

## Book reviews

*Frontier justice: a history of the Gulf Country to 1900* by Tony Roberts, xviii + 316pp, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2005, \$32.95

I first encountered Tony Roberts, now a retired Commonwealth public servant, some years ago when he contacted me regarding his interest in Charley Havey, a colourful figure who served as the local magistrate in the small isolated town of Borroloola in the Northern Territory's Gulf region between the early twentieth century and the 1930s. Roberts was enthusiastic about researching Havey's life, writing an excellent article for the *Northern Territory dictionary of biography*, of which I was general editor. Since then we have been in intermittent contact. He obviously knew the Gulf area well through his travels there and spoke to me about the further work he hoped to complete on its past. I, and others, encouraged him although his strong commitment to the task was already evident. The outcome, *Frontier Justice*, is an outstanding contribution to history. As Henry Reynolds comments on the back cover, the book is also particularly timely given current historical debates in Australia.

The story it tells is of 'the most colourful and lawless part of Australia's last frontier' (p xiii) from the period of initial contact between Aboriginal people and Europeans to the beginning of the twentieth century. Roberts defines the 'Gulf Country' as extending from the Barkly Tableland to the Roper River and from the Stuart Highway to the Queensland border and beyond. The establishment of the pastoral industry there from the mid-1860s led to widespread Aboriginal resistance and massive white retaliation. Using a range of official archival sources as well as other white and Aboriginal evidence, Roberts carefully documents over 50 incidents involving multiple killings of Aboriginal people, many of which were the result of punitive expeditions. It is impossible, he notes, to estimate how many other cases are unrecorded. By 1900, 35 years of 'dispossession, massacres, abductions and untreated diseases ... had taken their toll' (p 260). In spite of the obvious implications of such findings for Australia's 'History Wars', Roberts pays no direct attention to these. Instead he rather curtly comments in his final sentence that for descendants of the Aboriginal groups living in the Gulf Country, 'the violence of the pastoral frontier is not an academic matter' (p 262).

Ross Fitzgerald's review of the book, while acknowledging the depth of the research, questions *Frontier Justice's* length and argues that it 'would have benefited from considerable pruning' (*Bulletin*, 8 March 2005, p 62). It is, however, the richness of the detail that makes what Roberts says so interesting and significant. While the record of what occurred in the Gulf Country is, unfortunately, by no means unique in Australia, I can think of no other study of the Australian frontier that is so thorough and systematic in its portrayal of inter-racial violence. *Frontier justice* has other virtues. It is

well written with a strong and clear narrative that avoids unnecessary theorising. Roberts condemns what he sees as unfettered violence and examines its tragic consequences yet this is no simplistic exercise in 'black armband' history. The book includes vivid and readable accounts of individual explorers, overlanders, policemen and pastoralists that enhance understanding of their characters and motives. Excellent use is made here of diaries, letters and eyewitness statements. At least some of the white people, such as the expert bushman and cattleman Charley Scrutton, are dealt with sympathetically. Roberts's first-hand knowledge of the country about which he writes is always evident. There are maps, photographs and illustrations, including disturbing detail on the front cover from the Aboriginal artist Oscar's late 1890s illustration, 'Murderer hobbled to tree. Troopers despatching'.

Roberts is now well advanced with the sequel to *Frontier justice* that takes the story to 1950. I look forward to its appearance.

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*Donald Thomson in Arnhem Land, revised edition*, by Donald Thomson, compiled and introduced by Nicolas Peterson, The Miegunyah Press, Carlton, Victoria 2003, 245pp, many photographs, \$34.00

The first edition of this book, published in 1983, was warmly received as a personal narrative of anthropologist Donald Thomson. In it he recounted his reasons for persuading the Commonwealth government to commission him to undertake research in north-eastern Arnhem Land in the mid-1930s, what he learned there, and his return to organise and lead a reconnaissance unit of Aboriginal men during the opening years of World War II. The second edition should be even more warmly received.

As compiler, Nicolas Peterson's chief aims were 'to provide a visual ethnography of Aboriginal life in eastern Arnhem Land as it was between 1935 and 1943 and to go some way towards suggesting the vision Thomson had of the Anthropological Bulletin he outlined to the government but never wrote' (p xv). Peterson is handsomely successful in the first aim. The photographs are superb. Thomson was an excellent photographer and worked under difficult field conditions (which he describes). Of some 120 photographs all but two are Thomson's and more than 80 are additional to those in the first edition. Sixteen new drawings were intended to illustrate a volume, *The Aborigines of Australia*, that he planned but never completed (p 236). The photographs and drawings are well placed in relation to the text. The quality of photographic reproduction in the second edition is excellent and far superior to that of the first edition. One could only wish that the standard of copy editing, including that of captions, were of the same standard (one photograph of eight people names nine individuals [p67]).

Peterson generally succeeds in his second aim through the generous addition of photographs and drawings, but also in large part through incorporating material from Thomson's publications as well as his reports to government. Thomson's outline of the proposed Anthropological Bulletin (pp 13-14) suggests that the result would have been

much like other ethnographies that had been written at that time (even though Thomson said that the outline was preliminary). Through incorporating Thomson's published work in anthropological journals and in newspapers, unpublished reports, diaries, and letters, Peterson has woven a first-person narrative of Thomson's experiences in eastern Arnhem Land and his involvement in issues related to the Aboriginal people of Arnhem Land. Although it was surely demanding, the result has no distracting seams. The greatest significance of the text, however, is that it is a detailed and perceptive contemporary history: it is description of events in which Thomson was both observer and actor, events that included the effects of external forces on north-eastern Arnhem Land Aborigines during the 1930s and 1940s. It is the journal of a passionate participant and advocate.

Peterson begins the book with a biographical sketch. Thomson's interest in natural history was manifest in his childhood. His single-mindedness and determination were characteristics that were apparent throughout his university career as was his attraction to scientific expeditions to remote places. It was only after he became a staff member of the University of Melbourne in 1932 and completed his doctorate of science in 1934 that he changed from predominantly natural science to social science (p 5), and that followed two periods of fieldwork in Cape York Peninsula in the 1920s.

In 1933, during fieldwork on Cape York Peninsula, Thomson learned that Aborigines at Caledon Bay had killed five Japanese and three white men and that a punitive expedition was likely to be formed, events that moved him to offer to intervene. Peterson describes Thomson's campaign to conduct the Arnhem Land expeditions of 1935–36 and 1936–37 and to improve the administration of Aboriginal affairs, his subsequent sojourn in Cambridge, his return to Australia and the formation of the Aboriginal guerrilla unit during World War II, his later fieldwork in the central desert, his involvement as a member of the Aborigines Welfare Board of Victoria, and – toward the end of his life – his narrowed reputation as an ecological anthropologist. Peterson remarks on the unfortunate discrepancy between Thomson's publications in ecology and his overwhelming interest in mythology and ceremonial life revealed in the fact that almost all of the 1500 foolscap pages of field notes deal with the latter topics; his interests were those of the linguistic anthropology that developed later, making Thomson ahead of his time.

But the focus of the book is on Thomson's experiences in Arnhem Land between 1935 and 1943, and his reasons for going there underlie those experiences. Peterson says of Thomson's first approach to the University for support to undertake the first expedition, in addition to his apprehension of the consequences for the Aborigines of Caledon Bay if a punitive expedition were to go ahead, 'his motivation was surely reinforced by his feeling for the bush, by his love of exploration and by a somewhat romantic view of himself living with the unknown people of eastern Arnhem Land' (p 8). The account that Peterson has put together amply demonstrates all those facets.

Chapter 2 begins the first person narrative and is a short 'Prelude' to Thomson's first expedition to Arnhem Land. Here Thomson, on Cape York Peninsula at the time (1933), describes his reaction to learning of the possible authorisation of a punitive expedition and his first approach to the Chancellor of the University of Melbourne with a proposal to offer his services to the Commonwealth government to 'go alone into the troubled area to make friends with the Aboriginal people and to report the true facts'

(p26). It was more than a year later, after much negotiation, that he was given a commission to go to eastern Arnhem Land. Thomson refers to the trial of Dhakiyarr and his disappearance, and to the imprisonment in Darwin of three of Wonggu's sons for the murder of the Japanese at Caledon Bay. He was subsequently able to return these sons to Wonggu, widely known as the leader of the feared 'Balamomo tribe'. Thomson remarks that following the High Court's quashing of Dhakiyarr's sentence and order for his repatriation, 'Significantly, no high-level official enquiry was ever made as to his fate. But the Aborigines are unanimous about this. "Poiliceman shoot'im", was their verdict. And nothing escapes them, least of all the fate of a lone Aboriginal five hundred miles from home, who has killed a policeman' (p 31).

Chapter 3 is based chiefly on Thomson's extensive 1948-49 article in *The Geographic Journal*, which in turn is based on the Interim General Report of Preliminary Expedition to Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia 1935-1936. A map on p 34 shows Thomson's travels during this expedition as well as those of 1936-37. This chapter tells of Thomson's recruiting a crew and sailing the *St. Nicholas* from Cairns to Groote Eylandt and his first forays into eastern Arnhem Land. There were delays and during one of them he went to Darwin where he visited Wonggu's three sons, in Fanny Bay gaol, who gave him a message stick for their father (p 37).

The traverses Thomson undertook during this first expedition were arduous — partly because of his inexperience in the area — and his health suffered terribly; nevertheless, in June 1935, trying to follow the coast, he walked from the north bank of the Roper River north to Bennett Bay, and in July he walked from the mouth of the Koolatong River upriver to Matarawatj, 'one of the renowned, almost legendary camping places of the fighting men of Blue Mud Bay. This was probably the very same camp from which they had come to attack Flinders' men at Morgan Island more than 130 years before. This was the camp of the Aborigines I had come to meet' (p 58). Although Wonggu was not there, but at Trial Bay, Thomson stayed for several days. He then travelled from the Koolatong River north, walking overland from Blue Mud Bay to Trial Bay, where he found Wonggu: 'Here at last I met Wonggu. Although he must have been over fifty, he appeared still to be in the prime of life — a tall, powerful man with intelligent face, deep set eyes and a heavy beard, trimmed almost in Van Dyck style' (p 76). After a few days they had become friends, and Thomson explained to Wonggu why the government had sent him to his country: 'I told him that he would be held responsible for the peace of his group, and that this time he himself, and not his sons, would undoubtedly be blamed by the Government for any further trouble that might occur ... later he brought me a message-stick, and explained that the marks inscribed upon it represented himself sitting down quietly and maintaining peace among the people' (p 80). Thomson had achieved his first objective.

Peterson drew on material from Thomson's published account in the *Geographical Journal* and the unpublished report to form Chapter 4, which he titled simply 'Travels in Arnhem Land'. After visiting Wonggu at Trial Bay, Thomson began a planned walk from Caledon Bay to Arnhem Bay but, stricken with a debilitating fever, he was forced to abandon it. Instead he sailed to Port Bradshaw, guided by Mawalan, and with a group of people, some of whom were from Melville Bay, walked toward Arnhem Bay, finally reaching it after five days. He was quite ill with dysentery during this time, so he sailed to Milingimbi to restore his health. He remained at Milingimbi for two months

and 'With the aid of some excellent interpreters [he] was able to make a survey of the people in the area and obtain much general information on their culture and ceremonial life' as well as adding to the 'cinematographic record that [he] had commenced at Blue Mud Bay' (p 93). In October 1935 he left Milingimbi and began what he called the longest and most important patrol of that expedition: he crossed eastern Arnhem Land on foot from the Crocodile Islands (where Milingimbi is located) to Blue Mud Bay and then on to Matarawatj in the Walker Hills from where he organised a trip to the famous flint quarry at Ngilipidji (pp 93-106). On this expedition he also spent a short time at Groote Eylandt (pp 110-12). He returned to Melbourne in January 1936.

Chapter 5 is based on the 1935-36 unpublished report and is essentially a demographic summary of the area he had visited, the total population of which he estimated at 1475 (p 116). Thomson is not very sanguine about the continuing existence of Aborigines in the Arnhem Land Reserve under the multiple impacts of white expansion in the area including exploitation of their labour, unjust treatment by police and courts, and unenlightened policies. He set out 'the basis for an enlightened policy' that began with 'Absolute segregation within the Arnhem Land Reserve to preserve the social structure *in toto*' of the people living there, and he concluded with a recommendation for a 'settled, uniform policy for the treatment of the whole of the Aboriginal population of Australia' and the 'Immediate establishment of a Department of Native Affairs staffed by men [sic] selected solely for their special qualifications and sympathies for dealing with Aborigines' and the ability to administer the policy. Other recommendations were acceptance of the nomadic way of life of the people in Arnhem Land (thus missionaries would travel with them rather than gather them into villages or compounds), the formation of patrols to travel throughout Arnhem Land to protect the people from interference and exploitation, the deployment of a suitable medical officer to work in the area, and the abolition of the use of police constables as 'Protectors' of Aborigines (pp 118-19).

Thomson's *Report on expedition to Arnhem Land 1936-37* to government is the basis of the material in Chapter 6, augmented with material from Thomson's personal papers and published ethnographic accounts (p 233). Thomson saw his 1935-36 work as unfinished, and was successful in obtaining support to continue it. His re-entry plan included getting the government to release Wonggu's three sons from gaol in Darwin: 'I felt that the liberation of these men would be a very appropriate gesture following the excellent reception that I received at the hands of Wonggu and the people of Caledon and Blue Mud Bays. It would be appreciated by them not only as a reward for good behaviour, but as a gesture of goodwill and confidence on the part of the Government' (p 123). Thomson was successful, and in August 1936 returned Wonggu's three sons to him at Yirrkala, where Wonggu was visiting at the time. While Thomson had been in Canberra, several killings relating to a blood feud had occurred, and he sought out the principal actors, recorded their versions of the feud, and warned them of the 'gravity of their offence and cautioned them not to repeat it' (p 133). In December, Thomson arrived at his wet-season base camp at Gaarttji, on the edge of the Arafura Swamp, and from there he travelled to observe a Gunabibi ceremony in progress near the Blyth River. In the middle of January 1937 he returned to Milinbimbi, where he remained until the end of May. During this period he recorded information on social organisation, mythology, and language, and made a study of fishing methods, including

different forms of fish traps, descriptions of which were subsequently published in an anthropological journal (p 144). Thomson also observed the wet-season magpie goose-hunting in the Arafura Swamp (pp 148–60) and subsequently published an account of those two- or three-day expeditions into the swamp by means of specialised canoes, the collection of goose eggs and capture of the geese. In May he moved from Milingimbi to the Derby Creek area in order to observe and record women's food gathering and preparation (pp 164–71). A chart illustrating the seasonal cycle is included in this chapter (pp 172–3). The chapter concludes with a summary of Thomson's policy recommendations to Government and his rationale for them (pp 181–93).

The final chapter of the book is drawn from Thomson's *Report: the Organization of the Northern Territory Coastal Patrol and the Special Reconnaissance Unit 1941-1943*. Following Australia's entry into World War II, Thomson was commissioned as Flight Lieutenant in the RAAF, but he persuaded government to support the establishment of a special reconnaissance force with both a coastwatching role and a guerilla warfare role should the Japanese invade north Australia. Because of his knowledge of the people of the area and their recent history, Thomson was able to form a company of 50 Aboriginal men, some from the Arnhem Bay region and some from the Caledon and Blue Mud Bays region, who had been actively engaged in feud during 1936. He had the assistance of three regular army men in training them. The unit was reorganised in 1943. The outpost at Caledon Bay was closed, and the unit's activities (essentially a manned ship on armed patrol) were thenceforth only coastal patrol (p 227). Thomson's report describing the unit's activities during the 19 months that it existed is the stuff of good military history.

Whether Peterson should be listed as editor as well as compiler and author of a biographical sketch is a question that might be asked. Peterson notes in the Preface to the second edition that 'A large number of alterations have been made to the previously published text' (p xv) although he introduces the Preface by declaring that 'The principal change made for this edition is the inclusion of over eighty additional photographs and sixteen new drawings' (p xv). Peterson decided to cast the narrative in the first person and in the mode of an explorer's journal. This decision was hard: Thomson's 'style of writing was highly personal, even in government reports, and his passionate commitment to the Aboriginal people kept him constantly in the limelight as advocate, defender and critic' (p xi), and Peterson was able 'to create a narrative akin, in some respects, to the journals of the early explorers rather than an academic account' (p xi). Reading the material from the 1935–36 and 1936–37 reports of his expeditions to Arnhem Land it is easy, if not inescapable, to envision the writer as an explorer on an expedition into uncharted territory (he had much earlier wanted to join Antarctic expeditions). It was perhaps in this mood that Thomson gave names to geographic features to honour people important to him (eg the Peter John River after his sons [p 91] and a 'fine timbered plateau' MacFarland Plateau 'in honour of Sir John MacFarland, then Chancellor of the University of Melbourne' [pp 87–8]).

In all these circumstances, it might be asked whether it might not have been more appropriate, and not unfair to Thomson, to retain his own phrasing and terminology – which naturally were of his time – rather than alter them to be consistent with 1983 expressions of sympathetic attitudes toward Aborigines and convictions about fairness and justice. Peterson says, 'The most difficult problem facing me as editor [*sic*] has been

deciding on the extent to which I should alter certain phrasing to protect Thomson from anachronistic criticism. The original writing was done in the late 1930s and early 1940s when Aboriginal people were commonly called 'natives' or 'boys'. He used these terms, as well as 'Aborigines'/'Aboriginals', throughout his writings. Today [1983] they have a jarring and unpleasant connotation, which would not accurately reflect the relatively progressive [why relatively?] nature of many of Thomson's views [and] at times his expression and attitudes were more overtly paternalistic than is acceptable today...' (p xii). Peterson goes on to say, 'there can be no doubt that Thomson was in the forefront of champions of Aboriginal rights, including land rights, recognition of customary law, and the need to respect Aboriginal people as fully responsible Australian citizens with their own views and rights' (p xii). Thomson's reports and his publications clearly justify that assessment. Peterson acknowledged the 'risk of de-Thomsonising the account' in changing 'terms such as "natives" and "boys" to "Aborigines", etcetera' (pp xii-xiii). (The inclusion of 'etcetera' raises questions that arouse speculation about the full extent of the process of 'de-Thomsonising'). Peterson has supplied notes on his sources for the biographic sketch (Chapter 1) (pp 230-2), a list of the principal sources for each chapter and a description of the material he has added (pp 233-4), and short lists of further historical and anthropological sources (pp 234-5). This detailed information is very useful and provides readers with the ability to pursue particular passages and indeed to determine for themselves the extent and the effect of Peterson's 'de-Thomsonising'.

Sources of the illustrations in the book are also provided. Sources of the photographs and notes on the equipment Thomson used, as well as references to specific publications on Thomson's photography are given (pp 236-7). Lists of maps, drawings, and photographs with brief descriptions of subjects, and the pages on which they occur make them easy to locate, especially useful in the case of photographs, which are an expanded and important new component of the second edition (pp 237-40). Note should also be made of Peterson's expanded captions: he has added substantial descriptions based on his own research in north-eastern Arnhem Land and, particularly with reference to naming individuals in photographs, the result of consulting Yolngu. And, Peterson notes, identification of particular people as individual actors in Thomson's work, while not unique, is also not typical of the prevailing practice of anthropologists then, although Warner (1937; rev. edn 1958) had also named the individuals with whom he interacted in his Milingimbi-based study.

Written as a first-person narrative of discovery, the book is highly readable. It might even be regarded as a kind of 'reflexive' ethnography. Significant publications by other anthropologists working with Aboriginal people in Australia that include themselves as actors in the way that Thomson does are rare, not just the narrative that Peterson has compiled, but Thomson's articles in professional journals such as *Man* (which Peterson has drawn on), and even his most theoretically oriented publication, the book *Economic structure and the ceremonial exchange cycle in Arnhem Land* (1949). Thomson's reports to government involve explicit accounts of his interactions with Yolngu and their environment. Among Australianists, Lloyd Warner is a partial exception: Appendix IX (1958 pp 566-89) of *A Black civilization* is ostensibly a biography of Mahkarolla, Warner's friend and companion as well as his chief informant, but the two concluding sections are accounts of events that involved Warner as well as Mahkarolla. For Thomson, the thread that links it all together is his passionate plea that the Aborigi-

nal people of eastern Arnhem Land be allowed to continue to live their lives as an independent people.

### References

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*Blackfellas Whitefellas and the hidden injuries of race* by Gillian Cowlshaw, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Malden, MA USA, 2004, 272pp, bibliographical references and index, \$49.95

Not for a long time have I read such a beautifully written book in which the complexities of race relations in Australia are analysed with so much subtlety and candour by a respected academic. *Blackfellas Whitefellas* takes as its starting point the race riots ('the Riot') in the town of Bourke on the night of 5 December 1997 which occurred not long before Cowlshaw began her fieldwork in that town. It is a timely publication in light of events on Palm Island in December 2004 when the Aboriginal community reacted angrily to the death-in-custody of one of their young men, Cameron Domadgee, resulting in a coronial inquiry into Domadgee's death. Similar events have occurred in other parts of Australia, for example in Redfern in 2003.

Gillian Cowlshaw's *Blackfellas Whitefellas* is not just another thesis on race relations. It is a finely drawn, in-depth analysis. Four different perspectives of the Riot are presented in the Prologue, and revisited in Cowlshaw's developing thesis in the following chapters. Each chapter brings the reader through an examination of a different set of mechanisms of social control and reactions to these by Bourke residents, their embodiment in the lives and perspectives of individuals in the town. Her analysis of race relations in Australia challenges the conventional interpretations of racial confrontation in which the interests of blacks and whites are seen to be polarised. Here the eruption of the Riot is taken as symptomatic of the currents of underlying feeling between blacks and whites and within their communities in Bourke, the aetiology of which can be found in the initial colonising period. It is a fitting metaphor. The Riot and the responses of the people of Bourke to this event are a means to show us something about 'our racialized selves in Australia and indeed in the world today' (p xiv). It is not simply a black and white issue. Cowlshaw succeeds in unfolding the layers of meaning and many shades of grey by going under the surface and listening to what the people of Bourke have had to say and do about their lives and relationships.

Cowlshaw's argument proceeds with a careful examination of racial and racialised identities by exploring concepts of victimhood, stigma and the 'cultures of complaint' as manifested in the Murri (Aboriginal) and Gubba (non-Aboriginal) communities in Bourke (Chapter 2, Stigma and Complaint) She argues that it is the racial

stereotypes we hold about the other and the racial identification we embody in our own lives that shape our social life. Cowlshaw discusses the embodiment of these concepts in the lives of real people and situations. A town like Bourke has particular characteristics which influence the operation of stigma and stereotype, for example, the notoriety of the town as a site of racial conflict due in part to the intense media and research interest in the town and its people; the internal conflict of residents who could act out of both positive and negative stereotypes about themselves and others; the structural hierarchy in the town; the visibility of individuals and families and their histories in the intimacy of parochial conditions; the tangibility of Aboriginal people's experience of stigma. Deeply held and strong racist attitudes are often not displayed in public but are shared only with those who are thought to have similar values. Their public face is often silence and exclusion; the reaction to this exclusion is the projection of fear, anger and mistrust. Reading and analysing the discourse of complaint is complicated by the varying personal value positions influenced by family and personal experiences.

In Chapter 3 (Injury and Agency), Cowlshaw explores the question of agency and where its energy or motivation comes from. Her starting definition of agency is 'the ability to exert some power, beginning with enunciating one's own interest and identity as distinct from those of others'; the energising spark for agency is 'derived from injury' and applies equally to Gubbas and Murriss (p 60). The Riot itself and the legal processes associated with the Riot were seized by Murriss as opportunities to 'talk back', argue against or stand up to perceived stigmas and injustices. This talking back occurs literally by use of 'colourful' language and verbal breaches of protocol, or in embodied acts of defiance, for example provocative acts like smashing shop windows, which draw on the image of 'out-of-control violent blacks and demonstrating what violent blacks can do' (p 75). Black agency occurs in the face of the exertion of white power and as an antidote to a feeling of helplessness.

Cowlshaw's connection with Murriss and her understanding of their particular and collective situations is amply demonstrated throughout the book but especially in Chapter 4 (Performance) in which she draws a picture of the lives and identity of Murriss as 'performed' in Bourke, before the gaze of Gubbas or apart from it. Identified here are forms of Aboriginal narrative which include humour and ironic mocking, as well as public expressions of violent, transgressive and often chaotic behaviour, with their ability to shock the audience. Gubba responses to displays of apparently chaotic behaviour are an assertion of order and normality, with perhaps a tinge of envy of the freedom that the marginal status of Murriss appears to give them. One of the most significant markers of the marginality of Murriss in Bourke is poverty and its resultant dramas in their everyday lives.

The expression of Aboriginal cultural and social identity anywhere in Australia will necessarily entail its performance in a group which exists within the context of the colonisers of this country. Identity is maintained through everyday acts of individuals whose words and deeds reinforce the distance between Gubbas and Murriss and the boundaries between the two social and cultural settings (Chapter 5). Such a situation creates difficulties for those who marry across the cultural boundaries, or who work alongside each other as 'mates' in a rural setting, where individuals are pressurised, teased, cajoled or insulted into maintaining racial rather than personal or family loyalties. Cowlshaw aptly identifies the power of language, within both the Aboriginal and

non-Aboriginal settings, in the use of secret terms that name social stigma and its associations in ways which indicate that social stigma is barely contained below the surface or psychologically strengthens the Aboriginal person in the face of the oppression.

At the heart of this book lies the chapter on violence, Chapter 6, which is about 'the deployment and disavowal of violence, and its shifting place in colonial, postcolonial, and anti-colonial narratives of race in Australia' (p 140). In this chapter Cowlshaw deals with real violence – physical and verbal force and hurt to others, and 'immoderate vehemence' which includes rough or excessive actions or words that are not intended to inflict hurt, but inadvertently do. Here Cowlshaw pays particular attention to the reality of institutionalised violence and its impacts which include acting out and acts of self destruction. Her discussion also turns to Murri ways of acting and being that to Gubbas appear flamboyant or excessive, disturbing the sensibilities of Gubbas. Thus the incompatibility of the two cultural groups becomes visible at their boundaries. Past and contemporary frontier violence and the persistence of their influence must be acknowledged.

Through the lens of citizenship, Cowlshaw discusses Aboriginal people's rights and responsibilities in a civil society, and society's responses to them. Murriss struggle for survival and justice within bureaucratic systems that are alienating in their complexity. She argues that as the rights of Aboriginal people and their special needs as citizens are excessively scrutinised in the public sphere, and as their visual arts, dance, song and social systems are increasingly appropriated or eroded by non-Aboriginal society, this level of surveillance and erosion of identity leads Aboriginal people to rage against the system (Chapter 7)

Chapter 8 (Our History) deals with the question of the embodiment of the memory of oppression and its impacts on individuals, the family and community. Whose narratives? How should they be told? By whom? What is declared and what remains hidden? What happens to people as they sift through the memories, re-living or denying, inflaming emotions or dulling them. The recollection and narration of memories could be another oppressive mechanism, one in which anthropologists, historians, lawyers, doctors and academics are actively involved. By rioting, the Murriss of Bourke may also have been reacting to the burden of Gubba patronage and guilt and the projection of Gubba shame.

In the final chapter (Chapter 9: Trials and Transformations) the apparatuses of the court – the physical environment, language, dress, processes – are taken as a metaphor of the predominantly non-Aboriginal social and cultural system, another battlefield and an extension of the Riot. Cowlshaw is clearly of the opinion that while a significant amount of goodwill exists in Australia among non-Aboriginal people towards Aboriginal people, there remains a 'narcissistic desire, often muted and pressed into unconsciousness, to improve the Indigenous population', (p 244) and that non-Aboriginal Australians are largely baffled by the rejection by Aboriginal people of their good intentions. The Riot, and the eruption of other similar actions across Australia are the means through which Aboriginal people express their outrage and agency, challenging the hegemony of their colonisers in flagrant actions that draw attention to themselves and their communities in the face of apathy, blindness and sometimes ill-will of the wider community.

Cowlshaw's presentation of her arguments is even-handed and sophisticated. Her arguments are built on careful fieldwork among people of Bourke with whom she has developed strong relationships over many years, and on a very comprehensive array of sources which indicate the depth of her scholarship. The language of *Blackfellas Whitefellas* is refreshingly direct. I particularly appreciated the way in which Cowlshaw has used the endnotes to clarify and comment on particular points or items in her narrative in a way that is not intrusive or stilted.

*Blackfellas Whitefellas* is a very significant analysis of race relations in colonised countries and theorising at its best. Cowlshaw's contribution will have a lasting impact on discourses on race relations and the mechanisms of agency.

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*Paddy Cahill of Oenpelli* by John Mulvaney, Aboriginal Studies Press 2004, 215pp, \$39.95

Anyone interested in Australian history generally and contact history in the Northern Territory will appreciate this book. It is John Mulvaney's sixth publication relating to the work of Baldwin Spencer, following a research association of over 30 years.

The primary focus is Paddy Cahill's time at Oenpelli (1909–22) and his collaboration with Spencer. Details are also given of Cahill's other activities and achievements including pioneering tropical agriculture, serving as a Protector of Aborigines, and humanitarian work in Aboriginal health. He was a pioneer in the Buffalo industry, carried out mineral prospecting, was involved in pearling, and produced butter in the dairy at Oenpelli. He was close to the Administrator JA Gilruth, and was involved in the Ewing Royal Commission.

In 1883 Cahill arrived in the Territory from Queensland, having joined a cattle drive from Richmond, Queensland to the Victoria River District and the Ord River. He lived in Palmerston from 1891 (renamed Darwin in 1911), and was manager of Delamere station from 1903–07. Mulvaney presents a pioneer seeking to do his best in difficult circumstances. Paddy Cahill's faults are acknowledged, but without judgement Mulvaney comments:

Cahill was not faultless, but his later humanitarian efforts to introduce some dignity into the crisis of Aboriginal social and territorial dislocation, combined with the onslaught of introduced diseases, was exceptional (p 74).

His role in Aboriginal contact history merits greater understanding when set within the grim racial attitudes of his times (p 78).

An example of Cahill's humanitarianism is seen in his protest in 1901 on behalf of fringe dwellers (pp 29–31) for which he was severely criticised by other citizens. Mulvaney refers to an observation of Elsie Masson, a visitor to Oenpelli, who said:

his wonderful sympathy with their customs and their beliefs ... he speaks to them in their own language and calls them by their native names. In return they give him their confidence and no ceremony is too sacred to be enacted before him (p30).

Valuable features of the book include 25 letters from Cahill to Spencer from 1912 to 1921, a six-part article published by Cahill outlining a trip from the East Alligator River to the Coburg Peninsular in 1898–99, and another article giving details of a trip from the Adelaide River to Point Farewell (near the mouth of the South Alligator River) in 1901. Eleven of eighteen historical photos relate to Oenpelli. A short appendix gives four letters from Joe Cooper and Solomon (a Larrakia elder) to Baldwin Spencer.

Cahill's correspondence indicates the extent of the work Cahill did for Spencer. It is a sad reflection of the times that Spencer received praise and awards for work that could not have been done without Cahill's unique contribution.

While living and working at Oenpelli from 1967 to 1979 I had opportunity to meet the descendants of families that Cahill had worked with, and to hear some of the Kunwinjku (Gunwinjgu) oral traditions concerning their contact history. There are two issues that I will refer to based on this experience. The issues are the relationship between Kakadu/Gagudju and Kunwinjku (Gunwinjgu), and the attempt to poison the Cahill family.

Mulvaney (p 53) refers to Spencer's observation that 'Spencer called the local clan owners Kakadu (Gagudju). ... The Gunwinjgu "do not mix in camp" with the Gagudju and related groups, though they are present at one another's ceremonies'.

I have vivid memories of hearing an elderly Aboriginal woman, one of the last survivors of the Erre group (whose country was to the south of and close to Oenpelli) speak about Oenpelli and the Gagudju to the Woodward Land Rights Commission in 1973. She asserted that Oenpelli was not Gagudju country and that Paddy Cahill had brought the Gagudju people to Oenpelli. Her resentment about this was obvious. She clearly disputed Spencer's claim (1914: 14) regarding the existence of a Kakadu nation.

Mulvaney refers to the attempt to poison Cahill and his family (pp 62–4) and the involvement of two Aborigines Romula and Nipper. Cahill's letter 17 (pp 119–21) refers to Nipper's involvement and 'the first attempt was made to poison us' (p 120). The poisoning is referred to in the NT Administrator's report (NT 1918: 13–14), but no mention is made of multiple poisonings:

Mr Cahill ... informs me that in spite of the defection of Romula in attempting to poison him and his family, he would gladly have the Aboriginal back at once, ... He is satisfied the aberration manifested was solely due to the bad influence of the other native 'Nipper' and as Romula had been his close companion during twenty-five years.

I arrived at Oenpelli not long after Nipper's death. He was well respected and was recognised as the 'traditional owner' of Oenpelli and the surrounding country. One of his sons is the present senior traditional owner. There is no knowledge of the poisoning among this generation of Nipper's descendants. Romula was possibly with Cahill at Delamere station as there is a hill in that region known as 'Romula's knob' (personal communication Dr Patrick McConvell).

John Mulvaney is to be commended for this publication.

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Peter J Carroll  
Darwin

*Seeking racial justice – an insider’s memoir of the movement for Aboriginal Advancement, 1938–1978* by Jack Horner, 226pp, Aboriginal Studies Press, \$34.95 and *Black and White together – FCAATSI: the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders 1958–1973* by Sue Taffe, 288pp, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, \$24.95.

Jack Horner is a well-known and well-loved Canberra identity. His new book, *Seeking racial justice*, explains why. From the late 1950s, Jack and Jean Horner were integrally involved in the struggle for justice for Aborigines. They joined the Aboriginal-Australia Fellowship in 1957 and soon became affiliated with Australia’s first national lobby group on behalf of Aborigines, the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement, later called the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI). Readers will appreciate Horner’s humility. They will admire his tenacity. They might also relate to his professed naivete: when Jack attended his first Aboriginal-Australia Fellowship meeting in Sydney, he ‘simply went to find out if discrimination against Aboriginal people existed in Australia’ (p 21). His learning curve was steep and some mistakes were inevitably made.

Through Horner’s book we gain privileged insight into an individual’s struggle to understand competing racial ideas and policies, especially with regard to assimilation. Horner ‘believed in assimilation’ (p 41) and he saw ‘the benefits of assimilation’ (p 47), but he eventually had to change his ‘thinking on assimilation’ (p 68). Sadly this kind of honesty regarding assimilation is rare. Rarer still is Horner’s further acknowledgment that changing his views on assimilation ‘was not as easy as it might seem almost half a century later’ (p 68). Assimilation is a key concept in Horner’s book, as are integration and self-determination. These terms, and the phases in Aboriginal administration they loosely represent, help Horner to structure his book. *Seeking racial justice* has three parts: Segregation and Assimilation, 1938–61; Assimilation and Integration, 1959–67; Integration and Self-determination, 1968–78. Although Horner’s analysis of these terms is limited, he provides future researches with a wealth of material simply by revealing the extent of his own confusion. Horner reminds us that the meanings of these, and other such terms, cannot be taken for granted.

The back cover describes *Seeking racial justice* as ‘part history, part memoir’, as if these narrative styles are mutually exclusive: they are not. Horner’s message is most powerfully received when the historical narrative is interrupted by his presence – when readers are reminded in Jack’s gentle style that he was actually there. I found Horner’s explicit questioning of the role of white people in Aboriginal politics espe-

cially compelling. His personal reflections, explanations and anecdotes greatly enhance this extremely important, and beautifully written, book.

Sue Taffe's *Black and White together* is also beautifully written. It tells the story of FCAATSI: from its formation in 1958 to its demise in the early 1970s. Along the way we learn about several generations of activists, black and white, and about their campaigns and shifting priorities. The 1967 referendum for constitutional reform features prominently, as do FCAATSI's other, less well-known, campaigns for equal wages, work and welfare. Taffe's book covers similar ground to Horner's, but they are not in competition with each other. Rather, they complement each other and should be read together. A highlight is Taffe's balanced appraisal of Jack Horner's role in FCAATSI (pp 299–302) following the Easter 1970 split. Here, as elsewhere, the virtue of reading the books of Taffe and Horner together is self-evident, for as well as filling each other's gaps, they effectively, if unintentionally, emulate the fraught history they represent by simultaneously providing different perspectives on similar stories, people and events.

Much is made of the fact that *Black and White together* began life as an 'oral history'. Less publicised is the fact that its most recent previous incarnation was as a PhD thesis. Many publishing houses are reluctant to read, let alone publish PhD theses, and I commend the University of Queensland Press for publishing this excellent book. Granted, the end result is much revised, but all the attention to detail, careful analysis and meticulous research that characterised the original thesis remains.

As the title of her book suggests, Taffe's principle focus is on black and white Australians working together for Aboriginal advancement. Her skilfully crafted narrative is punctuated by mini-biographies as each new character is introduced resulting in a rich and colourful political history. Along with Horner's *Seeking racial justice*, Taffe's *Black and White together* is essential reading for anyone interested in the history of black and white activism in Australia. Both books have informative appendices, detailed references and excellent indexes.

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*Where the ancestors walked: Australia as an Aboriginal landscape* by Philip Clarke, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest NSW, 2003, xii + 282pp, \$29.95

Aimed at a general audience rather than an academic one, this is a book of very wide scope, covering topics including the original settlement of Australia about 50,000 years ago, aspects of precolonial economy and society, and changes in Aboriginal cultures following British colonisation. Clarke attempts to give the whole a unifying theme of 'cultural landscape', although the theme is not well developed.

The book is divided into four parts. Chapters in Part I cover the first settlement of Australia, the 'religious landscape', and institutions including kinship and land-owning groups. Chapters in Part II concern hunting and gathering, material culture and art. Part III is about variation across Australia, primarily in environments, foods and calendars. Part IV covers 'cultural change', from contacts with the Macassans on the north coast to the effects of British colonisation.

Together with the absence of an effective unifying theme, the result of the broad scope is that the book is rather a mixed bag. Given that it begins with the first populations of Australia, a brief overview of prehistory is an obvious omission. The approach to topics that are included tends to be on the conservative side. For example there is no discussion of the debate about the 'out of Africa hypothesis'; Clarke jumps from *Homo erectus* in South-East Asia straight to humans entering Greater Australia.

The treatment of the totemic ancestral doctrines is good, especially on the importance of the 'skyworld' and the networks of geographical connections they constitute. However, reliance on the concept of 'dreaming' results in an overly homogeneous picture, and Clarke neglects the 'magical' aspects of ancestral doctrines and ritual. There is almost nothing about sorcery and magic – a major omission given the centrality of these doctrines and their connections with ancestral doctrines.

The chapter on social life gives a general account of kinship, 'clans' and language identities. It says very little about rituals, but has a useful discussion of prohibitions of various kinds. In spite of caveats, Clarke relies on the concept of 'tribe' where language-identity would have been a good substitute. He states erroneously that patrilineal clans were ubiquitous except for the Western Desert. Considering all the rethinking that has gone on in the last few decades, it is a pity that Clarke reproduces the tribe-clan-band model.

As one might expect from a museum-based anthropologist, the strongest chapters are on material culture and resources. The central chapters describe in some detail, resources, equipment and techniques, and their broad regional variants. This information is complemented by material on Aboriginal concepts of seasons in various regions.

Part IV continues the material culture theme in looking at artefacts introduced from the Torres Strait Islands, Papua and the Macassans. The chapters on the effects of European colonisation are, to my mind, rather superficial. They include such matters as explorers' reliance on Aboriginal knowledge, the imposition of Christianity, and Aboriginal versions of history such as stories about Captain Cook. There is rather little here on political and economic relations between colonisers and Aborigines.

As a broad overview of Aboriginal culture and society the book may be suitable for higher grades in schools, and for general tertiary courses in Aboriginal studies. Some sections of the book, particularly those on material culture, resources and techniques may be of value in more specialist courses.

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*Woven histories dancing lives: Torres Strait Islander identity, culture and history* edited by Richard Davis, 276pp, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2004, \$39.95.

Richard Davis' compilation is a unique reflection on the lives and histories of Torres Strait Islanders. These essays are an extended dialogue that began with the 1998 Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies seminar series 'The Torres Strait 100 years on'. The 21 essays provide a useful and comprehensive insight into the complex and rich cultural diversity of the peoples of the Torres Strait. Importantly, this volume allows Islanders' voices to respond to Western academia, and places cultural and academic significance on Islanders' lives.

Part 1 (of 4) presents introductory essays by Jeremy Beckett, David Lawrence and Helen Reeves Lawrence. The essays represent Torres Strait as both a bridge and barrier between two continents. Islanders are understood as people of the sea, with strong kinship ties overarching the Torres Strait, where values, culture, law and socioeconomic structures continue to be maintained. The late Ephraim Bani expresses his concern for the need to restore Islander cultural self-esteem.

In Part 2, 'Identity, Performance and *Kastom*', Davis interprets the assimilation of Islander social identity as a fusion of past imagery and symbolism to locate the self in the present. Helen Reeves Lawrence and Julie Lahn describe how the process of indigenisation and recontextualisation of missionary-brought forms of Christianity has led to the formation of the Church of Torres Strait, and an ongoing movement toward self-management. An Islander woman, McRose Elu, highlights these spiritual adaptations as a 'pragmatic, symbolic and imposed choice'. The totem is explained by Bani as a symbolic focal point for group identification and social solidarity.

Maintaining this theme of identity, Jude Philp carefully examines ideas of 'cultural tourism' and ownership between the subject and the photographer in AC Haddon's 1888 photographs. Anna Sinusal notes that the formation of Torres Strait Islander Creole created the linguistic foundation for a pan-Islander political identity; and Maureen Fury argues that valuable research must actively engage with Islanders in their political-geographic space.

In Part 3, 'Space, Region and Politics', Martin Nakata and Sandra Kehoe-Fortuna thoroughly investigate the process in which the colonial administration positioned Islanders in a racist discourse that continues to shape their future. David Lawrence illustrates the narratives that are mutually understood through historical-cultural relationships between Papuans and Islanders, and Bill Arthur makes clear the complexities in a borderland rife with economic and resource inequalities due to modern legislative and political boundaries. This theme of power is developed by Jenny Martin Davis' discussion of community and school-staff relationships on Salibi Island. The processes of male and female initiation ceremonies are illustrated by Bani.

In Part 4, 'Time and Resources', members of the Murray Islands Archaeological Project advance the first firm archaeological evidence of approximately 3000 years of horticultural subsistence and human occupation in the Murray Islands. Additionally, Colin Scott, teamed with Monica McLennan, notes the key role Indigenous knowledge and institutions play in conservation, resource use and management of the land and marine space. Finally, Bani highlights Islander cultural knowledge of the dugong and

its hunting-processes associated with understanding the tides, currents, and the position of sea grass.

This is a readable and useful text that combines insightful scholarship with clear narratives. It has a broad scope over the Torres Strait region, and advances the proposition that, over time, changes to *ailan custom* (island custom) will require ongoing interpretations from multiple viewpoints.

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*The artificial horizon: imagining the Blue Mountains* by Martin Thomas, 313pp, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2003, \$49.95

As someone who grew up in the Blue Mountains and is still resident there, I felt some unease about the prospect of an academic historian dissecting the familiar, magical places of the region. I've always thought that those places you call home have a special aura, beyond academic analysis, even though the latest trend for historians researching 'place' makes home one of today's premier intellectual grounds for investigation.

However, my trepidation was unfounded. I greatly enjoyed reading most of this book. Martin Thomas treats the human experience in the Blue Mountains in an elegant, although sometimes academically heady way. He charts the experiences of different groups and individuals as a visual journey through the labyrinths of the hills in an attempt to place them in the Blue Mountain landscape. To do this he draws on art history, philosophy, geography, folklore, oral history and more traditional historical discourse. These are well illustrated with a wide range of images. The final product is a series of five thematic 'passages' consisting of groups of essays loosely tuned to each subject. At times I found the treatment of the themes to be a little lofty with the ubiquitous (and to me often unnecessary) references to scholars like Descartes, Engels and Wittgenstein making the text difficult to read in parts.

One major thread through the book is the role of Indigenous people in the history of the Mountains. An analysis of paintings by Thomas Mitchell and Eugene von Guérard provides the setting for a lively and intriguing analysis of the place of Aboriginal people in the narrative of Mountains history. As part of this analysis Thomas brings to light interesting detail about the Aborigines who occupied 'The Gully' near Katoomba township until they were moved on by developers in the 1950s. This is certainly an important part of Blue Mountains history, and it was enjoyable to read, but in some senses it was also disappointing. I found Thomas' analysis of life at The Gully to be not particularly original or inspired, and given the pivotal importance of events at this place, more might be expected. It is partly my own experiences that lead me to this conclusion. I grew up with the children of many of the Aboriginal people he refers to and for most of us what happened at The Gully, as described by Thomas, is common knowledge, as it is amongst many Mountain residents. Life and the incidents at The Gully are in fact so widely known and acknowledged that the local Rotary Club detailed them in

*The Katoomba-Leura Story* (Armitage 1998). Factually, and in analytical terms, Thomas's own work adds little to popular accounts. Similarly, one can question the worth of Thomas' attempt to debunk local identity Mel Ward's mythological story of the Three Sisters. As Armitage (1998: 118–19) points out, few local people seriously believed Mel Ward's colourful account of three Aboriginal sisters turning to stone to be a real Aboriginal myth. What would have been more interesting is to know what made these legends so popular as a representation of the Mountains to the outside world. The history of a place like the Blue Mountains is after all a constant balance between perceptions of self (locals) and others (visitors).

This brings me to the other main criticism I have of this book. Thomas lacks any significant level of introspection, which I find surprising for a cultural historian of place (although he may deny that he is one). Thomas, I consider, fails to analyse how he is reshaping the history of the very place he is examining. He recognises how the shape of the social landscape changes as groups and individuals add layers of meaning, but he appears oblivious to how he is doing the same thing. I am suspicious of any seemingly innocent attempt to reshape, without deep introspection, the history of any place or people. This leads me to ask, for example, whether one can place Aborigines into the landscape in a more meaningful way than the early painters and their contemporaries, without bringing to bear a very deep critique of one's own world view? In this sense I still feel the unease I mentioned at the beginning of this review. It is unsettling to see an analysis like this one that strains to see the far 'horizons' and yet misses being able to see itself.

Nevertheless, Thomas gives a brilliant and insightful view of early European movements into the Mountains. It was a great relief not to see the story of Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth conquering the mountains and opening up the western plains. Thomas sees European relations with the land from an uncommon perspective. Using his own analogy, it is almost as though he is able to take the light from the labyrinths and dissect it into its component parts, showing views of the Mountains not seen before. The accounts of Strzelecki's and Caley's journeys into the 'Devils Wilderness' were particularly illuminating. These are parts of the Mountains where I have walked and I now see the area through new eyes.

The passages of the book which deal with suicide, and the life of the archaeologist Gordon Childe are beautifully crafted. Again, it was a relief to see Thomas weave a picture of a slightly darker aspect of the Mountains which has received little attention. You get the distinct impression when reading these sections that Thomas is able to clearly see something of the 'aura' of the Mountains that has attracted people there for all sorts of reasons. His discourse on suicide and on Childe's death near Govetts Leap is a wonderful journey through the dark, shady labyrinths of the Mountain landscape and the minds of some of those who felt compelled to travel to these Mountains on their final journey. It is an intriguing sketch of a part of the area's cultural history also touched on by novelists like Delia Falconer (1997) who hint that the deep valleys say something profound about the spirit people who visit them.

Any misgivings I have about this book are outweighed by the impact it has had on how I, and others, will now see the Mountains. It is not an easy task for any author to take on a project like this, where they have to articulate a feeling for the hills that changes, like the light in the deep valley gorges, the longer they stay in the Mountains.

Thomas is to be commended for being able to catch glimpses of that light in the labyrinths and bring them to the reader.

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Rob Paton  
Blackheath

*A bend in the Yarra: a history of the Merri Creek Protectorate Station and Merri Creek Aboriginal School 1841–1851* by Ian Clark and Toby Heydon, 100pp, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2004, \$24.95

Among a handful of sites of Aboriginal importance in the post-contact past of Melbourne, an area at the confluence of the Yarra River and Merri Creek is of the first rank. Over a period of more than ten years beginning in 1841, this site was the scene of a range of encounters between Europeans and Indigenous people from local clans. In the case of the former group many of the actors were officials, who represented government in some capacity. The use of this area for official purposes and the consequent presence of government agents has led to both its importance being recognised and to a more extant historical record of the interactions that took place there. Thus, there are not only a number of reasons for the importance of the site, but a good body of documentation to substantiate this importance. Both of these features are spelt out at some length in this report, compiled by historical geographers Clark and Heydon. What the authors have done is to provide a detailed compilation of the historical basis for assessing the significance of this site.

This report is the result of a detailed historical study into the site, commissioned by Aboriginal Affairs Victoria. It is not surprising then, nor entirely out of place, to find it contains detail that is no more than background or contextual in nature. For example, the greater part of chapter 4 is devoted to providing historical detail about the Aboriginal Protectorate of 1939–1849, the three phases of a Native Police Corps (although the first two had no connection with the Merri Creek site), and a number of other sites around the Melbourne district frequented by Aboriginal people in the early post-contact period. This is all context for the specific detail about the study area that is to follow in the next two chapters.

After brief private use for pasturing cattle, in 1841 the area was reserved for government use. William Thomas, the Assistant Protector for the Western Port District had been visiting the site from late in that year and from June 1842 it was selected as temporary quarters for the Native Police troopers under the command of HEP Dana. In the following couple of years Thomas was unable to prevent local clanspeople living at the site also and eventually set up quarters there himself. Of major significance was the establishment of a school for Aboriginal children at the site, which operated from 1845 to 1851.

Of course, the area had an importance to the Indigenous clans prior to the arrival of Europeans. The authors point to the historical evidence for this, although perhaps they exaggerate their achievement in claiming, in the conclusion (p76), that their report has revealed the details of traditional ownership of the site, as these were well documented many years ago.

A few small corrections could be made. It is by no means certain, for example, that 'the signing of Batman's treaty occurred on Merri Creek' (p27); details of the site called *Worrowen* (near present-day Brighton) are quoted at length but the reference does not appear in the Select bibliography at the end of the report. However, these are minor quibbles and do not detract significantly from the overall value of the report.

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*Alive and kicking: Areyonga teenage Pitjantjatjara* by Annie Langlois, 267pp, Pacific Linguistics 561, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, 2004, \$69.30

Langlois documents the recorded speech of Pitjantjatjara teenagers in Areyonga, a southern Northern Territory community. About 200 (mostly young) people lived there at the time of her research in the mid-1990s. Pitjantjatjara is the community's preferred language of interaction. However, traditional cultural transmission is increasingly sporadic, and 'there is a very noticeable western influence on teenage speech and the way of life of Areyonga teenagers' (p11). The book gives an adequate account of Langlois' fieldwork, the setting and methodology, it contains a large number of speech examples, and includes interesting theoretical discussions on language endangerment. It appears to be a thorough documentation of linguistic and cultural change.

Chapter 1 provides background information on the Areyonga community, their language situation, and Langlois' methodology. Chapter 2 describes differences in the sound patterns of teenagers and senior Pitjantjatjara speakers, mainly concerning English loanwords. Word-level grammatical simplification is dealt with in chapter 3, followed by two chapters on sentence-level changes. Chapters 6 and 7 deal with the lexicon and case studies of lexical fields, in which extensive reliance on English borrowings seems increasingly evident in children's speech. Chapter 8 briefly describes the secret 'short-way' language used by teenage girls, and chapter 9 summarises the documented changes.

Although this is not a long-term study – the author avoids drawing on historical data – a number of important generational differences are documented. Langlois demonstrates an extensive shift towards English, affecting sounds, sound patterns, grammar and semantics. Her conclusions regarding language survival prospects are not, however, supported by the data presented. Her view is that teenage Areyonga Pitjantjatjara is in a 'healthy' state more or less because the changes happening within it can happen in 'healthy' languages. This is untenable. Changes in threatened languages are typically extensive, happen fast, and features are lost without being replaced by alternative devices in the language (Schmidt 1985: 213–214). Moreover, grammatical

and other changes do not act independently in any one level but tend to influence each other (see Lee 1987: 322).

One of Langlois' concluding remarks is that 'Areyonga teenage Pitjantjatjara, circa 1990, is in a healthy state' (p181) and her final sentence says 'for now, Areyonga teenage Pitjantjatjara is alive and kicking' (p182). It is unclear how ten-year-old data can support the latter statement. In contrast with Langlois' conclusions, it would appear that Areyonga teenage Pitjantjatjara is in fact undergoing rapid, accelerating, extensive linguistic shift, which in terms of language maintenance and loss is always a cause for concern.

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*Muslims in Australia: immigration, race relations and cultural history* by Nahid Kabir, 360pp, Kegan Paul, London, 2004

Hobsbawm, in his study *Nations and nationalism since 1780* (1990: 67) tells us that 'the links between religion and national consciousness can be very close'. He goes on to point out that world religions like Islam and Christianity were, paradoxically, 'therefore designed to fudge ethnic, linguistic, political and other differences'. Australia is ideologically a 'multi-corporate state', a place where religious communities have coexisted, with limitations, since 1788.

*Muslims in Australia* claims to be a study of 'the settlement of Muslims in Australia as a religious group' (p328). It should be remembered that Islam is a religion and Muslims are the peoples who adopt that faith. As a workable category for a history, these two are readily confused. On the surface it is easy to use Islam as a religious term but it lacks currency as a sociological term due to the diversity of elements that it includes. This book tries to combine a study of minority immigrant groups and their similarities to the Muslim minority community, with a perspective on their relationships with the European-Australian majority. In doing so, Kabir has chosen a vast subject which confronts, on the way, many barriers of mixed genres and non-availability of sources.

The topic certainly deserves attention as little has been written about these histories. 'Afghan' is the stereotype for Middle Eastern peoples in histories such as McKnight's book on camels (1969). However, Kabir's research shows that they came from northern Africa, the Levant, Afghanistan, Persian countries and from Middle Eastern countries only recently formed.

Kabir begins her narrative with a short, interesting collection of data on early Muslim convicts and free arrivals. She then jumps from 1813 to the 1860s, when a boat load of camels and Afghans cameleers disembarked at Port Augusta in South Australia

en route to providing camel transport from about the 1860s until the late 1920s, when rail transport gradually superseded cameleers and their camels. Kabir then provides a short piece on Australian immigration policies, which takes us up to the 1996 census.

Understandings of these historical movements are bound up in the schism of the occident and the orient, and the defining qualities of Orientalism: 'Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilisations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of the deepest and most recurring images of the 'Other' (Said 1978:1). Australia is included in this history. The subject is not just about fear, religion, race or culture and the prejudices therein, but it is also about the burden of 'who's history are we dealing with'?

Islam, the author acknowledges, has a past dating back 1,700 years emerging out of Arabia. She does not look at Islam's role as a conquering movement, although it was Islam's expansion from Arabia that enabled its proselytising of the Maccassans, who brought Islam to Australia prior to the arrival of Christianity (Mulvaney 1975: 41-44). Her account does not include the interactions of Muslim people and Aboriginal people.

Kabir presents us with a theory that the social and cultural phenomena surrounding the migration of people who are Islamic is largely determined by stereotypic Anglo prejudices. But I think that this is an over-simplification. For while prejudices have affected every group who came to Australia for whatever economic, political or cultural reasons, the author's attempts to characterise prejudices by white society against Afghans as relating to 'race' alone is misguided. They also need to be seen in an economic light. When the Afghans came to British Australia they came for a profit, the companies they worked for provided the capital but the camel transport was controlled by small privateers who relied not on Islam and its infrastructure but on verbal and customary contract systems to survive. Discrimination pervades every aspect of capitalism: its dehumanising aspects and its profit-driven capacities cannot tolerate difference either then or now.

For this review, in the journal *Aboriginal History*, I think it is appropriate to focus on the topic of the interactions of Muslim people and Aboriginal people. There are many Aborigines whose progenitors were Muslims. Their histories have not been extensively researched. This important topic is not studied in this book, and no use has been made of either the archives in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies or state and federal primary source materials.

From the 1860s Muslim peoples came in some numbers, prompted by a demand for camel transport, which they monopolised. They also employed others; some of the people they employed were whites, the majority were Aborigines. They provided the transport for the building of the Overland Telegraph Line and the numerous railway lines across Australia, for the transportation of wheat, wool and fruit along the rivers of New South Wales and Victoria, and minerals for domestic consumption and for export, until the rail links superseded their skills. In many country towns now you will see streets named after Muslim camel traders and such names as Mecca St, in Bungendore NSW, aptly placed on the eastern side of the town.

The cameleers present two dilemmas: firstly, they came without their religious leaders, and secondly, they came without their wives. The building of the Overland Telegraph Line and the railway through central Australia provided the circumstances for

cameleers and Aboriginal women to develop short and long term relationships. The transport depots where the Afghans rested overnight contained fringe camps where Aboriginal people lived. Many of the Afghans took Aboriginal women from these camps, and from these relationships came large numbers of children of mixed racial descent.

Between the time of the national census of 1901 and the first Commonwealth census of 1911 the number of persons of mixed descent ('half-castes') recorded in central Australia increased from 187 (in a total of 23,048) to 244 (in a total of 21,756). Partly because no racial category was used to distinguish them in the historical records, little is known of the actual Aboriginal-Muslim numbers and whether they became Muslims. The significant thing about these figures is that they represent a great increase in the number of children present in the transport and cattle camps. The increase in the population of children created a social revolution whereby the customs and manners of traditional group's civil society could not cope. The changed circumstances of the population of mostly females and children lacked leadership, lacking also an economy, authority structures and capital surplus (see Rowley 1972 and Briscoe 1991). Without a 'civil society', these children could rely only on the social and economic support of camp women. The Aboriginal women and their children either remained in the camps or moved from the main routes and lost contact with their Muslim relatives, to be swept up into Christianity, or no religion at all. Some Muslim fathers did take Aboriginal women into their harems (see Briscoe 1991: 127-9). On the whole, however, they were abandoned to their own devices or to those of the new Commonwealth Administrator (see Rowley 1972 *Outcasts in white Australia*). From 1911, well into the 1970s, children and adults of full and mixed descent were removed from cattle camps, depots, fringe camps and the bush camps. They were taken to government 'Native Institutions' and to church institutions for the purposes of socialisation, tuition and control.

While the topic of *Muslims in Australia* at first excites the imagination, it emerges that tackling 'immigration, race relations and cultural history' is too complex for this work. Given the limited source material available and used, the book's scope is problematic. 'Value free history' is a myth, but my impression is that the book is aimed at Muslim readers more than general history readers and students. The book is made hard to follow by the lack of a clear introduction to the content and an index.

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*Whitening race: essays in social and cultural criticism* edited by Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 303pp, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2004, \$34.95

It is disappointing when a nascent field of study (in an Australian context anyway), emerges seeming already tired and dated. This is not a problem with Whiteness Studies *per se*, but with its application here. In too many of the 17 contributions in this volume a politics and ideology forecloses against the formulation of the sort of revelatory enquiry that Whiteness Studies potentially offers. Nevertheless, despite these shortcomings there are some thoughtful and interesting chapters here. Several gently suggest caution, and the constraining path that Whiteness Studies could follow; a caution unheeded by some of its authors, however.

Jane Haggis (pp48–58), one of the scholars at the forefront of Whiteness Studies in Australia, admits to some ‘unease about naming and focusing on “Whiteness”’ (p49), principally out of fear of strengthening ‘white race privilege’ (p51) and of reifying essentialism. In dealing with these concerns Haggis provides a coherent and useful précis of key critiques of essentialism, including that of Ien Ang’s (pp52–4). She then, however, through a dubious contrivance, accepts a rigid, fixed difference between Aborigines and settler-Australians whilst at the same time rejecting that the asserted incommensurability represents an essentialist turn. This argument shows faithful devotion to a cause more than frank and fearless scholarship.

Gillian Cowlshaw’s contribution (pp59–74) is typically reasoned and astute, and in some respects counters the arguments of others featured in this text. Cowlshaw notes how culture has supplanted race in ostensibly progressive scholarship whilst still invoking the same markers of difference such as heritability and primitivity (pp59–60). This argument is not new and Cowlshaw has made it previously, but unfortunately it warrants repeating. Culture continues to be mobilised in race’s stead, as if word substitution alone absolves the nefariousness associated with notions of race rather than transferring the same problems to another similarly problematical category. Cowlshaw argues that the employment ‘of race as the basis of social identification [is not] necessarily negative or regressive’ (p60, her emphasis), and that our attempts to negate the significance of race have deflected analysis and helped us deny how ‘racial identities are powerful and positively significant’ (p60). Cowlshaw writes of the growing ‘conventional *discursive respect* towards Indigenous people and heritage’ (p63, her emphasis), which, like more public ‘[g]estures of appeasement or guilt often stand in for tough-minded work’ (p64). She also warns of the dangers of creating through Whiteness Studies an ‘unarguable indigenous authority’ (p72), an authority further bolstered by ‘obsequiousness towards black voices’ (p258). Cowlshaw calls for intellectual engagement, not avoidance (or indeed obsequiousness) (pp66–7, 72), and for recognition of entangled histories and the complexities of inter-subjectivity. It is precisely this sort of engagement that enables Cowlshaw to read empathically and with discernment rural Aboriginal support for Pauline Hanson (p65). Cowlshaw’s chapter is not merely the strongest in a text of mostly moderate scholarship; its strength would and should be recognised beyond this volume’s probable reach.

Bob Pease’s chapter too is interesting (pp119–30). His aim is to ‘discuss some of the dilemmas, tensions and contradictions in the process of challenging white male privilege’ (p119), and in doing so he provides a thorough and very useful review of

contemporary scholarship in this field. The critique of diversity programs is timely (p125), and Pease's consideration of the insights that critical Whiteness Studies may glean from debates within pro-feminist movements is both sensible and practical. Pease modestly concludes that he raises more questions and dilemmas than he provides answers to (p129), but it is these very questions and dilemmas that need raising, not ignoring, and the very problems that Whiteness Studies need to engage with. Few within this volume, however, appear willing to do so.

Maureen Perkins (pp164–75) provides a nuanced account of the act of 'passing', and links this in interesting ways to those in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English society who attempted to mask their social origins, only to have their obfuscation betrayed by their spontaneous real selves. Perkins details how stolen (and lost) children were a product of the dislocation that accompanied rapid industrialisation in Europe, and how the development of British government policy over several generations led to increasing intervention in children's lives. The stolen generations of Aboriginal children must be considered in this context, Perkins argues. However, attempts to mitigate blame by suggestions that the government policy of assimilation was well meaning are belied by the fact that there was a 'common belief ... that the hidden corruption of colour would always eventually be revealed' (p174).

Sue Shore (pp89–103) critiques the role that liberal humanism plays in skewing adult education towards a white norm. She shows how many radical educators are similarly entrapped by the discursive practices of whiteness. Susan Young (pp104–18), in an argument not without significant problems of its own, details how far behind theories underpinning the vocation of social work lag in terms of dealing with whatever Other. Kate Foord (p133–47) reads Rod Jones' novel *Billy Sunday* on one level as a recuperated inscription of Turner's frontier thesis in Australian nation building. In doing so she achieves the very difficult feat of rendering Lacanian psychoanalytical interpretative theories accessible, although the argument does not always flow easily. Furthermore, Lacanian psychoanalysis enables readings of *Billy Sunday* at considerable variance to those of Foord's, but these possibilities are ignored. Belinda McKay (pp148–63) focuses on the often overlooked early white women writers in Queensland and demonstrates their complicity in colonialism and dispossession. Her analysis is strongest and most interesting when discussing the issue of assimilation in women's fiction in the late nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century.

Moreton-Robinson, an indulgent editor in this instance, is the text's reference point and most contributors pay their intellectual respects. I have the sense that several of the authors are writing solely for each other (and perhaps their students), and that Whiteness Studies in Australia is more of a club than a genuine area of enquiry. The liberal acknowledgements to each other (both in this text and in laudatory reviews) emphasise this introspection. This field has the potential to offer new insights into fraught and contested terrains but for the most part the contributors to this text eschew that opportunity, hectoring their readers and opting for persuasion through convictive belligerence. How does this contribute to a supposedly academic text? It charts little new ground. Whiteness Studies needs to embrace a broader intellectual church, to be more generous and meticulous in its scholarship, and outward looking if it wants to expand its sphere of influence beyond vested interests and fellow travellers. The chap-

ters which are most constructive, including those listed above, are drowned in the overall clamour.

One minor point, directed to the publishers. This book as an artefact has its limitations, as the print is almost in danger of toppling off the page. Given that the book's readers will be mainly students in selected undergraduate courses, more generous margins are needed.

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*The French explorers and the Aboriginal Australians 1772–1839* by Colin Dyer, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 2005, \$32.95

### **A French cross-cultural compendium**

Nineteenth century meetings between French scientific explorers and Aborigines are a well documented but little used resource in cross-cultural Australian histories. There is a tendency to discard the French presence along the Australian coast in the early nineteenth century focusing instead on the British interactions with Aborigines. *The French explorers and the Aboriginal Australians 1772–1839* by Colin Dyer is the latest addition to a slowly growing literature which draws attention to the French meetings with Aborigines during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Other recent writings in this area include *Encountering Terra Australis: the Australian voyages of Nicolas Baudin and Mathew Flinders* (2004) by Jean Fornasiero, Peter Monteath and John West-Sooby.

*The French explorers* chronicles 10 French expeditions to Australia over six decades. Starting in 1772 with the journey of Marion Dufresne, Dyer then takes us to the expedition of La Perouse in 1788, Bruny d'Entrecasteaux in 1792, Baudin in 1801, de Freycinet in 1818, Duperry in 1824, de Bouganville in 1825, d'Urville in 1826, Laplace in 1831 and d'Urville again in 1839. Dyer gives us a summary of the 10 expeditions, their aims and official instructions, and divides the material up thematically. Of the four sections – 'descriptions of Aboriginal Australians'; 'relations between the Aborigines and the French'; 'relations between the Aborigines themselves' and 'relations between the Aborigines and the British' – most weight is given to the first two.

Dyer states from the first that his aim is to 'enable readers to make as close an acquaintance as possible directly with the French explorers and the Aboriginal Australians during their encounters'. Because of this, Dyer's voice is absent from the text. Dyer is also scant with historical context (crucial when dealing with the French in the late eighteenth century) and includes little analysis. What Dyer does give us is 'essentially the evidence ... to enable readers, if they so wish, to draw their own conclusions, to form their own arguments'.

Dyer's first chapter looks at the French writings on the physical descriptions of the Aborigines – their weight, height, size of teeth and the colour of their skin. Due to Enlightenment thinking, the French observations were highly anthropological and special emphasis was given to 'men in nature' and the physicality of the 'sauvage'. The

French were also interested in Aboriginal nutrition, their dwellings, use of fire and material culture.

Dyer then goes on to explore relations between the Aborigines and the French, through French eyes. He looks at social relations – how the Aborigines received the French and (briefly) how their first meetings were acted out. The French perception of Aboriginal character and language is an intriguing section of *The French explorers* as we are shown how French perceptions of Aborigines changed over half a century, from a romantic Rousseau-inspired spirit, to the disappointment that Arago and d'Urville experienced in the 'miserable' Aborigines of the 1820s.

Dyer makes an attempt at an Indigenous perspective in the next section entitled 'the Aboriginal Australians as anthropologists'. He comments on the Aboriginal curiosity at the colour of the French men's skin, their clothes, material culture and their sex. In doing so, Dyer could have used this opportunity to make the point that the 'anthropological' Aborigines were actually curious in very similar ways to the French men. He spends no time in analysing what these French visits might have meant to the Aborigines.

The next section of *The French explorers* looks at the relationships the Aborigines had between themselves. The book finishes with a short chapter on relations between the British and the Aborigines, all through the eyes of the French.

The small bibliography – made up almost entirely of French sources – leads Dyer to make an already cloudy picture of cross-cultural meetings even cloudier. This brief bibliography may also be the reason why he sometimes draws brash generalisations: 'Unlike the British, the French were not interested in conquering ... so relations between the explorers and the Aborigines were predominantly respectful and harmonious. They really got on very nicely – even romantically on occasion.'

With the absence of Dyer's voice, and no textual exegesis, the reader is left feeling that *The French explorers* reinforces eighteenth and nineteenth century attitudes towards Aborigines. In the absence of a deeper reading of these iconic journals it is easy to fall into the trap of accepting what was written at face value, or worse, judging their actions from the present – a dangerous temptation for a historian to fall into. The same can be said about the lack of Indigenous understanding: 'When the French first landed in New Holland the Indigenous inhabitants must have wondered who on Earth these creatures were.' No effort is made by Dyer to consult the records that actually document some of the Indigenous interpretations of the meaning of the presence of these white male visitors. Dyer writes that 'we can only guess at interpreting their interpretations', but the reality is that it is just as hard to get inside the heads of nineteenth century Frenchmen as it is to get inside those of nineteenth century Aborigines. It is hard, but this does not mean that we should not try.

Due to the absence of a deeper relationship with his texts, Dyer misses out on the complexity of these cross-cultural meetings – often, if not always, fraught with the unpredictable possibility of slipping into conflict.

*The French explorers* is not a fine-grained history book on French meetings with Aborigines and Dyer does not pretend that it is meant to be. Although the intricate details and complexities of cross-cultural meetings are quickly flown over, the book certainly has its merits. It is a valuable compendium of French descriptions and

impressions of Aborigines and a useful chronicle of ten extraordinary expeditions. Importantly, it includes previously uncited material, some of which Dyer has translated himself. This arduous task is of immense value for fellow historians and interested readers, and the effort that has gone into it is evident in his 'Note on Vocabulary'. The illustrations that have been chosen are also admirable. Francois Peron's detailed sketches, Nicolas Petit's Tasmanian pictures and Jacques Arago's illustrations of Aboriginal traditional life are beautifully reprinted.

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*Whispers of this Wik woman* by Fiona Doyle, University of Queensland Press, 152pp, 2004, \$24.95.

In *Whispers of this Wik woman*, Fiona Doyle has added to the rich stream of family history flowing from Aboriginal writers. In the process she has shown how the broader historical process of European colonisation has impacted upon Aboriginal lives and personal relationships. The story focuses on Wik activist, Jean George Awumpun, Fiona Doyle's maternal grandmother, whose adult life was spent in the Weipa-Napranum area. She is the last fluent speaker of the Alngith language and a living treasure-house of the local language and culture. She was an eloquent spokesperson in the struggle for Wik native title and was a signatory on 16 June 1998 to the Alngith Native Title agreement, and on 14 March 2001 to the Western Cape Communities Co-existence Agreement between the Peoples of Western Cape York Peninsula, the Federal Government and the mining company, Comalco. This sounds like a march of triumph in which justice is rewarded, but Doyle has courageously revealed the other personal, tragic dimension of Awumpun's life.

Fiona Doyle makes it clear that this book is her interpretation of her family's history especially as it relates to their identification with the Weipa area; an interpretation that is still not accepted by most of her countrymen and women. According to Awumpun, her father, Dick Kelinda, had visited Aurukun from his clan country around the old Weipa Mission and been persuaded or coerced to stay there, presumably to assist the missionaries at Aurukun which was established in 1904, six years after Mapoon's establishment. It was not until 1942 that Jean George Awumpun and Roy George returned to Weipa as newlyweds.

The Aboriginal people at Weipa concluded Awumpun was from Aurukun. There was also no acceptance that Dick Kelinda's father, Yepenji, was Alngith. The story that Fiona Doyle narrates is overshadowed by this assertion and rejection of the identity of Awumpun and her descendants. This reaches a compelling but bitter climax when she is accepted as Alngith to be a signatory because her grandfather's name, Yepenji, was recorded as Alngith in the white man's records. This has not convinced her nay-sayers at Weipa. This book is a glowing, unashamedly partisan defence of her grandmother's identification and a passionate tribute to her life.

Until 1966, when the Presbyterian Board of Mission handed over control of Weipa Mission to the Queensland Government, the family history takes place within the con-

text of a mission, but one in which the missionaries seem to be only bit players in the lives of the Aborigines, although they assume more and more control. The Aboriginal people continue to live the only lives they know with one another even though the framework of their lives changes from one generation to the next. Dormitory life is created to remove the children from the parents. One generation lived the language and culture. The next learnt about it when they associated with their traditional parents outside the dormitories. The next were at a further remove. Yet, as Doyle shows, Aboriginal people like Dick Kelinda and Awumpun, with complete faith in their Aboriginal religion and values, who had never experienced dormitory life, could accept sincerely the Christian faith and become its advocates among their own people. Fiona Doyle makes it clear, without any qualification or embarrassment, that Awumpun's Christian faith is still very important to her: 'She finds peace in her Saviour' (p129). She also finds a sustaining strength in being Alngith.

Although the focus of this book is on Jean George Awumpun, other fascinating cameos emerge: Dick Kelinda, Awumpun's grandfather who became a displaced person because of missionary influence at Aurukun. He was used as a bridge between the missionaries and the local Aborigines whose way of life the missionaries were determined to change. Also Fiona Doyle herself, who is a successfully established choreographer, dancer, educator and author. She moved to Sydney when she was 16 to study dance at the National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association and became comfortable with city life. She graduated from James Cook University's Remote Teacher Education Program (RATEP) with a Bachelor of Education in 2002 and has recently moved to Brisbane with her husband and three children. She has traced her Austrian father who appears with her in a photograph taken at Jessica Point in 1996.

Fiona Doyle is a woman of two very different worlds. It has been important for her to explore and establish her grandmother's identity for, in doing so, she was also exploring and establishing her own. Her traditional past is important to her personally and in the expression of her creativity.

Often, in Doyle's account, I was intrigued about what was *not* said or further explored. This may have been because she thought there was insufficient evidence or because she did not wish to pursue the matter further. For example, with regard to the relationship between Dick Kelinda and the missionaries, why did he accept the authority of the missionaries in the early days of the mission when he could have simply returned to his home country? 'He also had a heart for the Lord Jesus and His word' (p10).

The disturbed nature of family life is acknowledged but with a respectful sensitivity and restraint. No explanation is suggested as to why the children of a number of women are being brought up by others. Doyle observes that traditional culture is not currently being lived at Weipa by her parent's generation or hers, and that it is mainly the women who are trying to keep it alive. 'Where are the men, the Weipa men?' she gently laments (p99). She also observes the redefinition of identity that is occurring: 'members of family groups are being "clumped" together under "one tribe headings"' (p5).

Doyle devotes four pages of this book to telling one of Awumpun's stories, first in pidgin and then in standard English. Four men magically speared a woman who

turned into a bird and flew: 'The people saw her fly. My mother was there with old lady Laura' (p22). The men are captured by Dick Kelinda and brought back to Aurukun where Superintendent Mackenzie had them whipped. Two were exiled from the mission. The supernatural and the natural, the marvellous and the mundane exist side by side. Doyle's comment is: 'Nana once told me about a bizarre happening that occurred as the result of a crime that took place. This story has stayed with me because of its strangeness' (p19). Doyle's lightness of touch gives the material the respect it deserves.

There is much else in *Whispers of this Wik woman* that is touched on in passing: missionary control through government legislation, dormitory life, the involvement in World War II, the use of Aboriginal men and women as cheap labour, the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women when they were sent out to work, the perception of the old people that mission times were in some ways golden days, the impact of alcohol on community life, and the new life that Aboriginal people are cutting out for themselves. But the focus of this book is Fiona Doyle's determination to establish Jean George Awumpun's identity and to celebrate the triumph of her life despite the negative response of many of those whom she has lived with all of her adult life. Here there are broad parallels with Koiki Mabo's struggle to achieve Native Title, despite the lack of support from some of the Meriam people, their questioning of his lineage and denying his ownership of all of the land he claimed to have inherited.

In 2003, Fiona Doyle's book received the David Unaipon Award for the best entry by a Black Australian Writer. The University of Queensland Press have done well to sponsor this award and to turn it into such a fine publication. I hope it continues to attract writers of the calibre of Fiona Doyle.

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