

Book Reviews

A Different Inequality: The Politics of Debates about Remote Aboriginal Australia by Diana Austin-Broos, 224 pp, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2011, ISBN 9781742370491 (pbk), \$29.99.

How often have you heard a well-meaning person asking 'What is the answer to the "Aboriginal problem"?' Aboriginal Australian academics once responded by attesting that *whites* were the problem, and that Aborigines must be given back their land. Today those same people are involved in intense debates about just what to do about the ongoing post-Mabo tragedy in remote Australia. So yes, this is a now-acknowledged, but a confusing, multi-faceted problem. Violence and early death are endemic. People are suffering. Too many deaths of loved ones – of very young people, of sharp-witted people full of life, humour and fun, and of talented, accomplished leaders in their prime.

Austin-Broos's eloquent preface sums it up: 'Remote Aboriginal Australia is one place where great beauty can be juxtaposed with seemingly endless grief' (p. xix). The social indicators – the early mortality rates, the poor education standards, the violence and murders, the health crises, the alcohol and drug abuse statistics, the poor outlook and lack of employment opportunities – all combine to present a picture of unendurable horror. Sure, there are good news stories in certain communities and the numbers of high-achieving Aboriginal people are increasing. But we are talking remote communities, where it is hard not only for people and resources to get in, but for the people who live there to get out.

What happened to the 1970s and 1980s optimism behind Aboriginal land rights and 'self-determination', where Aboriginal people would be permitted to create their own futures, ones purportedly free of government and church authoritarianism? Austin-Broos walks us through both the discrediting of 'assimilationist' ideals and the unhelpfulness of anthropology's postcolonial critiques. She sees former ideas displaced by 'pathology', which conceptualises the problem of remote communities as a kind of socio-cultural disease zone of 'unhealthiness' and aimless welfare dependency. Yet what followed recently was the heavy-handed and often ineffectual Northern Territory 'intervention', one of a series of 'failed policies', and 'answers to the Aboriginal problem' mooted during the last century.

On the positive side, people in remote communities still hold onto many facets of a culturally complex, richly storied and remarkably ancient tradition that links them to the history of the Australian landscape 'before time', and that outsider seekers are ever-keen to share. Optimists hope that tourism and other industries

may develop to support hybrid economies that combine the traditional with the modern and enable Aboriginal people a place within a capitalist market economy. While it worked to a certain extent in the pre-Second World War days of the cattle industry, and more recently, the art industry has grown remarkably rapidly, is any economic feasibility simply an overly romantic, impossible aspiration?

As we watch the communities from which some of the most successful international artists appear to self-destruct with endemic despair, one has to be doubtful. But, as Austin-Broos points out, was it ever acceptable to impair human rights in order to aspire to better education and health outcomes? And, while many people living in remote 'homelands' communities are involved in an art movement that is internationally acclaimed and enjoyed, and that makes money, what happens to that money? Does it only create worse pressures by the wayward young on the elderly wisdom holders?

This highly intelligent, well-argued book reveals the deeper complexities of this debate, drawing upon strong expertise and wisdom towards a deeper understanding. By keeping her focus upon remote communities, Austin-Broos avoids homogenising and over-generalising across the complete range of Aboriginal urban and rural experiences.

Weighing into the debate by arguing the need to reconcile 'culture difference' and identity politics with 'equality', Diane Austin-Broos is refreshingly objective in her approach. She cuts through all the sensitivities and power politics of adversarial positionings to hone in on the issues and the theories that underpin them. With special aplomb, she interrogates the changing role of anthropology in informing economic policy.

One of the great strengths of this book is its willingness to give parity to knowledge coming from a range of disciplines, and to critique the failures of these several disciplines, and the university centres and think-tanks that she argues have adopted overly narrow, often ideologically-based approaches. Pointing to the failure of anthropological and political thinkers to consider historical influences, she gives equal attention to less-heard players. For example, to the creative-thinking economist Bob Gregory, who argues the possibility of Aboriginal equality only if they change 'postcodes'. In other words, he argues against remote-living as unviable. Austin-Broos also reveals how both academics and more popular opinion-makers have shifted their positions and approaches and have changed alliances.

Austin-Broos is courageous in her quest to find a balance between acknowledging the 'difference' of Aboriginal values and aspirations against the causes of continuing, if not worsening, social and economic inequality. In attempting to be fair to the many different players, Austin-Broos fearlessly disagrees with even the most formidable key thinkers. And undoubtedly, many of these writers will

be miffed by her slam-dunk conclusions about their reports, articles and books. Yet Austin-Broos also comes back to their ideas, allowing seemingly dismantled positions to subtly bounce back with potentially renewed value.

While Austin-Broos understands the importance of land politics and deeper associations for Aboriginal communities, she brings fresh clarity to the associated poor educational, employment and health disadvantage of remote living. She is sceptical of those who romanticised the 'homelands' of spiritual-meaning solutions and who would not let go of the prospect of cultural survival as key to Aboriginal happiness. She is also sceptical of those who pathologise Aboriginal society as essentially harbouring domestic violence and child abuse.

There is too much covered in this book to touch on everything here. The downside of its analysis is that as one reads on, the issues only become more complicated. While complexity should never be shunned, the last couple of chapters do start to become rather micro if not circular in their critiques of various think-pieces, which slightly detracts from the clarity of the book's overall argument. Nonetheless, it is terrific to see Allen & Unwin's list starting to include scholarly, intricately argued books of such significance.

In conclusion, Austin-Broos expresses concern about advocates of philanthropic means as a key route to providing remote education. She argues that the state should be providing excellent primary education as a basic right for all Australian citizens. On the one hand, it is disturbing to see Aboriginal people agreeing to developments by resource companies that will destroy significant cultural sites on the basis of seeking a decent education for their kids, when this is provided free of charge elsewhere in Australia. On the other hand, perhaps they are making the most of available opportunities.

Above all, in this book, I would have liked some more values-oriented interrogation of what 'equality' might mean in these Aboriginal societies. Is the issue only about 'equality' compared with or delivered by a wealthy developed urban world, or is it also about internal factors that limit or work against opportunity within Indigenous societies? Although culturally-based income distribution patterns are mentioned, the way this impacts upon 'equality' and social opportunity could be further scrutinised.

Perhaps it would also have been helpful for Austin-Broos to draw upon examples from Canadian and United States history and recent politics. Education successes and professionalisation happened in North America far earlier than in Australia, and often due to private philanthropists setting up now-maligned educational institutions based upon boarding.

While reading it, I had the urge to underline just about every page and I always felt assured that its balanced syntheses of key policy arguments and its sensible critiques were highly reliable. Everyone interested in Aboriginal policy, a key national challenge, should read this book. I have already recommended it to a politician or two. You should too, although it is not a book of answers. While it is rich with intelligently-argued insights, it is too nuanced to have the political

clout of a Noel Pearson-style opinion piece. While this book points the way towards some directions, it does not navigate the routes of detailed policy implementation.

As a historian, I note while Austin-Broos wished anthropologists had been more historical in approach, she herself has moved away from analysing 'historically-based' inequality. I think she is right. Whereas history is a foundational element, 'the problem' must be scrutinised in the context of what is possible and likely in the present-day, in its capitalist-driven urbanised world. As Austin-Broos so ably shows, history is not the only reason for this essentially *different* kind of inequality. Demonstrating both empathy and a degree of calm acceptance, Austin-Broos is genuinely concerned and worried about these communities. And, as she shows with the story of 'Matthew', remote community life goes on, in its complex, different, painful, everyday, up-and-down ways.

Ann McGrath

The Australian National University

'Fire and Hearth' Forty Years On: Essays in Honour of Sylvia J. Hallam edited by Caroline Bird and R Esmée Webb, 142 pp, Records of the Western Australian Museum, Supplement no 79, Perth, 2011, ISBN 9781920843656 (pbk), \$33.75.

As Australian archaeology emerged in the 1970s, one of the pioneers of the field was Sylvia Hallam, one of the few archaeologists working in Australia's western third. This early work set a high standard. *Fire and Hearth*, her analysis of past Aboriginal landscape burning has few comparisons as a treatise encompassing history, ethnography and archaeology, and taking full advantage of a wealth of colonial-era documentation (Hallam 1975). The present volume, edited by Caroline Bird and Esmée Webb, celebrates four decades of Sylvia's contributions to Australian archaeology and ethnography, through research, teaching and service to the archaeological community. Many of the contributions are from her former students, covering a range of disciplines and themes, and attest to the influence of an original thinker. The quality of journal format production is also good, with excellent illustrations and colour figures and photographs.

Chapters in this book fall into two main themes: explorations in archaeology and ethnohistory starting with Western Australia (Gibbs; Smith; Mulvaney; Randolph; Schwede) and ending with several papers beyond the West (White; Clarke; Bird and Rhoads; Brown, Kee and McConnell; Armstrong). In between these are three papers on the development of Hallam's role in Western Australian Aboriginal history and biography (Reece; Tilbrook; Green). Apart from White and possibly Armstrong, these authors had a direct connection with Sylvia Hallam in early stages of their careers, and all derived inspiration to various degrees from her work. On these criteria there would have been several other potential contributors among Hallam's contemporaries and students, who could have added still other research strands. However, the 13 contributions in this volume provide a good overview of Hallam's research and some of the work that it has inspired.

Synopses of Hallam's role in the early development of Western Australian archaeology are aptly provided in two short pieces by her contemporaries and peers from the east coast, Isabel McBryde and John Mulvaney. The first research paper in the volume is by Martin Gibbs, who brings to light his Honours dissertation describing the primary historical and ethnographic data on Aboriginal gatherings at a celebrated fish-weir near Perth. This work epitomises the Hallam approach to documentary evidence to illustrate the very recent past and from there suggest or infer earlier developments towards the complex ceremonial and social practices described historically (see also Reece's contribution). While such data should not be accepted uncritically, many regions of Australia allow some form of this approach (McBryde 1979). Gibbs's paper suggests several forms of ethnographic and archaeological evidence that archaeologists may search for in documenting the development of these networks over time.

Moya Smith's paper, based on her contemporary but more processually-oriented PhD thesis, nevertheless highlights the value of ethnography, and of another Hallam approach, the regional study, in her analysis of artefact assemblages on the Esperance sand plains at the margins of the south-western Australian biographic region. The south-west, she argues, largely features many small artefact scatters that are very uniform (the influence of quartz as the predominant raw material accounts for a lot of this), expediently produced, and lack time depth, creating an impression of high residential mobility across the region. It takes ethnographic interpretation to reconcile this record with the historic evidence for complex organisation, in that constant mobility within and between territorially-affiliated dialect and clan groups enabled much economic, social and ritual activity.

Reporting his rock art analyses in the north-west of Western Australia, Ken Mulvaney notes Sylvia Hallam was one of the first to predict a great antiquity for rock art of the Dampier Archipelago. The succession of motif subjects that Hallam noticed is consistent with Mulvaney's comprehensive analysis of patination and production methods indicating at least five phases of artistic style. Mulvaney observes that despite early identification by Hallam and others of the potential of Dampier Archipelago rock art to chart cultural and landscape changes over a vast period, governments continue to neglect this highly significant heritage resource.

A neglected field in south-western Australian archaeology is the study of stone arrangements: while difficult to date and difficult to interpret, Randolph's outline of his site management work in the 1970s shows that they are widespread and varied across the region, and that Hallam was one of the first to systematically record any of them. These features are a tantalising but under-valued part of the archaeological landscape of the region.

Cautioning against uncritical acceptance of Sylvia Hallam's four-phase sequence of artefacts based on surveys of the Swan Coastal Plain around Perth, Schwede presents evidence for intrusive European materials amongst stone artefacts in unconsolidated pre-European sand deposits. While Schwede does not investigate means of testing for disturbance, such as refitting, or sedimentological analysis, her paper warns against over-enthusiastic acceptance of orthodox chronologies – something that Sylvia Hallam would probably agree with.

The three essays in the middle of the volume by historians highlight the different research directions resulting from Hallam's forays into colonial era records of Aboriginal people. Reece presents his interviews with Neville Green and Sylvia Hallam, recalling the labour of an army of research assistants and volunteers in transcribing and cross-referencing decades of hand-written colonial records and hundreds of names, to create the four Aboriginal volumes of the Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians. Green says the reward is seeing the value these volumes have for Aboriginal people researching their family histories, and the parts they have played in reconciliation and Native Title (eg *Bennell v State of Western Australia* 2006).

An essay by the late Lois Tilbrook recounts how, from starting points in history and archaeology, Tilbrook's and Hallam's research interests converged, leading to ten years of collaboration, culminating in a broad perspective of Aboriginal history ranging from the ritual and economic life of Aboriginal societies of the pre-colonial south-west through the colonial-era conflicts and to the infamous *Aborigines Act 1905* (WA). Written to engineer the disappearance of a people, the investigative powers that this Act enabled ironically led to the recognition of more Aboriginal people than had been thought to exist. The third essay, by Green, reviews colonial justice before the 1905 Act, in which Aboriginal people from across Western Australia were sentenced in the harshest possible terms for the most dubious of convictions, often leading to their transportation 1000 or more kilometres south to Rottnest Island prison.

Leaping across the continent, White describes the artificiality of the notion of agricultural and non-agricultural societies divided by Torres Strait, a subject close to Hallam's heart. He cites her interpretations of historical Aboriginal south-western land management and protection of yam grounds, and parallel developments in the south-east, as evidence for Australian plant cultivation. The southern regions of Australia are missing large chunks of archaeological evidence for this, but new technologies to better understand residues on artefacts and microfossils in sediment cores may help archaeologists to eliminate the kinds of preconceptions that White grappled with, and develop more detailed and particular comparisons within and between Australia and New Guinea.

Clarke uses twentieth century mission records and anthropological observations from Groote Eylandt for charting cross-cultural interaction and change, rather than towards Hallam's goal of documenting pre-colonial conditions. Clarke suggests that the latter is a futile goal in northern Australia where inter-cultural contacts began centuries before historical records. Nevertheless these data represent a mine of detailed information about culture and economy that could be exploited archaeologically.

One of Hallam's favoured approaches was the topographical archaeological survey, epitomised by her Swan Coastal Plain surveys, which was innovative for the time. Now a relatively common approach, or at least better understood, Bird and Rhoads apply it to the Wimmera in western Victoria and develop a useful tool for understanding past population distributions and for heritage management.

In a similar way, topographical archaeological approaches were applied in Tasmania, where Hallam's students Brown, Kee and McConnell each applied regional perspectives in heritage management. Coupled with these approaches was their training in analysis of historic records, which allowed them to better appreciate views from the 'other side of the frontier' and the interests of descendent communities who were then assuming a greater role in heritage decision-making.

The final paper, by Armstrong, has only one obvious connection to Hallam's research, the interpretation of historic records. This time they are Charles Darwin's observations on hunter-gatherer cultures during his voyage on the *Beagle*. Detailed analysis of the observer's biases enables inferences about historic events – unlike the other papers, it is unclear how the author's research relates to Hallam's.

Taken together the papers in this volume represent a detailed view, albeit incomplete, of the diversity of research that in some way or other was connected with or inspired by Hallam's work. This research requires an acceptance of the value of ethno-history, a sense of the archaeological topographic landscape, and an appreciation of multi-disciplinary approaches. While these ideas may be unexceptional today, they were new in Western Australia when Hallam began to apply them. This volume provides a good overview of the development and findings of an important phase of Australian archaeology.

References

Hallam, SJ 1975, *Fire and Hearth: a Study of Aboriginal Usage and European Usurpation in South-western Australia*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.

McBryde, I 1979, 'Ethnohistory in an Australian context: independent discipline or convenient data quarry?', *Aboriginal History* 3: 128–151.

Joe Dortch

Eureka Archaeological Research and Consulting

University of Western Australia

Blue Mountains Dreaming: The Aboriginal Heritage (Second Edition) edited by Eugene Stockton and John Merriman, 255 pp, Blue Mountain Educational and Research Trust, Lawson, 2009, ISBN 9780646503868, \$60.00.

I (RP) recall the first edition of *Blue Mountains Dreaming* published in 1993. It was a delight then to see the disparate knowledge of Aboriginal heritage for the mountains west of Sydney brought together in such a fine volume. It still sits on my bookshelf in Blackheath alongside ragged maps and bushwalking guides that I constantly thumb through before heading out to explore the country that has so many layers of meaning. So I have been keenly awaiting this second edition of the book edited by Eugene Stockton and John Merriman, hoping it would live up to the benchmark set by its predecessor. I was not disappointed.

The second edition of *Blue Mountains Dreaming* has been refreshed with new information as well as including a wider range of authors, all accomplished experts in their own fields. While the book disappointingly lacks direct contemporary Indigenous input, there is still scope for this to feature in future editions. The dynamic character of research in the mountains certainly calls on the editors to update the volume more regularly.

Edition two of the book is divided into ten chapters, one appendix and a detailed and well-considered index. Chapter 1 'New Discoveries', by one of the editors Eugene Stockton, clearly and concisely sets out the general scene for the remainder of the book. One could easily be critical of the quality and consistency of the drawings and maps in this short introductory chapter and in other parts of the book. But in a sense this handcrafted character adds to the charm of the volume and speaks to the deep feelings Stockton has for the Blue Mountains. He has lived there for much of his life and it is his passion for the country that holds the volume together as much as the intellectual rigor of the contributors.

The remaining nine chapters generally cover the range of topics typically associated with edited books that have a regional focus, with the order of the chapters being structured to take the reader seamlessly through the material. First we have a well-written discussion about the past and present climates by Mooney and Martin (Chapter 2). These two climate scientists have managed this complex discussion without falling into the trap of environmental determinism, or bombarding the reader with too much climatic jargon. The following chapter by Stockton tackles the archaeology of the Blue Mountains. Stockton has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the archaeological work undertaken over many decades and he is to be commended for summarising all of this work in 31 pages. A trained archaeologist would probably find reason to critique Stockton's use of concepts such as 'tool' types and the various technological phases he describes. But one assumes most people who will read this book are not trained archaeologists and, to be fair, the bibliography at the end of the chapter gives readers suitable references to follow for alternative lines of enquiry and analysis. Matthew Kelleher's chapter on Aboriginal art is beautifully illustrated and has a clear

discussion of the various art forms and the theories about their meanings. The next three chapters deal with the Darug people (Val Attenbrow), Gundungurra country (Jim Smith) and traditional subsistence patterns (John Merriman). All three of these chapters are readable, finely researched pieces written by knowledgeable, experienced authors. Chapter 8, authored by Dianne Johnson, deals with The Gully Aboriginal Place at Katoomba, probably the best known contemporary Aboriginal site in the Upper Blue Mountains. Not surprisingly, considering Johnson's previous publications on The Gully, this is an outstanding and thoroughly engaging chapter and is recommended as a standalone read for people who only browse the entire book. The final two chapters on the Dharug and Gundungurra languages by Kohen and Steele and by Steele are relatively short linked pieces, with a clear structure allowing even a non-linguist to easily understand something of the character of these two languages.

The book has bibliographic references at the end of each chapter that are comprehensive and well laid out. But in edited volumes this can be a bit frustrating for researchers who have to troll back through the volume to chase up poorly remembered points. Fortunately for this book there is an index by Jeanne Rudd that directs the reader rather elegantly through the diverse literature. It is pleasing to see that Rudd is suitably acknowledged for her work in the list of contributors.

Appendix 1 by Stockton entitled 'Baiaime' seems oddly placed as an appendix rather than as a chapter. The piece is presented as a treatment about the notion of there being a High God, known by various names including Baiaime, which was recognised by many Aboriginal groups. The appendix is in fact much more than this. It also includes an interesting discussion about the incorporation of Christian ideas into traditional Aboriginal spiritual beliefs. Stockton's deep understanding of Christianity through his life in the ministry makes this a worthy discussion, particularly as it includes a geographically wide-ranging survey of relevant ethnographic literature and rock art analyses. It would have been good to expand on this theme and perhaps to have had a secular view included from a co-author (perhaps in the third edition of the book).

For a researcher working in the Blue Mountains (JT), this volume provides a good solid secondary source account of present knowledge. What it lacks, however, is a summary discussion about what is missing and what future research questions might be profitable to pursue. In this regard the volume would have benefited from a more substantial foreword that reflected on the themes that have developed since the first edition was published. Inspiring other researchers, students and the public with unanswered questions is after all the hallmark of a good general history.

The real failure in this volume is the absence of local Indigenous authorship. There are many and diverse views among local Indigenous people about the deep history of the Blue Mountains. My (JT) own current research is addressing this topic through archival research as well as oral and visual recordings. Without an analysis of the contemporary attachment of Indigenous people to place, it is

not possible to really appreciate much of the history of the area. Capturing the imagination of readers through these accounts would have lifted this volume well above its place as a traditional well written regional history. While the editors may argue that the diversity of Indigenous views means that a single account would not be inclusive, there are research methods and sources (such as oral transcripts) that can overcome such issues. Hopefully this crucial research can be part of any third edition.

Like many 'regional' books that draw together specialist authors it is sometimes hard to tell who the book is aimed at, as we have alluded to above. The beautiful front cover and A4 format suggests a coffee table market. Many of the chapters are, on the other hand, well-constructed academic pieces that could easily be part of a tertiary reading list. At once this makes the book a little confused and at the same time all the more appealing. Perhaps it is the bespoke character of this book that gives it this dual personality, trading on both academic rigour and handcrafted charm. We both look forward to a third edition of *Blue Mountains Dreaming* that builds on the present edition and includes further new and innovative interpretations.

Rob Paton and Julia Torpey

Deepening Histories Project

School of History

The Australian National University

The Biggest Estate on Earth by Bill Gammage, xxiii + 434 pp, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2011, ISBN 9781742377483 (hbk), \$49.99.

Throughout my life as a plant ecologist, I have yearned to 'see' the grasslands and grassy woodlands as they were in Australia before 1788. I felt that I might have had the smallest glimpse 34 years ago, as I crouched in a tiny remnant of grassland near a railway siding in Sunshine, Melbourne, one that had been regularly and recently burned. Since then, my imagination has been drip fed by fragmentary historical accounts and years of work in the more intact and extensive woodlands of southern Queensland. Stephen Pyne's book *Burning Bush: a Fire History of Australia* (1992) convinced me that Aboriginal burning was frequent and deliberate, for a number of reasons, including the manipulation of vegetation to attract fauna and make them easy to access. The account of people leaving camp for water or wood at dusk, illuminating their way by setting fire to the vegetation struck me deeply – that is a lot of burning.

I have often wondered why Pyne's book had relatively little impact on the debate around fire regimes and vegetation management, but no such fate awaits Bill Gammage's *The Biggest Estate on Earth*. This book sings – it is vivid, richly illustrated and forcefully argued. The annotated pairing of historical and current day landscapes with interpretation is engrossing. Gammage goes on to argue that the park-like vistas described by European newcomers were as man-made as those in their homelands. These were achieved by deliberate, frequent and planned use, and withholding, of fire. While no one can be comprehensively correct in all aspects of a book of this size, the broad evidence and message is clear: Aboriginal land management was active, knowing and wide-ranging. If Gammage's message achieves a mind shift in the general community it will be a great thing, particularly in southern Australia. Even greater will be our treasuring, adopting and adapting the values and fragments of knowledge that enabled Aboriginal people to maintain the landscapes at a level of functionality we can only aspire to. The tragedy of their dispossession is not only theirs, but ours, seen every day in degraded pastures and despoiled waterways.

In his book, Gammage reveals that he is deeply troubled by the attitude of plant and landscape ecologists, who in his view, apply the standards of science to history, while not necessarily applying them in their own profession. This, according to Gammage, results in ecologists discounting historical evidence and failing to understand the deeper elements of history that take one into the mindset of peoples in the past. Appendix 1 is a frontal attack in anticipation of criticism of the book, and is rather startling. Nonetheless Gammage is quite right – scientists are as prone to subjectivity as anyone else. For instance, ecologists are champions for the protection of species diversity and their ecosystems, and are highly sensitive to the way their messages might be (mis)interpreted when delivered to land managers and policy makers. Statements about 1788 tree densities caused some angst amongst ecologists (eg Benson and Redpath 1997) around the time of the introduction of vegetation protection legislation,

with concerns that historically-reported low densities would support a case for ongoing tree clearing. In terms of Gammage's own writing, the problem for me is not so much subjectivity, but the beguiling language that so lyrically and confidently fills in details of action and intent around the quoted evidence. I love it for its completeness of narrative, and of course he may be right, but I also know the ubiquity of uncertainty in all disciplines.

Gammage does not dwell on the implications of his historical account for current day land management in southern Australia where ongoing Aboriginal connections are fragmented or absent, and there is the massive job of translating all this evidence into the context of a landscape transformed by an industrial society. Straddling the cultural boundary of wilderness concepts and Aboriginal management, most land managers are confused; the threatened 'woodland' birds love trees and dense shrubs, but the rising tide of dense regrowth in reserves and post-agricultural land is a far cry from the open grassy places described so rapturously by the explorers and settlers in Gammage's book. How does one re-establish a fire regime in small heavily treed patches of vegetation? Are native shrubs invading ex-pastures self-limiting or only controlled by fire? Should they be controlled at all?

We most definitely need to understand what the 1788 vegetation was and how it was managed, not because we could ever re-construct it on any but the smallest scales, but because it provides the clues to the persistence of native plants and animals, a context for fire management and a standard of land care that we need to aspire to. The landscape templates deduced from historical accounts are important, and are an unexpectedly positive re-enforcement of landscape design principles that have been developed for agricultural landscapes, with their elements of intensively used open areas necessarily concentrating on the better soils and lower parts of the landscape and stratified areas of decreasingly intensively used vegetation – functionally equivalent to being less burnt (McIntyre et al 2002). Gammage concluded that all the best country was treeless. It still is, but not for the same reasons that it was. We now have additional tools for controlling trees apart from fire – cropping and fertilisers disrupt regeneration and induce poor health, unfertilised land will naturally regenerate trees even under grazing, but herbicides can be used to thin these. Technology is a potentially useful substitute for fire, but we still need to be guided by the requirements of the biota (the ecologists' task) and those tantalising glimpses of how things once were, to inspire us to greater things. *The Biggest Estate on Earth* amply provides us with the latter.

References

- Benson, JS and PA Redpath 1997, 'The nature of pre-European native vegetation in south-eastern Australia: a critique of Ryan, D.G., Ryan, J.R. and Starr, B.J. (1995) The Australian landscape – observations of explorers and early settlers', *Cunninghamia* 5: 285–328.

BOOK REVIEWS

McIntyre, S, JG McIvor and KM Heard (eds) 2002, *Managing and Conserving Grassy Woodlands*, CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne.

Pyne, SJ 1992, *Burning Bush: a Fire History of Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Sue McIntyre

CSIRO Ecosystem Sciences

Aboriginal Child Welfare, Self-government and the Rights of Indigenous Children: Protecting the Vulnerable Under International Law by Sonia Harris-Short, 354 pp, Ashgate, Farnham, 2012, ISBN 9781409419549 (hbk), \$138.60.

This scholarly work in law and history provides a thoroughgoing account of Aboriginal child welfare policies and practices in Australia and Canada. Importantly, Harris-Short links the debates around child welfare to issues of sovereignty, decolonisation and self-government. Arguing for a radical reconceptualisation of approaches to child welfare services in Aboriginal communities, the author sees the recognition of indigenous rights at the international level, through the adoption of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which formally acknowledges the colonisation of indigenous peoples, as an opportune moment to shift the paradigm of international and national law. Rather than becoming entangled in arguments over collective rights versus individual rights, she suggests that in combination with other human rights instruments, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a more nuanced approach is achievable.

The book is organised into four parts. Part I sets the context with three personal narrative accounts of children removed from their families and communities in Australia and Canada. The nature of James's story will be familiar to Australian readers, as it is drawn from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's *Bringing Them Home* report. The report was, at the time of publication, innovative in the primary use of first-hand narrative accounts as the evidentiary basis for a legal inquiry. Richard Cardinal's story, the first Canadian narrative, is drawn from a short documentary film about a Métis boy who tragically committed suicide at the age of 17 while under the care of the provincial child welfare system. There is also the story of Lester Desjarlais, a 15-year-old Ojibway boy who committed suicide after years of abuse while under the care of an Aboriginal-controlled child welfare agency.

Part II begins with an historical overview of the policies and practices of Aboriginal child removal to missions, dormitories and residential schools in Canada and Australia, drawing on well-established historiography. Harris-Short clearly places these practices within the general context of colonisation, highlighting the effects not just on individual children and families, but on Aboriginal communities as a whole, inter-generationally, disrupting the continuity of Aboriginal culture. She documents the shift, in the 1950s, to the administration of general child welfare policies. Routine institutionalisation was phased out, and children, particularly those with lighter skin colour, were placed in homes, with fostering and adoption by non-Aboriginal families vigorously promoted. Harris-Short argues that the application of liberal legal standards understood to be in the children's best interests demonstrate cultural chauvinism because it fails to recognise the importance of Aboriginal cultural identity, including specific child rearing practices.

The last chapter in this section brings us to the contemporary period, where there is evidence of increasing judicial sensitivity and significant legislative reforms, incorporating the Aboriginal placement principle into child protection and adoption law. While significant, as Harris-Short points out, in focusing on the care of children post-removal, such changes have deflected attention away from the more difficult issues associated with the failure of the child protection system and how to avoid the removal of children in the first place. Aboriginal children are vastly over-represented in child protection processes, nine times more likely to be subject to a court order than non-Indigenous children (p. 89). In Canada, legislative reforms in some provinces, such as Manitoba, delegate administrative and management responsibility for child welfare to Métis and First Nations communities. However, this does not extend to the law and had resulted in uneven outcomes in the courts when considering the importance of indigenous cultural identity as a factor in the child's best interests. Harris-Short suggests that the failure of legislative reforms provides support for arguments that involve restoring authority to Aboriginal communities for self-government over child welfare.

It is to this issue that Part III is devoted. In Canada, there have been moves towards community-driven self-government in certain fields, such as areas of criminal justice, health and social welfare. However, in some communities, the legacy of colonialism has resulted in disintegration and disfunctionality, sometimes with devastating consequences for children exposed to sexual abuse and violence. Harris-Short elaborates on the inquiry into the death of Desjarlais, which found evidence of sexual abuse occurring across reserve communities in Canada. Here, she discusses the effects of internal colonialism on Aboriginal men in leadership positions.

In the final chapter in this section, Harris-Short points out that the theory supporting the inherent right to self-government would provide a platform for indigenous autonomy and governmental powers over internal, and possibly, external matters. In 1982 in Canada, the Constitution was amended to entrench Aboriginal rights, precluding extinguishment after this date (s. 35), thereby providing for the right to self-government, including self-government over child welfare. While the Supreme Court decision in *R v Sparrow* (1990) suggested the endorsement of an inherent rights approach, this has not been supported by subsequent decisions. Treaty negotiations have been more productive. While courts have largely failed to find the right to self-government, in 1995, the Canadian Government accepted the inherent right to self-government of First Nations peoples and negotiated agreements at the regional level have occurred across the country.

In the face of the failure to deliver self-determination via national mechanisms, the author turns to international law. In Part IV, Harris-Short discusses the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Article 3 of the Declaration contains the unqualified right of indigenous peoples to self-determination. She argues that international law can provide for internal self-determination, while at the same time protecting the individual rights of vulnerable people, if

responsibility is vested in the Aboriginal community itself. The individualistic nature of human rights law, respecting, for instance, the child as the subject of rights separate from the community, may be at odds with an indigenous assertion of collective cultural identity. However, Harris-Short argues that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, recognising the inter-dependence of the child with family and community, may be the basis for a dialogue over the reconciliation of these principles.

Overall, the book is a significant and thought-provoking contribution to a discussion of indigenous peoples' right to autonomous control over the welfare of vulnerable children in their communities. Harris-Short is mindful that in Australia, where there is staunch opposition to self-government and in some communities overwhelming challenges, such proposals may strike a hollow chord. However, she asserts that the 'concept of sovereignty is key' (p. 287).

Trish Luker

University of Technology, Sydney

The Aborigines' Protection Society: Humanitarian Imperialism in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Canada, South Africa and the Congo 1836-1909 by James Heartfield, 379 pp, Columbia University Press, distributed via Footprint Books, Sydney, 2011, ISBN 1849041202, \$62.00.

'Accounts of the rise of the British Empire in the nineteenth century have properly taken economics and race as the overriding drivers.' So argues James Heartfield in the concluding chapter of his impressive new history of the Aborigines Protection Society (APS). Heartfield does not wish to disrupt the prevailing wisdom, but contends that recognising 'the humanitarian wellsprings of colonial policy' adds an important dimension to the historiography of the British Empire. In a wide-ranging study taking in several sites of British imperial endeavour, Heartfield shows that the APS regularly advocated greater powers for the Colonial Office in a quest for what it conceived as 'responsible imperialism'. In this way, it played a significant role in Britain's imperial expansion.

The APS was formed in 1837 at a high point of humanitarian influence in Britain. The Reform Act of 1832 had recast the Westminster parliament, increasing the power of the so-called 'philanthropists', a diverse group consisting of Quakers, evangelicals and non-conformists, who campaigned against slavery and supported missionary endeavour. After the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, many prominent philanthropists turned their attention to the plight of Aboriginal peoples in British settlements. Led by Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, they convinced the House of Commons to conduct a Select Committee on Aborigines (1835-37). The committee's report advocated a policy of Aboriginal 'protection' and the APS was formed to lobby the British government to implement this policy. For seven decades it was a prominent and sometimes controversial voice in colonial affairs before finally merging with the Anti-Slavery Society in 1909.

Heartfield's book is divided into two parts: the first provides a broad outline of the APS in a predominantly metropolitan context. He explores the origins of the society in the anti-slavery movement, analyses the Select Committee hearings and report, and charts the society's 'difficult relationship to Empire' (p. 43) over subsequent decades. A good example of this difficulty is the society's ambivalent response to Edward Eyre's brutal suppression of the Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica in 1865; Eyre's earlier experience as Protector of Aborigines in South Australia, and his friendship with APS secretary Thomas Hodgkin played a role here.

The thematic approach of much of the first part is somewhat counter-intuitive; this reviewer wondered whether a chronological treatment might have provided a more coherent introduction to the society and better demonstrated its shifts in policy as it negotiated key changes of the nineteenth century, such as the rise of settler self-government, the Darwinian revolution, and the intensification of racist ideology. Nevertheless, Heartfield introduces several themes of importance, most notably the society's gradual embrace of Imperial power as

the best solution to its humanitarian aims. He shows that APS changed from opposing the annexation of new territories to supporting it, in the hope this would enable the Colonial Office to rein in the excesses of settlers who were beyond British jurisdiction. Under its final secretary, Henry Fox Bourne, 'the Aborigines' Protection Society came close to becoming a champion of imperialism' (p. 47).

Heartfield gives some consideration to the view that the APS was a socially superior institution, noting that many members (especially the Tory ones) were anti-democratic. This is evident in the society's support for the traditional authority of chiefs and suspicion of egalitarian forces within indigenous populations. A disdain among APS members for settlers in the colonies is also identified: Heartfield argues that many Britons looked down on the 'dregs' that they perceived were the typical settlers and suggests that the APS fed off this prejudice. Similarly, he shows that opposition to the APS often pointed to the apparent hypocrisy of the philanthropists and their love of distant causes, such as the conclusion of the satirical *Punch* magazine: 'with many of the worthy people of Exeter Hall, distance is essential to love' (p. 59).

Part 2 of Heartfield's book provides six varied case studies, which examine the path of native policy in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Canada, South Africa and the Congo. Each location attracted the attention of the APS during its seven decades of lobbying: Australia was a significant site of experimentation in protection policy in the 1830s and 1840s; the New Zealand Wars were high on the society's agenda during the 1860s; while South Africa (with its large indigenous population) was prominent throughout. The book is a clear demonstration of the value of transnational history, with each case study presenting a unique story. For the most part, however, these contrasts are mediated through an analysis of metropolitan policy. The author makes this clear in his introduction: 'first and foremost it is a history of the Aborigines' Protection Society and the way it shaped the policy of the British Empire towards natives' (p. xi). With this aim in mind, his book is a clear success; collectively, the case studies paint a detailed picture of the society, its aims, its challenges and its failures.

The Australian material is dealt with intelligently. Although Heartfield's research is necessarily broader than it is deep (a synthesis of a few secondary sources) his account is a valuable addition to the literature. He gives a good account of Australia's significant role as a laboratory for ideas of Aboriginal protection in British imperial policy, pointing to the influence of the Black War in Van Diemen's Land and George Augustus Robinson's 'friendly mission'. The Port Phillip Protectorate features prominently, but relevant material from other colonies, especially South Australia and Western Australia, is also provided. Heartfield describes the rebirth of Aboriginal protection in South Australia and Victoria following the emergence of self-government in the 1850s, although his account is relatively brief. Some more detail about the changed political circumstances and a sense of how the APS viewed these developments would have been welcome, but perhaps this would be to ask too much of such a wide-ranging

study. Heartfield briefly traces the Australian experience of protection into the twentieth century and notes the painful legacy of the Stolen Generations, which he argues was a logical outcome of the policies of the 1830s Select Committee.

James Heartfield's prose is more often descriptive than it is analytical, but he lets his account of the society and his six varied case studies speak for themselves; the result is a compelling book, rich in historical detail, that will be of considerable value to a range of scholars working in related fields.

Samuel Furphy

The Australian National University

The People of the Paroo River: Frederick Bonney's Photographs by Jeanette Hope and Robert Lindsay, 112 pp, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW, Sydney South, 2012, ISBN 9781742323282, \$24.99.

At the back of Bourke lies the Paroo River, the last tributary of the Darling that flows unregulated by dam or weir. The town of Wanaaring – really a hamlet – is nestled within its serpentine bends. Graziers arrived at these always brown and usually sluggish waters in the mid-nineteenth century, as did an epidemic that brutalised the population of Paakantyi-speaking people, indigenous to the area. What followed for the Paakantyi was typical of the Aboriginal experience in western New South Wales. Doing what they could to recover and regroup, many formed strategic relationships with their colonisers and contributed to the sheep and cattle businesses that overran their ancestral lands.

Highly atypical in the colonial context was Frederic Bonney (1842–1921), the protagonist of *The People of the Paroo River*. A native of Staffordshire and an alumnus of Marlborough College, Frederic followed his brother Edward to Australia, arriving in Melbourne in 1865. The Bonney family included clerics and academics. There was also a Charles Bonney, uncle to Frederic and Edward, who served as a commissioner of Crown Lands and as a parliamentarian in South Australia. Charles had played a role in opening the overland stock route along the Murray River in 1838 and helped inspire his nephews to come to Australia where they established themselves on the Paroo. Their property, Momba Station, is now part of Paroo-Darling National Park.

The Bonney story would be unremarkable were it not for the fact that Frederic was a deft photographer. With his camera he channelled his deeply humanist vision. This is not the first book on Bonney. Robert Lindsay who, with Jeanette Hope, is co-author of the volume under review, published a shorter study in 1983, based on a series of photographs held by the Mitchell Library. *Held* (in the past tense) is the critical word here. Scandalously, all but 13 of these priceless portraits of Paakantyi people, dating from the 1870s, 'disappeared' from the Mitchell collection some time after the publication of Lindsay's first book. Consequently, many reproductions in *The People of the Paroo River* were by necessity made from the duplicates he ordered in the early 1980s. While Lindsay has generously (and hopefully not rashly) now donated his duplicate copies to the library, they are a poor substitute for the lost originals, printed from glass negatives.

The new book was inspired by the unearthing of a further cache of Bonney photographs, contained in an album put together by a Scottish medico and zoologist, Dr John Kerr Butter, that is now in the collection of the National Library of Australia. Butter lived ten kilometres from Bonney, who returned to England in 1881. This may explain how Butter became the owner of 29 Bonney photographs, a quarter of which are group portraits of Paakantyi. The remainder are views of the river country and station life in the 1870s. The new book contains reproductions of all known Australian photographs and commentary on the life and times of the photographer, based on careful archival research.

Much of my knowledge of the upper branches of the Darling comes from my investigation of the Federation era ethnographer, RH Mathews, who wrote extensively on this region of Australia. Mathews published on the mourning rituals of the area, influenced as they were by the presence of gypsum. When ground into a plaster, known as 'kopi', widows and widowers would mix it with water and mould the resulting paste about their head to form a grieving cap to signify their loss. These traditions were coming to an end when Mathews wrote about them in the early 1900s, but they were still in vogue during Bonney's time on the river. Among the many Aboriginal people whom Bonney befriended was a woman named Wonko Mary. A quartet of photographs, in which Mary is seen at various stages of the mourning period, are among the most resonant in Bonney's oeuvre.

The interface between Aboriginal people and photographers has for some years now provided important ground for rethinking the colonial experience, as is seen very notably in Jane Lydon's work on nineteenth-century Victoria. While Hope and Lindsay's study makes no attempt to scrutinise visual culture with this sort of rigour, it throws light upon it by reproducing the work and making thoughtful commentary, milking to the utmost the fairly minimal documentary evidence of Bonney's life story. The main disappointment is that the standard of photographic reproduction is mediocre.

Viewed collectively, Frederic Bonney's photography gives a vivid insight to the Paakantyi world in the decades following the invasion of their homelands. We meet Bonney's subjects as pastoral workers, as makers of ceremony and as producers of material culture. The sitters pose willingly in these photos, which betray not a hint of approbation on the part of their maker. In terms of both content and technical quality, these are exceptional images for the period. Photography could only be a hobby for Bonney, the fulltime grazier, yet in his ethnographic picture making he found his metier. Quite possibly he took many more photos than those now attributed to him. Not surprisingly, his work found its admirers in the colonies and was exhibited at the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880.

It is likely that Bonney would be better known had he remained in his adopted country. But his brother's ill health forced the sale of Momba Station. Frederic retired to England after little more than a decade and a half in Australia. Installed in the village of Colton, where he lived the remainder of his days, Bonney – as we know from surviving photographs – decorated his house with a remarkable collection of Aboriginal artefacts, obtained during his Paroo years. Some were later acquired by the University of Cambridge. Bonney kept a knowing eye on the emerging science of anthropology and was utterly appalled when he heard Carl Lumholtz speaking condescendingly on the ways of 'savages'. Bonney, in contrast, said of the people of the Paroo that he 'loved them for their loyalty and integrity'.

Martin Thomas

School of History

The Australian National University

Irrititja – the Past: Antikirrinya History from Ingomar Station and Beyond by Ingkama Bobby Brown and Petter Attila Naessan, 64 pp, Keeaira Press, Southport, Queensland, 2012, ISBN 9780980594256 (pbk), \$25.00.

'History is finished now', declares Ingkama Bobby Brown (p. 35), but clearly not, as this historical account of Antikirrinya language and culture testifies. This charming book, a collaboration between Bobby Brown, the Indigenous co-author, and a non-Indigenous linguist Petter Attila Naessan, is a valuable contribution to what is a sparsely documented part of South Australia, and to Anangu history pertaining to that region. Such ventures provide not only a written record of a world that is disappearing, but also a legacy for future generations of 'Antikirrinya' to seek out and treasure.

Herein lies what we found to be the main issue with this short book: it is not clear who the intended audience actually is. While this volume is commendable in aiming to blend both a vernacular recount and historical research, it is an approach that may speak more to researchers rather than local Antikirrinya readers. We are told (p. 9) that the initial idea for the project came from Ingkama Bobby Brown who wanted to make sure that *tjamula kamila arangka*, 'the ways of the grandparents', could be documented for future generations. This commendable aim follows in the wake of many similar published and unpublished accounts by Indigenous authors. Many of these succeed because they are written in a style and format that appeals to a local audience and they are filled with relevant photographs or illustrations.

Our concern with this book is that the style of the two authors has not blended into a coherent final text. Is this book Bobby Brown's story, that is, a transcription of a personal oral history? Or is it a 'report' that seeks to make sweeping reference to the broader linguistic, historical, demographic, ecological and geographical context of the Antikirrinya region? A defter merging of these two aspects, both of which are valuable and interesting, would have made for a more engaging read. Bobby Brown has a very important story to tell, however we learn so little about him. The authors could have made more use of the chronological structure of Brown's oral narrative to contextualise relevant diversions into the referenced literature. The book would also have benefitted from a genealogy of Brown's family, also for Brown's story, especially his account of '*puyu pakarnu 1953-angka*' the Weapons Research Establishment bomb testing in South Australia, to be linked more carefully to Naessan's account of South Australian history. Likewise, given Brown's interest in plants in his vernacular texts, it is strange that the scientific names of the plants are not highlighted in the English texts.

Language is a key theme in this book and this is made apparent in the Preface and the broader description of the 'language ecology' (pp. 31–35). As a linguist, Naessan takes care to explain his approach to spelling, pronunciation and translation. Upfront he highlights some of the quandaries associated with the standardisation of writing in newly literate languages such as the Western

Desert family of languages by focusing on the use of diacritics, ie underlining, in some orthographies to represent the retroflex sounds. As he so rightly points out, this can be cumbersome for literate Western Desert speakers and for all who try to write certain Western Desert languages on computers. The Ngaanyatjarra orthography developed by Amee Glass and Dorothy Hackett (see Glass and Hackett 2003) has indeed created a more durable system for maintaining the retroflex sounds in written language. In his transcription of Brown's Yankunytjatjara texts Naessan proceeds to use Ngaanyatjarra orthographic conventions not only for the retroflex sounds, but also for the tap or trill 'rr', in order to 'simplify the process of writing', despite the orthographic conventions typically adopted for Yankunytjatjara and also Antikirrinya (see Goddard 1996: 9). Naessan also decides to use a 'shorter' version of the language name, that is 'Yankunytjarra' (p. 5) rather than the standardised spelling 'Yankunytjatjara', even though he has provided a morphological description of the standardised form (ie the language having *yankunytja* meaning 'going' and *-tjarra* meaning having/with). Unfortunately, the language names that he uses (ie Yankunytjarra and Pitjanytjarra) do not make sense grammatically. This unnecessary and confusing simplification of the language names had us perplexed, as did other orthographic idiosyncracies (Pregon/Fregon; Aranda/Arrernte; Mable Creek/Mabel Creek; 'Arnangus'). For those who are fluent readers of Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara the text is difficult to read because of what appears to be a jarring spelling style.

Nevertheless, this is an important contribution to the documentation of an otherwise neglected region of South Australia and the hard work involved in producing this book needs to be applauded.

References

Glass, A and D Hackett 2003, *Ngaanyatjarra and Ngaatjatjarra to English Dictionary*, IAD Press, Alice Springs.

Goddard, C 1996, *A Basic Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara to English Dictionary*, IAD Press, Alice Springs.

Inge Kral

Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR)

The Australian National University

Linda Rive

Ara Irititja

Alice Springs

Doctor Do-Good: Charles Duguid and Aboriginal Advancement, 1930s-1970s by Rani Kerin, 203 pp, Australian Scholarly Publishing, North Melbourne, 2011, ISBN 9781921875298, \$39.95.

Despite his prominent status as a campaigner for Aboriginal rights, it has taken until 2011 for Charles Duguid to be the subject of extensive biographical treatment. In her elegantly written and sympathetic biography, historian Rani Kerin details the activism of a man whose 'efforts were, on the whole, appreciated by Aboriginal people and the wider society' (p. 2). Best-known for his role in the establishment of the Ernabella Mission in South Australia, this in fact was just the beginning, for it set the scene for 40 plus years of campaigning.

Doctor Do-Good is not a typical birth to death biography. Kerin instead focuses attention on Duguid's public life, his campaigning, and his rise to national prominence from the 1930s to the 1970s. Archival limitations necessitate this focus on Duguid and his public life, for he maintained an extensive collection of personal papers from the 1930s onwards. Despite this, Kerin successfully demonstrates the breadth and variety of his campaigning, his longevity, and the important role of his wife, Phyllis, in his work.

Kerin is also interested in assessing Duguid's 'exceptionalism' as a campaigner. This is a question of much importance and significance in Australian history, given, as she notes, the criticism of 'do-gooder' white campaigners in recent scholarship. In light of this, Kerin considers Duguid's personal ambitions, character, and his successes and failures as a campaigner. His platform was certainly different to other white campaigners of the era, preferring to argue for 'equality of treatment' rather than biological absorption or segregation, both prominent policies at the time. As a trained doctor, he was a methodical and practical man, but one of action too who sought out immediate solutions to issues, which found expression in his platform of Aboriginal advancement founded on his belief that Aboriginal people were not doomed to die out, but could be brought slowly into mainstream Australian life. He experimented with this philosophy at Ernabella from 1937. It was a cause that he remained committed to throughout the remainder of his life, and which found expression in all his campaigns.

Doctor Do-Good is structured in three parts, covering the main arc of Duguid's campaigns in a largely chronological format. In Part 1 Kerin examines Duguid's best-known public campaigns, and establishes the intellectual context for the emergence of Ernabella, setting the scene for the arrival of Duguid into the midst of missionaries, intellectuals, government officials and anthropologists all debating the extinction of Aboriginal peoples. Duguid, she argues, was exasperated by these groups, but happily drew upon their ideas combining them into a philosophy that he put into practice at Ernabella: a medical mission, and an experiment in using a mission to retain traditional ways of life. Duguid's involvement in the 1946-47 rocket range campaign against British and Australian

government plans to test rockets in Central Australia on Aboriginal reserve land, is covered in Chapter 2. It was a battle to save the reserve land. Land was an essential part of Duguid's philosophy: to retain the land was crucial to maintaining traditions and culture. It was this that motivated his involvement, fearing what the loss of land would do to a way of life, and to Ernabella.

Duguid's lesser known campaigns and his private life form the basis of the chapters in Part 2. Phyllis and Duguid's working and private relationship are examined in Chapter 3, while Chapter 4 explores the relationship between the Duguid's and their adopted Aboriginal son Sydney James Cook/Duguid. Phyllis was a reformer before she married Charles in 1930, and during her marriage she was to become a leading advocate of Aboriginal and mixed race women in Adelaide. She believed in Aboriginal advancement, fostering it through women's organisations during the Second World War. Twenty years younger than Charles, and raised in Adelaide by parents who valued education, Phyllis became a teacher, and a reformer active in women's social and political organisations, including the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). She took part in establishing the League for Protection and Advancement of Aboriginal and Half-Caste Women in Adelaide, a pro-Aboriginal lobby group and the first organisation to use 'advancement' in its title. Concerned for the welfare of young women in the city, they group sought to establish a recreation centre, but quickly moved beyond this practical vision to much larger ones, including pushing for the appointment of women protectors and protective legislation.

Duguid is revealed as a man full of confidence in his vision, self-righteous at times, and prone to myth-making, with a desperate desire for public recognition. Nevertheless, his concerns for Aboriginal rights and welfare were sincere. This is an excellent biography of a man, his campaigns, visions, ideals and personal ambitions. It also offers insight into the context of the times, and carefully places Duguid into his historical and intellectual context. Kerin also navigates the contested history writing about white campaigners in Australia's past, but she does it with grace and a light hand. Duguid is the star of this book, but Kerin does not celebrate him in the manner of the great man, even if he carefully cultivated that image for himself.

Angela Wanhalla

University of Otago

The Tale of Frieda Keysser: Frieda Keysser and Carl Strehlow: An Historical Biography. Volume I: 1875-1910 by John Strehlow, 1198 pp, Wild Cat Press, London, 2011, ISBN 9780956755803 (hbk), \$89.95.

The Strehlows have had more than their share of postcolonial critique, because in the postcolonial revolution of Australian Aboriginal politics old-school historians were lined up along with protectors and missionaries for all being part of the problem, not part of the solution. Once complex issues are reduced to simple slogans suitable for banners we know there is a problem, and it is therefore apposite to turn our historical attention to the generations of activists before our own, who were as committed as ours to a set of ideas, though the ideas have indeed changed. A quick glance at missionary salary-scales and retirement provisions signals that they were not in it for the money. The mortality and morbidity rates of missionaries ring out self-sacrifice, not self-aggrandisement. 'Labourers in the vineyard of God', they called themselves, and humility was a valued discursive currency: what a different world they inhabited.

So much has been written about Rev Carl Strehlow and the Hermannsburg mission in Central Australia that placing his wife Frieda at the centre of a history seems a refreshing change in perspective. Frieda is an interesting historical subject, but she is only the canvas on which this family saga unfolds, and the book sweeps well beyond a biography of a missionary wife who pointedly goes by her maiden name in this book. It is an exhaustive history of Hermannsburg mission and its Arrernte and Luritja residents, and a well-researched and interesting recovery of the histories of the Keysser and Strehlow families in Germany from the interior view of the family by a direct descendant: John Strehlow (JS) is a son of Ted Strehlow and grandson of Carl and Frieda Strehlow.

It was never going to be a small book, with a 19-page timeline beginning with Charlemagne's formation of the Holy Roman Empire in the year 800, and the directory of persons including 47 Indigenous people, the ones usually absent from missionary histories. JS, for whom the most direct way to Germany is via Alice Springs, Cairns and Port Moresby, explains German history to Australians, and Australian history to Germans. So that we do not get lost in the 'cast of characters', he provides every possible finding aid: an index, a genealogy trailing back to 1314, 11 maps, three appendices and close to 300 illustrations, including unpublished photos, and close-ups on Frieda's freckled Backfisch¹ face. That JS became consumed with this project of recovery speaks from the list of archives and repositories he visited since 1976 when he met his Tante Martha in Gunzenhausen near Munich and found her a complete stranger: he burrowed in the United States, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom and Australia, and in 41 German institutions.

1 *Backfisch*— small fry, a term usually describing private school teenage girls in nineteenth century Germany. Similar to *giovinetta* in Italian, or *midinette* in French.

With scalpel precision JS peels back brittle skins of intergenerational pain in this Buddenbrooks-style family saga of the Keysser/Strehlow family, and in places his storytelling craft holds its own to Thomas Mann with its deft caricature of good intentions.

Frieda and her brother Christian (missionary in Papua New Guinea) were the last of the grand Keysser dynasty of the mighty Keysserhammer (iron forge) in tiny Geroldgrün, and the first in 300 years who inherited nothing of the once grand family fortunes. Their grandfather Rev Johann Erhard Fischer wrote a 696-page history in 1863 about the introduction of Christianity to Bavaria, and was closely allied with the founding of the Bavarian Neuendettelsau mission society, which trained many of the Lutheran missionaries destined for Australia. Frieda lost her doting father at age four, and never got on with her mother, who re-married and died ten years later. Like Emily Brontë, Frieda became something like 'a Baptist chapel on top of a volcano'. She was bundled off to a finishing school in the Lutheran institution at Neuendettelsau, which her grandfather helped to establish, an entire village, as Strehlow observes, that is organised around the uplifting of women. Here she met Carl Strehlow, who had been barred from a decent education by a well-meaning, anti-intellectual, tyrannical father who had served time in prison rather than bend to doctrinal reform. Two injured children now meet as workers in the vineyard of God, and much more injury to come, because, too busy being parents to the Arrente people, they could not parent their own: the three eldest were sent to Germany in 1910. When Frieda re-joined them 20 years later, widowed and retired, her children harboured a deep resentment of her. This is reminiscent of the busy German Goddeffroy collector in Queensland, Amalie Dietrich, whose abandoned daughter destroyed all evidence of her mother's life and work and invented her own published version of it. One such second-generation version is Ted Strehlow's *Journey to Horseshoe Bend*, an account of the Strehlow's time at Hermannsburg mission and Carl Strehlow's death at remote Horseshoe Bend in 1922 when nobody could come and fetch the sick man who had served the Aranda mission for 28 years. JS calls his famous father's book about the equally famous grandfather 'mostly fiction'.

Three generations of pain speak from this book: 'in our family everyone competed and nobody helped each other'. Carl and Frieda's children scattered in Germany – Rudolf in Hamburg, Karl in Berlin, Martha near Munich – as if they were neglected and abandoned by their busy parents, and only JS's father Ted (or Theo) remained with his parents in Australia. Ted became a noted anthropologist in his own right, though JS thinks his father never properly acknowledged his intellectual debt to the work of grandfather Carl: to deny or ignore his achievements was a revenge in which all Carl's children conspired. JS claims that none of the Indigenous people in Alice Springs remembered Carl Strehlow's name, and his abandoned grave halfway between the mission and Adelaide radiates the idea that 'Carl's life and work had been a failure' and presumably, that the price of success was too high, at the expense of a decent family life. Carl Strehlow was a man whose children did not know him. Ted, too, in turn abandoned his children by leaving his wife and remarrying, and even

omitted them from his *Who's Who* entry: generations of pain and inadequate parenting. Indigenous people who have their own traumas of institutionalisation and removal should find this perspective eye-opening.

Despite this hard look at the family, JS seeks to recover his grandparents' professional contribution to science and to the welfare of Indigenous people at Hermannsburg. Missionary women are notoriously difficult to recover from the records, but Frieda has left a resumé, a diary covering 20 years and two travel accounts, all held by family in Berlin. The author also has a copy of the mission chronicle kept by Carl Strehlow. JS understands well that women, who have been played to the margin of mission histories, are the key to understanding their success and failure. Strategic marriages formed bonds of kinship between the Lutherans involved, and in great-uncle August's sitting room three such matches were made, including Frieda's. Frieda is shown here as the key in turning around infant mortality at Hermannsburg, where there were few Indigenous children. During three long excursions along the Birdsville Track, and all around the Coopers Creek in 1883 and 1884, missionary Johann Flierl encountered about 250 Aborigines, most of whom he already knew, and only about six children. 'Something must have gone wrong in the inner world of the women' argues JS, to have so few children, (p. 264) adamant that flippant references to cultural genocide are not a satisfactory answer. He offers a few alternative explanations. Inter-group violence from pay back increased to a furious rate as Indigenous people were shunted off their land, where previously dispersion and distance ensured that pay-back was slow. Wrong marriages caused many of these, and JS is at pains to point out that it was not the missionaries who introduced wrong marriages, these had always been a feature of Indigenous society. JS argues that the missionaries were practically the only people who stopped the shooting, opposed blood-feuds, eliminated venereal disease, and ensured the birth rate did not fall away – for this special credit to Frieda at Hermannsburg. They acted as whistleblowers about outrages from native police and sometimes sheltered refugees from the law because they did not trust in the integrity of the police.

Three worlds collided in a place like this: avowedly anti-German people – such as the emerging anthropologist Baldwin Spencer and the local police constable Cowle – suspected the missionaries of undermining the British empire, and the pious Lutherans had a deep distrust of the intentions of settlers towards Aborigines. JS thinks it is no accident that elsewhere in the world regimes which later overthrew British rule were often set up by people who had been introduced to Western ideas through a mission school, because the missionaries had shown them how to crack the system (p. 559).

Carl Strehlow arrived at Hermannsburg in 1894 during a serious drought that up-ended many stations and white colonisation was in retreat. The mission-cum-station had been abandoned by an earlier group of Lutherans, and dubious men had meanwhile been left in charge of the cattle station: cattle rustlers, ferals who ignored the colour bar, riff raff in the contemporary opinion – this was precisely when the Horn scientific expedition came through and Baldwin Spencer formed an indelibly negative impression of the place and was to become an influential

adversary of Carl Strehlow. Young Strehlow arrived as a greenhorn and was treated like one, his English was poor, he travelled without water, and he could not boil an egg, until his betrothed arrived from Germany with 627 kilograms of luggage to set up house. It was a journey forever, no visits home. JS captures the enormity of what these young people asked of themselves.

They had no suitable training, but young Carl completely understood the absolute centrality of food. He personally doled out the food three times a day every day to everyone on the mission, to be consumed within his view in the Esshaus, so that no traditional obligations could be brought into play.

JS vents much scorn throughout the book on the 'self-appointed experts' like Francis Gillen and on the whole profession of anthropology that gorged itself on information supplied by missionaries, all the while criticising them, with its career professionals too busy to spend time with Indigenous people. They ignored conflict like inter-tribal conflict, payback, violence, and infanticide, so that anthropology was bankrupt before it ever opened for business, JS writes. The book seeks to rectify every mistake that has ever been made in judging Carl Strehlow and Hermannsburg: nobody was forced to enter the mission, and Indigenous people were not stripped of their culture by the mission. Only about a quarter of the mission residents were Christians, and only Christians were barred from corroborees, simply because Lutherans did not dance.

While the argument might be predictable from someone whose family has been so picked over by critics, this is original scholarship with original insights, ideas and reflections, not gleaned from well-ploughed publications. JS is scornful of the errors of the published work on Hermannsburg, and only a few have slipped in here – confusing Bloomfield with Cape Bedford on p. 262, overlooking that Easter egg painting is alive and well throughout (Catholic) Germany, referring to Kalbensteinberg as Kalbensteinbach, and in some instances one can either believe it or not, because the sources are sparsely annotated. The doctrinal sectarianism of the South Australian Lutherans who supported the mission, too, gets short shrift: it was the 'Lutheran theocracy of the country', 'indulging in their favourite pastime, religious schism based on irrelevant doctrinal disputes' (p. 300). The book is a vindication of the Strehlows, but it is eminently readable and interesting, and the language is often deft, the work and its conclusions entirely original.

In his effort to give due credit to Carl Strehlow, JS is a little too light on acknowledging the Indigenous informants like Johannes Pingilina who assisted in the linguistic project at Coopers Creek, and to Georg Reuther whose voluminous recording of Indigenous lifeworlds, customs, beliefs and language show a man who was completely immersed and knew how to respect the material. But it is a good read with many surprises, and ample material for a movie and the author's background in theatre shines through.

Regina Ganter

Griffith University

The Habitat of Australia's Aboriginal Languages: Past, Present and Future edited by Gerhard Leitner and Ian G Malcolm, 389 pp, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, New York, 2006, ISBN 9783110190793 (hbk), \$137.00.

Ecological metaphors have become trendy in linguistics of late, as the complexity and inter-relatedness of botanic systems neatly parallels that of human societies and their languages. *The Habitat of Australia's Aboriginal Languages* engages the metaphor of ecological habitats to investigate the most significant changes to the Australian language landscape since European invasion. The papers in this volume cluster around three key aspects of habitat disturbance: traditional languages and how they have adapted, contact languages and how they have evolved, and how languages have come to operate in education and the law.

Harold Koch provides a very useful overview for those wanting an insight into the unique constellations of structural features (ergativity, 'kintax', pronominal ex-/inclusivity, complex verb morphology, unique semantic distinctions and metaphor) that have continued to captivate Australianist linguists from historical, descriptive and typological persuasions.

Michael Christie takes us into the 'habitat' of Yolngu languages, with a particular focus on activities designed to situate health and education services more firmly in a Yolngu perspective. For example, Christie describes how Yolngu educational theorists and practitioners such as Raymattja Marika-Mununggiritj and Mandawuy Yunupingu have drawn upon the concept of *ganma*, a confluence of salt and fresh water, to elaborate their approach to 'both ways' education. This aims to develop Yolngu people who can live successfully in just such a place 'where Balanda and Yolngu meet' (Yunupingu 1991: 101 cited in Christie). While *ganma* represents the process, *garma* is the context, the site for this to happen. Garma is the name of a ceremony and the site on which it is performed: 'a place where people know they are welcome if they treat the place, its owners, its history and its visitors with respect' (p. 73). It also entails all the preparatory and organisational work necessary to conduct the final performance properly, and here the Yolngu have found a road-map for how pedagogical and curriculum planning can be properly done. One is left with the overwhelming sense of how much intellectual and practical work Yolngu people have undertaken to articulate their own culture in order to reconcile with and accommodate the systems, institutions and language of the recent European arrivals. And one is haunted by questions of how well this has been reciprocated.

Michael Walsh's contribution to the volume begins by outlining some of the problems with assessing language vitality in the Australian context using scales, censuses and other statistical means. By way of contrast, in attempting to describe the status of the Murrinhpatha language (presently spoken in the Wadeye community in the Northern Territory), Walsh provides a detailed historical account of the language in its broader language ecology. This approach gives a richness to our understanding of its relative strength that is hard to

distil into a numerical scale. He briefly tackles some of the reasons that may contribute to language loss, and whether language loss necessarily entails a loss of cultural knowledge or practises. This is followed by some observations on how new Aboriginal languages (Kriols and mixed languages) have found a place in the language ecology of many Aboriginal communities, and how traditional Aboriginal languages are being used in new, often cyber, spaces. His sweep through the language landscape would have been incomplete without a word to those languages currently being woken from their slumber, and to that end there are a number of good references here for those seeking inspiration in this area. Walsh is optimistic about the future, particularly in regard to two new opportunities for Aboriginal people to carry out university-based training and research into their languages. One of these (the Language Endangerment Program at Monash) is now defunct.

This sad fact is politically contextualised by Graham McKay's chapter, an historical overview of policy initiatives aimed, directly and indirectly, at the maintenance of Indigenous languages. His illuminating account situates language policy relating to Indigenous languages at the nexus of attitudes to both Indigenous people (exclusion, assimilation, integration, etc), and linguistic diversity (including migrant languages). McKay examines both significant national initiatives, such as the National Policy on Languages, and state and territory based policy that have largely been generated out of education departments and the legal system, and often had an indirect focus on Indigenous languages. He catalogues their relative legacies, and from this there is much to reflect on about the role and efficacy of ad hoc, government-directed language planning to date, given the continual decline in speaker numbers (of most traditional languages) also clearly described in the chapter.

Four chapters focus on what linguists call 'contact' languages. These are languages that arise when two groups of people with distinct languages meet. John Harris explains these processes and the associated technical terminology (pidgin, creole, etc) in clear, accessible terms. His chapter is in large part an overview of contact languages that have arisen through interactions with English, but this is given historical context by a brief examination of the evidence of pre-European language contact and the linguistic results. This serves to highlight the relative experience with multilingual communication that Aboriginal people brought to early encounters with Europeans, and is an essential antecedent in the story of the rise and spread of early pidgins and creoles in the period following European arrival. Harris is keen for readers to see contact languages in Australia as not only 'products of disturbed language ecologies but also instruments of that disturbance' (p. 132) and thus the recent history of Kriol is presented in this light. Refreshingly, Harris also points out that in the process of contact language development, simplification is not impoverishment, but rather 'optimisation', thus turning the discourse of loss that so often accompanies the spread of Kriol on its head. Malcolm and Grote present a summary of features present in the varieties of Aboriginal English spoken around Australia, describing their origins and the present-day functions which sustain their use. The section on

geographic, social and stylistic variation is important as it emphasises that fact that Aboriginal English is really a 'complex continuum of varieties' (p. 168). This is often overlooked and a homogenous view of Aboriginal Englishes is perpetuated, even by those who quote (but misinterpret) these very authors. Under the section on pragmatics the authors state some often-repeated claims regarding features of Aboriginal interaction, specifically that there is no 'need or expectation of turn taking' (p. 161) or obligation to respond. For recent work on this topic, which reveals the situation to be considerably more nuanced than is presented here, I would recommend to the reader Gardner et al (2009), Gardner (2010), and Mushin and Gardner (2009). Farzad Sharifian delves into how kinship categories are reflected in the grammatical systems of various Australian languages. Those not familiar with the author's theoretical 'schemas' approach to cognition to which this data has been applied, will nevertheless find much of interest in terms of how kinship permeates the grammar of many Australian languages. His chapter examines traditional languages on their own terms, but also examines how grammatical encodings of kinship in these languages have been imported into later contact varieties such as Aboriginal English. Gerhard Leitner takes a look at the flipside of language contact: how the development of Australian English (AusE) has been influenced by contact with Aboriginal languages. Beyond commonplace words in AusE that have their origins in Aboriginal languages, Leitner shows how AusE has been influenced by contact with Aboriginal people in a broader sense: words such as *sorry*, *country*, *native*, *reserve*, *dreamtime* now have a uniquely Australian semantic scope through their use by and about Aboriginal people. Moreover, he considers how the progenitors of semantic expansion have also shifted since contact, from the non-Indigenous coloniser to Aboriginal people themselves.

Appropriately, the final chapters deal with the relevance of Australia's complex language ecology in two key areas of applied research: education and the law.

Partington and Galloway give a comprehensive account of the many issues that have been discussed over the past 20–30 years in relation to the formal schooling of Aboriginal people. They are specifically concerned with factors that might account for the apparent differences between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal students in school 'success'. In attempting to scope out the myriad of policy and initiatives in this area, there is unfortunately little room for critical evaluation of these policies and how they may or may not have translated into, among other things, educational empowerment. However, in mapping the chaos the chapter serves as a companion piece to the contribution of Ian Malcolm and Patricia Königsberg who take the reader deeper into specific educational issues. The authors bring much-needed rigour to the ways in which outcomes and objectives for Indigenous people have been defined in the educational sphere. In other words, who controls what is in 'the gap'. They point out that educational authorities have largely defined Indigenous success in terms of equal attainment on 'outcomes common to the mainstream' (p. 276): the gap is thus defined as what non-Indigenous students do that Indigenous students do not, rather than as the distance to the educational goals each group has set for itself (an

approach that would give equal energy to goals relating to the development of multilingual and inter-cultural competence often articulated by Aboriginal people as of equal importance). This has resulted in a biased testing regime that is based on 'monocultural and monodialectal' benchmarks, and thus takes no account of Indigenous students' 'foundational linguistic competence' (p. 277). The idea of a 'gap' is therefore redefined by the authors as one of expectations. This is a very useful contribution to the growing number of international and national critiques of 'gap talk' (eg Lingard et al 2012), and will continue to be relevant beyond the Australian Government's current use of the term.

Some of the most important academic and practical work on language issues in Australia has centred on the way non-native speakers of Australian English fare in our legal system. Diana Eades elaborates some of the key linguistic issues for speakers of Aboriginal English attempting to navigate the legal system, and for a justice system tasked with providing 'equality before the law'. Her presentation takes us through a number of case examples, including the two earliest cases in which linguistic evidence became part of the defence, and more recent cases where the language issues centre on misunderstandings arising out of features of the interview process. She also describes the very practical work that has been done to educate legal professionals (eg with the publication of a handbook) about the ways in which miscommunication can and does arise. Eades also demonstrates that work focusing on language issues can take us only so far, for the 'participation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system cannot be separated from socio-political issues involved in race relations in Australia' (p. 321).

Rob Amery presents a history of Aboriginal languages in the tertiary sector, where they have been present in two senses: as the object of research, and as the subject matter for language courses. In Amery's account Aboriginal languages have been more significant in the former sense than the latter, but receive equal treatment here. Amery gives a run-down of the sub-disciplines within linguistics that have been applied to Aboriginal languages. His account compliments that of Koch in providing reference to research beyond the descriptive and comparative linguistic traditions. Importantly, this chapter also chronicles the history of teaching of Aboriginal languages at the tertiary level, so that we may record what attempts have been made, what great things have been achieved, and may be still but for more favourable policy (particularly regarding class sizes) and funding environments.

Terry Ngarritjan-Kessarar and Linda Ford, who contribute the concluding chapter, reflect on each paper in the volume and provide an Aboriginal perspective on the central theme of the book: namely the change to their language habitat since colonisation. They share many personal anecdotes and perspectives which give vivid expression to the ideas raised throughout the volume. As well as articulating their own experiences, they refer to the increasing scrutiny given to Indigenous-related research by Indigenous academics. Of all the habitat 'disturbance' described in this volume this is surely the most needed and welcome. As soon as

our highest academic institutions succeed in entwining Indigenous thought and scholarship within their own limited micro-climates we may be truly optimistic about the future diversity of Australia's language habitat as a whole.

References

- Gardner, R 2010, 'Question and answer sequences in Garrwa talk', *Australian Journal of Linguistics* 30: 423–445.
- Gardner, R, R Fitzgerald and I Mushin 2009, 'The underlying orderliness in turn-taking: examples from Australian talk', *Australian Journal of Communication* 36: 65–89.
- Lingard, B, S Creagh and G Vass 2012, 'Education policy as numbers: data categories and two Australian cases of misrecognition', *Journal of Education Policy* 27(3): 315–333.
- Mushin, I and R Gardner 2009, 'Silence is talk: conversational silence in Australian Aboriginal talk-in-interaction', *Journal of Pragmatics* 41: 2033–2052.

Sally Dixon

The Australian National University

A Wild History: Life and Death on the Victoria River Frontier by Darrell Lewis, 319 pp, Monash University Publishing, Clayton, 2012, ISBN 9781921867262 (pbk), \$39.95.

Although over the past three decades I have been interested in, frequently visited, and occasionally researched and written on the history of the Victoria River District in the Northern Territory's north-west, there is much about the region that I did not know until I read Darrell Lewis's *A Wild History* and the earlier doctoral thesis on which it is based. *A Wild History* successfully tells the story of a remote and sparsely populated part of Australia but one that is of continuing fascination to many Australians. Lewis has a wealth of personal insights based on his long-standing and intimate association with the Victoria River District. His meticulous research and first hand knowledge of the region's people and places result in a ground-breaking study. The narrative is clear and strong with a commendable absence of jargon. The book significantly complements other work on Australian frontier history.

Each chapter in *A Wild History* is almost a separate essay yet the overall structure works well. There is a thematic focus on 'the various moments and types of early contact between Aborigines and whites, and the formation of a local settler society' (p. xxi). The Victoria River District's physical environment, its Aboriginal people before contact with Europeans and its pastoral industry are also covered in considerable depth. The emphasis is on the period between the 1880s and the early 1900s.

Many appropriate, and usually intriguing, examples are considered. Attention is devoted to individuals such as the policeman WH Willshire and the pastoralist Joe Bradshaw who played significant and sometimes violent roles in Aboriginal-European contacts. Outlaws, dreamers, alcoholics and various others are described. Lewis offers sensitive and shrewd assessments of them. While sources on individual Aborigines are generally more limited than they are for Europeans, wherever possible Aborigines like Jimmy and Pompey are named and discussed. The chapter on the ruggedly beautiful Jasper Gorge conveys a powerful sense of place. Its analysis of the 'most famous event' (p. 134) in the gorge's history, when Aborigines besieged the teamsters George Ligar and John Mulligan in 1895, pays careful attention to detail.

The book is an impressively original contribution to knowledge of its subject area. It is based on a thorough examination of relevant sources, including the use of many hard to locate unpublished materials and interviews. While other historians, the best of whom is Lyn Riddett, write about the Victoria River District, no one else considers the place, the people, the specific period and the themes in the same depth. Most of the material presented does not appear in other studies. *A Wild History* makes perceptive observations about regional identity, the physical environment's impact on both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal settlement and how people remember their histories. On the latter

point, Lewis points to a 'weak transmission of local knowledge from generation to generation among local whites' and how older Aborigines 'know their country intimately from years spent working on the stations and from going on extended wet season walkabouts' (p. xix). He succeeds in his aim of beginning the 'the process of "resurrecting" the history of the region and transforming the "wild imaginings" into "wild history"' (p. 295).

A Wild History's presentation also warrants praise. The book is sturdily bound and attractively produced, with a striking cover design, well laid out pages and numerous images and maps, all of which complement the text and are important components of the evidence presented. Source references are where they should be, in footnotes at the bottom of each page. The bibliography is well set out and the index is easily understood.

Given that the book is 'for the ordinary reader rather than academics' and does not directly engage with 'current (and usually ephemeral) historical controversies and debates' (p. xxiii), it is perhaps unfair to criticise it for only occasionally mentioning previous historical scholarship yet more references to such scholarship would be helpful. Lewis does not, for instance, refer to the cultural historian Mickey Dewar's argument based on a comprehensive study of literary sources, including some relating to the Victoria River District, that the Northern Territory frontier is a place quintessential to the Australian experience. There is no mention of Bill Wilson's pioneering work on Northern Territory police history. Wilson, incidentally, points out that Mounted Constable Willshire quite frequently fell behind in writing his journals, which he later attempted to reconstruct. This may partly explain why, as Lewis observes, there are differences between the journals and Willshire's book *Land of the Dawning* and presents another perspective on Lewis's statement that 'the journal was deliberately incomplete' (p. 106).

In spite of my small criticisms, *A Wild History* is a major contribution to understanding Australia's frontier past. When describing their nation's historical frontiers Australians quite frequently use the names 'bush', 'outback' and 'never-never' and locate them in areas like the Victoria River District that are a long way from the more closely settled parts of the continent. Lewis's findings convincingly support Graeme Davison's notion that the Australian frontier was more than just a line on a map and represented an idea as well as a place. Henry Reynolds' foreword wisely observes that *A Wild History* 'is a story with which every Australian should become familiar' (p. vi).

David Carment

Charles Darwin University

Outside Country: Histories of Inland Australia edited by Alan Mayne and Stephen Atkinson, 360 pp, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2011, ISBN 9781862549609, \$34.95.

Outside Country makes a compelling case for telling the history of inland Australia. Its strength lies in its attention to 'everyday lives' and 'ordinary' people. While it gestures towards a grander purpose – Alan Mayne, for example, describes a role for such histories in 'informing debates about important and complicated issues for the nation's future' (p. 2) – it is the untold stories within untold stories that hold this book together and make it so enjoyable to read. Making a virtue of 'small scale' stories that exhibit the 'human touch', this collection 'acknowledges disappointments and hardships, the mistakes and the ugly events, as well as things that elicit respect and pride'. It is a 'history to learn from' (p. 4) in more ways than one.

Reflecting the complexity of the region, the topics covered in this collection are diverse, from Jodi Frawley's intriguing discussion of Dr Jean White and the Prickly Pear Experimental Station at Dulacca (on the western Darling Downs in Queensland) to Raelene Frances' fascinating exploration of cameleers and sex-workers in Kalgoorlie. Ruth Ford utilises a wonderfully rich set of letters by settler women in the Victorian Mallee to tell a complex story of hope and optimism in difficult circumstances. Heather Goodall reflects on the entanglement of culture and history at two highly significant Aboriginal sites on the upper Darling system: Boobera Lagoon, near Boggabilla on the MacIntyre, and the native fisheries at Brewarrina. Documenting cultures in the process of change, Goodall's chapter challenges legalistic interpretations of culture as static and unchanging. Rick Hosking analyses South Australian historical pioneering novels, Lionel Frost considers the expansion of railway systems into the interior and Jenny Gregory closely examines the mobile lives of residents of Kurrawang, a small town in southern Western Australia that was completely relocated in 1938. Charley Fahey follows the fortunes of a migratory mining family and, in a second essay, explores the history of the Australian family farm. Essays by Keir Reeves and Christopher MacDonald on Cradle Valley in Tasmania, Fiona Davis and Patricia Grimshaw on Cummeragunja Aboriginal reserve, and Erik Eklund on memory and identity in Broken Hill and Mount Isa round out the collection.

'Indigenous wellbeing' is highlighted as one of four issues the book addresses (along with 'gender equality', 'cultural pluralism' and 'ecological sustainability'), however only two of the book's 17 chapters (four of which are introductions by Mayne, and one of which is an afterword by Atkinson) deal in any substantial way with Indigenous issues. Of these, only Goodall's chapter is about the 'Outside Country'; the other, on Cummeragunja, is about a place that – according the editors' own map (p. 7) – is not part of the inland corridor that comprises Australia's 'Outside Country'. While Davis and Grimshaw present an interesting account of social life at the troubled reserve, enlivened by Davis' oral history research, they struggle to make it fit with the collection's main themes. Given the increasing number of researchers working on Aboriginal history

topics across Inland Australia, I have to question its inclusion. Yet, overall, the collection more than achieves its purpose: by relaying the mysterious lives of men and women of inland Australia, by exploring the perception, meaning and experience of isolation, this book forces readers to re-imagine the Centre.

Rani Kerin

The Australian National University

Pygmonia: In Search of the Secret Land of the Pygmies by Peter McAllister, 265 pp, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 2010, ISBN 9780102236914, \$34.95.

Pygmonia begins with McAllister's (allegedly) first encounter, in both print and reality, with the (supposed) Pygmies of the North Queensland rainforest in 2007. It ends with an assessment of whether these rainforest 'Barrinean' people are, in any meaningful sense, Pygmies. In between, McAllister traverses the mythology, folklore, anthropology, genetics and human biology of the world's Pygmies, both real and imagined, from ancient Greece to now. He recounts this kaleidoscope of information in a generally accessible and often quirky written style, evidently intended to appeal to a wide readership – although the chapters devoted to genetics and biochemistry inevitably become jargon-laden and somewhat laborious. McAllister is careful, however, to balance such passages of scientific explication with longer stretches of narrative prose. Among the latter is a particularly fine chapter recounting the life of Ota Benga, a Babinga Pygmy man from the western Congo who in the early twentieth century fashioned a career for himself in the United States as both human exhibit and independent personality.

Unfortunately, the book does not get off to a good start. On the first page, McAllister claims that until 2007 he had never encountered the notion that Pygmies lived in North Queensland. Yet the blurb tells us that he is 'a qualified palaeo-anthropologist and archaeologist, with degrees in archaeology from the University of Queensland and the University of New England'. With that background, how could he possibly have been unaware, until 2007, of Tindale and Birdsell's claim to have found 'pygmoid' people in the North Queensland rainforests? Tindale and Birdsell first published this claim in 1941. Over subsequent decades, it was frequently repeated (and perhaps more often refuted) in the anthropological and archaeological literature. In 2002 Keith Windschuttle and Tim Gillen made quite a splash with a *Quadrant* article, 'The Extinction of the Australian Pygmies', which claimed that scientific knowledge about Pygmies in Australia had been suppressed in a politically-motivated cover-up. Windschuttle and Gillen's article drew numerous counter-attacks, including a devastating one by Michael Westaway and Peter Hiscock, published in this journal in 2005. Somehow, if McAllister is to be believed, all this passed him by, completely unnoticed despite his professions as anthropologist and archaeologist.

More likely, McAllister adopts this chronology because it suits his narrative. The year 2007 was when he visited North Queensland for a scientific conference, and took the opportunity to visit Yarrabah to see the local 'Pygmies' for himself. For the sake of the story, it is best if his first hearing of the Pygmies and first visiting them are brought into close temporal proximity. That is a perfectly acceptable narrative technique, telescoping events for dramatic effect. However, it is not a wise technique to employ when, as in this case, it undermines the narrator's own claimed expertise.

After the prologue, the book picks up pace. By Chapter 2, McAllister is explaining the theories of the nineteenth-century French anthropologist, Armand de Quatrefages, according to whom modern-day Pygmies are the remnants of a primordial human race who had once populated the Earth, before being supplanted by larger varieties of the human species. Thenceforward, de Quatrefages' theories become McAllister's constant reference point: a set of postulates about human origins, evolution, migration and diversity against which subsequent theorising about Pygmies can be conveniently compared and contrasted. Generally, the comparisons provide an effective means of illuminating and simplifying some complex and contentious issues, although sometimes they become a little stretched. More importantly, McAllister's version of events glosses too lightly over a major shift in scientific thinking between de Quatrefages' day and our own.

The big shift in scientific thinking about human diversity occurred shortly after the Second World War with the discarding (albeit incompletely) of the concept of racial types. McAllister alludes briefly to this shift, but gives it too little weight. Scientific thinking about Pygmies before the Second World War (including that of de Quatrefages and Tindale and Birdsell) was framed within an assumption that humanity was divided into discrete races, who in the past had variously merged with, suppressed or exterminated each other. The specific theories they propounded, whether about Pygmies or any other facet of human diversity, made sense only in the context of that assumption. With the shift in scientific thinking from 'races' to 'populations', such theories lost their intellectual moorings. It is true that essentialist ideas of race persisted, in science as in other domains. However, the changes in how scientists understood Pygmies were due not only to changing scientific methodologies and technologies, as McAllister intimates, but to more fundamental changes in how human diversity was conceived.

In the final chapter, 'Return to Yarrabah', McAllister revisits arguments for and against the 'Barrinean' Aboriginal people's status as remnant of a Pygmy race left isolated in the North Queensland rainforest. It is an anticlimactic ending. For reasons I cannot fathom, he never names any of the recent protagonists in these arguments – Windschuttle and Gillen, Westaway and Hiscock, for instance – although their identity is obvious to any reader familiar with the literature. His account of their disputes is as flat as his conclusion is banal: 'Barrinean people are not an outpost of Pygmonia'.

But the journey is as important as the destination. The journey McAllister takes us on, although sometimes a bit touristy, visits some fascinating and revealing episodes in the changing ways in which Pygmies have figured in Western peoples' attempts to understand human origins and diversity.

Russell McGregor

James Cook University

Indifferent Inclusion: Aboriginal People and the Australian Nation by Russell McGregor, 229 pp, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2011, ISBN 9780855757793, \$39.95.

This book is a welcome addition to the field of Indigenous history in Australia, written by one of its foremost scholars. It offers an engaging and readable account of the quest for Aboriginal inclusion in the Australian nation over the middle decades of the twentieth century. Tracing the incremental, often partial, successes of that quest, McGregor provides a new perspective on familiar events, policies and ideas, arguing that the inclusion of Aboriginal people in the nation was often thwarted by the apathy and indifference of white Australians.

The nation – or rather conceptions of it – are at the heart of McGregor's story, which as he explains is one concerned with 'the transformation of the Australian nation' (p. xii). It is this transformation, from an idea of the nation that was strongly embedded in ethnic nationalism at the beginning of the twentieth century, to a wider, more inclusive concept of the nation placing greater emphasis on civic elements, that provides the framework for McGregor's careful elucidation of the ideas which drove attempts to bring about Aboriginal people's inclusion in the nation. The strength of this approach is the fresh perspective it brings to bear on familiar episodes in the history of Indigenous-settler relations in this country. One example is his treatment of the policy of biological absorption pursued in Western Australia and the Northern Territory in the 1930s, and of its abandonment in favour of sociocultural assimilation. McGregor observes that despite the continuities between these approaches, the move toward sociocultural assimilation suggested a significant change, away from a nation conceptualised in strongly ethnic terms and toward one imagined in civic terms (p. 17). Another example is his discussion of the 1967 referendum, an event in Australia's political history that has been frequently misunderstood. In McGregor's view, the real significance of the referendum victory was as an affirmation of the principle of Aboriginal inclusion in the nation (p. 158).

Approaching his subject through the lens of inclusion versus exclusion leads McGregor to critique some previous scholarship and widely held assumptions about Aboriginal affairs in the mid-twentieth century, especially in relation to the ideal of assimilation. McGregor explains in his preface that an aim of the book is to 'promote a more nuanced understanding of what assimilation meant in mid-twentieth-century Australia' (p. xii). In this he succeeds admirably, building on the work of scholars like Tim Rowse, Rani Kerin and Anna Haebich, all of whom have turned their scholarly talents to the topic of assimilation in recent years. While acknowledging the terrible consequences of child removal and cultural devastation, McGregor emphasises that 'the meanings of assimilation were not exhausted by these practices', and that many of those who supported assimilation were opponents of such actions. In complicating understandings of the idea of assimilation and its close relation integration, the book helps to explain the appeal of the concept to Indigenous activists as well as to many white

reformers and administrative officials. Likewise, considering appropriations of Aboriginal artistic and cultural elements in the 1950s and 1960s, McGregor observes the positive aspects of the phenomenon – a greater receptivity to the inclusion of Aboriginal people in the nation – as well as its superficiality and appropriative nature.

This is an unashamedly political book. Aboriginal history has in many ways always been political. Many of its early practitioners were passionately concerned to achieve social justice for Aboriginal people, and were open in their political stances. This book continues in that tradition, speaking explicitly to current political debates in both its preface and its epilogue. The book's politics will not appeal to all its readers. McGregor's rehabilitation of the concept of assimilation, partial as it is, will be particularly polarising. But this is good scholarship, attentive to the nuances of the past and to the historical context of the ideas and reforms under discussion. The book offers a valuable contribution to our understanding of Australia's past, the changing ways in which the nation has been conceived, and the gradual, though incomplete, success of the efforts of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal reformers to achieve Aboriginal inclusion in that nation. In that sense, the book is a fine sequel to the author's earlier work, *Imagined Destinies*, revealing how the destinies of Aboriginal people were imagined by a range of players in the middle of the twentieth century.

Reference

McGregor, Russell 1997, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory 1880–1939*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton.

Karen Fox

The Australian National University

Germans: Travellers, Settlers and their Descendants in South Australia edited by Peter Monteath, xxi + 449 pp, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2011, ISBN 9781862549111 (pbk), \$34.95.

As a South Australian of German origin this book promised to be of some interest to me, but it should be so well beyond the small subsection of us who meet these parochial criteria. Anybody interested in Australian Aboriginal history will find much of value in this volume. Not only did a significant number of early German colonists and visitors to Australia pay close attention to the Aboriginal population, but their perspectives at times also provided an interesting contrast to the prevailing attitudes and approaches of the Anglo settlers and bureaucracies.

This is a substantial volume of 21 essays, most of which focus on one or several Germanic individuals. Many chapters do not relate to Aboriginal history, but concentrate on other pertinent issues such as scientific and administrative contributions of German colonists or the position of Germans during the Second World War. There are also some fascinating forays into nineteenth century German history as the experiences of the migrants are traced back to their origins. I will not focus on those in this review.

The significant contribution of German missionaries to the recording of Aboriginal languages and cultures in South Australia has already received some attention, largely with a focus on the life and work of Johann-Georg Reuther and Otto Siebert at Killalpaninna, Carl Strehlow at Hermannsburg and Clamor Schürmann and Christian Teichelmann in Adelaide (eg Amery 2000, Hercus and McCaul 2004, Jones 2002, Kenny 2009). *Germans* provides a welcome addition to this field with chapters discussing the work of the Lutheran missionaries Meyer and Schürmann among the Ramindjeri of Encounter Bay and the Barnjarla of Eyre Peninsula respectively, and an account of the brief Moravian mission attempts among Diyari people on Coopers Creek. All three chapters provide interesting insights into the passive resistance of Aboriginal people against the conversion attempts by the missionaries; the Moravians in particular also experienced more active resistance.

Meyer, who worked at Encounter Bay from 1840 to 1848 left there feeling his missionary activity had been in vain. One of his letters describes how a man who had assisted him for several days to learn the local language eventually had enough and withdrew, subsequently quickly excusing himself when Meyer came to his camp to seek further assistance. When this account is combined with comments by a local police officer, who claimed that 'the Murray people' did not come to Encounter Bay much anymore because Meyer asked them too many questions about their ancestors and beliefs, it is clear that Meyer was perceived, by some at least, as an intruder and a nuisance. Others seemed to have a different relationship to him, with Meyer also writing about the willing assistance he was given by some members of the Aboriginal community who appreciated the fact that he spoke their language.

Small passages say much about the issues grappled with during these early cross-cultural encounters on both sides. For example, the passing note that Ramindjeri people expressed their concern for Meyer's welfare, because they believed that he worked too much speaks both of their empathy and their difficulty in understanding the German's drive for incessant work while Meyer clearly struggled to adapt to Aboriginal interactional norms.

The historian Lockwood provides a general overview of the early Lutheran mission activities, with much attention paid to the work of Schürmann. Schürmann initially worked with Teichelmann in Adelaide and had actually intended to work with Meyer at Encounter Bay, but ended up at Port Lincoln instead where he remained until 1846 and then again from 1848–1853. His story is dominated by a lack of support and downright resistance to his work by the colonial authorities. In Port Lincoln, Schürmann was placed in the middle of violent conflicts between Aboriginal people and colonists and his attempts at seeking justice for the former were not appreciated by the latter. During his second stint he ran a school at Port Lincoln, encouraged by the Governor who was looking for ways to separate children from their parents and thereby their cultural ways. Eventually, however, an Anglican alternative was established just to the north at Poonindie and the Governor first withdrew his financial support and in the end shut down Schürmann's school. Along the way, Schürmann had lamented the fact that the people simply would not stay with him (he blamed his inability to provide rations), and he was not able to pursue them through the bush to live alongside them. Schürmann too left without a record of converts among the Aboriginal community.

Despite their 'failure' as missionaries, both Meyer and Schürmann produced significant ethnographic and linguistic texts about the people they worked with at Encounter Bay and Port Lincoln. Gale, a linguist who contributed the chapter on Meyer, points out that it is this record rather than their attempts at conversion that is invaluable to the community today and Lockwood suggests that they would have provided Aboriginal people with a humanitarian experience of Europeans that was all too rare during this period.

Bill Edwards, himself a Uniting Church minister who worked for decades in Pitjantjatjara communities, writes about the attempt by Moravian missionaries to establish themselves at Kopperamanna on Coopers Creek. Their inspiration for this endeavour came from accounts about the humanity that the Aboriginal people from Coopers Creek showed King, the sole survivor of the Burke and Wills expedition. The Aboriginal people who the Moravians encountered at Kopperamanna were less hospitable though and repeatedly threatened to kill them. The missionaries arrived in the district in 1866 and abandoned it after only two years, having had to rely on police protection for much of this time. A minor shortcoming of this paper is that it uses the cover term *Diyari* for all the Aboriginal people of this north-eastern part of South Australia, despite the fact that King is much more likely to have been looked after by Yandruwandha speakers and the hundreds of people who gathered when threatening the missionaries were probably of various language groups.

Lally and Monteath provide quite a different perspective in a chapter on the artist Alexander Schramm who arrived in Adelaide in 1849 where he died in 1864. Apparently, he was only able to eke out a very humble existence through the sale of his art, which is of significant value today. Among the various subjects of his paintings were a number of depictions of Aboriginal life. These include scenes of Aboriginal camps in what is now suburban Adelaide, as well as images of encounters between Aboriginal people and colonists. Regarding a painting called *An Aboriginal encampment, near the Adelaide foothills*, the authors observe, 'the closely observed detail offers evidence in an almost documentary scientific sense of accoutrements, clothing and activities indicative of the circumstances of daily life' (p. 155). The authors point out that Schramm's work is different from that of most British contemporaries in that he provides individualised details of his Aboriginal subjects who take central place rather than simple clichés at the margins of colonial imagery.

I was a little disappointed with the chapter about Erhard Eylmann, a pioneer ethnographer who travelled through South Australia and (mainly) the Northern Territory between 1896 and 1898 and published a significant volume on his journeys that remains untranslated to this day (Eylmann 1908). I had hoped for an insight into some of his key ethnographic findings, especially as the author, Schröder, emphasises that some of the details Eylmann recorded had previously been unknown and remain of ongoing anthropological interest. But there is little information about what these details may be, apart from a broad-brush outline of his general interests. On the other hand, it was interesting to learn that Eylmann's last publication in 1922 concerned begging among Europeans in South Australia. The chapter focuses primarily on Eylmann's life story, which shows him to have been a remarkable stoic and a man with great dedication to the scientific endeavour even during the many periods of personal hardship.

A final piece of early history centres on a somewhat enigmatic doctor by the name of Hermann Koeler who visited Adelaide between 1837 and 1838 and recorded numerous observations about local Aboriginal life in a subsequent publication. According to Mühlhäusler, the chapter's author, both Koeler's linguistic and historical observations have been long overlooked by English speaking researchers and he provides a brief outline of their relevance to our understanding of early Kurna society. Koeler's contribution essentially consists of a small number of words not recorded elsewhere and some detailed and insightful accounts of Aboriginal life on the fringes of the new European colonisers. His accounts are marred slightly by his belief that the South Australian Aboriginal people sat at the bottom of a racially designated hierarchy.

In conclusion, this volume provides valuable new information about the work and relationship of Germans with Aboriginal people in South Australia. It also highlights the combination of high scientific standard and self-abnegation that seemed to mark the work of many of these Germans. Given the significant role played by Germans in South Australia, however, it is unlikely that this will be the last contribution on this topic.

References

Amery, Rob 2000, *Warrabarna Kurna! Reclaiming an Australian Language*, Swets & Zeitlinger, Lisse.

Eylmann, Erhard 1908, *Die Eingeborenen der Kolonie Südaustralien*, D Reimer, Berlin.

Hercus, Luise and Kim McCaul 2004, 'Otto Siebert: a missionary-ethnographer', in *The Struggle for Souls and Science, Constructing the Fifth Continent: German Missionaries and Scientists in Australia*, Walter Veit (ed), Occasional Papers 3, Strehlow Research Center.

Jones, Philip 2002, 'Naming the Dead Heart: Hillier's map and Reuther's gazetteer of 2,468 placenames in north-eastern South Australia', in *The Land is a Map: Placenames of Indigenous Origins in Australia*, Luise Hercus, Flavia Hodges, Jane Simpson (eds), Pandanus Books, Canberra: 187-200.

Kenny, Anna 2009, 'Carl Strehlow's mission', in *Migration and Cultural Contact: Germany and Australia*, Andrea Bandhauer and Maria Veber (eds), University of Sydney Press, Sydney: 91-112.

Kim McCaul

Adelaide

Frontier History Revisited – Colonial Queensland and the 'History War' by Robert Ørsted-Jensen, 278 pp, Lux Mundi Publishing, Brisbane, 2011, ISBN 9781466386822, c\$27.00.

This book has been precisely written as a thorough rebuttal of K Windschuttle's work. It is not simply incidentally attacking him at various points. It has been written to knock him off his perch, and it succeeds. It is a political history of colonial Queensland dealing with black and white relations and the colony's parliamentary history as well as the key players, both inside and outside of parliament including the press. Ørsted-Jensen flags a further three volumes of work, yet to be published, entitled *The Right to Live*, which delve into the foundation of frontier policy, frontier policy and political dissent, and struggling for change of policy.

Frontier History Revisited certainly packs a punch. There are five chapters, the first: 'Queensland and Australian Colonial History' is critical of the paucity of studies and analysis of early Australian colonial histories, and in particular that of Queensland, which is identified as sporadic and inconsistent. This, even to the extent that 'on certain issues [they are] almost non-existent'. Unpalatable though this might be to some, one cannot help but agree that generations of Australian historians, with some notable exceptions, have accepted earlier written works and appear to assume that they do not need re-assessment. This is a pivotal criticism, which rightly singles them out as being in need of exposure to more 'critical evaluation'. In contrast, the primary sources tell a completely different story – one that is genuinely more honest and elucidates events in a way that cannot be done with the earlier secondary sources. Jonathan Richards has also noted this flaw (Richards 2008: 6). It is an important observation about Australian historiography.

Similarly the work deals with issues relating to the pre-occupation by previous Australian historians with patriotic nation-building that embraces a biased approach rather than allowing one 'to reflect and judge on what always will remain the core issues in human history, namely the struggles, sufferings, welfare and rights of *all* mankind' (p. 4). This perspective is a breath of fresh air that carries over into the rest of the book. Ørsted-Jensen goes on to identify that many of the white people who criticised the policy of violence on the frontier had in fact also participated in some way with the carnage. Next he contextualises the population of Indigenous Queensland in relation to the rest of the colonies of Australia and their pre and post contact numbers, as well as recognising the impact of at least two major smallpox epidemics. From the research of Butlin and then Prentis, the author concludes that Queensland had the highest Aboriginal population at 37.9 per cent that he notes is: 'the only possibility to rationally explain the Queensland colonial experience' (p. 15). That is, the formidable resistance and largest massacres of white settlers in Australia (Hornet Bank and Cullin-la-Ringo), as well as the longest serving Native Police service (51 years, 1859–c1910), and the highest estimates and more frequent references to violence.

There is also a consideration of casualty figures that confirms Queensland's pre-eminence in this unsavoury record of killing. In 'Accusations and Denials', Ørsted-Jensen considers the campaign against the 'black armband mode of history' and effectively deconstructs the denialist viewpoint with stunning veracity.

Chapter 2, 'Fact or Fabrication?' deals with an array of topics initially related to words and phrases brought up in the 'history war', such as 'dispersal', 'invasion', 'guerilla war' and 'war of extermination'. Under the sub-heading of 'Retribution Ratio' innumerable examples are given where the ratio of killings (black to white) vary greatly, from the conservative Reynolds/Loos ratio of 10:1, to 12:0, 25:0, 47:0, 59:3, 17:1, 29:1, 30:0, 60:0 and 50:1. The research here is compelling as each story behind the ratio is given and sources from which they have been derived cited so that the historical proof is particularly creditable. An unfortunate aspect is that these examples appear to be just the tip of the iceberg. Then there is a consideration of the class of officer who served in the Native Police and how it was not seen as necessary to perform body counts of the numerous 'collisions'. Under the sub-heading 'Forensic Evidence' Ørsted-Jensen tackles the absurdities of Windschuttle's method of argument and persuasively demolishes them using evidence from the primary sources. The discussion about Blagden Chambers' (1836–1943) *Black and White – the story of a massacre and its aftermath*, originally published between 1926 and 1927 and dealing with the late 1860s,¹ enables an insightful assessment of frontier violence to haunt the reader. The poisoning episodes of Kilcoy and Whiteside stations are also examined and their unpleasant ramifications considered. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of how white attitudes on the frontier hardened from the 1850s and into the 1880s.

Chapter 3, 'The Purging of the Evidence' looks at the deliberate obfuscation by the colonial government about the recording of 'the number of blacks captured, wounded or killed, and the number of murders and other outrages committed by the blacks' (p. 93) between 1 January 1865 and 25 April 1866.² While the question was accepted in the Queensland Legislative Assembly, it was never answered, or when it was the Premier lied. Then the official reporting system by the Native Police is identified and it is apparent that officers were to be discrete about what they and their troopers did on their dispersals far from the public eye. Here, once again, Ørsted-Jensen has discerned further methods of hiding the truth of Native Police operations when he identifies a system of double book-keeping where there was an official diary record and another for internal use. The last component of this chapter deals with the destruction of records and they are identified as having been very systematically, deliberately and comprehensively destroyed. Some reports survived because they were filed in other departments, but as the author notes they were cleansed of details that should have been there

1 In serial form in *Country Life*, New South Wales.

2 Ørsted-Jensen, *Frontier History Revisited*, p.93; *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 25 April 1866, as reported in the *Brisbane Courier* 26 April 1866 and *Queenslander* 28 April 1866.

because of established directives. This effectively contradicts Jonathan Richards' belief that the archives tells us everything we need to know and that official records have not been purposely destroyed. They had.

Chapter 4, 'The Myth of Missionary Prominence' is a detailed assessment of the role missionaries played in the propagation of the so-called 'Exeter Hall' objection to the treatment of Aborigines and effectively demonstrates that missionaries did not really begin their influence until the last decade of the nineteenth century. This contradicts Windschuttle's claim that they were supposedly instrumental in falsely exaggerating the violence on the frontier.

Chapter 5, 'Conclusionary Notes' wraps up further inordinately false or grossly misleading claims by denialists and identifies a much more rational interpretation regarding frontier violence. The fallacies propagated are shown to be just that. Ørsted-Jensen considers the falsehood of denying past governments for policies regarding the treatment and control of Indigenous Queenslanders and blaming foreign influences for these aspects. The uncovering of primary source documents which clearly identify the Executive Council and Governor's involvement in directing the Native Police is truly significant. This in conjunction with his discussion of death toll estimates is illuminating, and far more convincing than anything purported by Windschuttle and his fellow denialists.

Appendix A gives a listing of the death toll of the invader that coherently substantiates the author's interpretation. This includes a comprehensively detailed breakdown from 1827 to 1900 with a concluding summary. Appendix B is a thought provoking analysis of what happened to 'The Lost Native Police Reports'. In a common sense manner the file categories at the Queensland State Archives are assessed. From this comes the remarkable fact that 'only 10 percent of all our file volume is from the actual Police Department and 47 percent is from the minister's office!?' (p. 256). Ørsted-Jensen's argument that the Native Police files had been seriously culled is very convincing and the Appendices are a valuable contribution to Queensland historical research.

However, it is rather disappointing that a professional publishing editor was not used to smooth over some of the more awkward English phrasing that detracts from the flow of the work. It is apparent that Ørsted-Jensen is not a native English speaker and one wonders how the work got to the stage of publishing without this aspect being remedied. This is unfortunate as his research and ideas are truly exceptional. On a similar level, the frequent use of the phrase 'as we shall see' is somewhat irritating and might have been better to eliminate or varied by re-phrasing. Lastly, Yarrabah Mission was set up at Cape Grafton, not at Bellenden Ker (p. 146), which is some 40 kilometres to the south (see Bottoms 2002: 237-239, 278; Halse 1992: 57 *passim*). However, these points are relatively insignificant when considering the comprehensive scope and thorough coverage that the author has achieved.

This is truly an excellent and refreshing work in the world of Australian historical writing. The author argues:

Good historians are supposed to allow the material they uncover to influence them, they are not supposed to carefully select and massage the evidence to fit some political or ideological position of the present. Windschuttle does the latter, he has carefully picked the weak and insufficiently argued points in the body of work of what he clearly from the very beginning classified as his 'political opponents', and rather than carefully investigate and apply some unbiased scholarship and analysis, and thus attempt to mend such gap in our knowledge, he went on to prey on it. He simply commenced to twist and spin-doctor on the evidence he had in front of him, for the purpose of some specific political interests and positions of the present (p. 166).

One cannot help but agree. *Frontier History Revisited* is an extremely valuable contribution in understanding colonial Queensland and sets a very high standard in historical research. This work is a 'tour de force' and is a 'must have' for those wanting to understand the colonial machinations of Queensland's early politicians and is a damning indictment on those contemporary critics who would deny the true extent of brutality on Queensland's colonial frontier.

References

- Bottoms, T 2002, 'A History of Cairns – City of the South Pacific, 1770–1995', unpublished PhD thesis, Central Queensland University.
- Halse, C 1992, 'The Reverend Ernest Gribble and Race Relations in Northern Australia', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Queensland.
- Ørsted-Jensen, R 2011, *Frontier History Revisited*, Lux Mundi Publishing, Brisbane.
- Richards, J 2008, *The Secret War*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia.

Tim Bottoms

Cairns

Historical Dictionary of Australian Aborigines edited by Mitchell Rolls and Murray Johnson, 213 pp, The Scarecrow Press, Inc, Lanhan, Toronto, Plymouth, UK, 2011, ISBN 9780210259975 (hbk), \$75.00.

The *Historical Dictionary of Australian Aborigines* has been published as part of a series called 'Historical Dictionaries of Peoples and Cultures'. Other editions (there are 11 in total) have featured groups of people such as The Kurds, Gypsies, Tamils and Jews. The dictionary, numbered at just over 200 pages, is a surprisingly comprehensive account of Aboriginal history and culture for its relatively compact size. The dictionary entries themselves, covering Aboriginal culture and tradition, people, places, organisations and significant historical events, are accompanied by a chronology, an introduction from the historian Henry Reynolds and an extensive bibliography divided into different disciplines and thematic works. The different sections combine to make this a very useful reference work for students, both undergraduate and beyond, and anyone with an interest in the 'history, economy, society and culture of the Aboriginal past and present' (p. vii-iii).

The Series Editor, John Wonoroff's foreword makes explicit three important factors in any understanding of the Australian Aboriginal past and present: that at the moment of colonisation all aspects of Aboriginal life were 'intrinsically linked to the territory of each particular group', that the life-experiences of Aboriginal people since colonisation have differed widely throughout Australia, and that despite the resilience of Aboriginal people and the significant gains made since the initial devastation inflicted by British occupation, Aboriginal people are still socially and economically marginalised within Australia and their overall living standard, in many places, remains incomparable with that of other Australians.

The chronology begins 60,000 years BP, the point in time of the earliest evidence that humans were present on the Australian continent. The chronology is punctuated, over ten pages, by significant points in time in the Aboriginal past. The first contact between Europeans and Aboriginal people occurs two-thirds of the way down the first page. The following nine pages document encounters, disease, massacres, historical figures, government policy decisions, the establishment of significant Aboriginal organisations and moments in time that have either denied or restored Aboriginal political, social and economic rights. The chronology contains those events that you would expect, the Batman Treaty, Myall Creek, the formation of the Aborigines Advancement League, the 1967 Referendum, Mabo and the national apology to the Stolen Generations. A little more surprising, and extremely welcome, are those entries not usually covered in a chronology of this kind; the timeline also tells the reader that in 1868 an all-Aboriginal cricket team toured England, in 1942 at Skull Springs, an estimated 200 Aboriginal people from 23 language groups met to discuss action for ending

their exploitation, and in 2010 residents of Alice Springs Town Camp Ilpeye Ilpeye agreed to surrender their Native Title to the Commonwealth government in order to convert tenure and to pave the way for private homeownership.

Henry Reynolds's introduction fleshes out the chronology and gives it life with his narrative, reiterating as he does so, Wonoroff's emphasis on the importance of understanding the historical factors that have undoubtedly shaped an Aboriginal past and present. Reynolds writes that by the time Europeans arrived Aboriginal people had developed a relationship with the physical world around them and had moulded themselves to their country with 'art, religion and ritual' (p. 1). He also points out that the 'slow and fitful settlement over a vast and varied continent meant that Aboriginal experience differed greatly' depending on where and when it occurred (p. 2). However, Reynolds argues that despite this difference in experience, there are common and powerful themes that hold true for all Aboriginal people; that of terra nullius and land rights, the violence of invasion and official policies that had their foundations in Social Darwinism and theories of evolution, and the complete exclusion from political and legal rights as enshrined in the constitution.

Reynolds concludes his introduction by acknowledging that great disparities remain between Aboriginal and other Australians across all the social indicators, something that has 'continued to shame and vex national life to the present day' (p. 6). He also acknowledges that an emphasis on unemployment, substance abuse, domestic violence and poor health in the media and public commentary obscures a diversity of experience among Aboriginal people. Reynolds argues that this preoccupation overwhelms the significant achievements Aboriginal people have made in regard to their fight for political equality and the various ways in which Aboriginal people have celebrated their culture with story, song, dance and art and sought to share it with a world beyond Australia.

The dictionary itself is a comprehensive account of important Aboriginal individuals and organisations, covering resistance fighters from the frontier, political figures and organisations, artists, musicians and successful sportspeople. Many of the individual entries themselves are detailed, with good historical overviews of significant developments such as that of Aboriginal media and the Aboriginal art movement or more politically charged moments in Australia's history like the ushering in of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*. There is also considerable detail on lesser-known entries, such as the genesis of 'Alice Springs Town Camps' that help to demonstrate the diversity of Aboriginal history and experience within its definitions and historical overviews.

However, despite this diversity, the inclusion of some entries and the omission of others seems at times a little skewed in favour of southern experience. Similarly, despite the argument for diversity amongst Aboriginal culture and experience, some of the entries work to 'pan-aboriginalise' in their use of terms or language. 'Koori' is defined as the word used by Aboriginal people in Victoria or New South Wales to refer to themselves, as is Nunga in South Australia, Murri in Queensland and New South Wales, and Nyungar in south-west Western Australia. However,

Anangu, the word used by Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara speaking people in South Australia, the Northern Territory and some parts of Western Australia to refer to themselves is accompanied by the words 'See ULURU'. Anangu are the Traditional Owners of Uluru, however, to reduce the definition of the word to this is to undermine the meaning and use of that word for Anangu; it is about much more than a connection to that most famous of natural features.

Similarly, *Tjukurpa* is mentioned in the 'Uluru' entry, however, despite 'The Dreaming' and 'Ancestral Beings' being included with separate entries, *Tjukurpa* does not receive an entry of its own. *Tjukurpa* is a crucial concept still spoken of widely and a dictionary such as this would benefit from giving it, and the Arrernte *altyerrenge*, definitions of their own, provided by people who speak those languages and can translate the meaning of those words best into English. Similarly, 'Coolamon' and 'Corroboree' are both entries that give the impression that these terms are used indiscriminately amongst Aboriginal people Australia wide. In contrast, I have never encountered either of these terms being used in the Northern Territory and imagine that it may be similar in other northern parts of Australia; in Pitjantjatjara, one of the most widely spoken of Aboriginal languages, the respective terms *piti* and *inma* are used and are words that one would encounter often if working or living with many Pitjantjatjara speaking people.

Rather than being criticisms, my focus on these particular entries serves to highlight that a better, more nuanced, understanding of these important Aboriginal concepts and languages can contribute in no small measure toward a greater understanding of the complexity and diversity of Aboriginal history and experience and way of being-in-the-world. The combination of the different sections, particularly the inclusion of the extensive bibliography, makes the *Historical Dictionary of Australian Aborigines* an excellent work of reference for academics, students and interested people alike. Despite the few examples cited above, the breadth and detail of the entries, in conjunction with the Chronology and Reynolds' introduction, work to provide a rich and diverse account of the Aboriginal past, as experienced in different parts of Australia, and a context for a better understanding of an Aboriginal present.

Shannyn Palmer

The Australian National University

Tasmanian Aborigines: A History since 1803 by Lyndall Ryan, xxix + 448 pp, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2012, ISBN 9781742370682 (pbk), \$35.00.

Rarely are we able to witness an academic's scholarship on the same subject mature across her career. *Tasmanian Aborigines* can trace its beginnings in Lyndall Ryan's 1975 PhD thesis, published in 1981 as *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. That groundbreaking work was the first history of Tasmanian settlement to reference the field journals of GA Robinson, and the first to conclude 'the Tasmanian Aborigines have survived'. A second edition in 1996 reprinted the original text with a new introduction and two new concluding chapters. *Tasmanian Aborigines* might recount the same history, but the text is rewritten completely. It is indeed 'vastly different from its predecessor', as Ryan puts it. It warrants its new title.

It is 'an odd irony' writes Ryan in *Tasmanian Aborigines*, that Keith Windschuttle's 'key argument that settler massacres were largely invented' should have 'become the starting point for important new countervailing work in the field'. Was Ryan's new book likewise inspired? Perhaps originally, and it will for that reason be read with curiosity and anticipation, but readers will find *Tasmanian Aborigines* far more than a response to Windschuttle. Thankfully so, for his accusations, which can be boiled down to a handful of mistakenly tangled footnotes (to which Ryan responded thoroughly in Robert Manne's 2003 *Whitewash*) could hardly sustain an entire new history, and nor does Ryan attempt to make it do so.

From the outset Ryan attempts to refresh her approach to a field that must now be so familiar to her. Ryan has been inspired by the research into Tasmania's colonial history. Following Aboriginal Elder Patsy Cameron's important history *Grease and Ochre*, Ryan titles her opening chapter 'Trouwunna', returning an indigenous name to Tasmania, and all that a name can evoke and represent. James Boyce's portrayal of first generation Van Diemonians has clearly influenced Ryan's description of Tasmania's early agricultural and sealing communities as a 'Creole Society', an effective contrast to what follows: the pastoral 'invasion' that so terribly altered Tasmania's history.

The subsequent three parts that recount the war, the forced removal of the Aborigines, and their incarceration, are perhaps Ryan's finest. Forming the core of her original book, they are here enriched with a masterful command of primary sources and a maturing of writing. The narrative is careful and thorough. We are immersed in detail – indeed over a third of the book is dedicated to 21 terrible years – but it is also suspenseful and page turning. We emerge finally to celebrate 'survival'. As Ryan extends the narrative into the present, she also, appropriately, extends the simpler idea of 'survival' into the complexities of contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal politics: land rights, repatriation of human remains, stolen generations and the legal debates over identity. Considering the controversial and complex nature of contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal communities, Ryan's account is useful and well informed.

Tasmanian Aborigines seems bigger than its predecessor, covering more ground and with improved research, writing and design (including, importantly, redrawn maps). It is, overall, a thorough, chronological account. Ryan gets on with telling the story, largely undistracted by temptation to respond to Windschuttle's attack. Some important new ideas have, however, been shaped by that controversy.

Ryan's chapter title 'The Reckoning' might be recycled from her first book, but is newly apt in light of the history wars, that saw, as Tom Griffiths put it, historians 'exhuming bodies from the archives and counting them'. Ryan does offer a death tally, and from this concludes Tasmania's ratio of Aboriginal to settler deaths was 'only' 4:1; low compared to Raymond Evans' ratio of 12:1 in Queensland, a figure shared by Richard Broome in Victoria. Ryan argues that Broome's figure should be doubled, and from this concludes that the number of Aboriginal deaths in those three colonies alone is 7,000 more than Henry Reynolds' estimate of 20,000 for the whole of Australia. These are important new claims that require response and further consideration.

It follows that any attempts to reckon the total number of Aboriginal deaths should be based upon a solid estimate of the Aboriginal population prior to settlement. In this the numbers have varied greatly for Tasmania, but have often agreed at around 3,000 to 4,000. It is significant, and probably sound, that Ryan doubles this number. She attempts to historicise the population estimates under the umbrella term of 'scientific racism', in which the Aborigines were variously and repeatedly defined as having been too simple and too small a society to have survived, and thus 'faded away'. She brings together a range of scholars and projects dating from the mid-nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, including the work of EB Tylor (the 'father' of anthropology) in the 1890s and Rhys Jones, the first professional archaeologist to date Tasmania's occupation in the 1960s. This theoretical basis is arguably too broad and too blunt. Many of these scholars were interested in the effects of Tasmania's isolation, particularly in light of the Aborigines' relatively Spartan material culture, and while their ideas may now appear archaic and racist, few, if any, listed by Ryan were motivated to justify the then-assumed idea of extinction as natural. Windschuttle was. He took the lowest population estimate of 2,000 in order not only to have fewer Aborigines die, but to argue that they were too vulnerable to have survived anyway. If he misrepresented many of these older scientific ideas to serve this purpose, there is no need to do so again.

Windschuttle's real target – or perhaps his lure – was arguably not Ryan's careful account of war with its positive ending of survival, but an older, popular perception of Tasmanian history born from the myth of extinction. Since the late nineteenth century, Tasmania has been widely cited as Australia's – even the British Empire's – darkest hour. By the 1970s, in the first-wave of anti-colonial politics, Tasmania's story of extinction was recast (particularly in international scholarship and popular media) within a framework of genocide. Indeed for a time the terms 'extinction' and 'genocide' (as Ann Curthoys observes) became interchangeable in the Tasmanian context.

Ryan's first book described the contemporary Tasmanian Aborigines as 'victims of a conscious policy of genocide', but perhaps because of the term's association with extinction (and her focus on survival) it did not pursue the idea further. Since then, Henry Reynolds has argued that Tasmania does not offer a definitive case of genocide, while Curthoys has disagreed. In *Tasmanian Aborigines* Ryan describes the settler colonial society as having 'genocidal behaviour', and she finds it 'impossible not to agree' with Boyce's assessment that removal of the Aboriginal western nations was 'an act of ethnic cleansing that was tantamount to genocide'. But here her discussion on genocide closes. Considering the sophisticated nature of the discussions on genocide in Tasmania since the publication of her first book, Ryan's opinion would be welcome, not only on the technical applicability of genocide, but also its meanings within the broader representations of, and intense controversies over, Tasmania's colonial history.

Tasmanian Aborigines does not, however, aim to be a reflective history. It is an informative, formidable and fact-driven history of Tasmania's Aboriginal people, and in this is unparalleled and almost faultless. Reliable and solid in its research, *Tasmanian Aborigines* is also fuelled by evident compassion. This is a book that will extend and enrich the understandings of Tasmania's past.

Rebe Taylor

University of Melbourne

That Deadman Dance by Kim Scott, 400pp, Picador Australia, place, 2010, ISBN 9781405040440 (pbk), \$22.99.

Shaking Hands on the Fringe: Negotiating the Aboriginal World at King George's Sound by Tiffany Shellam, xii + 267 pp, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, WA, 2009, ISBN 9781921401268 (pbk), \$29.95.

Kim Scott's novel *That Deadman Dance* and Tiffany Shellam's history *Shaking Hands on the Fringe* emerge out of different writing traditions, but are drawn from readings of similar historical documents and time (the first decades of European contact with Aboriginal people), in the same place, King Georges Sound in the far southern corner of Western Australia. Both are important (Scott's obviously so having won the 2011 Miles Franklin Award) and accessible and will be read by people with little previous interest in the events of Western Australia's first frontier.

Here, on what has been called the 'friendly frontier', European officials like Captain Collett Barker, and doctors Collie and Nind, oversaw the small military presence from 1826 that became the tiny second colony of Western Australia in 1831. Each recorded their observations of aspects of Aboriginal society, religion, beliefs and practices in journals and published articles, providing Shellam and Scott with rich material for their writing. But it is the empathetic Collett Barker's journal that echoes most often in both works.

Barely a day passed in Barker's journal that the Aboriginal people of the region do not feature prominently (Mulvaney and Green 1992). He wrote of an intimate relationship with some Aboriginal people, especially Mokare and his family, who became more than occasional 'visitors to camp', sleeping in his hut, sharing ideas, food and ceremonies. Barker came to recognise and respect the complexity and dynamism of Mokare's world, remarking that its intricacies made it difficult for a European to comprehend. He noted that names for mountains, hills, river and the coastline, 'change at short distances', and were not always drawn from ancient mythological pre-historical times, but sometimes recalled recent events experienced by still living people (Mulvaney and Green 1992: 262). These are not people without history to Barker, but the notion of 'history' is unsettled in their hands.

Tiffany Shellam's micro-history follows writers such as Inga Clendinnen and Bronwyn Douglas into a close reading of key documents, to skillfully tease out 'repertoires' of cross-cultural encounters for Aboriginal people as well as for Europeans. This is more than a reading 'against the grain' or a 'two way' history; it is multi-dimensional in its illumination of texts, creating a world of actions and encounters and identifying the growing 'reservoir' of new knowledge that was built for both Aboriginal people and the 'newcomers' from the sea, the Europeans.

Shellam adopts 'King Ya-nup' as a collective name for any Aboriginal person who contributed to daily life of the King George Sound settlement from 1826 to the early 1830s. She does not use the term 'Noongar' for Aboriginal people of the area, as does Kim Scott, choosing instead to render a word from the available historical documents, *Kincinnup*, for her 'snapshot of a unique community' that is 'relevant for a very specific period of time and to a particular group of Aboriginal people and a particular selection of daily stories' (Mulvaney and Green 1992: 33). From King's journal of his week-long visit in December 1821, Shellam examines the minutiae of recorded meetings or sightings in texts and illustrations, using gazes, stances, distances between people and individual words to create a rich scene of exchange and mutual interest.

This ethnographic reading of the texts adopts Geertz's 'thick description' that turns a wink from a voluntary closing of one eye, to a purposeful and more deeply meaningful action, contextualised according to the possibilities of culture, place and time, and framed by Shellam's reading of the texts. Similarly the handshake is an action with many meanings and cultural and historical contexts that both Shellam and Scott utilise in their work. In 1834 Ensign Dale portrayed the handshake between Indigenous people and Europeans at King George Sound in a beautiful sketch. This image is on the cover of Shellam's book, symbolising her overall approach to cast Aboriginal people as actively engaging with Europeans and quickly doing their own reading of words and behaviours of the newcomers. Having met the French for whom the handshake was accepted practice, some time before the English, who were beginning their acceptance of the handshake between gentlemen in the early nineteenth century, Aboriginal people of the region put out their hand on meeting the newcomers from the sea.

For Scott the handshake has a darker, less historically specific side, signaling Noongar confidence, lack of fear and the false friendship from Europeans that would turn sour within decades of these first encounters. This is an exciting story of the first years of European occupation and settlement, a longer view than Shellam's. It is told through the eyes of a boy, Bobby Wabalanginyi, who experiences the best of what Europeans might offer in the first few years of contact, 'appropriating cultural forms – language and songs, guns and boats', grasping opportunities in the European ships, working with the white men to capture whales, learning to read and write with kindly Europeans and growing estranged, alienated, but never bitter as his land and people change. He is guide, translator, worker, the quintessential cross-cultural figure. Scott inhabits his characters with warmth and empathy, revealing the personalities of the friendly frontier through the friendliest of characters. He lingers over words and feelings without becoming self-indulgent. It is a book that could be read aloud and performed for its bubbling words and rich dialogue.

Scott the novelist is not as constrained to a close representation of the documents as is Shellam. As he states in the author's note, his book is 'inspired' by history. It is the result of extensive documentary research, immersion in historic linguistic documents, and years of sitting with his extended Noongar family listening and repeating words until they felt right. Characters and events in the novel criss-cross

with those of the historical documents; elements of Mokare's world as described by Collet Barker, names from Dr Collie and exploration relationships between Edward Eyre and his guide. Scott takes readers into a world where Aboriginal histories are told through song, stories and poetry. Bobby Wabalanginyi embodies history, dancing the old dances and creating new ones like the Dead Man Dance of soldiers with guns and a white ochre cross on their chests, mimicking the 'quick walking soldier Killam with the twist to his torso and the bad arm' or 'Guvnor Spender, nose up, hands going up and down, patting heads'. Bobby dances and sings characters to life, bringing their spirit into his and his people's world. Bobby, like the historical figure Tommy King, a prominent Noongar man of nineteenth century Albany, becomes a 'favourite' of tourists and travellers, throwing a burning Kylie in exchange for a coin. In Scott's novel Bobby tells his history to whoever will listen, adding, 'We learned your words and songs and stories, and never knew you didn't want to hear ours'.

Both Scott and Shellam slow down the frontier to imagine its smallest elements. Scott plays with words, while Shellam revisits historical moments in different chapters, to show the multiplicity of forms that can arise out of historical texts when they are used carefully. Both Scott and Shellam illuminate the human dramas of this frontier world without malice or meanness of spirit. Both substantially add to our understanding of contact history as a nuanced process, where lots of things were going on at once, where Europeans are brought into contact with Aboriginal people who hold a long history and robust culture. They explore the edges of historical imagination in a way that will help to keep Australian history alive.

Reference

Mulvaney, John and Neville Green 1992, *Commandant of Solitude: the Journals of Captain Collet Barker, 1828 - 1831*, Melbourne University Press at the Miegunyah Press, Melbourne.

Mary Ann Jebb

The Australian National University

Belonging Together: Dealing with the Politics of Disenchantment in Australian Indigenous Policy by Patrick Sullivan, ix + 147pp, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2011, ISBN 9780855757809, \$39.95.

Belonging Together is an important book which attempts to provide an analysis, and identify a path forward, in Australian Indigenous affairs somewhere between the polarised opposites of a new assimilationism and rights-based self-determination. The question, as Sullivan puts it during the introduction, is:

How can we move towards a public policy philosophy in which Aboriginal and settler interests converge, without either perpetuating second class separate development in the name of self-determination or effacing Aboriginal differences? (pp. 1-2)

The background to this analysis is, of course, the widespread assertion of the failure of the self-determination policy, which dominated Indigenous affairs from the 1970s to the 1990s. Sullivan questions, but ultimately accepts, this diagnosis of policy failure.

In a sophisticated analysis of the notion of policy following Mosse, Sullivan notes that 'old policy is, by definition, wrong', while 'new policy is future oriented' and therefore 'does not have to demonstrate efficacy' (p. 87). He also notes that:

Changes in policy alter the terms of the discourse so that what was previously successful is now, by externally imposed definition, a failure, while the facts on the ground remain the same (p. 87).

Given this social constructionist approach to policy, Sullivan, like many, could rail against the changing discourse, but rather he accepts it as part of the 'self-referring' nature of government bureaucracy (p. 88). Sullivan clearly does accept that Indigenous development, at least in remote Australia, has not been optimal since the 1970s. But neither does he wish to enthusiastically support the neo-assimilationism that has in recent years become the polarised alternative policy prescription to self-determination. Instead Sullivan wants to develop what he calls a 'consolidated approach' to Indigenous affairs:

in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are seen as inextricably part of wider national administrative regimes and concerns, but which neither seeks to erase or enshrine cultural difference (p. 2).

The other descriptor which Sullivan uses for his preferred approach is 'intercultural', drawing on debates within the anthropology discipline. However, Sullivan is largely writing for a generalist readership and only devotes one chapter of seven to directly addressing his anthropological colleagues. The empirical heart of the book is an analysis of the major and continuing changes that have occurred in Australian Indigenous affairs administration since 2004, particularly at the Commonwealth level of government. With the abolition by the Howard Commonwealth Government of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander Commission in 2004, Sullivan sees Indigenous affairs administration entering a period of flux and uncertainty the likes of which has not been seen since the early 1970s. The product of that earlier period of flux and uncertainty was the Indigenous sector; a constellation of community-based Indigenous organisations supported and funded by government to deliver services to Indigenous people and also to develop Indigenous community authority, identity and leadership. Sullivan sees government, under the influence of the New Public Administration (NPM) movement, pulling back from this support for the Indigenous sector, particularly in its non-service-delivery roles. However, he argues persuasively and passionately that the sector needs to be seen as having ongoing value for the development of civil society among Indigenous Australians. He thus talks of the 'unacknowledged' role or contribution of the sector in modernising Indigenous experience, leadership and development, both in the recent past and into the future.

If Sullivan has a target for criticism in this book, it is the organisation and culture of modern government. One chapter focuses on accountability, another on bureaucracy and both are highly critical. Accountability within government is seen as currently too unidirectional, placing too much focus and emphasis on funding relationships. A case is made for 'continual reciprocal accountability' built on dialogue between government and community members through mechanisms such as citizen juries and surveys (p. 81). The culture of government bureaucracy is seen as inward looking and as having long vertical chains of command which isolate it from the lived reality of Indigenous people, its clients in Indigenous affairs; even when some of the bureaucracy's members are themselves Indigenous. Sullivan's prescription is to shorten these chains of bureaucratic command by regionalising much Indigenous affairs administration, giving it more discretion to work with the local and regional Indigenous sector and developing Indigenous involvement in local government. Though I have sympathy with this idea, Sullivan's contribution is I think just the beginning of a useful debate, rather than in any sense a well established argument. For example, Sullivan dismisses State and Territory governments, which have been increasingly drawn back into Indigenous affairs as a result of recent 'whole-of-government mainstreaming', yet he lauds the potential of local government. Why one type of regionalisation and shortening of chains of command is seen so negatively and the other so positively needs to be better argued and drawn out.

Sullivan does not entirely convince me in the prescriptive elements of his argument, nor even in some of his analytic elements. However, he does provide us with a conceptually sophisticated and an empirically informed account of recent developments in Australian Indigenous affairs which can at least get some better debates started about the way to move forward. Compared to much else that has been written on Indigenous affairs in recent years this is a 'must read' analysis, which does actually get beyond unhelpful, moralising polarities. Sullivan has both a deep knowledge and has thought long and hard about Indigenous affairs. *Belonging Together* is the valuable result.

Will Sanders

Exploring the Legacy of the 1948 Arnhem Land Expedition edited by Martin Thomas and Margo Neale, 471 pp, ANU E Press, Australian National University, Canberra, 2011, ISBN 9781921666445, \$39.95.

In 2009 'Barks, Birds and Billabongs', a symposium, was organised and hosted by the National Museum of Australia in Canberra to explore the historical consequences of 'The American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land' in 1948. The title of the book under review might more aptly refer to 'legacies' rather than 'legacy' even though the qualifying verb 'exploring' implies that its gifts are manifold. The book is based on a collection of papers presented at the symposium organised to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the 1948 expedition to Arnhem Land, and is itself a worthy legacy of the expedition. Discussion of the expedition as well as its results had already been well served by publications of two of the symposium's steering committee: a book about the expedition by Sally May and an article in this journal by Martin Thomas, which could also count as legacies. May and Thomas contributed chapters to the present book. In the prologue, the symposium steering committee, Sally May, Margo Neale, and Martin Thomas, say:

We hoped to encourage an understanding of the Expedition and its era, and we wanted to grapple with the many facets of its legacy. Some of these – such as the preservation of wonderful paintings and artefacts – are a source of wonder and pleasure for contemporary Arnhem Landers. Others – such as the removal of human remains – have caused argument and grief. These and many other issues were put on the agenda because we believed that a continuation of the original transnational and cross-cultural conversation was urgently required. This book is a continuation of that dialogue, involving 24 of the scholars who contributed to the original conversation (p. xii).

The 1948 expedition received a great deal of publicity at the time and it is salutary to consider the reasons for the ensuing diminution of interest in it and its results despite the fact that a number of intervening anniversary celebrations had been occasions for the participants to engage in nostalgic recollections of the expedition as adventure. The 60th was intended to be the occasion for analysis of its historical and scientific significance as well as celebration; as Thomas puts it (p. 26), the organisers and the contributors pursued 'the tripartite objective of celebrating, evaluating and collaborating' and achieved a 'truly seismic distinction between public events that was Barks, Birds & Billabongs in 2009 and the private anniversaries of previous years'. Thomas attributes the seismic distinction 'to the substantial representation from the main Aboriginal communities visited by the Expedition'. Their participation was surely an indication of one reason for the diminution of interest in the expedition itself: 'much of what it pioneered became commonplace' (Thomas 2010: 164). In the ensuing years as research was conducted in Arnhem Land it increasingly involved the active collaboration

of local Aboriginal people and their increasing assertion of ownership of research results. The symposium itself was both indicator and harbinger of that collaboration and ownership claim.

The book's collection begins with an overview of the 'Expedition as Time Capsule: Introducing the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land' (Thomas pp. 1–32), and the book's editors have arranged the following chapters by identifying common themes of the papers presented at the symposium, while acknowledging that the categories are overlapping: eight chapters focus on 'Engagement with Australian Cultures', six on 'Collectors and Collections', and five on 'Aboriginal Engagement with the Expedition'. The Time Capsule chapter includes the story of the expedition's collaboration between two of the United States' most prestigious research institutions (the National Geographic Society and the Smithsonian Institution) and the Australian government and its purpose in contemporary context. Its objective was not geographic exploration but 'the frontier of knowledge that members of the Expedition hoped to penetrate ... in the aftermath of the World War II [it was] emblematic of broader transformations in Australia and beyond' (Thomas 2010: 143):

In terms of diplomatic objectives, it reflected the desire of Ben Chifley's Labor Government, then in its last days, to shore up the relationship with the United States through an overt display of collaboration between the two nations. Widely reported in the press, and transmitted to the world through film, radio and print media, this 'friendly mission' was a public face to behind-the-scenes negotiations that would shape the trans-Pacific relationship for the remainder of the twentieth century.

Kim Beazley (pp. 55–72) argues that the pro-American sentiment of Australia's major political parties is indicated by the domestic support for the expedition as they adjust to a post-war climate of decolonisation and the demise of Britain as a global power. In addition, as Thomas argues (2010: 143), the United States 'had a long history of using cultural, scientific, and educational programs to pursue its strategic and political interests in foreign nations'.

Although after the Second World War the idea of an expedition through Arnhem Land was already anachronistic (and Thomas says that by the time the final volume of the four-volume report of the *Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land* (1956–64) was published, 'the whole project had attained something of a sepia hue' (p. 2)), the editors of the book 'propose that the fusion of nineteenth and twentieth-century modes of thinking greatly adds to the interest, complexity and ultimate significance of this event'.

Part One of the book 'positions the Expedition narrative in the context of Western structures, institutions and field of knowledge ... making a compelling argument about the interest of Westerners in Australia's Aboriginal cultures, and how the engagements resulting from that interest affected modernity in the post-war era' (p. 27). South Australian Charles Mountford was the leader of the 17-member Expedition and American archaeologist Frank Setzler was deputy leader; two

members were volunteers (one was the Territory character Bill Harney); 12 were Australians and five were Americans, one was female (not counting the leader's wife). The participants represented a mix of professional scientists and writer-photographers. Margaret McArthur was a professional scientist and although Bessie Mountford's presence was ostensibly that of wife and her contributions were under-recognised because 'traditionally deemed women's labour'. She was a former public servant and skilled typist and bookkeeper, and the 'meticulous Expedition archives, recording everything from emergencies to birthday greetings, were largely her doing' (Thomas 2010: 153).

Philip Jones (pp. 33–54) describes Mountford's background including his participation in Board of Anthropological Research expeditions that went north from Adelaide in the 1930s which introduced him to expedition experience. This was his introduction to the living cultures of Aboriginal art that preoccupied him for the rest of his life. Jones' account of the expedition's difficulties is more sympathetic to Mountford than to others. As noted, Kim Beazley (pp. 55–72) describes the political setting of the Expedition and includes the remarkable and highly confessional correspondence between Calwell, Minister in the Chifley Government and major supporter of the Expedition, and Setzler, which lasted long after the cold war. Mark Collins Jenkins (pp. 73–86), formerly a historian for the National Geographic Society, gives a portrait of Harrison Howell Walker, the Expedition's chief photographer, something of the *National Geographic* gentleman image and the *National Geographic*'s golden age. Tony MacGregor (pp. 87–112) provides an 'evaluation of Colin Simpson as a broadcaster and writer, whose world view was significantly altered by his stay in Arnhem Land'. Jon Altman's (pp. 113–134) description of the transformations in hunter-gatherer subsistence from the time of Margaret McArthur's study at Fish River in 1948 to his own on the Mann River in 2009 exemplifies the Expedition's effects on the discipline of anthropology: Margaret McArthur's paper 'The Food Quest and the Time Factor' published in Volume 2 of the records, was perhaps the Expedition's most enduring impact on anthropological theory when it was taken up by Marshall Sahlins to support his notion of the 'original affluent society'. The Expedition's effect on the discipline of archaeology is shown by Clarke and Frederickson (pp. 135–156) as they explain how the Expedition's legacy informed McCarthy's approach to fieldwork over a sustained period. Lynne McCarthy's (pp. 157–169) interview of Expedition botanist Raymond Specht indicates the significance of the developing ecological approach of botanists. Sally May's (pp. 171–190) chapter, the last of the first section, summarises the Expedition's origins, bases, and activities.

The second part of the book is on collectors and their collections, which range from archival films and papers through baskets and fibre objects, string figures, botanical specimens, and fish. Collection of bark paintings was a major concern of Mountford and archaeologist Expedition member Fred McCarthy and is dealt with *passim*. Robyn McKenzie (pp. 191–212) focuses on the remarkable string figures that McCarthy collected at Yirrkala, by 'his estimate one-fifth of all "known" string figures in the world at the time' (p. 191), and includes comparisons

based on her own research on string figures at Yirrkala in 2009. Louise Hamby (pp. 213–239) writes on baskets and other fibre objects as revealing ‘histories of their makers and their uses’. She observes that ‘the collected items represented a slice of life from a material culture point of view. They are representative of the materials available to their makers in 1948, which include fabric and wool, not just bark fibre and pandanus’ (p. 237). Joshua Harris (pp. 239–251) reports on the existence and recent curation of the films that Howell Walker took during 1948, ‘a modern-day success story in film archiving’ (p. 250). Denise Chapman and Suzy Russell (pp. 253–254) report on Mountford’s papers before, during and after the Expedition contained in the The Mountford-Sheard Collection of the State Library of South Australia. Gifford Hubbs Miller and Robert Charles Cashner (pp. 271–282) describe the tenacious collecting of Robert Rush Miller, who gathered more than 30,000 fish specimens. Margo Daly (pp. 283–310) titles her edited oral history of Raymond Specht ‘An Insider’s Perspective’; it contains Specht’s recall of his training and early background and his observations of members of the Expedition and interactions with local Aboriginal people as well as descriptions of his collecting and classifying procedures.

The third part of the book is on Aboriginal engagements with the Expedition, and focuses on the Expedition’s effects on the communities it visited. Bruce Birch (pp. 312–336), a linguist, provides an intriguing account of an ‘American clever man’ recorded in Iwaidja, which was without doubt inspired by David Johnson, the Smithsonian mammologist who walked from Cape Don to Oenpelli without a guide. Ian McIntosh (pp. 337–354) cites Ronald Berndt quoting Burramarra, a Yolngu clan leader at Elcho Island, as authority for the role of screening Expedition film at Elcho Island on the subsequent public display of sacred objects that came to be known in the anthropological literature as an adjustment movement (Berndt 1962). From there McIntosh segues to accounts that Burramarra gave him of Bayini, said to be pre-Maccassan visitors to north-eastern Arnhem Land. Linda Barwick and Allan Marett (pp. 355–376) use fine-grained analyses of Simpson’s song recordings from Oenpelli and Delissaville to illustrate how people were coping with the new social environments of missions and pastoral stations, where many were dislocated from ancestral country. The result of innovation and collaboration between people from a number of different language groups provided connections to traditional country that were preserved in song, while ‘ongoing attachments to their current residence were also fostered’ (p. 29). Martin Thomas (pp. 377–402) interviewed Gerald Blitner, the only living Aboriginal person who had a direct involvement with the Expedition, a few months before he died. Thomas refers to Blitner’s ‘penetrating observations of the Expedition’ and ‘traces in his life story how encounters with Fred Gray, Mountford and other outsiders helped in the development of a political style that empowered him in his later negotiations with the Balanda world’. Murray Garde’s (pp. 403–422) study of the Expedition’s recording of the Wubarr, a male initiation rite indigenous to Western Arnhem Land, echoes Blitner’s concerns about ‘the interface of the esoteric world of Aboriginal religion and the putatively open culture of scientific investigation’. Garde describes the offence caused by screenings of Expedition films, as happened at Gunblanya

before a mixed audience without prior consultation. But he also paints a more sanguine picture of the Expedition's documentation of culturally restricted material when it is repatriated in a consultative manner.

Margo Neale (pp. 423–436) has titled the Epilogue, 'Sifting the Silence', a reference to the symposium's aim to encourage participation by members of communities that had been visited by the Expedition:

The centrality of Indigenous voices ... during this symposium provided a partial ... rectification of the marginalisation of Indigenous perspectives six decades ago ... Already collections from the Arnhem Land Expedition were being rediscovered: film footage at the Smithsonian Institution; painting on paper at the State Library of South Australia archived among manuscripts; orphaned objects at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra; as well as Indigenous accounts of the Expedition, previously unheard outside the community (p. 425).

Concerning the human subjects of the Expedition's study, she says that they or their descendants

have now become beneficiaries of it in ways that were explored at the symposium. With the rise of knowledge centres in Arnhem Land communities, there has been a transfer of knowledge to the people whose culture and environment were the subjects of study. Images of objects collected in 1948 were received – not as relics of the past, but in a way that saw their reanimation as part of a continuing and changing contemporary culture. Attitudinal changes in research protocols, in social context, in the nature of history telling, and issue of who owns the past, were re-examined (p. 425).

Some 25 Arnhem Landers, representing each of the Expedition's major sites, participated in the symposium and conducted panels dealing with repatriation. It was their decision to show footage of Setzler's collection of human remains from burial sites at Arrkuluk in Western Arnhem Land so that people at the symposium could see what actually happened and understand Aboriginal people's distress and their need to have their old people returned to country (p. 425).

Nearly all the bones were exported to the United States, where they were accessioned into the collection of the Smithsonian's US National Museum. Bone collecting was never mooted in the build-up to the Expedition, although an agreement was reached that two-thirds of all specimens collected should remain in Australia. In 2008, the Smithsonian returned this proportion of its holdings of Arnhem Land human remains, and, in July 2010, in the wake of the Barks, Birds & Billabongs symposium, the rest of the human remains were released to three traditional owners from Arnhem Land (pp. 21–22).

References

Berndt, Ronald M 1962, *An Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land*, Mouton, Paris.

May, Sally K 2009, *Collecting Cultures: Myth, Politics, and Collaboration in the 1948 Arnhem Land Expedition*, AltaMira Press, Lanham, Maryland.

Thomas, Martin 2010, 'A short history of the Arnhem Land Expedition', *Aboriginal History* 34: 143–170.

Nancy Williams

University of Queensland