishermen. Dhakiyara and Mirera were then tried for the murder of an unknown white man believed to be Fagan one of the white transients. Both men were acquitted when the Crown failed to prove the indictment. Dhakiyara was kept in custody to face trial for the murder of Constable McColl. After a controversial and widely-publicised trial in the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory he was convicted of murder and sentenced to death. Three months later the High Court of Australia quashed the conviction. The High Court ordered that Dhakiyara be discharged as it had become impossible for him to obtain a fair trial at a new hearing.<sup>2</sup> The Canberra officials immediately asked the Darwin authorities to release Dhakiyara and to ensure that he was returned to his own country. Dhakiyara was released from Fannie Bay gaol the following day and disappeared forever. He is believed to have been murdered by members of the Mounted Police.

These are the events which Ted Egan documents in his book. He records the stories and rôles of all the major actors in great detail. Although inevitably it is the story of

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1. A 1929 official inquiry accepted that as many as 100 people were killed by the police.

2. *Tuckiar v. The King* (1934-35) 52 CLR 335 at 355.

the killing of McColl and the trial of Dhakiyara which is the centrepiece. The official versions of the events are presented through extracts from official correspondence, contemporaneous notes of the trials and the evidence of the key witnesses. The book also contains unofficial documentary records of the events including personal letters and extracts from contemporary newspapers and later autobiographies. Importantly it also contains records of the oral history of the Caledon Bay and Woodah Island killings. The oral history of the killings recorded in the book includes Yolgnu accounts, recollections and lore which Egan has collected in many interviews conducted since the 1950s. This history from 'the other side of the hill' allows the reader to see the killings in a context which is not revealed in either the official records or typical 'white' accounts and recollections. The noble exception to the latter is the oral account of his knowledge of the events provided by Fred Gray who was gifted to straddle the two different cultures. At the time this was for Gray a mixed blessing. It gave him however unique first-hand perspectives which Egan has used to enrich the value of the material he presents.

Egan successfully portrays the complex chain of events which make up the story of the 1932–33 Arnhem Land killings. It is as he himself describes it 'a great crime story'. This somewhat self-deprecating throw away line in the preface is apparently made to bolster the book's popular appeal. So is the movie-like promo on the jacket front: '[w]hen cultures clash, those with greater power seek to impose their values upon people held to be weaker or inferior'. If these devices succeed in increasing sales and readership of the book well and good. They run the risk however of diminishing its wider significance. This is not to say that Egan does not relate a story about 'murder', innocent accused, dishonest police, a biased judge and a small-town jury. He clearly does, and his re-investigation of the killings also often resembles the techniques of the Palermo investigating magistrates.<sup>1</sup> Nor is it to downplay its story of injustices wrought upon subjugated Aborigines by the processes of the criminal law and its impact on their lives and culture. Racial justice within the criminal law has happened again and again many times since, and continues to do so seemingly without end.<sup>2</sup> So that even if the book merely told a 'crime' story it is significant story worth both telling and reading. On this basis alone Egan provides another welcome addition to the growing body of non-anglo-centric scholarship in Aboriginal history.

The wider significance of the book derives from its historiography. The inclusion of 'great slabs of letters, reports, judgments and evidence' in the book has an important effect. It certainly doesn't make the book easier to read, or to follow the activities of the principal actors. The organisation of his material clearly initially troubled Egan. He comes close at one point to apologising to the reader whom he feared may find the documentary record tedious.<sup>3</sup> Fortunately he had the courage of his convictions, and the good advice of his supervisors. The outcome of his methodology is twofold. It enables

1. Stille, A., *Excellent Cadavers: The Mafia and the Death of the First Italian Republic*, (London, Vintage 1996).

2. Eggleston, E., *Fear, Favour or Affection: Aborigines and the Criminal Law in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia*, (Canberra, ANU Press, 1976); Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, *National Report*, Vols 1–5, (Canberra, AGPS, 1991); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commission, *Indigenous Deaths in Custody*, (Canberra, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, 1996).

3. p. 200.

Egan to enliven the story of the Arnhem Land killings. So that the personalities, qualities and complexity of the major official actors are revealed. This is particularly true of the trial judge Mr Justice Wells. The documents damn Wells in his misconduct of the trial of Dhakiyara and related misbehaviour. Yet they also show him to have not been an evil man, and ultimately himself a pawn in the wider political scene which emerged. There are inevitably no contemporary Yolgnu documents recording the events. Egan however makes a similar use of their oral testimony and testament. He demonstrates the presence of comparable social and political complexity amongst the Yolgnu actors and their families. In other words, the organisation of the book magnifies its significance by its display of the social reality of the killings and the trials. This is a hallmark of good social history and Egan's book has already been recognised in that domain. In 1989 it shared the History Award at the University of Adelaide.

The second outcome of his methodology was probably unintended. The book contains a significant 'legal' sub text beyond its description of colonial criminal 'justice'. The High Court appeal in *Tuckiar v. The King* did not subsequently become compulsory reading for all first-year law students. When students read *Tuckiar* it is generally in the context of studying the law of evidence, professional privilege and ethics. There are many reasons for this neglect. Amongst them is that the law report contains little background information about the events and processes which preceded the appeal. This was to be expected. It is axiomatic in modern western law that its processes are presented in an asocial and apolitical guise. Modern law in Australia in the 1930s was in full bloom, and the members of the High Court were exemplars of the capacity to 'legalise' the resolution of justiciable social conflicts. The way in which Egan documents his story now reveals much more of the 'legal' reality surrounding the Arnhem Land killings. In doing so he presents a rare insight into the actuality of the legal domain in Australian society in the 1930s.

These insights go to basic aspects of the system, law and authority which were present in the legal domain. The paradigms of official modern law still pretend that it not only monopolises legality, but that it is socially progressive, omnipresent and omniscient. These are powerful myths, and still have many and powerful adherents in this age of post or new modernity. In the 1930s these legal ideals corresponded with the idea of Australian society as a modern progressive western mono-culture.<sup>1</sup> 1932–33 was after all when Bradman's performance in the 'body line' Test Match series saw him join Phar Lap as a popular social icon.<sup>2</sup> And northern Australia and its indigenous peoples were seen as targets of progress to be overcome and on which the benefits of modern society were to be bestowed.<sup>3</sup> Egan reveals some of the reality of the legal system, law and authority which were present in this modern society.

At a general level it reinforces what contemporary legal historians have begun to tell us about the legal system.<sup>4</sup> It did not simply replicate the metropolitan experience.

1. This was an influential ideal. As late as 1970 Australian academics could still confidently pronounce that Australia in the 1930s as 'culturally and ethnically homogenous': see Aitken, D., Kahan, M. & Barnes, S, 'What Happened to the Depression Generation?' in Cooksey, R., (ed.), *The Great Depression in Australia*, (Canberra, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History 1970) 174 at 179.

2. Williams, M., *Australia in the 1930s*, (Sydney, Trocadero Publishing, 1985) at 53–57.

Specifically Egan's documentation shows that in the 1930s there was a distinctive colonial experience of law in the Northern Territory. Its legal system was not merely geographically distant from its modern southern core. It was distinctively different system and saw the judiciary, police and law 'bound together for sustaining the authority of the colonial state'.<sup>1</sup> The administration of the Northern Territory legal system was also beset by management problems typical of colonial societies.<sup>2</sup> It was not merely by chance that an incompetent judge presided at Dhakiyara's trial, or the Mounted Police were predisposed to violent responses towards tribal Aboriginals. Colonial regimes had great difficulty in attracting appropriately skilled public administrators and police.<sup>3</sup> In frontier colonies like the Northern Territory police maladministration of the law was encouraged by their functions and para-military culture.<sup>4</sup> What all this means is the reality of the Australian legal system in the 1930s was more complex than we, at least those of use who are lawyers, were taught to believe.

So was the law. Egan's book highlights two powerful myths about modern law in Australia when these events occurred. The first is the myth of the social omnipresence of official law. The documentary record shows that the 'rule of law' in the 1930s had a fairly shaky grasp of parts of life and government in the Northern Territory. This was tellingly described by Mr Justice Starke who said in the High Court appeal, referring to the detention of Djaparri and the other Yolgnu women, that it 'was, no doubt, necessary for the police to capture and handcuff the lubras if they were to achieve the object of their expedition, but the rules of English law cannot be cited in support of their action'.<sup>5</sup> There was in other words some aspects of Australian society which were 'without the law'. The second myth is law is exclusively a product of the courts and Parliament. The intervention of the Federal executive government and its officials in the proceedings reveals the significance of 'administrative law' properly so-called in the government of the modern state. Official law in this context was only one of a range of public policy factors to be considered in achieving a result which suited the national interest. Indeed, Egan suggests Canberra 'ran dead' in the Commonwealth response to the High Court appeal. The official documents also reveal some of the unresolved paradoxes of modern law. The principal instance in the case of the official law was its treatment of Dhakiyara. On the one hand its initial failure to prevent the abuse of his human, civil and proce-

3. For example see Langford Smith, K., *Sky Pilot in Arnhem Land*, (Sydney, Angus and Robertson Limited, 1935); Idriess, I. L., *Nemarluk: King of the Wilds*, (Sydney, Angus and Robertson Limited, 1941); Idriess, I. L., *Man Tracks: With The Mounted Police in the Australian Wilds*, (Sydney, Angus and Robertson Limited, 1946); Hatfield, W., *Australia Through The Windscreen*, (Sydney, Angus and Robertson Limited, 1939); Idriess, I. L., *The Cattle King*, (Sydney, Angus and Robertson Limited, 1936).

4. Neal, D., *The Rule of Law in a Penal Colony: Law and Power in Early New South Wales*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991).

1. Anderson, D. M., 'Policing, prosecution and the law in colonial Kenya, c. 1905-1939' in Anderson, D. M. & Killingray, D., (eds.), *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority and Control*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1991) 183 at 198.

2. *Policing the Empire* at 5-8.

3. Ibid.

4. See for instance Killingray, D., 'Guarding the extended frontier: policing the Gold Coast, 1865-1913' in *Policing the Empire* at 106.

5. *Tuckiar v. The King* at 352.



dural rights was appalling. Yet ultimately it was the official law through the agency of the High Court which protected and freed him. The rôle of the judges of the High Court has its own internal contradictions. Mr Justice Starke, perhaps the most reactionary of the judges, was the most forthright in condemning the behaviour of trial judge and Dhakiyara's defence counsel.<sup>1</sup> Paradox is also evident in the 'administrative law' response. It generally assumed a benign and humane form which assisted Dhakiyara. But it was unable, unwilling or powerless to adequately protect him on his release from gaol and return to Arnhem Land.

The book also contains insights into a basic conflict between modern law and Aboriginal society. These insights are probably most marked for those like me who are newcomers to this field. In reading the record of the killings one is help struck by the apparent absence of criminal culpability on the part of those accused of murder. This is particularly so in the killings of the Japanese and McColl. In contrast to the presence of criminal intent the record portrays the killers as acting to defend or protect their society, its members or culture. In neither case did the Yolgnu perceive the killings as socially delinquent or 'criminal'. This aspect of the killing of McColl for example was acknowledged by Mr Justice Starke. His admonition of the trial judge included the criticism that Wells had not suggested:

for the consideration of the jury the possible effect upon uncivilised aboriginals of a police party capturing their lubras, and apparently endeavouring to capture the aboriginals as well...To uncivilised aboriginals, however, and particularly to the prisoner, the conduct of the police party may well have appeared as an attack upon the lubras and themselves, and provoked or led to the attack upon the police in their own defence.<sup>2</sup>

When Starke made these comments he was canvassing the possibility of a legal defence to the murder charge. His choice of words show his ignorance of the world in which Dhakiyara and the Yolgnu women lived. This world was, as Donald Thomson witnessed, and recorded in his remarkable photographs, a few years, an intact, cohesive and vibrant tribal society with its own law and legal system.<sup>3</sup> This was the world in which reality of Dhakiyara was constructed. It was the same reality which governed the actions of Mau Mununggurr, Natjelma, Narkaya when they killed the Japanese. It was not merely that the 1930s Yolgnu misunderstood 'the methods of administration and justice of the white man as it is at present applied to his affairs'.<sup>4</sup> It was that they belonged to a different and sovereign polity. From this political perspective the Yolgnu saw no relationship 'between the operation of their own legal code and that of the white man ...'<sup>5</sup> It is this political conflict over legitimacy which is still central to the relationship between Aboriginal societies and official law and government. Egan's book adds

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1. Ibid at 351-55.

2. Ibid at 355.

3. Thomson, D., *Donald Thomson in Arnhem Land*, (South Yarra, Currey O'Neill, 1983); Thomson, D., *Children of the Dreamtime: Traditional Family Life in Northern Australia*, (Ringwood, Viking O'Neil, 1983). See also Commonwealth of Australia, *Report on Expedition to Arnhem Land, 1936-37*, Dr Donald Thomson, (Canberra, Commonwealth Government Printer, 1939) at 6 & 11.

4. *Report on Expedition to Arnhem Land, 1936-37* at 11.

5. Ibid.

to our understanding of the social reality of this conflict between incompatible bases of legal authority.

This is a long review but this is an important book. Not only does it help us to understand the Aboriginal experience of modern law. It also helps us to understand the difficulty of ensuring justice in a complex modern legal system. Egan shows us again how legal justice and social justice are inseparable twins. This is a lesson which is relevant for governments today in their responsibility to make the law more 'accessible', just and fair for all citizens, black and white alike.

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*Jandamarra and the Bunuba Resistance*. By H. Pedersen and B. Woorunmurra, 1995. Broome, WA: Magabala Books. Pp. xiii +216.

As many readers of this journal will know, Jandamarra was an Aboriginal man from the central Kimberley Ranges of WA, who led one of longest and most effective resistance campaigns against European settlers anywhere in Australia. He was born just before they first arrived in his Bunuba homeland in the 1880s and as a boy became their protégé and apprentice, developing outstanding skills as a rider, stockman and marksman—the best in district at over 100 yards according to one his European mentors. Although never formally deputised, he worked with the police, minding their horses and helping them to round up Aborigines accused of killing stock. In October 1894, having assisted in the arrest of seventeen of his own countrymen, he turned on the police, murdered his boss, Constable William Richardson, released the prisoners, captured a sizeable cache of firearms and ammunition and fled to the nearby ranges, from where he is said to have planned to mount a last-ditch campaign to oust all European settlers from the area.

This finally provided the settlers with the political leverage they needed to gain a free hand in dealing with natives. Indiscriminate reprisals against the Aboriginal population of the region had already been carried out several times before, resulting in scores of deaths for every one suffered by the colonists. But the hand of the police in such matters had always been constrained to some extent by the watchful eye of the colonial administration in Perth, the southern press, and the home office in London, which was still resisting the Western Australian colony's bid for independence in large part because of lack of confidence in the colony's ability to deal in an acceptable manner with its indigenous inhabitants. But now that there was the prospect of an armed insurrection led by one of them who was skilled in the ways of the white man, permission was at last granted by the police commissioner in Perth for the west Kimberley force under sub-inspector O.E. Drewry to swear in special constables and otherwise 'take such steps as you deem necessary to deal with the natives' (124). Following unsuccessful attempts to flush out Jandamarra's band from their stronghold in the Leopold ranges, the newly-deputised police parties swept up and down either side of the Fitzroy River Valley slaughtering hundreds of the Aboriginal people not yet on stations, many of them women and children, and most of them Nyikina, Warrwa, Unggumi, Mangala and Guniyandi people who would have had nothing to do with the insurrec-

tion. All in all it was 'the most sustained slaughter of Aboriginal people in Western Australia's history' (139).

For the next two and a half years, Jandamarra and his band managed to hide from police in the ranges and caves they knew so well. Perhaps fearful of further reprisals, they killed very few Europeans, but engaged in acts which dramatised their ability to do so at any time, for example by sneaking undetected into police encampments and stealing more firearms even as the police thought they had Jandamarra trapped in a cave, which he had left through another entrance unknown to them.

In all the Aboriginal accounts I have heard of this story, including Woorunmurra's, Jandamarra, more commonly known as Pigeon, is said to have been invulnerable to the Europeans' bullets because he was a magician, who knew how to concentrate his life force into his thumb, toe, or even move it out of his body altogether and hide it in a nearby pool of water (p. 153, cf. Muecke et al. 1985; Rumsey 1994). In this view, the only way Jandamarra could be killed was by another, equally powerful Aboriginal magician who knew his tricks. In all accounts, including the European ones, it was indeed another Aboriginal man that finally succeeded in hunting Jandamarra down: a police tracker from the Pilbara district, called Micki, or, in Banjo Woorunmurra's account 'Mingo Mick', who in April of 1897 faced Jandamarra down outside his hide-out at Tunnel Creek.

Although he is named as co-author, the role of Banjo Woorunmurra in this book seems to me an ambiguous one. The book is in the main a revision of Pedersen's 1980 Murdoch University BA honours thesis, the writing of which was stimulated by a conversation Pedersen had with Woorunmurra on a visit to Fitzroy Crossing in 1977 (p. xii). On one of Pedersen's subsequent trips to Fitzroy Crossing in 1985, Woorunmurra 'suggested that [Pedersen] write a book on Jandamarra based on his and other Bunuba people's oral histories, fused with police, newspaper and other written historical sources' (p. xii).

But though an exciting prospect, such a fusion 'proved much more difficult than [Pedersen had] imagined, for after further study of the written sources and several weeks discussion with Bunuba ones, Pedersen

realised that a white historian could not reflect in writing the essence of the Bunuba stories...

The integration of these stories into a western historical narrative is highly problematic. Much of the information is secret and cannot be written for general public consumption. Also Aboriginal perceptions of the past and explanations about why certain events occurred do not sit easily within western historical chronology and its understandings of cause and effect.

This book therefore does not pretend to be written from an Aboriginal perspective. That task awaits the creativity and insight of Aboriginal writers (p. xiii).

So in what sense is Woorunmurra a co-author of the book? His authorial voice is confined to the first six pages, which reproduce one of his previously published accounts of the Jandamarra story from an article in this journal (Muecke, Rumsey and Wirrunmarra 1985). Elsewhere his and other Aboriginal oral accounts are relied upon mainly for their historical value, for example to fill gaps in the official record of how many Aboriginal people were killed on reprisal raids (p. 136, cf. Muecke, Rumsey and Wirrunmarra 1985, p. 92).

Might another, more challenging form of collaboration have been possible? Obviously Pedersen could not write 'from an Aboriginal perspective' any more than Woorunmurra could be expected to conform to the conventions of 'western historical narrative'. But rather than accepting either of these alternatives as given, one could explore what goes on in the space between the two. Surely such a space has been opened up in this case by Pedersen's extensive collaboration with Bunuba people over the past twenty one years (not only on this book, but on plans for a feature film on Jandamarra, as alluded to on the back cover). We hear much in this book about how Pedersen the historian's understanding of the Jandamarra story has been transformed by his engagement with Woorunmurra and other Aboriginal people. But surely this was not a one-way process. What do Woorunmurra and other Bunuba people make, for example, of the figure of Ellemarra, who features prominently in the historical record as Jandamarra's Aboriginal mentor and partner in crime. What do they make of historical accounts of coordinated action by a band of fighters under Jandamarra's leadership, as opposed to the emphasis on Jandamarra as a solitary figure in all the Aboriginal oral accounts, including that of Woorunmurra, who said in 1985 that Jandamarra 'had himself, nobody else...he done his own battle...he didn't want to bring anybody in' (Muecke, Rumsey and Wirrunmarra 1985, p. 94).

And what are we to make of the fact that, notwithstanding the historical positioning of Jandamarra as a resistance fighter in this book, Woorunmurra himself consistently refers to him as an 'outlaw' (p. 1; cf. Muecke, Wirrunmarra and Rumsey 1985, pp. 89, 92, 95)? As I understand him, Woorunmurra is here using the word 'outlaw' in a way that derives neither from the dominant discourse of 'law and order' nor from any purely Aboriginal one, but instead draws upon both to try to account for what made Jandamarra the unique figure that he was.

When Woorunmurra says of Jandamarra that 'they couldn't kill him 'cause he was a outlaw' (ibid. 89), the transgressions he alludes to are not so much the ones against the European law as against the Aboriginal. Pedersen notes that Jandamarra's 'sexual promiscuity became legendary...[His] sexual activities broke Bunuba law as many of his girlfriends had kinship ties, or skin names, not right for him' (p. 77). What he does not note is that these transgressions were actually what Woorunmurra sees as the source of Jandamarra's magical powers: when asked in 1985 how Jandamarra knew how to put his life into his thumb, Wirrunmarra answered that it was by chasing after (i.e., having sex with) his 'father's sister', 'sister' and 'wife's mother':

SO the life was come OON and OON and OON  
so—that way he was sort of a WIT doctor  
but he was a OUTLAW  
because he had his life in his thumb  
(Wirrunmarra in Muecke, Rumsey and Wirrunmarra 1985, p. 91–92).

he wasn't a friend of anybody now  
he was on his own  
he was a outlaw  
(loc. cit., p. 89)

The complex relationship that Woorunmurra sets up here between Jandamarra's positions vis à vis the Aboriginal law and the European one, the notion of transgression as isolating but potentially empowering, and the mediating power of hybrid notions such

as Woorunmurra's wonderful invention 'wit doctor', are all topics of a sort that Pedersen eschews here in favour of a more conventional historiography. But one cannot fault him for the book he didn't write. As a work of redressive history this book is superbly well done. Pedersen writes with a narrative sweep that is unsurpassed among historians of the Australian frontier. Though his plumbing of the archival sources is extremely thorough he works them effortlessly into what can only be described as a 'rattling good yarn'—and one that urgently needs to be told to all Australians. It is the first book I have ever reviewed for a scholarly journal that I could read aloud to my children and have it hold their interest as well as it did mine. Kind of makes you jealous.

### Reference

Muecke, S., Rumsey, A., and Wirrunmarra, B. 1985. 'Pigeon the outlaw: History as texts'. *Aboriginal History*, 9:81–100.

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*Un Long Chemin Semé d'Objets Culturels: Le cycle initiatique aranda*. By Marika Moisseeff. 280 pp., illus. maps, bibliogr. Paris: Éditions de L'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1995. 140 ff.

Pity contemporary anthropologists writing on the secret dimensions of Australian Aboriginal ritual. Whereas their forerunners could write about the most taboo components of sacred object, design, and narrative with little restraint or restriction, their ethnographic heirs, in particular those writing in English, are subject to all manner of ethical scrutiny, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

The French, however—or rather the French who write up their research in their native language—still retain a measure of that pre-postmodern latitude for which they are famous, and as such can mix a heightened sensibility with less oblique references to materials now deemed 'off-limits.'

Marika Moisseeff is one such example of a French anthropologist who is able to resurrect sensitive turn-of-century source material—in particular the work of Baldwin Spencer and Francis Gillen—and to update—it with a psychoanalytic sensibility.

The product of this effort—first presented as a Master's Thesis at the University of Nanterre Paris X—now comes to us in book form, as *Un Long Chemin Semé d'Objets Culturels: Le cycle initiatique aranda*, which can be rendered as *A Long Path Scattered with Ritual Objects: The Aranda initiation cycle*.

If the book is successful it is because Moisseeff brings to it the training of both anthropologist and psychoanalyst, a training that allows her to give a new spin to an early masterpiece of Central Desert Aboriginal ethnography. In her rereading of Spencer and Gillen's 1927 work *The Arunta*, Moisseeff offers insight into the 'dynamic' (p. 17) nature of Aboriginal ritual, a nature often underappreciated by a small company of her fellow French seeking to generate atemporal theories out of the ceremonial life of the desert.

Moisseeff starts off her tripartite reading of initiation with a broad overview of the Dreaming ('The Geography of Aranda Dreaming'); continues with a stimulating analy-

sis of some of the Central Desert's most secret ritual paraphernalia, the *churinga*, ('The Anatomy of Aranda Dreaming'); and ends with a kind of psycho-social overview of ceremonial *mise en scène*—the term is Moisseeff's—of ritual ('The Staging of Aranda Dreaming').

Part One complicates the broad Spencerian and Gillenian assessment of the Dreaming (*alchera*), of the Aranda (known today as the Arrernte), that touchstone providing a spiritual, topographical, and ritual reference point for an Aboriginal cosmology saturated with marvelous beings, spirit-children, and other mythical creatures made manifest in rituals sites and ritual objects, and in the ceremonies that celebrate them. The first section of Moisseeff's book does this in various ways: by offering up a novel and provocative spatial assessment of the complexities of Eternity and related notions of permanence and change; and by scrutinizing the individualized dimensions of kin and gender-based ritual expression.

Moisseeff argues that Eternity for the Arrernte should not be seen as statically anchored in the past; it is, rather, 'the actualization of movement, a continuous motion in space and not the periodical reiteration of the past'. (p. 26). As such, innovation is part and parcel of the permanence of Arrernte religious practice, 'an invisibility generating visible forms' that exists independent of fixed notes of historical temporality (p. 41). Moisseeff further enriches this analysis by distinguishing two classifiable manifestations of that 'asubstantial movement' in the cosmological expression of identity: the 'différentiateur' (or 'differentiating') and 'associeateur' (or 'the associating'). In the former, the differentiating rubric of identity formation, Moisseeff includes those processes, all of which ultimately find expression in ceremonial activity, that relate to matters of gender and kinship. In the latter, associating category, Moisseeff places a variety of ritual cycles that touch on such matters of fertility and inter-tribal connectedness. (p. 50). But Moisseeff further complicates this bifurcation, by establishing the associative dimension of the differentiating rituals. It is in the crossvalent force of these two forms of dynamism that the identity and cosmology coherence of the Arrernte are established and maintained.

After wending through such spatial and social complexities, Moisseeff turns to one of the most potent and sacred physical manifestations of Arrernte cosmology, namely the *churinga*, those ceremonial objects linked to matters of fertility. (p. 83). This extended material analysis initiates, as it were, Part Two, and with it Moisseeff's 'Anatomy of Aranda Dreaming.' Once again, Moisseeff relies on oppositional vocabulary to assist her in her post-structuralist analysis of Arrernte myth, a bifurcation directly linked to the cosmological categories established in the opening chapters. The 'differentiating' *churinga* tend to be those objects that are overseen by individuals and which are shaped and engraved. The 'associating' objects, which Moisseeff also identifies as 'totemic', express a collective potency and are unadorned. Other distinction are noted. Whereas the collective *churinga* remain at the totemic sites to be deployed for ritual purposes, the personal *churinga* move through the landscape with their owners.

The distinction she establishes in Part One is further played out in her analysis of material culture, both in the execution of ritual and in the transmission of those objects required to sustain them. Thus, the *churinga* tend to possess either 'collective' or individual' potency while they are used, and later serve a similar dichotomous function when passed from one generation to the next, or from one group to another. And while

Moisseeff focuses most of her analysis on the wood and stone ritual objects, she provides similar assessments with regards to hairstrings. She concludes that the transmission of these objects is central to the physical and symbol transformation of Arrernte identity, both in individual terms and in a broader tribal sense.

In the third and final section, titled 'The Staging of the Aranda Dreaming', Moisseeff recapitulates her analyses in Parts One and Two by applying her vocabularies to a long and complex initiation ritual called *ingkura*. *Inkura*—which Moisseeff renders as *empreinte du feu* (literally 'the mark of fire') and which Spencer and Gillen labelled 'fire ordeals'—constitutes the cycle of ritual activities in which an initiated boy moves into the domain of initiated manhood. The series of ceremonies provides Moisseeff with further opportunity to advance her plurally cloven worldview of Aboriginal ideology, pairing up as she does the distinctions of the male and the female, the physical and the spiritual, initiated and novitiate, socio-centric and ego-centric. She concludes, as others have before her, that ritual performance enhances the ethnographers understanding of kinship and subsection responsibility. Indeed, she sees ritual acts as nothing short of actualizing moments in the dynamic of Aboriginal interconnectedness.

There is a risk, of course, in this kind of either/or differentiation when the templates and historical record Spencer and Gillen provided are tested against the realities of Central Desert ritual as they are now undertaken. Many of the so-called 'male' ceremonies scrutinized by Spencer and Gillen—including the *Inkura*—must be seen as environments of cross-gender negotiation, despite the single-sex nature of their actual execution. Women figure prominently in the arrangement of the events, and the actions of their males relatives carry direct social and ritual rewards for them *as* women, and as members of a kin group. Moisseeff is right to note that women participated to make boys into men, but that very same involvement can also make women themselves ritually prominent. As such, the social setting of post-sedentary Central Desert Aboriginal life now tends to deploy ritual as a form of collective and individual negotiation inexorably linked to all manner of non-ceremonial exchange, and it is a negotiation implicating both women and men.

Moisseeff is no doubt aware of this fact. But it is a fact that must reside beyond the scope of her critique, since she restricts herself to a rereading of classic (and often jumbled) British text relying on fieldwork that began more than one hundred years ago. Yet if the data have changed that does not diminish the power of the vocabulary Moisseeff generates to reinterpret Aboriginal cosmology. Spencer and Gillen offered Moisseeff a template by which to assess Aboriginal culture. Moisseeff, in turn, offers a template for others to do the same in more current and less distant settings of Aboriginal life.

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*Kunwinjku Spirit: Creation Stories from Western Arnhem Land.* By Nawakadj Nganjmirra, edited by Neil McLeod. Miegunyah Press, Melbourne. Map, drawings, paintings, photographs, glossary.

This is a beautifully produced book of drawings and paintings by the late Nawakadj Nganjmirra, a Kunwinjku artist of western Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory,

together with some works by other members of his family—Ralph Nganjmirra, Peterson Nganjmirra, and Thompson Yulidjiri.

The paintings and drawings are set out under mythological traditions together with the basic stories in Kunwinjku and with English translations. They include major and minor 'dreamings' such as the creator figure Warramurrungundji and the dangerous being Luma Luma, myths associated with the Ubarr ceremony, stories about localised dreaming places and so on. These are interposed with very beautiful photographs of the associated landscape by Neil McLeod. The paintings reproduced include early examples of the artist's work on bark. An interesting feature of Nawakadj's art are the drawings in crayon—black on white paper, and coloured crayons on black paper in which the artist deploys a sinuous line, and infills solid masses with parallel lines. Here the artist introduces blue pigment together with equivalents of white clay, red and yellow ochres and black pigment. Works in the more recently developed medium of painting on paper, simulate the textures and style of rock art, while other use a different range of colours such as yellow on a blue-black ground.

While it does not inform the reader about the place of art in Kunwinjku life—for this one must turn to Luke Taylor's *Seeing the Inside*—the result is a rich corpus of Kunwinjku stories, paintings and drawings from the point of view of members of this clan. The book contains a useful glossary, however the dates and provenance of the works are not supplied.

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*Warrigal's Way*. By Warrigal Anderson. University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia. 1996. Pp. 218. ISBN 0 7022 2909 1

This book is a great read, as Mudrooroo says on the jacket. Anyone who loved Hugh Lunn's *Over the top with Jim* will, like me, be unable put it down. Why? Because it's the story of a man who sees the best in most people, the funny side of every incident, and who writes very vividly and can make the smallest incident come alive. It is also a gripping morality story about how a young boy grew up and learned to read and write, escaping institutionalisation by luck and his own strength of character, as well as with the help of ordinary people, black and white.

The boy never attended school, because his mother was frightened that he would be taken away from her, as had befallen his older brother and sister. When he was ten he was forced to leave her, and accidentally caught a train going north instead of to Swan Hill. Fortunately he was lucky enough to find a droving team who took him on, taught him to work, and took him around Queensland and the Barkly Tablelands. The book is dedicated to the droving team, and especially to Ted Hanson, the team member who taught the boy to read and write, and hammered home to him the importance of education. While his travels were shadowed by the knowledge that there was a warrant out for his arrest, he learned and earned a good deal—so much so that the story sounds like a fantasy—if only every homeless boy could acquire such a good education from such selfless people!



There are a lot of interesting descriptions of work on droving teams in meat works, and seasonal farm work, as well as of the social life of the itinerant workers, Aboriginal, Maori, and white, who did the work in the '60s and '70s. There's also a description of construction work at Warrabri, but lacking in detail about Aboriginal life there. It left me wanting more information—was there really someone doing bark painting there?

Anderson writes in a colloquial style with plenty of rhyming slang, spoken language syntax, and splendid exaggeration. It is great fun to read and will provide many citations for the *Australian National Dictionary*. There are only a few typographical errors (e.g. Wahope Well for Wauchope Well p. 159).

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*Tammy Damulkurra*. By Derek Pugh and the Sunshine Girls, AIATSIS, Canberra 1995. Pp. 86. \$8.95 p.b.

Love, betrayal, and strict parents. The themes may sound familiar, but *Tammy Damulkurra* is not your average teenage novel. *Tammy* was written by Derek Pugh, a high school teacher working in a small Aboriginal community in Arnhem Land, in collaboration with a group of his students, all girls, aged between 13 and 18. In the introduction, Pugh writes that with *Tammy* he aimed to fill that gap that existed in reading material relevant for contemporary Aboriginal teenagers living in rural areas. Along with his 'Sunshine Girls', Pugh has indeed created a story which manages to address the both the universal themes confronting all young adults, yet also the specific difficulties and interests of young rural Aborigines.

*Tammy Damulkurra* tells the story of Tammy, a fifteen-year-old Aboriginal girl living in outback Australia. Tammy, strongly attached to her extended family and her best friend Elisa, falls in love with Johnny Manjulukau, a boy who she meets at the local disco. Complications arise when Tammy's parents find out about her relationship with Johnny and are less than impressed. They send her to stay with her relations in the bush, and it is here where *Tammy Damulkurra* sets itself apart most significantly from other young adult fiction, describing in detail traditional (and in some cases not so traditional) means of living off the land, with the odd dreamtime story thrown in here and there.

The fact that it was written partly by teenagers is the source of both the main strengths and weaknesses of this novel. While it does add an element of realism and integrity to the story, it has also lead to a rather over-simplified discussion of the issues raised. However, considering its short length such simplification is difficult to avoid, and in any case the novel's simplicity is one of its charms. It is a relief to find a novel for young people which so successfully avoids the trap of patronising or preaching.

Eleanor Thomas

*The Way We Civilize: Aboriginal Affairs—the untold story.* By Rosalind Kidd. University of Queensland Press, 1997. Pp 389. \$19.95.

When the colony of Queensland was granted self-government in 1859, seven thousand of its twenty-five thousand settlers lived in Brisbane, and the Aboriginal population, scattered throughout the colony, was estimated to be one hundred thousand. Assuming the land to be theirs, the settlers were slow to devise ways to govern those whom they dispossessed. For years there was intermittent warfare, and much of the 'dirty work' was performed for the settlers by 'Native Mounted Police' whose predations were investigated and exonerated in 1861. Local magistrates and justices of the peace were of little use to the Indigenous people; but as the frontier moved out west and north, the Indigenous people remaining in 'settled' districts had to be governed. Rosalind Kidd's book is distinguished by its sensitivity to the different views of good government which have been contested in the field of 'Aboriginal Affairs' in Queensland.

The 'industrial schools and reformatories movement'—developed in Britain to police the poor—identified sectors of the population whom the state should supervise. Queensland's *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act* (1865) included any child born of an Aboriginal or half-caste mother along with children destitute or associated with thieves, prostitutes or drunkards. Aboriginality was equated with moral hazard, and rescued children were to be taught basic skills. However, the government's commitment to this crusade was qualified in two ways. Missions and private humanitarian initiatives were so poorly funded that unpaid Aboriginal labour was essential to their survival. And the Native Mounted Police remained a menace to these institutions. In 1874 the government considered whether the Native Mounted Police should be replaced by ordinary police so that rationing and the issue of blankets could be the preferred mode of pacification. One Father McNab even suggested that Aborigines be allowed to purchase land. However, reform was slow. Though the procedures for taking Aboriginal testimonies were changed in 1876, homicide remained largely unchecked as frontier practice. A few reserves were gazetted in 1877, but they could not survive the settlers' land hunger. *The Queenslander* campaigned against these barbarous priorities in 1880. In 1884 Premier Samuel Griffith passed a law to regulate the use of Melanesian and Aboriginal coastal workers, but its enforcement proved a problem.

The humanitarian critique would not go away, however. Its institutional expression was a wave of mission formation, by Lutherans, Presbyterians and the Church of England, in the north of the colony and at Deebing Creek near Ipswich in the 1880s and 1890s. Exploiters of indigenous labour objected to the government's meagre mission subsidies, and even humanitarians had to admit that Aboriginal people did not always stay in the institutions set up to protect and reform them. The government was nonetheless receptive to Archibald Meston's proposal for a more systematic effort to manage the indigenous survivors, on a network of supervised reserves. In 1897, with the passing of the *Aboriginals Protection and Prevention of the Sale of Opium Act*, the reformatories movement at last eclipsed the practices of licensed terror.

The reformatory strategies' victory was subject to 'exceptions' and had insufficient government financial support. Indeed, much of Kidd's 'untold story' has to do with the Protectors' siphoning money from trust funds (those under the Act had to be paid but were not allowed to spend) in order to subsidise what was supposed to be a public

service—'a complex web of negligence, fraud and misappropriation' (p. 130). Missions responded to financial stringency by finding in dormitory care the means to restrict the circulation of rations. The church/state bureaucracy of protection was difficult to standardise. Kidd's stories illustrate 'vested interests, unsuitable personnel, and the private agendas of diverse authorities' (p. 78).

Underfunded missions and settlements could not keep their residents well fed and housed and so added twentieth century illnesses such as hookworm and malnutrition to the conditions which opium issue and sexual contact had made endemic in the nineteenth century. One of Kidd's most fruitful themes is the tension between a medical inspectorate and a penny-pinching and locally capricious protectorate. Both State bureaucracies were set up around the turn of the century, but the medical interest was boosted when the Commonwealth created its own Health Department in 1920 with a special interest in tropical diseases. Kidd thus dates the Commonwealth critique of Queensland Aboriginal affairs policies not to Whitlam's initiatives (1973–5) but back to the 1920s.

Discovering high rates of sexually transmitted diseases gave reason to intensify state surveillance of Aboriginal life, and led in 1934 to the inclusion under the Act of half-castes and of people not on missions and reserves. Palm and Fantome Islands became more important as places to segregate those suffering from VD. Diet and the identification of lepers also became state concerns. The Protectors' responses to medical critiques were generally 'irritation, reluctance and miserly inflexibility'. They had also to contend with occasional critiques of their administration of Aborigines' trust accounts.

The Protectors were even less hospitable to the advice of anthropologists such as Ursula McConnel and Donald Thomson who both worked on Cape York between the wars and Caroline Tennant Kelly who found herself in Cherbourg in 1934. Anthropologists had only a weak institutional base (the Australian National Research Council) but officers from the Bureau of Census and Statistics could not be so easily excluded, and so demography began to affect official thinking—particularly the recorded increase in 'half-castes'. By 1939, when the *Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act* was passed, there were 3,000 settlement inmates, 3,500 Torres Strait Islanders, 3,500 mission residents and 7000 people in rural camps under the Director of Native Affairs.

The war raised the value of all labour, including Aborigines', but placed the darker Australians in new and worrying proximities with whites and raised the issue of the 'natives' loyalties. Kidd tells of the cavalier fashion in which those under the Act were moved around to cater to these new needs and fears. As always, she gives us the medicos' dutifully filed counts of illness and death. It is a miserable and infuriating story.

The war improved Aborigines' social security entitlements, to the advantage of their custodians, some treating such payments as institutional income. In the Torres Strait, Anglican missions passed on the child endowment in full and so did Cape York's Presbyterian missionaries, though not for parents whose children were in their dormitories. More money (from wages and social security) offered more chances for 'Protector' theft. 'Examination of departmental audit reports reveals many instances of police fraud on Aboriginal accounts.' (p. 179)

The gradual inclusion of Aboriginal and Islander people in the national social security system is part of a larger story which dominates the second half of Kidd's book: the attempt by the State to turn growing Commonwealth interest in Indigenous welfare to its own financial advantage, without losing any policy autonomy. Impoverished northern indigenes were a useful, if tricky, card for both Queensland and Western Australia to play in the game of federal financial relations. The other great theme for Kidd's second half is the Presbyterian fight to assert the land rights of the Wik and other Cape York peoples whose lands were rich in minerals.

Kidd argues that the systematic generation of Indigenous poverty was doubly useful to a series of Queensland governments (Labor and non-Labor) from the 1930s to the 1980s. First, Mission advocacy of Indigenous interests could be discredited by pointing to how poorly the cash-starved missions maintained their residents. Those doctors' files were useful, and there was more measurement of ill-health than ever after 1967 when the Queensland Institute of Medical Research made Aboriginal health research a priority. To the extent that missions sought greater subsidies, the State offered greater control (short of full responsibility) as well. Second, the State could shame Canberra into greater transfers of revenue, in the light of the large northern State's special disadvantages. Meanwhile, the State continued to use 'protected' workers' trust accounts as a source of investible funds and of loans to the State-run hospital system: a neat and cynical formula, held in place by patronage, Cold War rhetoric, public service secrecy and racist conviction.

Thus the Presbyterians were persuaded, in the mid 1950s, to abandon Mapoon mission (and the Department would also have liked them to give up Mornington Island, to take its residents to Aurukun). Those at Mapoon were supposed to go to Weipa, though church men and women in touch with people's feelings for home lands were uneasy about, and even opposed to, such a plan. The mining industry, discovering bauxite on the Mapoon and Weipa reserves, entered this feud of church and state. The missionaries saw mineral wealth as saviour, but clashed with the government about how best to relocate people. They were excluded from the government's negotiations with the miners, and in 1958 Comalco was given the lands it required, with only 7 per cent of the Mapoon, Aurukun and Weipa reserves left for Aboriginal use. The government pointed to mission neglect, while the mission insisted that improvement was contingent on Aboriginal land security. Presbyterian concerns on the west of the Cape were echoed by Anglicans, worried about the threatened relocation of Lockhart River and the continuing under-funding of Yarrabah. The Anglicans surrendered Yarrabah in 1960, and the Seventh Day Adventists yielded Mona Mona mission to the government in 1962. Bauxite mingled with Presbyterian grit to make the west Cape battle more protracted.

The Queensland government over-reached itself in re-locating Mapoon. Many Presbyterian authorities were attracted by the material inducements offered by the government, but they were embarrassed when the residents' opposition became widely known through the Aboriginal Advancement League in 1963. Presbyterian relations with the State government were further strained during negotiations about building the new mission at Weipa in 1965. Church men and women had ample opportunity to reassess the promise of mining and of 'assimilation' policies in the decade 1955-65. By 1968

Mornington Island's Reverend Belcher was declaring that 'the hot potato is the question of title to land.' (p. 253) In 1969 the church formally espoused indigenous land rights.

To the extent that the State was able to take over the churches' efforts, it fed a festering problem—the appropriate wage policy for settlement workers. Kidd shows that by the late 1950s, the unions were challenging the government's wage inequities for so-called 'slow workers' at missions and settlements and on pastoral properties. On the settlements this was not only a policy issue, but a budgetary problem: the State had never conceded the money required to run settlements for residents' benefit. Rations were out, low wages were in, by the late 1960s, and residents found it impossible to purchase enough food. To the State, the solution was easy: people should move away from the settlements and missions and get a job. Poverty was assimilation's spur. And Indigenous poverty remained a stick with which to beat the Commonwealth, by now (early 1970s) newly interested in helping the States to deal with indigenous poverty, poor housing in particular. When the State got Commonwealth housing money, it fought to spend it according to its own policy of inducing residents to leave reserves. Against federal policy, it also built crude shacks as 'transition housing', and it refused to start Aboriginal housing associations. Sub-standard dwellings could be justified by a regime that inspected, through an intensifying grid of surveillance, the degree to which residents of settlements were adopting the approved way of life. 'Parental competence' had become the concern of 'a network of social police' in the 1960s (p. 261). Such interpretations of responsibility exculpated the State in the health crises that racked Palm Island in 1972 and 1973. Kidd's final chapter includes important material on the Queensland government's deliberate under-policing of remote Indigenous communities. As the violence and disorder of these places became known, their aspiration to 'self-determination' was easier to question.

The Whitlam and Fraser governments attempted to confront Joh Bjelke-Petersen's administration of indigenous affairs, from 1972 to 1983. Kidd's material is consistent with the interpretation that that challenge was most powerful at the local level, when the Commonwealth offered better resources (including insisting on award wages in Commonwealth-funded programs) and so competed with the long tradition of Departmental patronage. If Kidd's splendid book has a weakness, it is that she does not adequately show the workings of colonial patronage—the colonial authorities' elevation of 'good' Indigenous people to positions of petty responsibility and greater material reward. Here and there we glimpse the micro-politics of such differentiation, but Kidd's focus is elsewhere—on questions of finance and political tactics in the wider political sphere. It is likely that intra-communal politics was exacerbated by an 'assimilation' program which rewarded the faster 'progress' of some individuals and families. In the 1970s, the Commonwealth's officials and programs began to weaken that reward system, not only by being an alternative source of patronage (for we cannot rule out the persistence of such a political dynamic) but also by governing in a more bureaucratically rational manner—most importantly, by submitting wage levels to the rule of industrial law. Kidd gives some credit to Bob Katter, the new the Minister for Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, (appointed 1983), for realising that union claims for equal pay on reserves could no longer be resisted.

However, if there is a history of the rise and fall of colonial patronage here, Kidd has not made it explicit. For an author interested in 'governmentality', she is curiously

insensible to the importance of patron-client relationships in a colonial theatre. You would think, from reading her, that the State government and missions were so foolish as to treat all Indigenous people in their power equally badly. Angela Burger's *Neville Bonner* and David Trigger's study of Doomadgee *Whitefella Comin* show that this was not so.

With the local struggles among colonial strategies as her ongoing background story, Kidd's final chapters feature the high policy jousts. When miners showed interest in Aurukun, the Presbyterians sought not to repeat their complicities in the Weipa and Mapoon debacles. The State overruled them with a 1975 Act authorising mining. When the Department began to face Aboriginal litigants, it blamed the missionaries. In March 1978, the Uniting Church (a product of the 1977 merger of the Presbyterians with Methodists and Congregationalists) was expelled from the Mornington Island and Aurukun missions. The Fraser government threatened legislative intervention in the residents' favour, but accepted a truce, much to the concern of the distrustful church. The Premier crowed victory, and the Fraser government attempted to finesse him with legislation. The Premier revoked the missions' reserve status and declared them shires. This gambit neutralised Fraser and substantially breached the truce agreement on residents' rights. The communities, robbed of land rights and self-management, waged a public campaign, in which the Fraser government was cast as passive and weak.

The distinct and valuable contribution of Kidd's work is her attention to tensions among colonial authorities: State/Commonwealth, church/state, medical/bureaucratic, union/employer. Indigenous agency is hardly visible, either as protest or (equally significant in explaining the Queensland system) as accommodation. Only in litigation are Indigenous people conspicuous, for her history is written from the State's own files, a chronicle of coping with crises occasioned by the collisions between diverse colonial authorities. Yet one fundamental point about Indigenous agency emerges with great weight. To the extent that Indigenous Queenslanders appear in our news media as unhealthy, disorganised, prone to violence and despair (and these are unavoidable themes of many reports) there is now Kidd's story of cynical, dishonest misgovernment to which we can turn for much explanation. 'Assimilation' was not only a doctrine of nationhood, it was also a disdainful preoccupation with the unfitness of inmates. It set up a sociological and historical schema for pathologising the victims of colonialism and for ennobling the intentions of their captors.

This way of seeing remains part of our intellectual legacy. Affirming Indigenous self-determination sets up new tests for Indigenous people. Their problems are still interpretable 'as aspects of an Aboriginal, rather than a governmental, problem' (p. 347). While applauding Kidd's effort to shift the interpretive emphasis from Indigenous pathology to governmental failure, I believe that the next step in the history of Queensland colonialism is to face up to the ways in which the term 'governmental'—in the properly Foucauldian sense avowed by Kidd—includes the agency of those Indigenous people for whom government was the source of 'uplift'. The mutual implication of the State, the churches and the upwardly mobile Indigenous person is an historical topic which awaits its author.

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*Archives in the Tropics: Proceedings of the Australian Society of Archivists Conference, Townsville, 9-11 May 1994, Canberra, ASA, 1994. Price \$14, plus postage, from the Australian Society of Archivists Inc, PO Box 83, O'Connor, ACT, 2601.*

Henrietta Fourmile's paper, 'Who Owns the Past? Aborigines as captives of the Archives', published in this journal in 1989 (Vol. 13, No. 1), set the baseline for the Townsville conference of the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA). As Baiba Berzins wrote in another seminal paper, 'Archivists and Aboriginal Records', Fourmile had asserted a claim for Aboriginal 'say in if not control over the way in which materials relating to their group identity are guarded, used and controlled.' (*Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol.19, No.2, Nov 1991; p. 197) Responding to pressure from Aboriginal people and organisations, a number of the major archival institutions in Australia had initiated projects aimed at disseminating their Aboriginal archival resources, but it was not until the Townsville conference that the professional body of archivists, the ASA, had shown any concerted interest in the issues relevant to Aboriginal and Islander archives. The Townsville conference put forward indigenous archives as the major single conference theme. Fabian Hutchinson reported to the Central Land Council, 'this one Conference has done more to raise the awareness of the profession about the special requirements of Aboriginal organisations and people for historical records, than any other single meeting in the last decade.'

Three papers on issues relating to Aboriginal archives are published in the proceedings. The first, 'Who's telling our story? Archives access, education and training for Aboriginal organisations in Central Australia', was given by Fabian Hutchinson in the session on education and training. Fabian was Information Services Supervisor at the Central Land Council (CLC) at the time and died in Darwin a few months afterwards while working on a project with the Northern Land Council. The paper urges the archives profession to pay sufficient heed to the alternative forms of safekeeping that some of these culturally-grounded Aboriginal organisations are developing. Hutchinson pointed out that Aboriginal communities' cultural property programmes are proactively aimed at 'keeping culture strong' and at gaining access to government and other institutional archives to gather information for land claims and family link-up. He outlined a program for the control or hand-back of Aboriginal archives, emphasising

the need for accelerated programs to identify, within all those major national and state institutions holding records in the field (AIATSIS included), all records (listed or not), of any current use for designated Aboriginal organisations having urgent objectives to fulfil, in areas of land interest and social justice, intellectual property and customary law, cultural and language maintenance. (p. 30)

Hutchinson noted that until 1989, when the Australian Archives paid some visits to the CLC and Mathew Platt began archival work at the CLC and the Tangentyere Council, there had been no engagement of archivists in this setting. He sketched the work of the Central Australian Archives Project in 1992-1993 at the CLC, the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, the Tangentyere Council, the Institute for Aboriginal Development and the Yipirinya School. In 1990 Baiba Berzins had surveyed all NT archives and libraries holding Aboriginal records, including those in Aboriginal communities, and found inadequate storage and a general lack of staff expertise. In this context Hutchinson advocates appropriate forms of training for Aboriginals to self-

manage archival programmes and calls for support from the archives profession to achieve this goal.

The second and third papers on Aboriginal archives were given in the conference session on documenting Aboriginal and Islander experience. Henrietta Fourmile, of James Cook University, gave a paper, 'Aborigines as captives of the archives: a prison revisited', focusing on the control and dissemination of the Tindale genealogies, the originals of which are owned by the South Australian Museum, but which she regards as Aboriginal intellectual and cultural property. She outlined concerns about copyright, intellectual property rights, and the misuse of archives containing historical and anthropological information by Governments and mining companies hostile to land rights. She notes that the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 'does not offer us any protection of confidentiality concerning such records [as the Tindale genealogies], as under Section 6(1) the interpretation of the term "record" does not include "anything kept in a library, art gallery or museum for the purpose of reference study or exhibition"' (p. 120).

Fourmile's paper is an update, in the context of the Mabo judgement, of her 1989 paper, referred to above, on Aborigines as 'captives of the archives'. That image is based on a comment by Professor William T Hagen that 'to be an Indian is having non-Indians control the documents from which other non-Indians write their version of your history'. ('Archival Captive—the American Indian', *American Archivist*, Vol. 41, No. 2, April 1978; p. 135) It is worthwhile noting that Hagen's paper is primarily addressed to archivists: 'Archivists, please remember that you not only have real power over the Indian of history, the Archival Captive, but you can facilitate or frustrate the contemporary Indian's drive for justice in the courts' (p. 142).

The third paper was presented by Ysola Best and Kathy Frankland who had worked together on a project developing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Resources Unit in the Queensland State Library. Until the Unit was established, they stated, 'no time had ever been devoted to documenting sources relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, thus rendering them virtually inaccessible' (p. 122). Improvements to access to the documentation occurred in recent years due to 'pressure from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples themselves demanding the right to access information relating to their heritage, pursuing land claims, or the recognition of native title rights, and also through the reconciliation process and the recommendations of the Deaths in Custody Royal Commission' (p. 123).

Best and Frankland report that in response the Queensland State Library has not only indexed much Aboriginal archival material, but also provided remote communities with internet access to the index data bases. At the same time the Queensland State Archives, in conjunction with the Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, have been compiling three guides to the archives of the Department and its predecessors and to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander archives produced by other State agencies. The first of the guides was published later in 1994.

The papers on Islander archives, which have suffered alienation, loss and destruction as a consequence of resource deprivation, and dispersion as a result of war and changes in sovereignty, provide a useful comparative context for the presentation on Aboriginal archives. Karin Brennan's paper tracks the custodial history of the archives of the German colonial administration in Samoa which are shared by several nations



within the Pacific region resulting 'in the archives being alienated from the cultural heritage of the country to which they belong' (p. 109).

In his paper on archival training in the Pacific region, Peter Orlovich points out that Western Samoa, the Kingdom of Tonga, Nauru and the states of Kosrae and Chuuk (formerly Truk) in the Federated States of Micronesia have no archives directorate, no permanently appointed or professional archivist and no archival legislation (p. 19). Orlovich argues that archives can be best understood in their historical and administrative context and best made accessible in that context. He says that this is the only practical solution to helping people in the Pacific with their archives.

As far as Aboriginal records are concerned, the Townsville conference resulted in the formation of an Aboriginal Archives special interest group of the ASA and participation of representatives of the Society in the drafting of protocols for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander information in libraries, archives and information services which were formally adopted by the Society at its annual meeting this year. Fabian Hutchinson concluded his report on the conference to the Central Land Council with the comment that 'it was a very positive experience...to feel that the profession, through its conferences at least, is starting to pay some regard to programs for Aboriginal archives, and is prepared to listen to Aboriginal viewpoints and requests for more appropriate treatment'.

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*Bushfires and Bushtucker—Aboriginal Plant Use in Central Australia.* By Peter Latz. IAD Press, Alice Springs. 1995. pp 400. hb 49.95. p.b. 34.95

This is a book which has value not only for botanists and ethnobotanists, but for a wide range of people—anthropologists, archaeologists, linguists and all those interested in the arid centre of Australia. It is the fruit of 'a lifetime's research' by Peter Latz, beginning with his first 17 years growing up among the Arrernte people at Hermannsburg Mission.

The section most likely to interest the general reader is Part One, which gives a general picture of human survival in the desert. The physical nature of this difficult country is surveyed—its climate and soils, and how the various plant communities are adapted to drought and unreliable rains. Some plants literally rise from the dead—the so-called 'resurrection plants', the leaves of which dry down to only 10% of water content and appear to be dead, yet within 12 hours of rain will turn green and revive.

Aboriginal people belonging to several different language groups have mastered the art of living in the desert—Arandic, Western Desert, Warlpiri and Warumungu, and Latz surveys their strategies for obtaining food and water not only for immediate needs, but for ensuring the continued survival of those resources. One whole chapter is devoted to the use and effects of fire. He suggests that the pre-European landscape presented a mosaic of areas in different stages of fire recovery and that this general pattern also occurred in other areas of Australia. Certainly there is evidence for it from Arnhem land, and from the dry sclerophyll forests of south-eastern and south-western Australia.

Animal species such as the bilby and the hare-wallaby have been found to be adapted to this pattern. Plants from these areas became dependent on Aboriginal burning—the Bush Tomato and the Desert Raisin, both important foods, become scarce in the absence of fire. The same applies to another *Solanum* species, *Solanum vescum*, the Kangaroo Apple of Gippsland, Victoria. Latz discusses the effect that the entry of Aborigines into the pristine Central Australian landscape was likely to have had, and adds weight to the now widely accepted view that the landscape encountered by the European invaders was largely an Aboriginal artefact.

A chapter on general plant use illustrates the importance of seeds as a food source. 67 species supplied seeds, 28 fruits, and only 12 tubers, in contrast to south-eastern Australia, where tubers were the main staples. He also draws attention to the importance of the skill of yandying, whereby the women were able to gather seed from the ground beneath plants and separate it from sand and rubbish by rocking it in a coolamon. Other plant products such as gum and gauls are also discussed, and he is at pains to single out plants which harbor edible grubs—Witchetty Bush, *Acacia kempeana*, for example.

Plant uses are not limited to material culture—plants used in ceremony, in song and art, in decoration and in children's play are also noted. Plants with milky sap, such as *Euphorbia tannensis*, Caustic Bush, are female sex totems, while pink-flowered *Ptilotus* species symbolise the male because of the penis-like shape of the flower, and the author remembers children playing teasing-games with this symbolism in mind. Part 2 of the book contains a list of plants, this occupies about 3/4 of the volume. Most plants are illustrated by a clear color picture or drawing, the botanical name, and a description of the appearance, uses, preparation, ecology and occurrence. All this is in clear plain English, botanical terms are minimal, and there is a small glossary. Forty *Acacia* species are listed, mostly used for their seed. Since many of the plants are not confined to Central Australia, workers in contiguous areas will find this a rich source of information. One of the most interesting aspects is the listing of names for the plants in up to 7 of the languages of Central Australia. Linguistically, this is almost unique; and only a person of Latz's qualifications and experience could have done it. Ethnobotanists are often frustrated by their inability to give correct names to plants mentioned in the ethnographic literature and language lists; there is no such difficulty here. An additional table in appendix 1 lists names for plants with no recorded or minor uses. Further tables list known nutritional values, a complete summary of all useful plants, medicinal plants, other uses such as implements or ceremonies, and many references. Table 4: 'List of species utilised in Australia but not in area researched' appears to be mis-titled—I think it should have referred to 'species utilised in Central Australia, but not in area researched'. Appendix 2 lists plant names divided into the seven individual Aboriginal languages—Alyawarr, Anmatyerr, Eastern Arrernte, Western Arrernte, Pintupi/Luritja, Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara and Warlpiri. To sum up, this is an invaluable reference for Australian ethnobotany, but will also be of great interest to a much wider audience.

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*Follow the Rabbit-proof Fence.* By Doris Pilkington (Nugi Garimara). University of Queensland Press, St Lucia. 1996. Pp. xiv + 136. ISBN 0 7022 2709 9. \$14.95.

This book tells the story of an extraordinary journey that deserves a place among the founding legends of Australia. Three girls aged about eight, ten and fifteen ran away on foot from Moore River Native Settlement (just north of Perth) back home to Jigalong. The journey lasted about nine weeks and covered over 1200 kilometres. For the most part they travelled through country they had never visited. And throughout the journey they had to hide because they were being hunted by police as escapees from the Native Settlement.

Doris Pilkington (Nugi Garimara) is the daughter of the oldest girl, Molly (we are only given the girls' European names, although apparently they belong to the Milangka section (p. 76)). She has written the story based on her mother's and her aunt Daisy's recollections and on examination of Government papers and newspaper articles of the time.

The book divides into four parts. The first part is a fantasy reconstruction of the encounters between Nyungar and Europeans in the early days of the settlement at Albany. The second part is a reconstruction of the movement of Aboriginal people into Jigalong, and appears to be based in part on family history. It provides the family background for the three girls, who had Aboriginal mothers and European fathers. The third part consists of the journey and the events that led directly to it. The conclusion tells briefly of what happened to the girls.

The extraordinary nature of the journey makes the description of that journey the strongest part of the book. Pilkington (Garimara) makes the story her own, adding in her own perceptions of the changes in landscape, especially of vegetation, that the girls noticed during the trip, as well as interpretations of what the girls must have felt. She imagines conversations, rendering them in a mixture of standard English, Aboriginal English and words from Aboriginal languages. She presents a fairly even-handed account of the abduction of the girls, noting the Superintendent's concern that the girls were being teased by the other children for having white fathers. She describes their encounters with people on the trip, and their homecoming (includingly, amazingly, a warm bath when they reached their aunt's camp on a cattle station).

In general Pilkington (Garimara) tells the story without much authorial comment, allowing facts and Government records to speak for themselves. An example is the sad irony that Molly, having saved herself and her younger sister from Moore River Native Settlement, then lost her first child Annabelle to Sister Kate's Children's Home in Perth and has never seen her again. Another example is the way in which a black tracker used to track down runaways from the home, and a 'muda muda' stockman wanted to turn the girls in. Occasionally Pilkington (Garimara) does interpolate comments, sometimes inaccurately, as for example the statement that in the boarding-schools for wealthy Europeans the children were 'likely to be given pleasant rooms that would be theirs for the duration of their schooling' (p. 72).

The story is written in the style of an Australian young adult book, and some readers will find the hackneyed writing in the descriptive passages offputting. Moreover, it is not always clear what parts are Pilkington (Garimara)'s reconstructions and what parts come from her mother's and aunt's stories. The story deserves telling again

in different ways. The range of readers could be extended, by publication of Molly and Daisy's Martu Wangka versions, (both for children and for adults), and also of their Aboriginal English versions.

There is a map which would be improved by the addition of a distance scale and by marking Moore River Native Settlement on it. There is a glossary of words from Aboriginal languages used -- we are told that these words are from 'Mardujara'. The publishers and the author are not familiar with the spelling systems used for writing Martu Wangka languages such as Manjiljarra. As a result the words are spelled inconsistently, based mostly on English spelling. Words of Aboriginal English such as 'pink-eye time' are also included.

Such criticisms aside, we must be grateful to Pilkington (Garimara) for bringing to light this epic journey. It was indeed a 'most wonderful trek' as Arthur Hungerford, the Jigalong Protector of Aborigines described it (p. 124). It would make a wonderful film.

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*Writing on the Backs of the Blacks: Voice, Literacy and Community in Kriol Fieldwork.* By Mari Rhydwen. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia 1996. x, 185 pp. ISBN 0 7022 2890 7. \$22.95

The author of this book, Mari Rhydwen, did her undergraduate studies in England, and gained her PhD from Sydney University, and now lectures at Murdoch University. English-speaking schoolmates shamed her into losing Welsh, her first language, and she thinks that perhaps her distress at this realisation was part of the motivation for working with Aboriginal people with endangered or lost traditional languages. Her book is a disturbing one, in much part, I feel, because she faces many of the entangled issues arising from both negatively prejudiced attitudes towards language, culture and people of many (pastoralists, administrators and educators) and well-intentioned (but perhaps at times counterproductive) work and attitudes of many others (administrators, educators, linguists and missionaries) to educate, mitigate or undo the negative outcomes of past history.

It is also a vaguely depressing or depressed book. Unlike some books that present us with possible very destructive outcomes of the way humans behave (environmentally, or socially) its final chapter does not attempt to convince the reader that there is light at the end of the tunnel if only we can in sufficient numbers pursue a certain course.

The book arose from work she was doing over a time of personal disruption for her through a marriage breakdown (though she gives due credit to her husband/ex-husband amongst those who offered advice and suggestions), and the Preface begins with the recounting of a dream which made her aware of the inner conflict her work was causing her. I do not feel she found a real resolution of it. Nor do I see a resolution to some of the issues she raises. It is an uncomfortable book, and for finding resolutions or accommodations in the long term we need a few such uncomfortable books.

Rhydwen worked in Kriol or creole-speaking areas of the Northern Territory, somewhat to the north of where I had worked in Kriol-speaking areas, and some 25

years later than my basic research in that area. In that time Aboriginal self-assertion has grown enormously, and Aboriginal control over who visits and works in research has taken over from Government Welfare Branch and cattle station manager control. Not only in the eastern states has Aboriginal suspicion of white researchers, their motives and their profit, and Aboriginal desires to keep their own worlds private become stronger, but this is increasingly being felt in remoter areas of the Northern Territory. Rhydwen states (pp. vii, viii) 'I decided to include writing about the experience of being a non-Aboriginal academic doing linguistic work on Aboriginal languages in Australia in the 1990s and the relationship between my socio-political role as linguist and the kinds of knowledge I acquired.' The problems and issues she discusses increasingly need to be faced.

After a Preface, where Rhydwen recounts her dream and the issues it brought awareness of, the book has ten chapters, a select bibliography, and an index. The chapters are:

1. Introduction
2. Church, State and Kriol Literacy
3. Kriol Communities
4. The Language Situation at Nauiyu Nambiyu (Daly River)
5. Writing: A human Rite
6. Variation in Kriol Literacy
7. Kriol and Control
8. Rabbit Creek Road
9. 'Any Story told Twice is a Fiction'
10. Ending

Rhydwen has a bias, which she is fair in acknowledging, of antagonism, dislike, or disapproval (call it what you will) of missionary work, but as she acknowledges, for any one who listens and observes and tries to work in 'the field', issues are not clear cut, and there has been good, as well as bad, outcomes of missionary and government policies and activities. She states (p. 164):

I have often been encouraged to believe that Kriol has been an American-based, white, male, imperialistic Christian-fundamentalist plot to deracinate Aboriginal Australia, and had I been able to prove it I would have done so. In reality, the activities of SIL (the Summer Institute of Linguistics) with regard to Kriol seem to have been neither more sinister nor more benign than those of any other institution involved with linguistic work and education in the Northern Territory, and although it is an SIL researcher who named and documented Kriol, its origins were laid down when the English first arrived in Australia. Pidgin English has been spoken since the arrival of the first fleet and Kriol is just the most recent manifestation of the linguistic changes caused by social upheaval. If the development of Kriol had been a conspiracy perhaps it would have been more successful.

Contrary to the information Rhydwen conveys in her book, it was an Australian female (myself) who (as far as I know) first documented the language we now call Kriol (formerly called 'Roper Pidgin'). The name Kriol was indeed settled on by an American male Christian, a member of SIL, but like other changes of name, it was in an attempt to avoid the negative connotations of 'pidgin', and to clarify that it was different from standard English (speakers often referred to it as Inggilij) that it was done. What's more,

it was I who first encouraged John Sandefur (the American SIL member) to work on Roper Pidgin before he even arrived in the Northern Territory. I am implicated in all the outcomes, good and bad, of linguistic work on 'Kriol'—although I am sure if I had not been involved, the time was ripe for others to have 'discovered' and researched the pidgins and creoles of the area—and launched the work of a Sandefur. I do not get a mention in Rhydwen's book, although we met during her work.

Rhydwen's initial research agenda came from her interest 'in the idea that people from literate cultures were different from those from oral ones, as Aboriginal cultures had been until the arrival of European colonisers' (p. vii). Her work began in the mid 1980s; Bilingual Programs had been started in many schools in the Northern Territory just over ten years earlier, and she was interested in researching 'the effects that the recent introduction of literacy was having on previously oral languages' (p. vii). Her confidence in what she was doing dwindled, but rather than abandon her work, she focused also on the experience of being a non-Aboriginal academic doing linguistic work on Aboriginal languages in Australia in the 1990s and the relationship between her socio-political role as linguist and the kinds of knowledge she acquired. She found other colleagues were frequently confronted by the same issues, which are of central concern to theorists in a number of disciplines.

One of the constraints Rhydwen elucidates is that of kinship in Aboriginal Australia. Even on the east coast of Australia, where the accepted newcomer is not given a kinship designation, it becomes clear that those to whom one 'relates' in one's work are a subset of the total community. In the Northern Territory the subset is determined by how you are related to those in the community, and the obligations to one group and the circumspection in dealing with another, as laid down in the accustomed kinship relationships. Obtaining the whole picture involves extrapolation, with the uncertainties this brings. Obligations to the community, to the individual real people, can clash with those towards the funding bodies and the requirements of doing PhD research. From other accounts and my own experience, it is clear that this is an increasing problem faced by researchers in Aboriginal Australia and in other ethnic and social groups in Australia. While this may be a source of regret to the ardent researcher, it is progress in that decisions are being made by those who might be subject to research.

Rhydwen runs up hard against the problem of the definition of a 'language'. What linguists would describe as dialects or dialectal variation in one language, the speakers, for local and wider political reasons, would insist are different languages. In my experience, the differences between the creoles spoken at Halls Creek, Barunga, Ngukurr, and Borroloola are easily tuned in to, and there is no real barrier to communication. Yet Aboriginal people from these different areas, and from Nauiyu Nambiyu (Daly River) are adamant that their 'languages' are 'different'. In addition, the spelling chosen for Barunga or Ngukurr Kriol is not perfect for other areas (or even for Barunga and Ngukurr), any more than English spelling is perfect for anyone's English. A number of questions arise, and Rhydwen discusses these, particularly in her central chapters (pp. 4-6).

Firstly, while there has been some standardisation of Kriol spelling for use in the Kriol *Holi Baibul*, a fair variation in spelling of Kriol (or the various creoles) has been permitted, even at times encouraged. While throughout its many variants in North Australia, the creole or creoles have similar phonology, there are a few differences car-

ried over from the traditional languages. In particular in the Nauiyu Nambiyu area the creole differs in phonology from that of the Ngukurr area. Also, Nauiyu Nambiyu people are not keen to promote their Ngan'giwatyfala as a language for literacy, nor do they accept it as 'the same' as Kriol. Some of its phonology is linked to the traditional languages of the Daly River area, and differs from the phonology of Barunga and Ngukurr Kriol.

Secondly, there is very little community need for written matter in Kriol. Communities are reasonably small, and in them spoken communication fulfils most functions. Increasing use of the telephone (as well as the older two-way radio) means speech is used for much communication between communities and within a community. For communication with the wider world or with officialdom, English (written and spoken) is used. Written Kriol is only used occasionally for written notices within the community, and such notices would probably have the same impact if written in 'fruit-martese'—that type of sometimes misspelt English often seen on notices outside shops. A carefully and rigorously worked out orthography is not necessary for such notices to be effective!

Thirdly, Rhydwen takes issue with the estimate of 15,000–20,000 speakers of Kriol. In part this is because Kriol is not uniform, and in part because for many, it is not a creole in the sense of their first language, but a pidgin mutually intelligible with the various creolised variants spoken in the north.

Rhydwen also raises the problem of the promotion of literacy as a basic human right. Here she notes the belief in Western culture that literacy is a basic cognitive tool and comments on its impact on oral cultures, 'fragmentary remnants of a cultural diversity that is rapidly shrinking' (p. 6). Literacy, like the presence of the observer, changes what was there. Literacy, as taught, is not value neutral either; wittingly or unwittingly literacy instruction pushes a cultural bias. It may empower; it may disempower. Or it may, in the hands of the 'underdogs' been seen by the governing group as a threat to a particular *status quo*, or 'too much education' for the masses may be seen as 'a bad thing'.

Rhydwen's chapter 2 is an excellent summary of the impact of church and state in the development of literacy. She discusses various reports (the Watts, Tandy, McGrath report and the Hale-O'Grady report) briefly, and to what extent their recommendations were followed, as well as critically evaluating their recommendations. Chapters 4–6 are central to her concern about orthography and the variation in the creole(s), and for some readers perhaps they are a bit longwinded on this issue. But, if not such easy reading as other chapters, they supply necessary data. Chapter 3 talks about the contexts in which Kriol was used, and what triggered the use of Kriol or English to her. Chapter 4, on the Nauiyu Nambiyu situation, goes into some detail on orthographical questions. Chapter 5 looks at the creole-speakers' preferred way of punctuating texts, which, Rhydwen found, was almost identical to the conventions used in English, even though she showed them other conventions. The chapter on Kriol and Control has a nice description of 'Backwards Kriol', which is modelled on one of the various 'pig-Latins' known for English. Chapter 8, 'Rabbit Creek Road' (Rapid Creek, in Darwin) discusses the problems of assigning some words to either English or Kriol, with, in many cases, a change of spelling, when there is no cogent reason to differentiate them. A Kriol speaker, Rhydwen found, would assert such a word was Kriol, whereas an English

speaker would assert it was English. In her teaching at Batchelor College, Rhydwen found students much more able to transcribe 'Kriol' written 'English-way' into Kriol spelling (though they did not all choose the same spellings) than to understand some texts written 'Kriol-way', citing *dimbagem* 'timber camp' as one of the extreme examples of problems (it could also be written *timbakemp* or otherwise). She concludes this chapter (p. 137):

Kriol speakers also read English for pleasure and in later visits to Kriol-speaking communities I witnessed more reading than I had previously; for example older men had copies of farming magazines and younger men and women had books in their camps. People often read such material to find out what is happening outside their immediate environment. This kind of material, produced for a wide audience in English, is what people want to *read*. If they want to know local stories or local news they *listen*. In view of this, it may be time to consider whether Kriol literacy is really necessary (emphasis added).

Chapter 9 contains a number of accounts, using pseudonyms, for composite characters based on her experiences (the communities are also kept anonymous), which illustrate some of the interactions and problems she faced, including when to use Kriol, and chapter 10 summarises what she has learnt. Chapter 10 also raises the issue of naming a 'language', creole or other, which creates a 'thingness' (to use her word) which is not necessarily there. (This issue also comes up in naming languages elsewhere, for example that spoken from the Gold Coast down almost to Grafton, for which there was traditionally no general name.)

There are a number of her statements that I feel introduce an unnecessary bias, although on reflection the bias is small. On p. 1 she states 'the introduction of literacy in both English and the vernacular in Aboriginal communities has been the result of a conscious attempt...to deliberately change Aboriginal patterns of language use.' I doubt if this was explicitly in mind by many who introduced literacy, who, it seems on my reading, to be more from a conscious desire to 'save souls', or change 'the primitive culture', especially in earlier times. On p. 27 she quotes a suggestion (not her own) that 'SIL has been keen to promote Kriol in order to facilitate Bible translation because of the enormity of the task of translating the scriptures into all surviving Aboriginal languages'. As I saw it, SIL was reluctant to start studying the creole(s), and a number who initially invested many of their years on traditional languages reluctantly had to concede that a creole had taken over as the main mode of communication. As this change was well under way by the time Rhydwen began her work, and SIL workers had responded with much more enthusiasm to the existence of Kriol, it is easy to understand how such a suggestion might be floated.

In all, the book is a worthwhile addition to the University of Queensland Press's growing publication list on Aboriginal language and culture.

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*Language in Evidence: Issues confronting Aboriginal and multicultural Australia.* Edited by Diana Eades. UNSW Press, Sydney 1995. xii, 289 pp. ISBN 0 86849 119 6 \$29.95.

Eleven authors, with expertise in the law and/or linguistics, and mostly employed in universities or tertiary institutions, have contributed to the ten chapters that make up the body of this book. I have heard four of the authors present in seminars the material they present in this book, and enjoyed 'hearing their stories' again. The whole book shows that while there has been much progress in awareness and catering for language difference in the courts, there is still much that needs to be changed, much that needs to become standard procedure.

The book is written for the hypothetical ordinary person, and does not presuppose expertise in linguistics or the law. The chapters are well written, and are organised into three general areas: Language in Court, Linguists in Court, and Offensive Language, as follows:

*Part 1: Language in Court*

1. International law, natural justice and language rights in Australia, Greta Bird, associate professor of law, Southern Cross University
2. Silence in court! Problems and prospects in Aboriginal legal interpreting, Russell Goldflam, Institute for Aboriginal Development, Alice Springs
3. Aboriginal evidence in the cross-cultural courtroom, Michael Cooke, lecturer training Aboriginal interpreters at the Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics, Batchelor College
4. Tainted evidence: literacy and traditional knowledge in an Aboriginal land claim, Michael Walsh, lecturing in linguistics and Aboriginal studies, University of Sydney

*Part 2: Linguists in Court*

5. Linguistic evidence accepted in the case of a non-native speaker of English, Marie-Thérèse Jensen, lecturer, Faculty of Education, Monash University
6. Aboriginal English on trial; the case for Stuart and Condren, Diana Eades, senior lecturer in linguistics, University of New England, Armidale
7. What got lost? The place of electronic recording and interpreters in police interviews, John Gibbons, senior lecturer, Dept of Linguistics, University of Sydney
8. Linguistic analysis as evidence of speaker identification: demand and response, Heather Bowe, senior lecturer, Dept of Linguistics, Monash University, and Kate Storey, research consultant, Speaker Identification Consultancy Unit, Linguistics Dept, Monash University, also teaching in the Dept of Languages, Interpreting and Translating, Deakin University

*Part 3: Offensive Language*

9. Offensive language: a legal perspective, Bill Walsh, barrister
10. Offensive language: a linguistic and sociolinguistic perspective, Brian Taylor, associate professor of German and director of the Language Centre, University of Sydney

The book has an introduction by Diana Eades, lists of 56 cases and 23 statutes cited, an extensive bibliography, and an useful index.

It is only quite recently that the issues of non-native English speakers in court proceedings in Australia has received much attention or study, although, as Eades shows

by quoting the Stuart case from early 1959, there was at least one case of a linguist presenting evidence much earlier. On the international front, an International Association of Forensic Linguists is only recently established with its own journal *Forensic Linguistics* (Routledge). In Australia and elsewhere, linguists may advise on needs for interpreters in the courts, on sociocultural differences in language use, and on voice identification from recordings.

In *Language in Evidence*, Bird's chapter sets the Australian scene, with its delineation of factors behind the reluctance to guarantee language rights, and describes positive developments that might bring substantive change in the 1990s. Bird states at the outset (p. 3):

Australia may be the most multicultural nation on earth; its citizens come from many cultural groups and speak a multitude of languages. The nation's legal system is based on the principle of *equality before the law* (author's italics) for all citizens and the Australian government has ratified international conventions and passed legislation, such as the *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986* (Cth) designed to remove barriers to equality based on race, ethnicity or gender. In spite of this commitment to the worthy principle of equality and the passage of anti-discrimination legislation, language rights are not fully guaranteed in legal proceedings in Australia. The failure to guarantee these rights means in practice that 'it is futile to assert that persons are equal before the law'.

Bird's chapter is a foundation for all that follows. Goldflam's chapter takes this further into issues involving Aborigines, and looks at many of the issues from the point of view of the Northern Territory legal practice. Here the need for interpreters is recognised, especially under the Anunga rules, yet there is still very scanty use of interpreters, for a number of reasons discussed by Goldflam. The next two chapters focus on cases involving Aboriginal defendants and witnesses, from authors who were directly involved in court hearings on criminal matters and on land claims. Michael Cooke's account of a Coronial Inquest in 1990-1991 into the circumstances surrounding the killing of an Aboriginal man with a history of mental illness by police in the attempt to apprehend him highlights a number of disturbing issues arising from imperfect awareness of sociolinguistic and cultural rules in Aboriginal interaction on the part of lawyers involved, the inadequate use of interpreters, and the naive belief of some of the legal profession that 'word for word' translations give a true and adequate picture of what was said. Michael Walsh shows the paradoxes and complications that occur when a judging body has to assess information gained from different types of Aborigines, who Walsh points out, range from those fluent in a traditional language, living out of town in a remote area, whose closest approximation to English is a pidgin or creole, to those living in town, speaking standard English, literate (perhaps with university degrees), whose knowledge of traditional beliefs, practices and sites has been gained by reading or taking notes at meetings with the first type of Aborigines—in the same way as the anthropologist or linguist may have gained information. To government representatives, literacy and traditional knowledge have been regarded as in opposition. While in the legal system, the written transcript or written records are regarded as the definitive evidence, written submissions or evidence presented by Aborigines was ironically considered suspect. As Walsh points out, cases like the Kenbi claim, submitted by Aborigines, many of whom were thoroughly literate in English, and with similar living style to white city-dwelling Australians, will be increasingly submitted by similarly accultur-

ated Aboriginal groups in the more populated parts of Australia. Some in the legal profession and out of it find it hard to credit that such Aborigines have any 'tradition' of their own.

In Part 2, Jensen and Gibbons discuss cases where non-Aboriginal people with limited English were disadvantaged in legal proceedings, looking at the need for interpreters, the usefulness of analyses of proficiency in English, style and grammar. Appendices to Jensen's and Gibbons's chapters give the transcripts, PRIs (Police Record of Interview) and translations into English of interviews conducted with interpreter help. Bowe and Storey discuss the work of linguists in assessing the probability that two tape-recorded voices are of the same person. In all these areas linguists have been increasingly recognised as expert witnesses. This part also includes Eades's account of the cases of two Aboriginal men gaoled for murders: the Condren case, in which she acted as an expert witness, and the Stuart case of 1959, where Strehlow, fluent both in English and Stuart's mother tongue (Arrernte) gave evidence. Both men were convicted on the basis of police 'verbals'; both claimed innocence and appealed their sentences; both spent years in gaol before release, Stuart after serving a life sentence. In both cases, the linguistic evidence was clear that the accused could not have composed or dictated the alleged confession, which was couched in a style of English quite foreign to them. Strehlow's evidence, though convincing to us now, was discounted at a time when far less was understood of sociolinguistics and less known about Aboriginal forms of English; Eades's evidence was at length taken into account.

Part 3 consists of two chapters, the first a legal perspective and some history of changes in definitions and applications of the criminal offence of 'offensive language', and the second, an analysis and classification of swearing and the language of abuse, with a number of accounts of charges laid and opinions offered by judges and others, presented in Taylor's inimitable style. It is clear from both these chapters that working class and Aboriginal people are more likely to be charged with using offensive language, and professional people less likely so, and if charged, are more likely to have the charges dropped. What is also clear, is that what is regarded as swearing is rather tightly linked (or was so) to social class and status, as well as setting and interlocutors or hearers. Taylor points out that from the first white 'settlement' of Australia, Australia has had a reputation for its swearing, and Taylor comments on

the genius of the swearing system of English, certainly of Australian English, in the combining of the figurative uses of swearwords at the various taboo levels with a whole host of sentence types, whose meanings and levels of social acceptability are completely lost on anyone who has not grown up in the society that uses this sort of language. Other languages, for example German, which is related to English and some of whose swearwords, such as *Scheisse* for *shit* and *Arsch* for *arse*, are from the same origin as ours, do not have this same degree of complex interaction of the vertical and horizontal axes (i.e. literal meaning and grading of acceptability, both literal and figuratively) in their swearing language that English has (p. 224-5).

In his appendix, Taylor lists (with examples) 23 constructions where swear words or quasi-swear words (corresponding to his vertical axis) can be inserted to add vehemence or otherwise modify the meaning of the utterance. I include three examples (pp. 256-8).

**Pseudo-simile:** *as* + adjective = *as* + 'S'-noun = 'extremely'.

He's as lazy as shit.

**\*Pseudo-imperative:** 'S'-verb + noun/pronoun = indication of anger towards the person or thing referred to.

Fuck this pen! It won't write!

**'S'-word/phrase + (tag) assertion = negation of interlocutor's (A's) assertion.**

A. You cash cheques here, don't you?

B. Pig's arse (we do/we cash cheques). (= We certainly don't (cash cheques).)

Taylor describes how the ABC's 1992 documentary 'Cop it sweet' showed how young police routinely told anyone standing around to 'Fuck off', then arrested a mildly inebriated man for telling *them* to 'Fuck off'. The man was incredulous that they considered this swearing. Taylor shows how in many cases police reaction escalates a relatively minor situation into a major confrontation. The account I enjoy most in this chapter is the case where a man was fined in a Lismore court. In the presence of the Federal Minister for Land Transport, he used words to the following effect 'But what about the roads, mate? They are shit!' An appeal judge (and apparently the magistrate informally) considered it was a fair description of the roads! (Having travelled in that area about that time I recall one section of road that well fitted his description, and bore a sign which showed the locals thought so too.) The judge also was reported as having said that 'a word could not be offensive if it was used 50 million times a day in NSW' ('Dirt roads', *S-H*, 25 November 1996) (p. 234).

Taylor also makes a good case suggesting that for many Aboriginal people, our commonly used swear words referring to bodily functions and sexual organs are mainly used only as vehemence words (his 'S'-words), as (even where only English is spoken by them) traditional language words are widely used for such bodily functions and sexual organs. Not only Aboriginal people, but many whites also, use such words almost exclusively for vehemence.

This is a very worthwhile book.

Margaret Sharpe  
University of New England

*Aboriginal Enviromental Impacts*. By James Kohen. University of New South Wales Press, Sydney 1995. Pp.160. \$27.95.

It is possible both visually and from historical records to measure much of the human impact on the Australian environment during the past 200 years. The overall loss of trees, land erosion, the growth of cities and their suburban and industrial landscapes providing all manner of pollution to the air, rivers and surrounding seas to mention but a few. How to measure human impact on the continent for the thousands of years that preceded the arrival of the eighteenth century seafarers with home ports in Asia and Europe is more difficult. Aimed at the general reader Kohen's book attempts to establish the record of human impact by demonstrating a sequence of events, derived in the most part from archaeological and palynological records. The front cover of the book depicts fire, a theme which is central to his argument.

The timing of the arrival of the first inhabitants is given at about 50,000 years ago when low sea levels had increased continental and island land mass and reduced sea distances if island hopping. Timing of subsequent arrivals is not resolved until the arrival of the dingo about 4,000 years ago with a suggestion based on morphology of some isolation in the intervening years. However, during the intervening period 46,000 year period dates are given which place humans in the now arid and semi-arid desert areas on the mainland and in the forests of Tasmania. That the lead up to glacial maximum and the subsequent amelioration of climate would have been a slow process allowing for human adaptation to changing conditions and their presence in possibly un hospitable areas is not addressed. Similarly, neither is the continuing change of climatic conditions since sea level stabilisation and the gradual desertification of much of the continent. Estimates of population away from riverine and coastal areas are not discussed.

Mega faunal extinction is presented with discussions on tools, dwarfing, global extinction, climate, possible habitat, fire, overkill, trophic cascade and 'three conflicting models of mega faunal extinction' without a conclusion. That they survived at Trinkey until c7000 years ago indicates a late extinction and a long period of co-existence with the human population.

Hunting, gathering, the changing tool kit and its timing across the continent, leads the reader into the subject of intensification with the theory proposed by Lourandos based on Victorian data accepted. Increased population density equated with increased impact on the environment. There is a suggestion that remains of structures and eel-traps proliferate over the landscape as an indication of new technology and intensification whereas in fact they are restricted to a small area.

Fire is a theme which Kohen returns to many times and is the major environmental impact. The remains of fire show in the palynological record and archaeological sites. Ethnography informs of the mosaic burning carried out to promote growth and from this animals attracted to the new growth areas and availability of protein when the animals are killed. Destruction of mega fauna habitat by fire could have been a factor in their demise. Denudation by fire can cause soil erosion which in turn can cause silting. The pattern of fire management appeared to be beneficial to the environment. European fire hazard management allows for the reintroduction of plants and a subsequent reservoir of fuel for burning. The fire theme appears in most chapters.

Overall data are cited in a general way with perhaps further explanation required. For example, page 66 mentions prohibition on the size of shellfish collected, and mentions adults not eating fruit which falls to the ground. In the first instance this is considered as a conservation mechanism, no explanation is given for the second example. When women collect yams the burying of part of the yam is considered as another possible conservation mechanism, it is not until page 116 that this might be considered as incipient agriculture. There is a repetition of sub-themes with perhaps slightly different data. For example, on page 23 'the earliest dingo remains are not more than 4000 years old.' By page 86 'Archaeological evidence shows that it was established in parts of Australia by 3-3500 years ago'. Suggestions that north Australian axes may be 31,000 years old rates an exclamation mark but not a reference (page 71). The trading and sowing of seeds (page 116) also merits a reference. Andrew Cockburn on reduction of fire frequency and the decline of pseudomyine rodents (page 130) has an incorrect citation.

No maps are provided to assist the reader to locate the many sites and areas referred to. A table showing tool assemblages and their change through time would provide a focus for the various comments on tools. The change in size and attributes from say a Kartan artefact to a microlith might be easier to visualise with a few line drawings.

Doreen Bowdery  
The Australian National University

*The Son of Jimmy.* By Jack Gibbs, Historical Society of the NT, Darwin, 1995, 122pp. \$14.00. ISBN 0646233076. Available from the Society, PO Box 40146, Casuarina NT 0811.

This book is a light editing of transcriptions, ordered chronologically, of Jack Gibbs' tape recorded yarning.

He was born in 1918, the son of James Boland Gibbs (died 1963) of St Vidgeon station in the Gulf, and Nellie Narlilwarra, a Mara and Wandarang woman. He learned to be a stockman from his father, then worked around the Northern Territory and east Kimberley. He tells his tale in twenty-six short chapters such as 'Poddy dodging at Tipperary', 'Roper Valley to Alice Springs with horses', and 'Mustering at Aileron'. There are sixteen photographs. From 1948 he and his wife Nancy Croft were on and off at the Channel Island Leprosarium, then from 1954 the East Arm Hospital, until it closed.

The A4 size book with his fine colour portrait on the front is a good evocation of his life, 'the story of a yella fella, born in the bush and working on cattle stations and travelling all around'.

D.G. Nash  
The Australian National University

*A Life Together, A Life Apart. A History of Relations between Europeans and Aborigines.* By Bain Attwood, Winifred Burrage, Alan Burrage and Elsie Stokie. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne 1994. Pp. xiv + 232. \$24.95 pb.

Bain Attwood has done a great service to Aboriginal historical scholarship in editing the 'oral narratives' or reminiscences of Winifred, Alan and Elsie, the daughters and son of Charles and Elsie Burrage who managed or taught on three Aboriginal reserves in New South Wales between 1917 and 1940. The book is organised in three parts, a substantial historical introduction, the body of the work which presents memories of life on the Sevington, Cummeragunja and Moonahcullah stations, and an essay which attempts to assess the oral narrative as a reliable source for reconstructing history.

As might be expected the introduction places the narrative firmly in the context of protectionist government policy, the appalling negative side of which has led to so much present outrage, anger and recrimination. In a period when many managers were often poorly selected and acted harshly and unfeelingly the Burrages stand out as highly motivated and dedicated officials imbued with a missionary spirit. Currently managers such as the Burrages are condemned for their paternalism and their attempts

to 'persuade Aborigines to become white' though that was the approved policy of the day.

Since the renaissance of Aboriginal activism in the late 'sixties it has become difficult for the present generation to imagine how much defeatism and submissiveness fed the prejudices of officials who did not have the missionary idealism of the Burrages. Even when I was laying the groundwork for starting *Aboriginal History* in 1968 a senior and much respected anthropologist attempted to dissuade me on the grounds that such a publication would raise public expectations and the Aboriginal people would not live up to them. Fortunately he revised his opinions as a result of the growing activism. Joyce Mercy told me how she and others in her generation had passively accepted that they were supposedly backward in relation to white children until a dedicated school-teacher made them stay back after school until they had caught up with the others of their age. This was not making Aborigines white; it was making them equal.

In a time less concerned with grievances and reconciliation Attwood might well have placed the story of the Burrages in the Congregational tradition: Samuel Clode who instructed the Sydney Aborigines before his murder in 1799, the Hassalls who taught Aborigines in their Sunday Schools, L.E. Threlkeld at Lake Macquarie, George Taplin at Point McLeay, J.B. Gribble in the Riverina (afterwards with the Anglicans in Western Australia) and the London Missionary Society in the Torres Strait between 1870 and 1915. The Congregational missionary tradition was egalitarian and democratic in theory. Charles Lionel Burrage belonged to this tradition. His family had been 'staunch Congregationalists' for generations and he himself was ordained a Congregational minister in 1909. There was even a family tradition that they were related in some way to the great missionaries David Livingstone and Robert Moffat, and Charles Burrage's elder sister was a missionary in South India.

Apart from a number of letters written by Mrs Elsie Burrage to her family in 1917, the reminiscences consist of a narrative of life at Sevington and a postscript covering the later years by Winifred and a transcript of seven interviews by Bain Attwood with the three Burrage siblings held between November 1985 and February 1987. That Attwood almost agonises over the place of oral history may seem strange to historians trained to assess all types of evidence and who are painfully aware that any historical reconstruction can only approximate to what took place in the past, yet some of the issues raised in the terminal essay clearly justify the excursus. His informants had particularly sensitive consciences since they would not even read the intimate letters of their parents and were loath to offend both Aborigines and former officials.

As with all reminiscences not based on *aides memoire* memory was often faulty but the memories themselves resonate with responsibility, care, humour and affection. There are people in this story, real people, and the Aboriginal characters have a dignity often absent from those missions and reserves where an already humbled people were instructed to be humble. The book has illustrations and a map but no index. One hopes that if it is republished it is illustrated with the full complement of photographs in Alan Burrage's album.

Niel Gunson  
The Australian National University

*Torres Strait Islander Women and the Pacific War.* By Elizabeth Osborne. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press. 1997. Pp. xv + 271. \$29.95

Elizabeth Osborne's work is the latest contribution to a growing field of scholarly works devoted to understanding how Torres Strait Islanders have made and experienced their life-worlds. As a discussion of Islander women's recollections of their experiences during the second World War, it further deepens our understanding of how they, and many other Islanders, reacted to events that had such profound impacts on all Australians. Along with other recent publications devoted to Islanders, this work signals a significant turning of the scholarly wheel. Since the mid 1980s the number of published academic books devoted to Torres Strait Islanders has virtually surpassed the number of preceding works published over the past 100 years. What was once at the margins of scholarly attention has now assumed an important place in Australian literature. In part, this reflects the impact Islanders have had on national debates through issues such as the negotiations over the establishment of the Papua New Guinea-Australia border in the early 1970s, and the 1992 Mabo decision in the High Court. It also reflects the increased awareness that the inhabitants of Torres Strait have long been grappling with issues which are currently concerning the rest of Australia: identity, inter-ethnic relations, relations between Indigenous Australians and others, and the development of representative political structures which better articulate local concerns and interests.

In the context of the new dialogue between Islanders and mainstream Australians, Osborne offers a personal work, relying strongly on Islander women's recollections of their lives during the second World War. Osborne achieves this through the extensive use of quotes from Islander women. This allows the reader to engage with them more readily. Osborne balances these quotes with an analysis that seeks to explain the actions of government, church and military officials towards Islanders: these involved evacuation, enlistment and governmental policies.

This oral history methodology has much to offer, as it gives voice to those so frequently elided in historical discussions. It also requires some patience on the part of the reader, as a slow and revelatory relationship is established between reader and those speaking: tedious at worst and edifying at best. The burden for these relationships lies, as with all written works, at the level of textual structure and writing technique. However, in oral historiography, the narrative carriage also brings with it a substantial amount of analysis. Words are more often left in the mouth of the speaker, but their arrangement in relation to other's spoken words and the author's own words are crucial to meeting the oral historian's aim of resting history at the local rather than with abstractions. There is then, considerable weight put on the author's writing skills, as the structure of the text is designed to give validity to the spoken word. In pursuing this writing strategy Osborne seeks to redress the absence of speaking women in historical texts. While men are not clearly singled out as the source of this exclusion and the cross-cutting axis of race does not fall on whites, it is clear that Osborne identifies both gender and race as the two themes behind the exclusion of Islander women from Islander history. Less clear is why Osborne has chosen the second World War as the period through which Islander women should speak. Undoubtedly the events in the Pacific during the second World War had profound effects on Islanders, as Osborne and other writers note. They, with all non-military personnel, were removed from the major settlement of



Thursday Island and adjacent southern islands to places throughout Queensland. Unlike white women Islander women were treated as wards of the state and placed under the care of government and Church. Their words convey the confusion they experienced as a result of dislocation. However, an equally valid case could be put for an exploration of women's experiences during the Torres Strait pearling industry before and after the war, when gender relations were profoundly reorganised, or a more general exploration of women's migration to the mainland, to name two issues. With no clear reason for choosing this period it is difficult for the reader to assess the importance of the war in Islander women's lives as against other events and experiences in their lives.

Discriminatory evacuation and enlistment procedures are a recurrent theme in the first six chapters of the book. Interestingly, Osborne shows how anachronistic these policies were in light of the relationships Islander women were making with Islanders and non-Islanders alike prior to the war. Thursday Island was a bustling multi-ethnic town as the flourishing pearling industry attracted people from around the world. When evacuation commenced and the authorities organised the southern island's residents into groups for the ships to take out, Islanders found the evacuation procedures to be organised around race: white-black, and then internally differentiated as full-bloods and half-castes. These arrangements were the basis of the order of the evacuation, with whites first on the ships and half-castes last. By contrast, those women, children and the aged who resided on the northern Torres Strait islands were allowed to stay on their islands. As Osborne remarks, this was a curious decision, as they were likely to feel the brunt of any land invasion by the Japanese and were also regarded, as with other Islanders, as likely sources of labour for the Japanese. Osborne explains this policy as stemming from a regard by the authorities for the adverse effects arising from such a dislocation, a policy shared with respect to Melville and Bathurst Island residents. I am unconvinced by this argument as the military had shown a willingness to do whatever they thought was necessary for recruitment by reversing an earlier decision to not enlist Islander men on racial grounds, and then granting them half the pay of enlisted whites. Also, pre-war policy towards Aborigines and Islanders had rarely worried about their attachment to place, as evidenced during the war by the removal of southern island residents.

The remaining chapters focus on Islander women's experiences in Torres Strait. As with many other communities in Australia, they instituted blackouts and restricted the wearing of brightly colored clothes. Their fear of invasion seemed to be balanced by the strength of their Christian faith, expressed through prayer. Serving Islander men said that they regarded the women's faith as bolstering their own confidence. The issue of women's faith is an important one because Osborne regards it as marking a shift in Islander women's identity. Osborne argues that the development of the Mothers Union, a 'women only' organisation affiliated to the Anglican Church, allowed women to have more of a say in community affairs than tradition had previously allowed them. The critical hinge is said to be prayer. Through prayer Islander women were able to exert leadership in community and regional affairs. Small and large gatherings gave a sense of solidarity through a trying time. In addition, war-time prayer was said to continue a spiritual relationship to the corporeal and spiritual world which was common in pre-Christian religion. Hence, women gained a spiritual leadership they had not known

before. But at this point Osborne reverts to an earlier claim that this leadership was as peripheral in the Church as their influence in pre-Christian religious and ceremonial affairs.

My misgivings with this argument lie at two levels. One is the author's reliance on men and women's accounts and written sources of pre-Christian gender relations as wholly indicative of those relations. From these it would seem that women were entirely secondary in social life. However, some of what is elided or denigrated occurs because of the evaluation Christianity has made of particular practices. Sorcery and communication with spirits, practices that conferred great respect on a person, have been transformed from processes of agency into heathen beliefs. Women were participants in both, as well as being prominent in agriculture, birthing and relationships negotiated within a kinship framework. My second misgiving concerns the statement on page 170 that Torres Strait Islanders are a Melanesian people cut off from their heartland by the Australian border. This is a confusing statement as Osborne states in the previous sentence that it is important to understand religious change as amalgam of old and new practices and beliefs. The border, as it currently stands, is an open border, allowing freedom of movement within a designated area for Papua New Guineans and Islanders. Prior to its establishment in 1978 there were very few restrictions on movement between the southwestern Papuans and Islanders. The border has not stopped the flow of people, ideas, materials and beliefs. It seems that Osborne is unsure of how to account for both continuity and radical change.

There is a great deal in this book for Islanders, war historians and Torres Strait scholars. In taking women's experiences seriously Osborne reminds us that a masculine reading of history and a wholesale reliance on archival materials too often obscures the complexity of peoples' lives. By creating spaces for women to speak the explanatory sections are given depth. It is also a work about Australia, in the sense that many of the women's experiences during the war were not too far removed from those of mainland Australian women, as the northern island women kept their communities alive through difficult times and southern island women were evacuated from the region. Though this publication adds a missing dimension to the histories of Islanders and Indigenous Australian women, it ought not to be regarded as a work about memory or a series of interlocking biographical sketches. It is more historical than oral. This is a pity because despite women's voices appearing throughout the book, the expectation that we might gain an insight into their experiences beyond their words remains unfulfilled. This could have been remedied by following the lives of one or two women, and reflecting on how and why Islander women's memory has taken the forms it has.

Richard Davis  
The Australian National University

*Words of Our Country, Stories, Place Names and Vocabulary in Yidiny, the Aboriginal Language of the Cairns-Yarrabah Region.* Compiled and edited by R.M.W. Dixon. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1991. Pp. 312, xiv, maps and illustrations.

Yidiny (Y) is the indigenous language of the region which extends roughly from Cairns to Babinda, and many of the descendants of its speakers live at Yarrabah and other

towns in the area. Bob Dixon published *A Grammar of Yidiny* in 1977, and seen in that perspective, *Words of Our Country* completes his descriptive task by presenting a collection of texts and a comprehensive vocabulary. However, it also stands on its own as a paperback book which will engage the interest and attention of both popular and academic readers. For local Aboriginal people, it makes accessible a great amount of historical and cultural heritage which some caring members of their old people wished to pass on to future generations. For (local and other) non-Aboriginal readers, it presents a rich body of knowledge which contests the stereotype of traditional Aboriginal cultures and societies as being somehow 'primitive' and simple. And academic readers, whether anthropologists, botanists, linguistics, zoologists or whatever, will find in it a veritable goldmine of information and data, some of it systematised and some of it to be discovered as the gift of serendipity and other background knowledge.

Following its introduction, the book is in three major sections: stories, place names and vocabulary. The introduction provides an account of the recent history and the longer indigenous history of the region, its peoples and their language varieties, a simple account of Y phonology to enable the reader to understand and pronounce the Y forms (written in a practical alphabet) and a delightful description of Dixon's informants/consultants and how they worked together from 1970 to record as much as they could of the language and the culture and society of its speakers. Dick Moses (his main informant), Tilly Fuller, George Davis and other helpers are presented as interesting people and personalities in their own right.

The stories number twenty-four texts, and they include conventional and autobiographical narratives, as well as Storytime (Dreamtime) and current-era accounts. An interesting feature of Y conventional narration is that the narrator generally assumes the role of a main character and moves into the first person. The stories each are presented in numbered sections; the first lines are Y clauses and sentences, marked as intonation groups, the following lines are fairly close English translations with some bracketed material added to aid understanding. Notes close each text. This format is a good compromise among various possibilities, and it has the virtue of constantly associating the English translation with its Yidiny original. The stories themselves are interesting reading, and some tell of the Storytime heroes—Dammari and Guyala, Gulnyjarubay and Bindam—and how the country was formed, while others concern historical and ethnographic topics.

The short section on place names lists 140 or so place names with translations and sometimes folk etymologies, and these are presented again on two clear maps.

The vocabulary section occupies more than half the book and includes three parts: a Yidiny-English vocabulary, an alphabetical list of Yidiny words and affixes and an alphabetical English finder list. The main vocabulary is organised by semantic fields and parts-of-speech. Entries indicate dialectal affiliation and special affinal register forms. The glossing is excellent, giving both technical and popular translations, and the forms are often exemplified in appropriate sentences. Many floral and faunal species are given their proper Latinate designations, and botanists and zoologists will appreciate the systematised listings.

Throughout the book, Dixon cross-references Roth and earlier scholars' work as well as his own *A Grammar of Yidiny*. The two final alphabetical lists include cross-references to the earlier vocabulary and the grammar.

I recommend the book highly to all readers—all will find something interesting and engaging in it—and I commend the University of Queensland Press for publishing it in a paperback edition.

Bruce Rigsby  
The University of Queensland

*Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1972.* By Heather Goodall. Sydney: Allen and Unwin 1996. Pp. i–xxiv, 1–421, plates, maps, notes, bibL, index. ISBN 1 86448 1498. \$29.95.

The aftermath of the Wik decision makes one wonder if there will ever be an end to the resistance that settler Australians have to accommodating the presence of the indigenous peoples they displaced in order to build contemporary Australia. Official and *unofficial* programs of massacre, dispersal and humanitarian aid have been undergirded by racist policies and attitudes which have ensured the continual exclusion of Aboriginal people from their rights as both indigenous landowners and as Australian citizens. Long structured into Australian thinking, this resistance emerges in various guises in different situations over the two centuries of colonisation. It is graphically and meticulously documented in the work of Heather Goodall, whose latest book, although focussed on New South Wales, says much about colonial and racist attitudes more broadly, both past and present. I thought I knew a lot about Aboriginal history in New South Wales, indeed much of it learned from Goodall's earlier work, but *Invasion to Embassy* is jammed packed with a century and a half of stories of effort, defeat and determination which left me dazed at the enormity of the struggle that generation upon generation have had to face in every part of the state.

What Goodall manages to convey so well is the complexity of these stories, from one time to another and one place to another as Aboriginal people responded to the local, state and national agendas which impacted on their lives. This comprehensive account blends generalised and specific histories to create a panoramic patchwork. The way in which Goodall does this, without losing the reader, is the great strength of this book. It contextualises the local in the broader picture, bunging a forceful and often confronting significance to seemingly isolated localised events, involving specific individuals and communities, but without losing the richness that comes from detailed case studies.

This approach provides the vehicle for Goodall's overall theme. This is expressed most succinctly when she begins to talk about land politics in the 1920s: 'This was a new spatial politics of exclusion and entry, defined and controlled by the incoming town whites but fought out on the very earth of Aboriginal people's own country' (p.174). Goodall sets out to demonstrate that Aboriginal people have consistently fought to regain control of at least parts of their own lands, arguing that they stayed as close to their own lands as possible, maintained a strong consciousness of their rights to land based on their prior ownership and that this has provided an important dynamic in the ways in which they responded to pressures which were at one moment assimilationist and the next segregationist. In the shifts in policy making Goodall traces the consistent demands for portions of land, demands which were expressed in various ways.

Overall, Goodall does support her thesis that Aboriginal demands for the return of and control of land has been persistent through the period of their colonisation. She also demonstrates the strong conviction that the return of lands was always understood by Aboriginal people as a right based on their prior ownership of 'this vast land which is ours by Divine Right', as put by William Cooper whose own efforts form a central motif of the book. What is not so persuasively argued is the thesis that different Aboriginal peoples were claiming the return of their own specific traditional lands rather than land in general and Goodall herself does not always address the ambiguity. There are also interpretative comments which sometimes are insufficiently substantiated by the data presented, leaving an impression that the argument might be being pushed too far. One example makes it difficult to generalise, although the picture Goodall paints is internally consistent and evocative.

Goodall's focus on relations between Aborigines and the state, rather than on the internal dynamics of Aboriginal interactions, means the thesis that people were demanding their own land, rather than land in general (and both, it would appear, were the case in different times and places) would be difficult to develop with her specific data base. But this is not to say that this was not the case. Indeed, Goodall would seem to have laid an important foundation for the next step of taking detailed local knowledge of systems of succession to land and movements of specific people through time and place so as to establish the ways in which land continued to be understood or was changed in Aboriginal perceptions.

The fine grained detail is what is so fascinating in Goodall's work. There may be a way to skim this 'magnum opus', as a colleague described it, but I found it difficult to do so as the text would draw me back into itself. It is well written and is deserving of the time it will take to read. However, it is also an example of the kind of history which is currently proving very difficult for many Australians to hear. As a laying bare of events, the majority of which have taken place during living memory, the book demands a witnessing of that history in such a way as to feel the pain and struggle which Aboriginal people in this country were and are going through. This book does not allow the luxury of locating colonisation as something that happened 200 years ago, for which 'we' have no current responsibility, but as an on-going process which started in the past and continues, and for which responsibility must be taken by those who hear this story.

The history and cultural experiences of the many different Aboriginal societies of New South Wales, whilst the subject of both anthropological and historical research in the past, have not been given much weight in comparison to other parts of Australia. Indeed, Goodall's critique of Elkin is a response to a long process of devaluation. This very accessible text should contribute significantly to bringing the Aboriginal experience of this part of Australia to the fore in public as well as in educational contexts. It celebrates the continuities and strengths of New South Wales indigenous societies whilst placing them firmly within the structures and relationships of the state - with effects which were certainly debilitating at times but which were also responded to in very creative ways as Aboriginal people sought to maintain their own sense of space and social relations.

Gaynor Macdonald  
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*From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as Social Memory.* By Chris Healy. Cambridge University Press, Melbourne 1997. Pp. viii + 249. \$29.95 paperback.

Chris Healy explores six sites in which social memory has been (and is) articulated: white Australian memorials to Captain Cook (especially the cottage in Melbourne's Fitzroy Gardens; Aboriginal narratives about Captain Cook; colonial Australian museums; schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (in particular local histories produced by Victorian school children and teachers in 1922); the Eureka Stockade; and captivity narratives concerning Eliza Fraser. Healy devotes a chapter to each of these topics examining various ways in which they have been remembered, memorialised, represented. His choice of topics seems to have been guided by his claim that 'the most powerful public historical narratives of Australian social memory date from the colonial period, prior to Australia becoming a nation in 1901'. It's a dubious claim. What about Anzac, for example?

More immediately what's social memory? It's a slippery concept and Healy attempts no rigorous definition perhaps because to do so would subvert the elusiveness and polysemy that he counts among its positive qualities. At the risk of oversimplifying, social memory could be characterised as a sense of the living significance of the past in the present. It is non-historicist (or anti-historicist?) in that its sense of the past is determinedly present-centred. This presentism Healy especially values, insofar as it fosters a mode of historical imagination that might lead to more truly postcolonial histories. As he comments, 'the dreams of colonialism [more dubiously he includes modernity as well] lie in ruins' (p. 1), but like ruins they still litter the intellectual landscape. Healy would like us to see and understand these traces of colonialism, not as something safely compartmentalised as 'the past' as conventional historiography allegedly does, but in something more like the presentist mode of social memory. His arguments have parallels with the work of Michel de Certeau although the latter gets only an occasional mention in the footnotes.

Like de Certeau Healy's writing is frequently obscure, his text dense, his prose tortuous. It is the obscurity not of postmodernism's playfulness but of postcolonialism's earnestness. In fairness, Healy is dealing with complex issues of epistemology, historiography, representation and remembrance. He is certainly not suggesting anything so simple as that social memory can provide a quick fix to the current problems of historiography. Rather, he is pleading for a reinvigorated historical imagination in which social (ultimately moral) purpose is given primacy over 'the facts'. His bugbear is 'positivist history', a term he (like other postcolonialist, poststructuralist, post-theorists) misleadingly applies to virtually any empirically-based historical study.

Perhaps it's in the nature of complex, abstract arguments that their proponents feel the need to construct convenient straw-men. Healy's is conventional historiography. On the first page of the introduction he declares: 'More often than not, the mission of [Australian] history has been to remember the triumph of colonising a continent and forming a modern nation state with destiny on its side'. How much longer can such caricatures continue to be trotted out to bolster the latest claim to having something new to say? Throughout the book, Healy invokes such caricatures of 'history' although it is sometimes difficult to discern which sense of the word he is invoking. In a discussion of the similarities and differences between history and memory he declares: 'History is

realist and rational, public and prosaic; it consists of disciplinary chronicles that aim to certify and tend to be universal in their aspirations' (p. 74). The irony is that this conception of 'history' is remarkably close to that put forward by conservative partisans for an alleged 'traditional' historiography, like Keith Windschuttle. Opposing judgements of value may be ascribed, but the problem with both is that historical scholarship (as I take 'history' to mean in this context) does not and did not necessarily conform to these strictures. And Healy must be well aware of the fact; his own footnotes are sufficient evidence of that. His characterisation reflects not the reality of historical scholarship but the demands of his own argument.

This raises the topic of Healy's rhetorical strategies. His book is no bland account of 'what happened when', nor a dry treatise on 'theory'. And there is no indication that Healy intended it to be. It is committed, impassioned, extravagant, imaginative. From close textual analysis he launches into extravagant speculation on history, memory and colonialism with a suddenness that I find disconcerting. Elsewhere he laces his exploration of colonial museum exhibits with assertions that are bold, to say the least, or less kindly opinionated and doctrinaire. Hyperbole abounds. I presume that these strategies are meant to be provocative, to subvert any conventional expectations of rational, restrained, orderly historical discourse. Too often it doesn't work. Too often I get the sense of an author overly concerned to display his own cleverness. His opening gambit falls particularly flat. Healy intersperses his introduction with slabs of text that appear to be entries from his own diary recounting his involvement with the Aboriginal protests at the 1988 bicentennial. I suppose this is meant to be self-reflexive. It collapses into mere self-indulgence. Perhaps irony was intended; if so it escaped me; I found it embarrassing to read.

Healy's Chapter Four, dealing with history teaching in Victorian primary schools during the first half-century after the introduction of compulsory education in Victoria in 1872, is his most successful. Or perhaps this merely reflects my own historiographic preferences, because here Healy is in his most historicist (to which word I attach no negative connotations) mode. He explains, why history was at first not taught in Victorian schools (because of its sectarian dimensions), then moves on to discuss the disputes over an appropriate school history in the late nineteenth century as nationhood loomed closer. The centrepiece of the chapter is an examination of the local histories, produced by Victorian school children and their teachers in 1922. As Healy explains his interest is in specifying 'the ways in which local historical imagination connects with and differs from the more universalist tendencies of national historical imagination'. He is particularly fascinated by the presence—sometimes prominence—of Aborigines in these local histories, commenting that this aspect is 'completely at odds with the received wisdom of a twentieth-century white historical silence about the Aborigines' (p. 123). Indeed, and one does not have to dredge social memory to find that there was no silence. For too long, Stanner's vast rhetorical overstatement of the 'great Australian silence' has been taken as literal truth. As Healy himself comments elsewhere, there has been 'a seemingly endless babble about Aboriginal people created by European Australians', which has impaired their hearing of Aboriginal voices (p. 45). But there was no white silence about Aborigines. Of course this raises the awkward question of why Healy (or any other non-indigenous Australian) would want to add to the babble; but that's too big to tackle here.

Healy's Chapter Two, 'Captain Cook and Death: Black Histories of Cook' provides some interesting explorations of Aboriginal historical narratives. His enthusiasm runs away with him in his introductory remark that 'These [Aboriginal] histories seem closer to the spirit of social memory in caring about the importance of being able to live with rather than simply accumulate knowledge about the past in the present' (p. 7). Invoking 'the spirit of social memory' seems perilously close to essentialising it; and 'simply accumul[at]ing knowledge about' the past suggests the prevalence of a perversely impoverished historiography that I, at least, have rarely encountered. After lengthy exegeses of a few Aboriginal narratives about Captain Cook, Healy's major point seems to be that these histories 'provide a powerful sense of the limits of non-Aboriginal social memory, a sense that the historical imagination of European modernity that we all inherit (although in distinctive ways) is not the only valid way of understanding the past' (p. 71). Healy is keenly aware of the dangers of over-emphasising the otherness of Aboriginal historical sensibilities; he expresses unease at the fact that he himself is appropriating Aboriginal narratives for his own argumentative purposes. His self-reflexivity on these scores is neither misplaced nor over-blown. Yet in the end it is the otherness of Aboriginal histories that secures their worth. 'In these [Aboriginal] histories we hear a whole range of alternative forms and plots which handle time/space differently, experiment with identity differently, juggle continuity and discontinuity differently and take as their structures not progress or heroism, but morality, culture, land and Law' (p. 71). Characteristically, Healy here insinuates his argument against an (unspecified) Western historiography structured around progress and heroism and by implication morally bankrupt while Aboriginal histories possess the admirable qualities of morality, culture and so forth. The implied dichotomy does justice to neither.

And that's the problem with *From the Ruins of Colonialism*. It is too diffuse, too grand; its targets are simultaneously too big and too narrow. Healy would like to open the historical imagination to new fields, to different modes of apprehending the past. That's fine. But his argument relies on the simplest of rhetorical devices: caricaturing the alternative. 'History' is reduced to a discourse of realism, rationalism, chronology, progress and triumphalism. The discursive diversity of history is repressed for the convenience of the argument. As much as I would appreciate further contribution to the critique of the strands of naive empiricism and progressivism that remain powerful in historiography, I fear that *From the Ruins of Colonialism* has little to offer in this regard. Any such contribution demands engagement with actual historical practices and theories, not belabouring an historiographic straw-man.

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'Living Under the Act': Taroom Aboriginal Reserve 1911-1927. By Scott L'Oste-Brown and Luke Godwin, with Gordon Henry, Ted Mitchell and Vera Tyson. Cultural Heritage Monograph Series, vol. 1. Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage, Brisbane, 1995. Pp. x + 110. p.b.

This is a fascinating exercise in local history. It recounts the brief history of the Taroom Aboriginal Reserve in central-western Queensland from its foundation in 1911 to its dis-



mantling in 1927 when the inmates were removed to the new reserve of Woorabinda some 240 kilometres away. The book's longest and most interesting section, 'Living Under the Act—Life on the Reserve' recounts the everyday lives of Aborigines at Taroom. Other sections detail the administration staffing and organisation of the reserve, the background to its establishment and eventual disbanding, and (rather too briefly) the state administrative machinery set up under the 1897 *Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act*. The text is enlivened with—a good selection of contemporary photographs and clear (though not always well-positioned) maps and diagrams. Four appendices provide additional data on the resident individuals and families of the reserve.

The book is based primarily on the oral testimonies of Gordon Henry, Ted Mitchell and Vera Tyson, all former residents of the Taroom Aboriginal Reserve. The acknowledgements suggest (somewhat equivocally) that two other Aboriginal persons Hubert Dooley and Heather Toby also contributed oral testimony. Oral evidence is supplemented by archival records from the Queensland State Archives and some Queensland government publications, as well as a limited range of published historical works. In the introduction the authors assert the empirical veracity of oral testimony, in a manner that may appear theoretically and methodologically naive. However it is not the authors' intention to problematise oral history. Rather, as they state in the introduction, it is to use oral accounts to show how the reserve inmates 'asserted their determination to exercise considerable autonomy in their own affairs'. In demonstrating this assertion of autonomy in the face of a massive apparatus of administrative control, the authors have been eminently successful.

Autonomy was not normally expressed in grand political gestures, although the book does include anecdotes about individuals who made a point of demonstrating to the authorities the fact that they would not be restrained. One was persistently sent to Palm Island for his misdemeanours, and just as persistently returned to Taroom within three weeks of being sent away. Another made it a point of honour to prove to the police that he always could and would escape gaol. More usually, autonomy was asserted through the daily commonplaces of life. The book recounts how the Aborigines of Taroom continued to hunt, both on and off the reserve, sometimes with, sometimes without the permission of the superintendent. Fights between Aboriginal individuals and groups were a common occurrence, and on at least some occasions the reserve officials were directed (successfully) by other Aborigines not to intervene. Traditional punishments were maintained on the reserve. Although the ultimate sanction of death was usually withheld because of potential conflict with the European legal system, the informants recounted one instance in which an alleged serious offender was judicially killed by other Aboriginal men. There is a fascinating section on death and burial. Traditional funerary procedures were followed as far as the actual grave site; there the superintendent would conduct a Christian burial service, after which 'the traditional ceremony would continue'. The Aborigines of Taroom Reserve seem to have had considerable success in carving out areas of social and cultural life away from the gaze of officials, and even where activities came under the official gaze, a good deal of success in maintaining a level of autonomy.

Yet Queensland had what was probably the most rigorously authoritarian system of Aboriginal administration of any Australian state at the time. How can we square the

remembrances of these former reserve inmates with the official pronouncements of, for example, J.W. Bleakley, who was Chief Protector through the major part of the period of this study? Perhaps they can't be squared. And this might suggest the extent of the gap between official discourses and the lived realities of peoples' lives - or should it be the remembered realities of peoples' lives? Perhaps we have come to believe all too readily that the rhetoric of senior administrators translated directly into the governance of peoples' lives. If so this book provides a welcome corrective.

The impact of the book would have been strengthened by a more comprehensive account of the 1897 *Aborigines Act* and the central machinery of its administration. Considerable detail is given—on local (Taroom) administrative arrangements, but the argument would have been better served by closer attention to central office policy and procedures. After all the book celebrates the 'ability [of reserve inmates] to maintain some degree of control over their lives in the face of a bureaucracy intent on establishing absolute authority over, and regulation of, every aspect of the residents' lives'. But the relevant bureaucracy was that based in Brisbane. To judge from the information in the book itself the petty officials of Taroom seem to have been relatively benign and/or ineffectual. To properly highlight the achievement of Taroom Aborigines in maintaining their autonomy, more detail is needed on the Act and its administration. The book devotes only two and a half pages to these issues, which fail to convey the extent to which the Chief Protector and his officials (formally) held power over Aboriginal lives.

In a few other instances, the information provided is a bit too sketchy. For example we are informed of an Arthur Conlon, an Aboriginal man of mixed descent, who 'would travel around the various reserves, missions and Government settlements making the residents aware of, and educating them about, their rights under the Act'. A remarkable individual it would seem. But I had never heard of Arthur Conlon before; neither had any of my colleagues. An Aborigine who in the 1920s wandered around the Queensland reserves telling the inmates of their rights deserves more than the scant two paragraphs devoted to him.

Local history it may be, but the book would be of relevance to anyone with an interest in the history of the institutionalisation and governance of Aboriginal people. It would also be of interest to the many Murrumbidgee who have some connection with the central Queensland reserves of Taroom and Woorabinda

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*Arguments about Aborigines: Australia and the evolution of social anthropology.* By L.R. Hiatt. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996. Pp. xiv + 225. Index and bibliography. \$29.95 paperback; \$90.00 hardback.

Les Hiatt has packed an amazing amount of material into less than two hundred pages of text. His book ranges over a number of the disputes about the nature of Aboriginal society and culture that have exercised the minds of non Aboriginal scholars (and sometimes the not so scholarly) since the eighteenth century. Each chapter deals with a particular area of disputation: land ownership, marriage, the role and status of women, political organisation, religious beliefs, understandings of conception, avoidance

behaviour and initiation. All are dealt with in exemplary fashion. Hiatt's prose is clear, and his ability to explicate complex issues and arguments, without falling into over simplification, is admirable.

Although each chapter deals with a particular constellation of arguments about Aborigines, they fit together nicely as a loose limbed exploration of the evolution of social anthropology. The only exception is the prologue. Here, Hiatt sketches out the history and prehistory of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, beginning with the English anti slavery movement of the mid eighteenth century. The quality of the essay is not in doubt. But I am at a loss to understand what it is doing here. Presumably it is meant to support Hiatt's contention (in the preface) that the 'ancestry [of anthropology] is not quite as bad as [he] had been led to believe'. If so, the prologue is less than successful. Moreover, its relationship to the following chapters is at best tangential.

The dozen pages of the prologue could have been better devoted to explaining the intellectual circumstances that, from the eighteenth century onward, promoted European interest in Aborigines and thereby gave rise to the arguments of the book's title. As Hiatt remarks, these arguments originated in an assumption that Aborigines were 'exemplars *par excellence* of beginnings and early forms'. It would have been useful, then, to provide some elucidation of why nineteenth century scholars made this assumption about the primitivity of Aborigines and why primitivism was central to their anthropological endeavours. Hiatt merely makes brief reference to Darwinism in the preface, while elsewhere in the book evolutionism is dealt with more by implication than explication. These issues deserve more extended consideration, particularly in view of Hiatt's own statement that: 'All the arguments in the present collection have their own origins in the evolutionist tradition' (p.xii).

Actually, some of the arguments originated prior to evolutionism becoming the established paradigm of anthropology; all of them continued long after anthropology's shift away from evolutionism. With a skill born of long and close familiarity with these arguments, Hiatt guides the reader through their twists and turns and transformations. His perspective is that of the detached scholarly observer, offering little by way of judgement of the arguments apart from the occasional ironic observation. Even where Les Hiatt himself is the anthropological commentator under discussion, the author maintains his detachment. Each chapter, with the possible exception of the second and eighth, ends with some kind of review or summing up of its topic argument, although Hiatt avoids conclusiveness. Appropriately, all arguments are left hanging.

Of course, all the arguments with which Hiatt deals could have been expounded at greater length. The cast of argumentative contributors could have been expanded. The selection of topics of disputation could have been extended. Hiatt, however, remains within limits that allow his book to be digestible as well as informative, accessible as well as insightful. Within those limits *Arguments About Aborigines* is both comprehensive and comprehensible, making it suitable for the general reader, for the undergraduate student of anthropology, Australian history and other Australian and Aboriginal oriented studies, as well as for the specialist in those fields.

In the epilogue, Hiatt adverts briefly to issues of commitment and responsibility in anthropological research, and the relationship between Australian anthropologists and those who long provided the source material for their arguments. In his view, the

role adopted by many contemporary anthropologists, of activism on behalf of the Aborigines, represents a return to the philanthropically inspired studies of the pre Darwinian early nineteenth century. Perhaps so, but one does not need to go back a hundred and fifty years to find such parallels. In the middle decades of the twentieth century, A.P. Elkin, W.E.H. Stanner, Donald Thomson and others sought to connect their scholarship with their attempts to improve the lot of the Aborigines, however misguided their attempts may appear in hindsight. Similar comments apply to an earlier generation of anthropologists, including Walter Roth and Baldwin Spencer, although hindsight might decree an even more severe assessment of their endeavours. Perhaps the problem is that Hiatt treats this particular argument all too briefly, but he does suggest, misleadingly, that anthropological studies and the welfare of those studied were once completely disconnected and have only recently been reconnected.

Or perhaps it is the needs of his own argument. Hiatt is critical of the demand for an exclusively politically committed anthropology not, it must be noted, of the notion that anthropology may serve certain political or social purposes, merely of the insistence that it must necessarily do so. He argues (again all too briefly) that such over commitment to designated political ends would subvert 'the spirit of free inquiry' on which anthropological research is rightly based. Whether anthropology (or any other discipline) ever has been based on a spirit of free inquiry is a moot point, but Hiatt is, I think, correct in identifying postcolonial unease with the 'tainted origins' of anthropology as the inspiration for its repudiation. Indeed, insofar as this book has any polemical purpose, it seems to be to lighten the taint by showing how much anthropology has been concerned with academic disputation and how little with imperialist expansion. And if that is one of Hiatt's purposes, he has been quite successful, for the argumentative anthropologists of this book appear more as opportunistic foragers around the fringes of empire than as active participants in the colonial project

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*The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History.* By Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999, ISBN 1 86448 584 1, 375 + xxii pp, \$29.95.

Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus are well known for their contributions to Aboriginal history, where their publications have sometimes been controversial but are invariably based on thorough research. Given their shared interests and the fact that both are at Monash University, it is appropriate that they have combined their talents to produce a very useful resource. *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights* tells the history of Aboriginal political battles in many parts of Australia through a selection of documents largely created by Aborigines themselves. Many of these have not previously been published and they present important Aboriginal perspectives. Attwood and Markus note in their Preface that the book was produced 'in the belief that there is an urgent need to document the history of Aboriginal political activism, in part to enable the concerns which occupy a central place in contemporary Australian politics to be placed in historical perspective'.

The process of selection and the task of arrangement were difficult. A first attempt to short-list documents for the collection resulted in more than six hundred and this had to be 'painstakingly reduced' to two hundred. Documents are presented roughly in chronological order. A comprehensive index permits consideration of particular thematic issues such as health, land and trade unions. Key terms like 'freedom' and 'justice' are also indexed. *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights* begins with a substantial introduction. Four sections, each with an explanatory statement, follow. These deal with the nineteenth century, the 1920s to the 1950s, the 1950s to the 1970s and the 1970s to 1998. There are 41 illustrations.

The chosen documents range widely, reflecting different sources, regions, objectives and strategies. Oral histories recorded after the events they describe are not used. The 1846 petition 'of the free Aborigines Inhabitants of V.D.L., now living upon Flinders Island in Bass's Straits &c &c &c.' to Queen Victoria movingly comments that, 'Your Petitioners humbly tell Y[our] M[ajesty] that when we left our own place we were plenty of People, we are now but a little one.' Burruga, 'chief of the Aboriginal Thirroul tribe', tells *Cinesound Review* in 1933 that Aborigines require representation in the Commonwealth parliament. The activist and poet Kath Walker observes in a report of her national tour in 1962 that Aboriginal leaders must found be in each state 'because that is the missing link between the white man and the Aboriginal.' The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 26 January 1995 notes that Michael Mansell, national secretary of the Aboriginal Provisional Government, would work in his Hobart office that day, deliberately ignoring the Australia Day public holiday and nearby official celebrations. These and many other documents record in some detail a changing but continuing story of Aboriginal political activity.

As Attwood and Markus concede, some indigenous Australians are critical of white historians' attempts to present the Aboriginal past. Many Aborigines, however, are likely to join Charles Perkins, Ruby Langford Ginibi and Gallarwuy Yunupingu in welcoming *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights*. Some historians will, no doubt, quibble with the book's emphases and, in particular, its omission of oral history interviews. But it still strongly reflects recent scholarly emphases on Aboriginal agency with indigenous viewpoints and voices providing the principal focus. Perhaps more convincingly than in any other publication, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights* demolishes the argument that Aborigines did not fight for political rights. It deserves a wide readership.

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*Prehistory of Australia.* By John Mulvaney and Johan Kamminga, Allen and Unwin, Sydney 1999; pp. 480, ISBN 1864489502, pb. \$39.95

Effectively a third edition of John Mulvaney's classic synthesis, this book updates the material on Australian prehistory while maintaining the distinctive vision provided in his 1969 volume. With the assistance of Johan Kamminga, Mulvaney has once again described the findings of archaeological research using a structure that begins with an ethnographic image of life and looks backwards at the historical development of those lifestyles. While the current book has many more chapters than the 1969 first edition (23

compared to 6), the basic structure remains largely true to Mulvaney's method of archaeology in which the bones and stones of Australian archaeology are illuminated by the detail of historically recorded Aboriginal lifestyles. Depending on your view of archaeological theory and cultural continuity/discontinuity in prehistoric Australia, this methodological structure is either a weakness or the volume's greatest strength. This approach emphasises continuity and gradualism in cultural change, a view most obvious in Mulvaney and Kamminga's discussion of desert adaptations. In the central Australian deserts they opt for an image of early colonists gradually developing in situ to form the historic groupings. To achieve this view they reject interpretations of migrations, regional abandonments, new colonising and adaptive strategies in the arid zone. In particular they question the linguistic and genetic evidence for desert migrations (synthesised by McConvell), the evidence and interpretations of Veth that unoccupied desert areas were settled in the Holocene, and Hiscock's model of technological adaptations in response to desert migrations. Consequently the book consistently develops an image of Aboriginal cultures, rich in complexity and ideology, gradually adjusting to changed environmental and cultural circumstances through the long span of Australian prehistory.

This book is clearly designed to educate readers at the high school or informed public level, thereby providing a worthy competitor for the very successful introduction to Australian prehistory by Flood (i.e. *Archaeology of the Dreamtime*). Consequently *Prehistory of Australia* deals with all the major themes commonly discussed at the introductory level: what traces of ancient people remain, where people came from, when they arrived, what they were like and how they spread across the continent, how they 'conquered' the deserts, whether they killed the megafauna, how they made artefacts, how they used the coasts and colonised islands, what patterns and meaning exist in rock art, and the nature of historic culture contact. These topics are all explained in clear and non-technical language, and would provide a readable introduction to the subject for any reader. Lay readers are certain to find the abundant illustrations, the description of the variety of archaeological materials and the emphasis on rock art (3 chapters) an attractive feature of the volume.

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*Body and Soul: An Aboriginal view.* By Anthony Rex Peile (S.A.C.). Edited by Peter Bindon. Jointly published by Hesperion Press, Carlisle WA and The Pallottines in Australia, Rossmoyne, WA 1997. Pp 310, hb. \$50.00.

Father Peile had a long association with the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Although he worked primarily with Aboriginal people, he was widely known and respected by people of all races and occupations. He comes in a line of Catholic priest-scholars who, for more than 100 years, have published accounts of the languages, belief systems, social and cultural institutions of the Aboriginal people among whom they have lived in the numerous Catholic Missions in the Kimberleys. Arguably, foremost among these would be another Kimberley priest, Father E.A. Worms (SAC) who came as parish priest to Broome WA in 1930, remaining there for the next ten years. He

returned to the Kimberleys in 1948 for a further ten years. Worms published numerous articles on Aboriginal language and culture. Some of his linguistic analysis now seem somewhat dated, but the bulk of his works remains as a distinctive contribution to the documentation and understanding of Aboriginal culture.<sup>1</sup>

Father Peile came to the Kimberleys in 1959, by which time Worms was a well known and respected figure among the then small group of Australian anthropologists. In several ways Peile follows in Worm's footsteps. Worm was a bush worker, travelling with Aboriginal people in their country. Three years before his death he spent nine months undertaking research in Arnhem Land and Central Australia. Peile too travelled extensively, the maps of named places which are the endpapers to *Body and Soul* were compiled during field trips. They are only a fraction of the places he mapped. Some of the tracks followed more recently by researchers are described by locals as 'Father Peile's roads'. On visiting sites in the desert away from Balgo, one would be told, 'See father Peile, our Dad showed him this place years ago'. Above all, Peile followed Worm's position that Aboriginal views had to be explored from inside and through their own conceptual tools. In this, they were modern before their time, pre-modern if you like, rather than post-modern. Both saw that, as language was how people described the world, skills in the native language would be needed for their work. Above all both applied rigour to their work, gaining the insights they did over many years. Peile was at Balgo in the eastern Kimberleys for the best part of three decades. There he set up the Gogadja Research Centre to pursue his studies<sup>2</sup>.

Kukatja people are one of the many groups whose first language is a variety of what is often called the Western Desert Language. Kukatja's close relations are the other desert languages which are spoken as far south as Kalgoorlie. Recordings made at Cundeelee and Kalgoorlie in the Western Desert dialect known as Wangkatja are readily understood at Balgo. Many Kukatja are closely related to the Pintupi people from western Central Australia. Balgo was set up as a Mission to desert people. Its short lived original location was close to Halls Creek within the Kimberley Ranges. It has been relocated several times and now sits on a headland overlooking, to the south, an enormous sea where the waves are seemingly endless sand dunes—Carnegie's 'spinifex and sand'. In this region lies the traditional home of the Kukatja, the collaborators and informants for *Body and Soul*. It is their desert bodies and desert souls that Peile reveals. In addition to its Kukatja residents, Balgo has sizeable numbers of Ngardi,

1. Among the more significant are 'Djamar, the creator: a myth of the Bad (West Kimberley), Australia'. *Anthropos*, Vol. 45 641–58; 'Djamar and his relation to other culture heroes', *Anthropos* Vol. 47, 539–60; 'Contemporary and prehistoric rock paintings in Central and Northern North Kimberley', *Anthropos*, Vol. 50, 546–66; 'Australian Mythical terms: their etymology and dispersion', *Anthropos*, 732–68. Worms died in 1963 leaving an unfinished work on Aboriginal religion which was completed for publication in German by Helmut Petri, a German anthropologist with Western Australian field experience (*Die Religionen der Sudsee und Australiens* (1986)). It was later translated into English and published as, Worms, E.A., 1986, *Australian Aboriginal Religions*, Kensington, NSW: Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit. A revised edition was published in 1998 by Spectrum Publications, Richmond, Vic.)

2. Gogadja is now written Kukatja. The earlier spelling will be encountered in the older literature.

Djaru, and other peoples. Peile worked with all these groups and while this book centres on the Kukatja much of the cultural material is equally applicable to these other groups.

While Father Peile studied the language of the Balgo people, particularly the Kukatja language, of which he acquired a rich knowledge, his primary interest was not merely understanding and documenting the language. Rather he tried to immerse himself in it to a degree where he could use his knowledge to allow the Kukatja to speak for themselves—to reveal how they perceived of themselves—as individuals who come into life and who die and who, during their life are subject to physical, emotional, spiritual forces—and how the individual seeks to exercise some control over these forces. In addition to what he learnt of Kukatja concepts of the human person and its condition, Peile was also interested in how the Kukatja language expresses the complexity of physical, cognitive and psychological states we all experience as humans. In addition he sought to understand what people saw as the underlying causes or explanations for our physical states, conditions about which we have knowledge only on the basis of observable symptoms.

Peile did not live long enough to prepare *Body and Soul* for publication. The difficult task of taking over the massive work he composed on his personal computer at Balgo, and rendering it down to a size that allowed it to be published as a single volume was undertaken by Peter Bindon. He edited out the Kukatja language content, apart from key words and the glossary, while retaining Peile's English translations of the original Kukatja. Bindon also adds occasional identified comments of his own. At the time of his death, Peile was also working on a dictionary of the Kukatja language which was completed after his death by another priest, Hilaire Valiquette. We owe a great debt to both Bindon and Valiquette for their vital contributions to giving us access to the fruits of Peile's long and dedicated work. Those of us who have seen parts of Peile's original work hope this present publication can be supplemented by access to the original with its Kukatja passages, even if only in electronic form.

In both content and form, *Body and Soul* recalls T.G.H. Strehlow's *Songs of Central Australia*. Neither work would have been possible without a detailed knowledge of an Aboriginal language, in particular the fast disappearing vocabulary of the 'old people' who were born and came to adulthood in a world beyond the reach of Europeans, as discussed by Fr. Peile in his 14 page Introduction (see especially p. xix). Strehlow published a description of the Aranda language and Peile compiled a Kukatja dictionary. While Strehlow's debt to his linguistic knowledge is obvious almost from page one of *Songs of Central Australia*, Fr. Peile's is somewhat disguised in *Body and Soul* due to the editing out of the bulk of the quotes provided in the original Kukatja. While using the Kukatja and Aranda languages respectively to allow relatively unhindered access to Aboriginal people's voices reflecting on their own experience, both authors have gone to great pains to compare the beliefs of the Aboriginal people they lived among with other traditions. Sometimes this seems to detract from the points being made about the Australians, at other times it illuminates the place of their belief systems and associated behaviours within the broader context.

*Body and Soul* is a difficult work to review. In both its published and unpublished versions it contains a mass of data on a wide variety of topics. Chapter 1, entitled 'Life Cycle', covers pregnancy and birth, childhood, puberty, adulthood and death under



these sub-headings. Chapters 2 to 4 present the Kukatja view of the body: the 'Head and its Attributes', 'Trunk', and 'Internal Structures, Organs and Attributes'. Chapter 5 covers the Body's Operation, Chapter 6 Health and Sickness' and Chapter 7 the Treatment of Sickness. Then follow chapters on Animals and Health, Medicinal Plants concluding with the half page Chapter 10, Drowning and Resuscitation. In addition, there are 35 pages of references, and a further 35 page glossary, a Kukatja to English word list useful for following discussions in the main text. Several maps have been included: the endpapers are European style maps of the country around and to the south of Balgo with Aboriginal names over topographic features, while a Kukatja style map of an informants traditional country is reproduced on p. 34.

A strength of Peile's work is the detail given to poorly recorded or unrecorded aspects of life and belief. What do the Kukatja people think occurs at death? What causes it? Few Aboriginal accounts have been published. In particular it has not been centrally linked to the metaphysical, the spiritual world so often invoked in Aboriginal studies but usually left shallow, e.g., the spirit becomes a star in the Milky Way, or goes back to an ancestral waterhole or country. By comparison, read the account of death on pp. 32-3. Death occurs in a dream, 'it happens in a dream and it becomes true' Father Peile was told by Wiminytji, an elderly Kukatja man. Death occurs through evil supernatural beings (*kukurrpa*) taking a person's spirit from the body. These spirits evoke other images: two cats, one an old male and one an old female, and a butterfly which hangs around the body before death. The dead person's spirit is taken to a 'slippery hill near Jigalong' in the country of another Western Desert group where 'the evil spirits light a fire, cook the spirits of the deceased and devour them' (p. 31). These images exemplify how the Kukatja express their thoughts in a subtle interplay of related symbols which they share with each other—each one evoking a network of personal relationships, shared beliefs and common experiences. The essential difference between life and death consists in the permanent separation between an individual's body (their visible attributes) and their spirit (their invisible attribute). Peile documents the many types of events which may precipitate this permanent separation (especially in Chapters 6-7).

No other work known to the reviewers addresses such a range of topics as this does, for example, Peile has ten full pages on what Kukatja see as the 'injurious effects of arthropods' (pp. 184-94). Kukatja have told him:

In the *tjukurrpa* [Dreamtime], mites and ticks lived in areas of water, at soaks waterholes and billabongs. These water sources dried up and mites and ticks had to live where they could—in green grass, on green leaves, on man and animals. Mites, *putiny tjapiya*, which live in water in the arid interior belong to the order, Hydrachnidae. According to Kukatja mythology, these are the ancestors of all mites and ticks in the world today. (p. 194).

Chapters 6, 'Health and Sickness', and 7, 'Treatment of Sickness', are very revealing of the Kukatja view of the relationship between the physical and metaphysical aspects of a person. A state of good health or optimum well-being is described in terms of the body being 'cool' and 'dry' due to the presence of the spirit inside the body. This state is maintained by eating plenty of meat, drinking enough water, avoiding excessive heat and sweating, but also by avoiding evil forces which may come from a variety of sources. A person whose body becomes 'hot' because their spirit has been compro-

mised or even drawn out from their stomach via their feet must turn to external sources of aid to restore their 'cool' and their 'spirit'. These include the services of a traditional medicine man who has the power to see inside a person to detect the source of illness and hence extract it. In recording and analysing what his Balgo collaborators told him about the human condition or what he observed them doing or saying which threw light on their views, Peile had a number of goals. He wanted to understand some fundamental aspects of the world view of the people he lived among. He did this by recording the 'evidence' and then sifting through it and analysing it, comparing it with his own views and with those reported for other people around the world—peoples far removed in space, and often in time from the Kukatja. Peile also wanted to give others access to the mass of original data he had collected—texts, the dictionary, other linguistic and anthropological material his Balgo friends had provided him with over so many years—and to the insights he had gained. In the particular case of 'Body' and 'Soul', Peile's hope was that this information could lead to heightened understanding by outsiders of how Kukatja people perceive of themselves as individuals, as Kukatja and of the human condition generally, and that this would return benefits to the Kukatja, e.g., through more informed public policy and practice especially in health. In no way did Peile pretend to have uncovered all the answers, or to have arrived at a neat synthesis of Aboriginal beliefs or theories about the human condition. His aim was to lay out as best he could the facts available to him, and to try to understand them, to fit them together, without forcing them into any preconceived mould. Here again he was clearly the disciple of Worms of whom another priest wrote, 'He was careful about using Aboriginal terms to try to describe Christian values. For instance, he cautioned me against using the Gogadja people's word for spirit to help explain the Christian concept of soul.' (From J. Kearney SAC, Biographical note p. xiv to Worms, 1986). A reading of the section 'role of the spirit' (p. 96), among others, shows that Fr Peile would concur. Despite some similarities, the Kukatja spirit is not the Christian's soul.

In some places, his editor, Bindon, questions Peile's conclusions or points out seeming inconsistencies in the data presented. Some of the instances where it seems that Bindon felt compelled to interpose his own views or to reposition Peile's findings were probably ill-advised. For example, on p. 42 Peile discusses the Kukatja concept of intelligence and good sense and its relationship with the brain. Peile contrasts the meaning of the expression literally translated as, 'brain-without' which refers to the absence or non-functioning of that organ, and expressions literally translated as 'ear-without' *langa-parni* which have the extended or figurative meaning 'having no sense or understanding' since it is the word for 'ear' which has the extended more 'abstract' meaning, synonymous with 'intelligence' which in English is associated with the word 'brain', (as in 'he's got brains', or 'he is brainy'). Bindon's comment shows that he has failed here to capture the distinction Peile is making between the way in which English and Kukatja extend the meanings of words referring to body parts to more abstract concepts such as intelligence. The use of 'no-ears' (*langa-parni* in Kukatja) in a similar manner to the English, 'no-brains' is widespread in Aboriginal languages. Often translated by Aboriginal people as 'deaf' it has a wide range of meaning from 'deaf', i.e., cannot hear sound, to 'has a mental illness' (is 'crazy/mad'), 'lacks good sense' or 'is disobedient', 'you can't get through to him'.

Peile has left behind a rich legacy. We strongly encourage any serious scholars interested in accessing the understandings of Kukatja and other Aboriginal people about these most fundamental issues for all human beings to study this book. It is not a work to be read and understood in one 'hit'. Rather it is a work to be opened and reopened and pondered on. It is a challenging book, not so much for the language or form in which it is written, but rather in how 'foreign' much of the revealed thinking is to the Western mind. Peile mostly refrains from telling the reader what to think, how to interpret what is being written, but rather lets the many texts speak for themselves—albeit via his deliberately rather literal English translations. His digressions into what various 'experts' have to say about particular phenomena, or about what peoples in a range of other cultures are said to believe, are often just juxtaposed with the Kukatja texts.

*Body and Soul* is not a mainstream anthropological work. Like T.G.H. Strehlow, its author was someone apart from 'the rest'. Anthropology and Aboriginal studies have been well served by the divergent and almost alternative viewpoint taken and topics addressed by Peile. The pity is that *Body and Soul* was not published during the author's lifetime. An editor can only go so far in producing the product its author intended. If Peile had to cut it back to the size we now have, who knows what revisions to the text would have been made to convey the information he most valued. We have long awaited this work. Bindon and the publishers have done a fine job producing a work both scholarly and attractive which deserves a place with other Australian Anthropological classics.

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*Terrible Hard Biscuits, A reader in Aboriginal history*. Edited by Valerie Chapman and Peter Read. Allen & Unwin and Journal of Aboriginal History. Sydney, 1996. Pp. xv + 284. \$29.95 p.b.

In 1990 *Australian Historical Studies* published (with Allen & Unwin) *Through White Eyes*, a collection of eight articles dealing with aspects of Aboriginal history which had appeared in that journal in its first fifty years. Just two of those articles had appeared in the journal's first forty years: John Mulvaney's two-part survey of 'opinion and field-work from 1606 to 1929' (1958) and Peter Corris's brief article on racialism (1973); all the rest were published in the eight years preceding the bicentennial year. This relative neglect of Aboriginal history by the Melbourne based journal may have been one factor influencing the small group of historians in Canberra who in the mid-1970s set about the job of establishing a specialised journal, *Aboriginal History*, the first issue of which appeared in 1977. Twenty years later this journal (with Allen & Unwin) has published a first collection of articles chosen from the first nineteen issues.

The sub-title 'a reader in Aboriginal history' suggests that the book is envisaged as a useful text for students of the history of Aboriginal Australians since 1788, as well as introducing 'a wider readership to the journal's contribution to knowledge' of that history. The eleven papers, selected from some 200, range widely across the continent and over the 200 years of settlement. The writers represented include two Aboriginal authors and, as well as historians, some whose primary fields of study have been anthropology, archaeology and geography. The editors decided, with regret, to exclude linguistic material 'because of its more technical nature' but the selection gives a good impression of the range and variety of professional and amateur writing that this journal has presented.

Isabel McBryde, historian and archaeologist, has written an introduction which tells the story of the establishment of this journal and outlines the scope of 'Aboriginal history':

It encompasses the narratives and explanation of all those complex interactions between indigenous peoples and Europeans or others during the last three hundred years of what is often unhelpfully referred to as 'contact history'. But it is not only concerned with colonial encounters. It also includes accounts of the lives of Aboriginal communities in that period, life stories of families and individuals in their own countries.

She describes the growing interest in the subject and in the methods of Aboriginal history in recent decades, and in particular the focus on 'life histories and community histories'. The book includes one 'brief life' (written from a recorded interview): Bowman Johnson's 'Growing up in Queensland', an account of his Cherbourg childhood and schooling in the 1920s and 1930s, and of his experiences working on stations and as a 'black tracker'. Several articles could be regarded as community histories, notably Lyn-dall Ryan's account—in the first issue of *Aboriginal History*—of the unique Bass Strait group from the arrival in 1798 of the first ships hunting for fur seal up to the early 1900s. Elspeth Young's article describes how settlement at two cattle stations in Anmatyerre country affected people's links to the land, a study based on land claim work. Richard Baker outlines the 'contact history' of the Yanyuwa people and in particular the story of their movement to the Borroloola township.

Two articles deal with the early years of Aboriginal encounters with white settlement. Bob Reece examines the complexities of relationships between Aboriginal groups around the Swan River and between them and the colonists in the first decade. Philip Clarke deals with a parallel situation in his examination of the available evidence about the 'cultural landscape' of the Adelaide region at first settlement there. McBryde examines the historical record for accounts by early observers that provide evidence about traditional forms of exchange of goods and services between Aboriginal groups in Southeastern Australia.

Three articles deal directly with government policies in later periods and with Aboriginal influence on, and responses to, those policies and practices. Heather Goodall and Peter Read each write about government policies in relation to reserves in New South Wales. Goodall makes the case that the government was responding to Aboriginal pressure in establishing many of the small reserves in the eastern areas of the State in the late nineteenth century. Read contrasts the public concern expressed in Sydney in the 1930s about Aboriginal administration in the Northern Territory with the apparent indifference shown to the shifts in policy and practice which severely disad-

vantaged Aboriginal people nearer to home in country New South Wales. The last article in the volume is Scott Robinson's account of the 1972 'Aboriginal Embassy' protests and their impact, based partly on interviews with participants.

The intention that the book should serve an educational purpose is clear in the way each article is presented with an introductory note, side headings and marginal notes raising questions for consideration and referring readers to related sections of other papers in the collection. The 'general reader' may find these distracting and they certainly do nothing for the appearance of book, which does not share the elegant typography and layout of the parent journal. The footnotes of the originals have been replaced by Harvard system references in the text and relatively few endnotes. The system works well enough when the reference is just a 'name and date' but many of the references are lengthy, running over two and more lines, and readers may find them distracting. Some minor editorial improvements have been made, and an index is provided, but unfortunately fresh errors have been made in transcription. Robinson's article in particular has suffered with not only single words omitted (pp. 242, 252) but in one place most of a two-line sentence has been lost (p. 248), and Prime Minister McMahon makes his Australia Day statement on '16 January 1972' (p. 242). On the plus side it is worth noting that, although not all the illustrations with the original articles have been used, some (as in Elspeth Young's article) have reproduced rather better in the book than in the journal.

This collection provides a stimulating and accessible introduction to the subject, alerting readers to some of the subtleties and complexities of the responses of Aboriginal people to settlement in their lands and to government policy and practice. It deserves to be widely used and read by teachers and by students.

Jeremy Long

*Studies in Comparative Pama-Nyungan*. Edited by G.N. O'Grady and D.T. Tryon, Pacific Linguistics. Series C, No. 111. 1990. Pp. xxii, 279, maps, bibliography and index to language names.

Pama-Nyungan (PN) is a grouping of a large number of indigenous languages which covers the Australian mainland, excepting the Kimberleys and Arnhem Land. The name comes from two widespread forms for '(Aboriginal) man, person, people' in the northeast and southwest, respectively. Against the received view, Dixon argued that the PN languages do not form a genetic unity or clade, i.e. they are not descended from a common ancestral language in such a way that they are more closely related to one another than to any language(s) outside the grouping.<sup>1</sup> Blake examined pronominal systems from languages throughout Australia and, in contrast, concluded that PN is indeed a language family, while Evans considered stem-initial apical and laminal consonant correspondences across PN and non-PN languages and proposed that the PN

<sup>1</sup> Dixon 1980, p. 226; see now also Dixon 1997, p. 37, note 5, for a reconfirmation of his position.

languages merged stem-initial apicals and laminals as laminals.<sup>1</sup> Such a shared innovation would define PN as a true clade.

Geoff O'Grady wrote the introduction to this collection and he is the author or coauthor of six of nine papers: the book is his response to Dixon's position.<sup>2</sup> O'Grady reminds us repeatedly of Ken Hale's earlier claim that PN is the 'largest coherent linguistic genetic construct in Australia'. What is distinctive about O'Grady's approach here is his attention to the evidence that vocabulary or lexicon can provide for demonstrating common descent among languages. His methodology goes beyond the inspection of comparative vocabularies for obvious one-to-one sound-meaning similarities. Forms not only may undergo phonological change, but they may also change their meanings in ways patterned by metonymy, metaphor, widening, narrowing, etc. One must cast a wide net to find cognates (forms descended from the same ancestral form) that have undergone semantic change. For (an Indo-European) example, having judged that Russian *noga* 'leg, foot' and English *foot* are not cognate, one must push on to compare English *nail* and German *Nagel*, which are cognate with *noga*. And this set of forms must be set beside the set which includes English *foot*, German *Fuss* and the root of Russian *peshij* 'pedestrian, unmounted' and *peshkom* 'on foot', as well as with *pod* 'ground, base, foundation', to gain a fuller perspective on semantic change.

Knowledge of how semantic change can operate and the daring to try to recognise its courses in examining phonologically resemblant forms of disparate meanings across languages: these are O'Grady's specialties. It is fascinating to watch him work his magic especially in three papers here. In 'Wadjuk and Umpila: a long-shot approach to Pama-Nyungan', O'Grady compares two languages at the extremes of the continent and finds them plausibly relatable just on the basis of modern evidence. In 'Pama-Nyungan semantics: *brain, egg and water*', he explores sets of forms whose meanings include these senses and others, but the argument might be strengthened by more explicitly laying out just how these senses can be connected synchronically and diachronically. And in 'The Nuclear Pama-Nyungan universal quantifier *\*parntung*', he searches for its reflexes in more than a dozen far-flung PN and non-PN languages.

T.R. Hendrie's 'Initial apicals in Nuclear Pama-Nyungan', the longest paper of the collection, searches nine regionally diverse PN languages for cognate sets and concludes that Proto-PN contrasted *\*t*, *\*n*, *\*l* and *\*r* initially, as against Dixon's different reconstruction—but now note Evans' quite different view.<sup>3</sup> It's a pity that Hendrie still takes Tindale's trihybrid theory of Aboriginal racial origins seriously when later physical anthropologists and archaeologists have consistently failed to find supporting evidence for it. Its persistence is pernicious when some opponents of the recognition of traditional Aboriginal property rights in land justify European colonization and dispossession with reference to the Tindale position that the Murrayian and Carpentarian ancestors of modern Aboriginal people earlier dispossessed the original Barrinean negro owners of most of the continent.

O'Grady and D.T. Tryon's 'Early Austronesian Loans in Pama-Nyungan?' identifies eight forms they believe may have been borrowed very early before the later spread

1. Blake 1988 and Evans 1988.

2. Dixon 1980; see also O'Grady and Fitzgerald 1997.

3. Dixon 1980, p. 175; Evans 1988.

of PN languages across the continent. *\*payung* 'shelter, protection' and *\*mAya* 'language' are certainly striking. O'Grady and Tryon's suggestion that Cape York Peninsula was the probable region of contact should be detached from their proposal that northeastern Australia was the centre of PN dispersal in view of more recent stronger evidence pointing to an area south of the Gulf of Carpentaria as the centre of dispersal.<sup>1</sup>

Barry Alpher's 'Some Proto-Pama-Nyungan paradigms: a verb in the hand is worth two in the phylum' brings to mind Bloomfield's well-known reconstruction of full Proto-Algonquian inflected forms. Alpher corroborates certain of Merlan's views on verbal conjugations in Proto-Australian, but with specific reference to Proto-PN, which displays in his reconstruction a system that lacks the symmetry of many of its modern languages. Like O'Grady, Alpher too has Dixon in his sights.

Nick Evans' 'The Minkin language of the Burketown region' is thematically anomalous in focusing on a single language which doesn't even belong to the PN family, but it provides a fine example of what a talented researcher can wring out of limited vocabulary lists of poor quality to reconstitute features of a language. Minkin disappeared very early in contact history, but to judge from its available vocabulary, pronominal system and verbal systems (as well as certain lesser features), it can be placed in a Minkin-Tangkic family as a distant cousin to the more closely related Tangkic languages of the lower Gulf coast region.

In summary, this collection stands among the more notable works in Australian historical linguistics, and specialists will refer back to it for promising lines of inquiry, substantive and methodological, but like the historical portions of Dixon (1980), it should be taken as provisional and suggestive or provocative. Yes, there is a PN family, but just what languages it includes in what subgroupings and how it relates to the non-PN languages remain very much on the research agenda.<sup>2</sup>

I thank Nick Evans for helpful suggestions to update this review, originally written in 1992.

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1. Evans and Jones 1997.

2. See now also papers by Alpher, Breen, Evans, Fitzgerald, Koch and McConvell in Tryon and Walsh 1997; they all assume PN as a genetic grouping.

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*White Flour, White Power: From Rations to Civilization in Central Australia*. By Tim Rowse. Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1998. Pp. 255, \$49.95, h.b.

At the protests during February of 1999 in support of the Aboriginal tent embassy in Canberra, Yaluritja, an Indigenous man, came bearing small ration bags of tea, flour and sugar. He said that he wanted to give the bags to the Prime Minister, Mr Howard, so that he could regain the land and the life his ancestors had lost in exchange for the rations (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 February 1999). The gesture, which was not accepted, was in part an ironic comment on the unequal power relationships between Indigenous people and other Australians, particularly evident in the rationing association, that have existed for over 200 years. In the vast majority of cases, nothing was given to the Aboriginal owners for their land. It was appropriated with force if necessary and the process was not explained to the owners. If something was given in these early interactions, it was either as a gift to reassure and disguise future intentions, or as a payment for services rendered, particularly in areas of exploration and guidance, and subsistence support.

In his book, *White Flour, White Power*, Tim Rowse thoughtfully explores later examples of the provision by whites of goods to Aboriginal people where the intentions were more sinister and focused on social control. The main theme of the book is rationing and how it was used by authorities and settlers in Alice Springs and its hinterland to achieve assimilation. Rowse does not propose to write a 'comprehensive history' of assimilation. He clearly states that there are other techniques and policies, such as the forced removal of children, which he does not wish to consider in this book. Also, Rowse presents an analysis of white intentions and actions, their supposed successes, failures and contradictions. As he states, this 'book should not be mistaken for Aboriginal history; it is a critical history of the culture of the colonisers, using non-indigenous sources', 'to comment on what the colonists did but also on what they thought they were doing'. Some Aboriginal voices still come through via transcripts of interviews conducted by the author and other anthropologists.

Rowse uses four ideas developed by Michael Foucault to underpin his analysis of the white rationing program. The first idea is christened by Rowse as the 'mobility of technique' and it refers to certain techniques of behaviour management that are 'transferable from one institution to another'. Rowse amply demonstrates the reality of this principle in relation to rationing. He provides numerous examples of rationing conducted by the government, pastoralists, missionaries and individuals. The second Foucauldian idea concerns the construction by the colonising group of a body of knowledge about those who are being governed. Rowse shows how this knowledge was used



to develop further techniques of social control, but that often it was wrongly conceived, particularly in the area of the strength of indigenous traditions. The third idea refers to modern government which is characterised by an emphasis on the 'enhancement of life' as opposed to the pre-modern form where government exercised a 'negative power over life and death'. The fourth idea is based on the concept of the norm, and in the case of assimilation, the norm to be achieved was set by the nature of town life, with the participation of its domestically ordered members in the mainstream labour market. These last two ideas in particular are crucial to Rowse's understanding of assimilation as a procedure of inducing Aboriginal people to adopt the same way of life as the colonists. To the reader, they provide a template for understanding the narrative as Rowse presents it, although the structure of the book does not always align with the Foucauldian analysis.

Rowse divides the book into three parts. The first part is devoted to how the colonisers gained so-called 'knowledge' of Aboriginal people from the rationing relationship. The argument is particularly strong when it deals with the settler concept of 'pauperism'. Early settlers and officials, it is argued, who wished to

provide a 'civilising' influence through the rationing program, were ridden with doubt about the ability of Aboriginal people to resist the allure of handouts and become decayed dependents. Rowse forcefully states that this misconception stemmed from the inability of the colonists to understand the reciprocal nature of Aboriginal culture and their resilience to imposed ideas of how they were.

The second part exhaustively documents and examines the 'abiding structures of Central Australian rationing'. These include rationed work for pastoralists (intended to induce a strong work ethic in Aboriginal people); supervised camps on the fringes of town where rations were used to impel Aboriginal people to adopt white social, culinary and educative standards; the separation of hinterland from town-based Aboriginal people and the exchange between Aboriginal people and missionaries, particularly at Hermannsburg, of the products of Aboriginal labour for food and clothing. The enduring theme that Rowse presents is again rationing as an agent of social control, and a technique from the white point of view that was often ineffective. He makes it clear that assimilation was an underlying aim of private settlers, missionaries and authorities alike before it became an official policy. The only criticism perhaps worth making is that Rowse could have offered a clearer indication of the difference between rationing and wage work, which was often rewarded with goods rather than cash. It is not entirely clear whether wage work qualifies as part of the rationing regime.

The final part attempts to define the 'norm' that assimilation was intended to impose upon Aboriginal people, and how rationing was to achieve this aim in three contexts: the pastoral industry, the Welfare Branch settlements and the town of Alice Springs. Rowse concludes that rationing was intended to induce a lifestyle based on town residence and participation in the mainstream labour market. He makes it apparent that the policy largely failed due to the resilience of Aboriginal people and the internal contradictions of the policy itself, which partly stemmed from a false dichotomy between town and hinterland Aboriginal people.

In the last chapter of his intelligent and persuasive book, Rowse examines the replacement of rations with cash and the emergence of self-determination as a new policy. He sadly notes that some elements of assimilation policy are still in use and this is

borne out by the recent decision of the Northern Territory government to axe bilingual language education for numerous Aboriginal schools (*Time Magazine*, 22 February 1999). It is apparent that the unequal power relationships, so eloquently articulated in Rowse's presentation of rationing, still exist, and that unfortunately, Yaluritja's action of returning the tea and flour will do little to change the status-quo.

Michael Bennett

*Dealing with Alcohol: Indigenous usage in Australia, New Zealand and Canada.* By Sherry Saggars and Dennis Gray. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1998. PB, \$29.94, 240p.

At the beginning of this decade I reviewed an earlier book by Sherry Saggars and Dennis Gray, *Aboriginal health and society: The traditional and contemporary struggle for better health* (1991), for a very different audience.<sup>1</sup> The 'political economy approach' utilised to explore Indigenous ill-health, they contended, was significantly informed by 'the growing contradiction between health and the pursuit of profit under capitalism, and the contradictions inherent in the particular forms of medical practice which have evolved within capitalist societies'. In *Dealing with alcohol: Indigenous usage in Australia, New Zealand and Canada*, Saggars and Gray state that the political economy analysis remains 'the approach best able to explain differences in patterns of alcohol consumption and related harm between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples' and that it 'directs our attention to the ways best able to reduce that harm' (p. 84).

In terms of explaining differences, the authors review numerous theories (biological, psychological, social, anthropological) of indigenous alcohol use that have been proposed over recent decades, most of which invoke ill-defined mediating factors (depression, hopelessness, resistance). However, while the authors provide material consistent with their own model, rather than clarifying, I suggest, they have replaced the contents of the 'black box' between cause and consequence. In the political economy model it is 'marginalisation' which mediates between the structural conditions resulting from colonialism, and problems resulting from alcohol use. How marginalisation suffices where powerlessness, anomie and their like fall short remains unexplained.

While similar to other analyses that emphasise the role of political and economic factors, the political economy approach differs in that 'it does not treat those factors as discrete variables; and it treats current political and economic systems not as givens, but as shaped by history and differential power relationships' (p. 85). Emphasising the historical and contemporary parallels between the indigenous populations of Australia, New Zealand and Canada, Saggars and Gray insist that a model of indigenous drinking must take the experience of colonialism as a starting point. Acknowledging that there are many 'reasons' for indigenous people drinking, the authors contend that these are: 'themselves a function of relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous societies within the broader web of political and economic relationships. That is, they are symptoms of underlying inequalities'. As in their previous book, they add that 'inter-

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1. Hunter 1992.

ventions aimed solely at these symptoms—while alleviating some of the pain—will not address the underlying cause, and the symptoms will continue to re-emerge' (p. 88).

In terms of initiatives to 'reduce that harm' Siggers and Gray discuss (though in limited detail other than supply and promotion) various indigenous and mainstream responses—treatment, harm minimisation, supply reduction and demand reduction—which, by and large, to date have had 'limited impact' (p. 194). The authors suggest that this is, in part, 'because of the way the problem has been conceptualised. Many of the intervention strategies that are employed are based on views that the problems of misuse are the problems of individuals or arise from aspects of indigenous cultures' (p. 208). This is a view with which most workers in the field would probably agree, as they would with the authors' support for indigenous empowerment and control, and for their call for governments, organisations and individuals to address indigenous disadvantage—a big task. In terms of more specific approaches, the authors contend that 'most success in reducing excessive alcohol consumption and related harm appears to have been the result of structural interventions' (p. 169) that address the social environment of excessive consumption. Even so, as these do not address 'the underlying issue of colonialism', they have not resulted in significant improvements, leading the authors to conclude that 'the intervention strategies we have described merely tinker with existing political and economic systems that marginalise and exclude indigenous people, and perpetuate the inequalities they face' (p. 169). Thus the title of the concluding chapter—'Where to from here?'—emphasises the problem rather than suggests directions.

While clearly not intended, *Dealing with alcohol* will possibly leave some readers feeling fatalistic. Not that the association of social inequality and ill-health is new. For instance, Leonard Syme (1998) has explored the manifest association between social class and health status and the many purported contents of the 'black box'—mastery, self-efficacy, locus of control, sense of control, powerlessness, competence, hardiness and so on. He has proposed a related concept—control of destiny—the ability of people to be able to influence the events that impinge on their lives, suggesting that 'the possibility that inequalities can be traced not to differences in money, in social economic and political context, or in relative deprivation, but, rather, to differences in problem-solving skills and ability to access resources, would open a path to interventions' (1998: 497). Expanding on this idea in an ABC radio interview (Health Report, November 9, 1998), Syme comments on two consistent findings from empirical research. First, known risk factors are generally imperfectly related to specific disease outcomes, and second, psycho-social factors (such as social support and class) seem to be related to everything. 'The solution' Syme proposes, 'is that the psycho-social factors are related to the vulnerability and defences that people have to disease, not to what disease you get'. Given the enormity of the disadvantage experienced by indigenous Australians, it should then be no surprise that they have markedly elevated rates of morbidity and mortality from just about everything, including substance use.

This is also the case, as Siggers and Gray point out, for the other indigenous peoples discussed in this work. Unfortunately, even compared to these groups, indigenous Australians are distinguished by having the worst health status according to almost every measure. Steven Kunitz (1994) has explored this terrain, comparing indigenous populations in areas of what he calls 'Anglo settler colonialism'—Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States. A number of correlates emerge in his analysis

including health being worse in those nations where no formal treaty had been concluded between the colonising and indigenous populations, and worse also where States and Provinces retained responsibility for indigenous health rather than federal or national governments. Ironically, in that nation with the least equitable system of health care for the population as a whole (and the greatest socio-economic disparities), the United States, indigenous health is, comparatively, best. By contrast in Australia, where health care resourcing is probably least inequitable, indigenous health is worst. Kunitz points to the disadvantage of the disadvantaged in accessing resources, emphasising the importance in the United States of a well funded national program, the Indian Health Service, targeting that disadvantaged population.

While identifying commonalities, Kunitz's analysis also suggests that health status can be modified across groups with broadly similar historical and political experiences. There are, in fact, significant structural differences across these four populations which are probably important in terms of informing the differences identified by Kunitz. However, between and within these indigenous populations there are also uncountable instances of approaches to solving the problems confronting individuals and groups—what Saggars and Gray call 'individual agency' which, while not discounted by them is noted to be 'constrained by broader social structures' (p. 169). This is often despite persistent relative disadvantage which Syme (1998) and others (for instance, Wilkinson, 1997) have noted is a potent indicator of differential health status within, as well as between countries. Syme acknowledges the importance of social disadvantage as well as the difficulty of changing it. However, he suggests (1998), citing (as do Saggars and Gray) the Head Start program in the United States, that even among disadvantaged groups there are means by which individuals may influence their health outcomes by developing problem-solving skills. Similarly, increased problem-solving capability of organisations and communities has been identified as a fundamental component of 'capacity building' in contemporary health promotion (Hawe, Noort, King & Jordens, 1997). In Australia the Aboriginal adaptation of 'narrative therapy' following the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody might be considered an important instance (Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia, 1995).

While there are others, *Dealing with alcohol* provides the reader with a good review of theories of indigenous alcohol use. As have also others, the authors draw attention to the historical and structural precursors of problems arising from drinking and emphasise that 'indigenous people themselves must be enabled to determine their own goals and strategies for their achievement' (p. 207). This is not, however, a book that will satisfy those workers in the field—indigenous and non-indigenous—struggling to find innovative inroads into a tenacious problem causing enormous suffering. 'Detailed discussions of a possible theory' Syme (1998) contends, 'seem fruitless when they do not lead to a remedy' (p. 495). Is this an example of theory constrained by outcome? I think not. As do many indigenous people who remain resilient in the face of adversity, Syme clearly acknowledges the importance of social disadvantage and structural inequalities. However, while remaining committed to social change in the long term, he also remains committed to resisting fatalism in the short term:

insisting only on fundamental and revolutionary social change is dooming us to programs that will take years and generations to take effect. Since it is difficult to implement such major social change, it is easy to ignore inequalities because, they say, nothing can realistically be done about them. Moral outrage about inequali-

ties is appropriate but may be self-indulgent. If we really want to change the world we may have to begin in more modest but practical ways (1997, p. 9).

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