
Burton Stein’s *A History of India* covers an immense period of time - from 70,000 BC to the present day. It is a vibrant work that makes substantial use of knowledge gained in the disciplines of archaeology, geography, geology, anthropology, theology, and literature to provide a broad perspective of the sub-continent that examines the history of the geographic area almost as much as the people who have inhabited it.

*A History of India* is in a sense a deeply self-contradictory book. On the one hand, it subscribes to a ‘big-picture’ view of history that has come under intense and sustained criticism in recent decades. Stein focuses more on political and military developments than on social systems in the first half: kings, empires, wars, and the interests of ruling elites are very much core material. Little attempt is made to describe how the majority of the population lived, worked, or worshipped.

On the other hand, however, Stein does not ignore or plead the irrelevance of perspectives that he does not actively pursue. In his introduction he is at pains to consider the significance of various historiographical points of view, including social history and the impact of gender-conscious perspectives. Stein’s strength lies in acknowledging the values underlying the European concepts which shape academic historical studies and in debating their applicability to the study of India. He shows that there are many instances where Western points of view are not applicable to developing an understanding of Indian civilisation, or where these principles cannot accurately convey the characteristics of its social systems.

For example, Stein talks of the difficulty of transcribing European models of social and political systems onto ancient and medieval Indian cultures. He points out that at no time in the pre-modern world did India exist as a unified state, or even as a kind of loose set of states joined by religious or linguistic norms, such as in feudal Western Europe during the middle ages. Instead, Stein emphasises the need to view India in its various historical incarnations as a unique social, political, and religious environment. Equally, he is averse to simply applying the concept of the foreign ‘Other’ upon all things Indian, as other Western scholars have done in the past. What emerges from this study is a view of a geographical area commonly known as India which has witnessed immense social and political changes.

One of the most fascinating areas covered by Stein is the way in which successive foreign invaders and explorers, including Alexander the Great,
the Mongols, and more recently the Western European colonialists, have been assimilated into Indian civilisation. Of particular importance here is the effect of Islam in India, and Stein traces its introduction and impact of the sub-continent more successfully than he explains India’s indigenous religious traditions. Other facets of Indian culture are also not considered in any depth. One of the most complex concepts to grasp is structure of the caste system. Unfortunately, Stein covers neither its origins nor its historical and modern social implications adequately.

The second half of *A History of India* is more cohesive and is comparatively more successful. Stein’s description of the rise of the British East India Company is intriguing. The company had developed by the start of the nineteenth century into an impressive international enterprise. Clear comparisons can be drawn between it and the multi-national companies of the late twentieth century. As with concerns today about the political and economic power of such companies, the way in which the East India Company ruled India is described as pernicious.

The circumstances of company rule encouraged the development of unique legal and political institutions. To give an example, during the 1830s in India slavery was condoned while the Emancipation Act of 1833 freed Britain’s slaves in the West Indies and other colonies. It is perhaps a lesser irony that the British did not attempt to systematically develop Christianity in its territories through the use of missionaries during this time. Stein notes that the British initially prohibited only those Indian social customs they found most unnecessary, such as female infanticide, while allowing many others to continue. Slavery was an established facet of Indian society, and the British argued (for a time) that it was not their responsibility to overthrow it.

Stein is successful also in bringing to life the tumultuous events of the twentieth century in India. He does so with a measured voice that does not follow the familiar pattern of elevating Gandhi to the exclusion of other political leaders in the events leading towards independence. Late in the text Stein returns to environmental concerns, and notes how the effects of industrialisation and population explosion have altered the Indian landscape.

*A History of India* is ideal as an undergraduate text or an introduction for the novice reader. It is fascinating to read and advances a perspective that focuses substantially on the environmental impact of humanity. It will not satisfy more advanced scholars with the detail of its discussion, but it does provide the opportunity to reconsider the nature of Western historical methods, and the prevailing attitudes of Western scholars to the religiously, socially, and politically pluralistic sub-continent.

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*The Lady in Medieval England 1000-1500* is a book with a promising title in terms of the greater specificity current in the historiography of medieval women, with its suggestion of an historically and socially specific understanding of a position and term often subject to generalisation across both time and space. Although Coss presents much interesting material about the lives and actions of a number of English ‘ladies’, unfortunately he does not add much to greater understanding of the ‘lady’ as a social construct, and hence a person subject to various roles and definitions within different societies. Rather, he relies on long- held assumptions about the ‘lady’ to come to very general conclusions.

In the introduction to his book, he defines his project in terms of a history of social relations. He draws a distinction between the study of ‘social relations’ and that of gender history. He highlights the way in which the study of gender has, as he perceives it, tended to efface the women that its initial premise was to discover or uncover by reducing them to manifestations of categorical definition rather than allowing them movement as agents within society. He seeks to ‘attempt to counteract this tendency by placing the “lived experience” of ladies at the centre of the stage. Gender constructions are significant only as societal expectations’ (p.3).

He also seeks to ‘correct’ the desire - again, as he sees it - of historians of gender to discover a ‘feminine space’ in which the socially constrained woman might gain the agency denied her in the public realm. His argument is that any medieval society, by its necessary inclusion of women, necessarily is, in part at least, a feminine space in which the actions of medieval women, and hence ‘ladies’, can be read. Coss then frames his project in terms of discovering the ‘real’ lady, whose past has been overdetermined in the present, by gender historians.

Eschewing the theoretical concept of gender on the grounds that ‘such stereotypes tend to be either based upon normative and paradigmatic models produced within society, which may be partial and are certainly ideological, or derived from psychoanalysis … which is essentially ahistorical’ (p.3). He nonetheless chooses to retain the concept of patriarchy, ‘the institutionalisation and idealisation of male dominance’, as that of misogyny, for what would appear to be reason of its historical validity. Patriarchy, he comments, was a ‘situation which arose historically - at the very dawn of civilisation, it would seem - and which has persisted through time, but which is nevertheless subject to change in both form and intensity’ (p.4). Whilst sympathetic to Coss’ objection to the loss of the individual lives and agency of medieval woman within the confines of modern understandings of gender, and similarly to the potentially ahistorical and reductive application of psychoanalytic theory, I nonetheless found it
difficult to imagine how misogyny or patriarchy might operate in a gender vacuum. Does not the function of such discourse rely, in part at least, on the maintenance of certain ‘social expectations’? Coss neat but not entirely convincing separation between ‘reality’ and ‘social expectation’ signals problems with his approach that dog his argument throughout the book.

The first question this problem raises is how Coss will answer the questions that he poses in his introduction. Of some questions, he is certain to find answers with his approach: that of the participation of women, and cohabitation of women and men, within the culture of gentility. An answer to this question requires only the perception of women and some indication of their interaction with men. His primary objective, however, seems more difficult to dissociate from the concept of gender. He writes that he wants to, ‘seek the meaning that contemporaries attached to the term “gentilwoman”’ and to discover how the lady was ‘perceived within secular society, that is to say both by herself and by her male counterparts’ (p.3). These questions rely on a generalisation that must in some way entail considerations about the role, function and meaning of women in society given by that society - in short, on ‘social expectation’. Such questions will not receive answers simply by considering social relations alone, but also require the examination of social expectations - the gauge against which confirmation to the term ‘gentilwoman’ (and any ‘real’ actions performed by her) - even if the term is in some ways ambiguous - must be measured.

Unfortunately, this question of the meaning of ‘gentilwoman’ or ‘lady’ is one that Coss neither articulates, nor answers, clearly. From Coss’ somewhat anti-theoretical introduction we move into the book without much understanding of what Coss himself means by ‘lady’, and hence have little information to guide us as he goes to apply this term to a variety of medieval women.

The book appears at first to present itself in terms of the lady in process, beginning with a chapter on ‘The Origins of the English Lady’. This chapter focuses on high status women from Anglo-Saxon England and into the twelfth century. The thrust of this chapter is that a small number of women were holding and administering land in this period, and would appear to continue to have done so despite the more gender focussed and structural approach to inheritance and land acquisition with the onset of the twelfth century. He finds the lady difficult to define, but sees her as the wife of a nobleman whose status - if not agency - derived from him. While his examples of active women are interesting in themselves, he does little towards the advancement of his thesis in terms of the questions he asked in the introduction. Indeed, his conclusion that the ‘status of the lady was high, but it was heavily bound up with the status of men’ (p.35) does little to enlighten us about the realities or position of the noblewoman in this period. His conclusion to ‘Gentility and Social Position’ has similar effects, where he writes: ‘Altogether, the ladies played a major role in sustaining and transmitting gentility.’ (p.72)
Rather than following on chronologically, Coss opts for four chapters that consider the period of 1000-1500 as a whole, ‘Gentility and Social Position’, ‘Visual Representation and Affective Relations’, ‘Lady Versus Lord: Antagonistic Relations’ and ‘Literature, Gender and Ideology’. The reasoning behind these divisions is never clear and often material overlaps or seems to belong in a different chapter. An example of this is the lengthy discussion on seals in the chapter on ‘gentility’, which begs the reader to ask why they are not ‘visual representations’ and why the two are seen as distinct in any case. Within the three former chapters Coss again finds many interesting examples of women acting powerfully within a potentially oppressive environment. He recounts examples of women acquiring and disposing of property, representing themselves on seals, participating in the upbringing of children, and arranging marriages for themselves and others. He also cites several fascinating cases where, it would appear, love broke down and led to the worst of all possible outcomes in murder. In each of these instances Coss is keen to retain his focus on the individual ‘lady’ - still not, however, clearly defined - as a member of society rather than one who functions within a special social sphere, an idea that he later defines as ‘cultural apartheid’ (p.171).

The problem with all of these chapters is that the focus on specific examples of agency with little consideration of the ‘gender politics’ or ideology in action leads to the construction of an unblemished landscape upon which the medieval English lady acts. She is within her society, but seemingly exists and acts without much attention to its specific beliefs about the role of the lady. The argument he adopts at the beginning of the chapter ‘Literature, Gender and Ideology’ gives some explanation as to this approach. He suggests, that the lady herself changed little over the five-hundred-year period, and agrees that:

There was no such thing as the lady so far as theory went, no formulated ideal for the lady as such, distinguished from the gentleman or from any other woman ... . The lady, shall we venture to say, turns out to be merely a wife. (p.150)

This approach led this reader to question how, if Coss agrees with such an idea, he plans to answer his initial questions of discovering the meaning of the lady, and even further, to beg the question (yet again) of whom it is that he considers. How did Coss decide on the ‘ladies’ who would form the focus of his investigation? In an attempt not to limit the actions of the ‘ladies’ through ahistorical gender constructions, he nonetheless reveals his own, often seemingly essentialist, notions about the motivations and desires of medieval women. For example, he adopts not uncommon but highly contentious idea that women’s role in romances and fin’amor reflects a real participation in elite culture, even referring to them as ‘partners in
Similarly, he later states, despite his acknowledgment of a mixed audience, that ‘romance has particular association with women ... romance is about love and the expression of human feeling’ (pp.164-165). He makes an even more striking assimilation between the ‘real’ lady and the text in his comment about an effigy of which he states:

> The overall effect is charming and graceful. She appears personally at rest. Moreover, she seems socially comfortable, with her husband’s arms displayed proudly on her body. (p.78)

At points such as these the reader must begin to doubt the validity of some of Coss’ conclusions, and consider just how ‘real’ they might be.

To my mind the most problematic part of Coss’ examination of the lady was in his chapter ‘Literature, Gender and Ideology’. In this chapter he was quick to assimilate (despite his former desire not to do so) the literary constructs that ‘constitute social identities’ (p.167) - and hence sound alarming like the ‘societal expectations’ he sought to avoid - into the ‘real’ life of English ladies. The value he attributes to textual sources in this chapter as both influence on female contemporaries of the authors he cites, and as indicators of ‘reality’ for historians now seems incongruous with his earlier approach, and leads us again to wonder about his chapter divisions, as much of the material cited here would be useful in considering some of the ‘real’ ladies considered in other chapters. His assumptions about the ‘real’ value of such material becomes disturbing at times, however, as he approaches them in the same unquestioning way as he did much of his ‘factual’ material. His attribution of an authentic female voice to Chaucer’s Wife of Bath, despite her acknowledged construction by and tendency to speak for men was particularly galling given the agency denied to ‘real’ women named in the text (p.22). For example, Juliana Murdock’s conviction for murder is attributed not to her own characteristics, but to Coss’ assumption that: ‘It seems highly likely that Juliana Murdock was a sexually bewitching woman, and this may well have influenced opinion against her.’ (p.138)

In his attempts to assimilate the medieval English lady into, rather than isolate her from, her society, he generalises her anew, as an ahistorical figure of agency who acts apart from, rather than in some meaningful way with or against the ‘social expectations’ of her society. His tendency to leave the actions of these women untouched by the taint of ‘gender’ prevents him from making the generalisations necessary to the accomplishment of his goals as set by the questions he posed in his introduction. His only attempt at justifying his divergence from the ‘social expectations’ which, despite his theoretical approach, nonetheless do crop up in his argument is one that again, seems to rely on the capacity of people to act outside the conventions of their society.
Real women in real situations, and no doubt many men, ignored the excesses of misogynistic doctrine but were none the less influenced by the weight of opinion that gave women, formally at least, a subsidiary role. For most people then, as now, their lives were not ones of perpetual conflict, even latent conflict, but of accommodation within institutional and ideological parameters.

As a book that informs about the activities of medieval ‘ladies’ and the various social realms that they could enter and in which they could participate, this book is a success. It will, however, be a disappointment to those who seek to understand the lady as socially constructed and historically specific. This book also stands as a warning against the dangers of a modern, and market-based, historiography. This book is, as Coss indicates in his introduction, a companion to a volume on the knight in the medieval period. This generalised and ahistorical approach - ahistorical in the sense that it assumes that such binaries simply exist and that subjects such as ‘knight’ and ‘lady’ will be directly comparable and furnish the same kinds of study - is unhelpful and even detrimental in an area that already suffers from problems of theory and approach.

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*Archeology of Aboriginal Australians* is a book suited to the lazy researcher or someone without access to inter-library loans. All be it that it contains newly published material as section breakers. A better title might have been ‘my mates and I said’ or ‘articles I have enjoyed’. For this book is primarily a collection of previously published material accompanied by occasional added comment.

Tim Murray, as editor, attempts to present for the reader an image of how archaeology has progressed through the decades. I am not convinced that he achieves this stated aim, partly due to the limited selection of republished papers. Murray writes that the discipline of archaeology has changed from that of academics working in isolation with many amateurs to a situation of Aboriginal and bureaucratic control (p.2). The included papers neither substantiate this nor explain the changing circumstances. On reading Murray’s introductory piece I am left with the impression that earlier practitioners of archaeology failed us; they neither informed us correctly nor did they do their archaeology properly. This certainly was not the case, so I remain pondering on Murray’s intent. Somehow Murray sees that archaeology in Australia has progressed without an adequate theoretical framework. Of theory and appropriate methodology he states that ‘some of this has spilled over into the practice of Australian archaeology’
(p.2), but I think he ignores the underlying structure of much of the research conducted in Australia since 1960. It is disappointing that Murray does not himself identify the social and historical context that the archaeology of Aboriginal Australia existed within. Murray observes that method and interaction have changed from ‘cowboy archaeology’ to one that works within a wider social interaction and Aboriginal involvement. Again, none of the selected republished works deal with these important aspects.

In a book that purports to pattern the trend in the archaeology of Aboriginal Australia it is unfortunate that there is not a section covering the issue of Aboriginal involvement. Murray extends himself in justification for this absence, an effort that equally should have been applied to other social and theoretical facets of Australian archaeology that are absent from the book. Nevertheless, I do not accept the editor’s argument that inclusion on such matters could be construed as appropriation, tokenistic, misleading and non-representational. In addition, if this was so, then such a situation exists for all the other inclusions, for surely the papers included are tokens of the archaeology of Australia.

With any amalgam of available literature it is inevitable that people will disagree with the selection, I certainly do so. Nevertheless, Murray has attempted to provide the reader with a range of material that he hopes will ‘convey a sense of excitement and of the significance’ as well as show that there is not an agreed position of process to the research undertaken in Australia (pp.4-5). Unfortunately, in the particular grouping of republished papers these fall far short of this goal. In addition, the inclusion of single papers dealing with specific aspects of the archaeology of Australia also seems to defeat this notion.

It is not so much in the particular republished articles, but rather the specific section contributions that provide the insight and feeling to the differing aspects of archaeology as practiced and interpreted in Australia. This is the book’s one true value, but may have been better served by coming out as journal articles or as a book with more original contributors. One unfortunate aspect is that each of the specifically written offerings to this book appears to have been finalised well in advance of the book being published. Considering their important contribution to understanding the archaeological process and to their placing the other papers in context, this time-lag and associated lack of reference to the recent debates lessen not only their individual contribution but also the overall usefulness of the book.

In the first of the contributions, J. Allen provides an interesting introspection on the history of chronology and its context with archaeological investigations. It in part sets the focus on the three proceeding papers and provides for the student or those interested in the study of archaeology, a means of critical assessment of the grouped articles. The tenure of the three previously published papers is rather a comment on the age debate in terms of scientific technique and acceptable parameters than
on the timing of human colonisation of the continent. As a collection they are of interest but by no means present all views on this debate.

M.A. Smith provides a discussion of the possibilities of human colonisation of the greater Australian landmass (including New Guinea and Tasmania) as the introduction to the papers in third chapter. Contained in Smith’s introduction is a discussion on matters concerning various theories and colonising models. However, I am not certain that the inclusion of the articles by K. Kiernan et.al. (Chapter 3b), J. Allen et.al. (Chapter 3c) or M.A. Smith (Chapter 3d) contribute to the wider debate, rather they appear as re-runs of Jones’ ‘cowboy archaeology’.

In Chapter 4, Murray touches on a so-called ‘vertical reading of social evolution’ and apart from himself, Australian archaeologist misunderstood the Aboriginal cultural development and environmental adaptations that took place within Australia. His statements (pp.82-85) are a disservice to the contribution of archaeology and to the researchers that have looked into the human history of this continent. A reading of Murray’s contribution at the start of Chapter 4, leaves you with the impression that until recently Australia was a land of bumbling archaeologists misunderstanding the real nature of Aboriginal occupation of the continent. The situation is more a reflection of the increasing amount of data and field areas that have become available in recent years, rather than an intellectual upgrade of certain archaeologists. The proceeding article by J. Allen (Chapter 4a) continues this theme and is an interesting synthesis of current (1993) Pleistocene data from New Guinea, other Melanesian islands and Tasmania. However, Jones’ article (Chapter 4b), originally published in 1979, some 14 years prior to Allan’s, tends to belie Murray’s and Allan’s statements.

Unfortunately I find the inclusion of C. Williamson and her piece on the intensification debate not so informative as some of the other contributions nor does it contextualise the selected republished papers. It is very much a personalised view and less a critical assessment of the prehistoric situation during the Holocene. I am unconvinced that the selected papers within this chapter are appropriate. Certainly N. Yoffee’s paper (Chapter 5b), originally published in association with several other scholars, is not a stand-alone paper and certainly the writing style does not enhance its selection.

The first few chapters, with their associated themes, at least provided an avenue into the progression and differing avenues of archaeological research. Why include single subject articles in the rest of the book is unclear, this is at odds with the stated objectives of the book and the contributions certainly are not ‘big picture matters’ (p.5). Nevertheless, P. Hiscock’s contribution does present a useful synopsis of the historical approaches to stone artefact typology and trends in research.

I do not consider that the selection of a majority of the papers does credit to either the fullness of studies within Australia or does justice to including them in one publication. It is interesting that Tasmanian
archaeology publications are well featured in this edited book. Possibly this is a reflection of La Trobe University and the department’s research interests, for I cannot believe that it is Tasmanian archaeology that has the answers for us all.

There are some other aspects that make this publication irritating. The book would have been better served by including the publication date at the commencement of each republished article. Cross-referencing with the provided bibliography and acknowledgment does not help, for this reveals inconsistencies and errors. Considering Murray’s statement that one of the intentions of the book was to provide an impression of how archaeology in Australia has progressed, this lack of chronological identifiers is disappointing. It would seem logical that the order of publications needed to be sequential with original publication date, for whatever reason the editor did not deem this necessary.

This collection of republished papers and the contribution of the introductory sections deal more with the prehistory of Aboriginal Australia than does it with the practice of archaeology. One wonders is the choice of title more a reflection of current social debate over the term prehistory than the topic itself. It is just one more aspect of this book that leaves me with a sense of dissatisfaction.

After reading the book I am left with the impression of ‘so what!’ I do not have a better feel for the archaeology of Aboriginal Australia, a greater understanding of the complexity of the academic debate nor do I feel that the selection of authored introductions or republished papers provide the knowledge that Murray so expansively wanted the reader to gain. My recommendation to anyone who is really interested in Australian archaeology is to go and read all you can, there is no short-cut to knowledge and understanding.

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Leon Hunt’s *British Low Culture* provides the reader with a wonderfully self conscious example of a cultural studies intervention bursting with sex, humour and recreational media consumption set against a theoretical background of high and low culture in eternal conflict and all contained in a slim, vibrantly produced volume. What could possibly go wrong? Inevitably, perhaps, given the closeness of the author to the source material the writerly present gradually dominates over the intended referent, or at least disturbs commonly held understandings about this relationship.

Hunt sets out on an exploration of the ‘low’ media constructions (or ‘generic artefacts’) of 1970’s Britain. Hunt’s textual vision of Britain’s 1970s
‘low’ culture is limited to a specific array of media productions, namely texts rejected by respectable ‘high’ cultural arbiters (and contemporary academics) as juvenile at best - but (significantly for Hunt) always popular. Importantly these were also the texts of the 1970s British cultural ‘crisis’ largely overlooked by Stuart Hall, Stanley Cohen and others of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies – scholars who function both as Hunt’s theoretical ancestors and, being representative of 1970s theory, ostensible subjects of analysis.

Ranging across texts (or perhaps more appropriately drawing inspiration from texts) as varied as newspapers, television, film, fiction, magazines, record sleeve notes, song lyrics, 1990s travel writing, Hunt arranges chapters somewhat arbitrarily around television comedy, masculinity’s, youth sub-cultural fiction, sexploitation/pornography and horror, postulating the 1970s as a period of cultural ‘crisis’ in Britain. The method of construction chosen by Hunt deserves to be questioned as the units of analysis used to build argument vary widely and often lead to confusion. At times Hunt is wittily leading the reader through the minutiae of individual television programs or films and at others proposing complex thematic argument. One begins to get comfortable with some excellent popular cultural criticism only to be drawn, often extremely uncomfortably, into accepting historical/cultural argument which has a habit of sneaking quietly into the conversation with the reader.

Indeed Hunt’s essays do contain some fine media criticism – the ideological supports and thematic structure of media products and their administrative milieu are expertly revealed but as is often the case with similar cultural studies analysis the wider social/cultural significance or influence of these media products are not convincingly tracked. Conclusions are drawn too easily about what media texts ‘say’ about the time in which they were produced without clear justification.

One example of this tendency lies in Hunt’s suggestion that ‘1970s popular culture often seems to display an optimism at odds with this impending chaos, a sense of not noticing that the 1960s were over’ (p.19). In this example of problematic teleology Hunt attempts to chart a temporal movement exhibited in popular culture from the swinging 1960s to Thatcher without sufficient explanation as to how the creators of popular cultural products could have been in a position to imagine the impending closure of the ‘permissive populism’ of the 1970s. Hunt is unfortunately at his weakest in articulating clear and significant relationships between the substance of his chosen texts, from which he seeks answers about 1970s political and cultural life, and social and political life in Britain in the 1970s.

Hunt promises early in his book ‘intriguing insights into the sexual and political culture of the period and how it was mediated through popular generic forms’ (p.33). The question which leaps immediately to mind, and is never quite answered, is whose culture? Hunt limits his comments on
this issue to brief discussions of the implicit racism of certain texts as well as to discussions of sexuality and gender (mainly by exploring character types, such as the ‘queer’ John Inman of Are You Being Served?). Greater involvement with the study of reception, circulation and use of media products by their audience would have been valuable, strengthening Hunt’s ability to safely draw conclusions about the complex sexual culture, rather than sexual ‘types’ exhibited in popular media, of the 1970s. With regard to this point Hunt’s use of television ratings as indices of social and ‘moral’ change are instructive. If this was Hunt’s purpose in quoting ratings figures his argument seems greatly problematical as the very ratings that were used to vet television shows and target them to audiences are being used as evidence of cultural change – a very ‘blunt’ analytical tool indeed.

Hunt’s decision to quote Bill Bryson (a popular mid-1990s travel writer resident in Britain) in introducing a discussion of race in 1970s television comedy is indicative of a more general difficulty in the approach Hunt takes to establishing relations between various media (p.50). Hunt lurches wildly between media types and contexts, in one case between the media discourses of 1970s British suburbia and contemporary popular music from British band Blur (pp.102-109). In doing so he assumes knowledge of the later as well as, and without justification, some form of significant relationship between the two. Two decades all but evaporate in the analysis. More importantly Hunt risks losing many readers at the beginning of a valuable discussion of 1970s suburban ‘reportage’.

Aimed squarely at a young (see popular) audience Hunt’s tone is conversational, attendant with the requisite quips (Roger Moore as an inferior James Bond, p.30) and the occasional carefree and cautiously anti-academic smutiness (the ‘pussy’ jokes of Mrs Slocombe, p.29). One wonders whether those in the academy unable to appreciate the youthful smut initially and not in a position subsequently to have either need or desire to pick up a magazine of the Loaded variety will not be alienated further by the book’s existence, or at the very least mystified as to its motivation. A fascination with the revival phenomenon (ever visible on television and in magazines such as Loaded et.al.) was clearly a major provocation for this book as the author openly states in the introduction. A fact which should immediately alert the reader to the book’s potential (perhaps more pristine than its stated goal) for revealing contemporary academic, and perhaps cultural, mores. It is certain that an increasing number of studies will ally themselves with Hunt in their acceptance of the ‘need to look to a BBC sitcom to see … radical change in Britain’s sexual culture’ (p.44). It is also certain, however, that in this case Hunt has asked both too much and too little of his, admittedly voluminous, texts.

Why are our prehistoric ancestors portrayed so often as dark skinned, hairy and club-wielding brutes? In this work, Stephanie Moser aims to highlight the cultural significance which underscores these depictions, in the process demonstrating how pictorial representations have ‘not simply been an inconsequential by-product of research’, but that ‘the imagery of the past has made its own contribution to defining ancient humanity’ (p.169). She does so convincingly in a work which is beautifully and lavishly illustrated with both black-and-white and colour plates.

Moser begins by examining Greek and Roman mythological visions of the past, emphasising how key icons, such as nakedness, hairiness and club-wielding, communicated primitiveness and the non-civilised existence of people beyond the Greek and Roman world. Moser shows how many of these same icons were incorporated into medieval and early modern religious representations of non-Christian peoples, inherently implying they lived in a primitive and non-civilised state. In the seventeenth century, antiquarians emphasised the primitivism of other cultures outside Europe. They incorporated features of ethnographic research in the New World colonies, such as tribal body painting which was seen in portrayals of American Indians, into their depictions of ancient European ancestors. With the nineteenth century, another generation of artists drew inherently upon the iconographic traditions of prehistoric representation to present new scientific theories and archaeological discoveries of human ancestry. Adding increasing detail, these artists saw their depictions as scientific representations rather then artistic impressions.

Moser asks why, in *Prehistoric Man*, published in 1960, did Zdenek Burian depict a Neanderthal family group as dark-skinned and club-wielding when there was no evidence of a club on the European archaeological site? Why should our European ancestors have been darker-skinned than Europeans today (p.163)? Burian was, probably unconsciously, drawing on iconographical traditions of prehistory which conflated geographical, racial, cultural and religious differences with depth of time. Moser argues compellingly that images did (and do) not only reflect scientific ideas, but also construct them from other contexts in a familiar and accessible way. Furthermore, she draws attention to the worrisome way in which images were sometimes re-used in different contexts despite revisions to the theoretical framework of prehistorical archaeology.

The work is marred by some editorial faults, which detract from the scholarly research. There are some poorly constructed sentences such as ‘two naked warriors standing naked alongside a tree’ (p.87) and occasional omission of words or letters: ‘Pictorial elements soon acquired an iconic status and pictures looked wrong if they [did] not include them.’ (p.106),
and: ‘This display constituted a[n] even greater contribution ... ’ (p.157)

There are also some errors of references in foreign languages. Fernand Cormon’s 1883 representation is referred to as *Le retour e la chasse à l’ours à l’age de la pierre polie* (The Return from the Bear Hunt in the Age of Polished Stone) (p.150). This should surely read *Le Retour de la chasse à l’âge de la pierre polie*. At least one foreign work is referenced inconsistently. Louis Figuier’s 1870 book *L’Homme primitif* (as per Bibliothèque Nationale catalogue spelling) is referred to as *L’homme Primitif* (p.125), then as *L’homme primitif* (p.126) and later, as *Primitive Man* (p.130).

I had another quibble with a rather unexamined area of cultural construction: that of gender constructions in the images. Clive Gamble’s foreword draws attention to the gendering of visual constructions of the past, observing that the 1987 publication *Early Humans: A Prehistoric World* contained 47 illustrations of men, 9 of females and 6 of children (p.xiv). He refers to contemporary research, some by Moser herself, which examines the active and foregrounded roles played by men in depictions of the past, in comparison to the background, passive images of women: representations of a ‘natural’ division of labour between men and women which there is no archaeological evidence to support. Sadly, this area of study was rarely followed up in the main text, except in the final chapter *Popular Presentations* (a chapter in which Moser makes little attempt to explain in what sense the visual representations are popular). Although Gamble claims that it has been ‘thoroughly examined’, these gendered constructions ought to be given at least equal attention to the racial and religious biases in the images.

In sum, Moser’s work has implications far beyond the field of archaeology and prehistory. All historians must critically read visual representations of the past and question the agendas behind such depictions. We need to question the way we present material in dioramas, tableaux, and historical displays in museums. Finally, we must not take the words ‘authentic’ or ‘scientific reconstruction’ at face value.

*University of Western Australia*  
SUSAN BROOMHALL


When it first appeared in 1968, Joseph Shennan’s work was one of the first texts to draw together research on the Parlement of Paris, an institution central to the *ancien regime* and crucial to the history of France. Whilst other scholars analysed the influence of the Parlement in a particular era, Shennan focussed on the institution of the Parlement itself, encompassing an extensive time span from its medieval origins until the French Revolution. Shennan achieves no small thing in making the detailed scholarly study of the construction and functions of the Parlement an interesting and readable
text. It remains an important and highly influential work for French historians today. On this, there seems little dispute. My focus however rests on whether the reprint is satisfactory in the form in which it appears here.

Shennan’s own updated bibliography bears witness to the vast amount of further research which has been undertaken since 1968. Yet this new research is addressed only through the means of an ‘Introduction to Second Edition’. This is a lengthy and thorough piece of summary and analysis addressing major recent studies and indicating current areas of research on the Parlement. However, this does not seem to me a satisfactory way to update the text nor to recognise the importance of 30 years of further research. Does Shennan mean to suggest by this approach that none of the research alters his 1968 theories on the Parlement in any way? Surely post-1968 studies on the subject would be better integrated into the main text and the latter re-evaluated and re-written accordingly. Although this would have been a more extensive undertaking, the results would seem to be worth the effort. As it currently appears, all research since 1968 seems somewhat marginal and peripheral to Shennan’s own history of the Parlement.

Furthermore, it would seem to this reviewer that having nevertheless reached the conclusion to add new material to the text in this manner, this section would be better placed at the end of the book. Any new reader wishing to learn about the Parlement must wade through this dense introduction with perhaps little sense of the basics. Since it does not seem to serve the function of introducing the main text at all, the ‘introduction’ might be more usefully placed as an appendix to the text. In this way, the reader could approach the material with a solid understanding of the general concepts.

Still regarding the logic of textual placement, I also found the position of the two maps of France rather curious, particularly Map 2 (p.150). This second illustration, of France during the eighteenth century, appears opposite the first page of chapter 5, ‘The Medieval Parlement’. There seems no particular reason why the illustration is placed here and I could find no justification for it in the text. Since Chapter Nine deals entirely with ‘The Parlement in the Eighteenth Century’ would not this diagram be better placed opposite this chapter?

There is no doubt that *The Parlement of Paris* is a thorough, cogent and influential work and remains the major study of the most important of all the French Parlements. This alone warrants a paperback reprint in a more affordable student price range. However, I am rather disappointed in the way in which the updating of Shennan’s research is achieved and in which the material has been arranged.

*University of Western Australia*  
SUSAN BROOMHALL

In recent years, increasing amounts of secondary literature have concerned constructs of womanhood and women writing themselves in sixteenth-century Europe. However, Erdmann’s work is one of the first large scale projects to collate a bibliography of primary texts written by and about women, and it is a most welcome addition to the field. Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks opens the work with a comprehensive introduction summarising sixteenth-century views on women and female opportunities to participate in publication. This introduction provides a necessary historical and cultural context in which to view Erdmann’s bibliographical work.

Erdmann begins with a catalogue of texts written about women by sixteenth-century (mostly male) authors. This is divided into specific areas of discourse - adultery, education, legal status and virginity to name a few. These are texts both discussing the nature of ‘woman’ and also instructional texts for women of the era. Erdmann provides detailed references for each text, often with copies of the titlepage and some commentary on texts and their authors. Although a more extensive undertaking, some mention of extant locations of the texts would have been an invaluable addition.

The second section is a catalogue of texts to which women contributed. This primarily lists women’s contribution as authors but Erdmann has also broadened the concept of publication in a useful way by examining briefly women’s participation in publication as illustrators, publishers and printers as well. This too includes commentary about the texts and their authors.

Part Two of Erdmann’s collection is a series of briefer bibliographies. Firstly, there is a more extensive list of books on or for women with only the author, title and publication details provided and no discussion of the texts. This is followed by a more thorough, though not exhaustive, checklist of texts by women writers from different European countries. I am particularly pleased to see that Erdmann includes marginal works which women contributed to published texts. Although it is through this means that most women contributed to texts, it is by far the most understudied aspect of their contribution, frequently overshadowed by studies of whole texts by women authors. Since marginal works by women in the text of another author are extremely difficult to trace, given that most major library catalogues lists by primary author, Erdmann’s checklist goes some way towards opening up this area for further research. Finally, the last major bibliography concerns women in the printing business in which he lists, by country, texts published by women printers and publishers. Following on from these bibliographies of sixteenth-century primary texts, is a comprehensive list of secondary source material for further reading.

It must be noted that the bibliographies are not intended, and should not be taken as exhaustive. I would further encourage readers to go beyond
this work for detailed information on the authors and their texts since, as might be expected in a work of this scale and breadth, there are some errors. In particular, I found some of the commentaries to be incorrect. Madeleine and Catherine des Roches’s correspondence, *Missives des Mes Dames des Roches* (1586), is listed as ‘the first published by any woman in France’ which is simply untrue (p.109). Despite what Etienne Pasquier, and a good many researchers with him, have insisted, as early as 1539 Marguerite de Briet had published her *Epistres familières et invectives* in Paris under her pseudonym Helisenne de Crenne. There are other small mistakes in spellings too: for example, Charlotte de Minut, Abbess of the Poor Clares in Toulouse, is listed as Charlotte de Minuit.

However, to this reader, such a work as this has as its main aim to provide an starting point for further research. Indeed Erdmann claims to provide a ‘representative overview’ of women and printing in sixteenth-century Europe and he achieves this aim admirably. Serious researchers pursuing studies of women and publication will go beyond this work to discover the original texts for themselves and this collection will make an excellent and essential base text for them. Yet Erdmann has done more than collate texts according to contemporary historical trends. Through his choice of boundaries for this work, he asks us to question our understanding of participation in publication by emphasising alternative methods of female contribution: as marginal authors, as illustrators and as workers in the print trades. It is a thorough and welcome addition to the study of women and printing in early modern Europe.

*University of Western Australia*  
SUSAN BROOMHALL

**John Adair,** *By the Sword Divided* (1983), Sutton Publishing, Stroud, 1998; pp.240; RRP $34.95 paperback.

For King or Parliament? This was the question a traveller in England in the summer of 1642 was most likely to be asked on arrival in a town, wrote the Puritan John Corbet, who was there at the time. Just a year later he was in the midst of conflict and danger, writing of the cheerfulness and resolve of the people of Gloucester as their city was besieged by Royalist forces. In using such texts to weave together his engaging and lively account of the divisions and conflicts of the English Civil War, John Adair’s stated objective was not to analyse its politics and strategies, or to describe campaigns, battles and sieges in detail, but ‘to give an impression of the nature and course of the whole war, and its influences upon the lives of ordinary Englishmen and women’ (p.7). His title, *By the Sword Divided,* aptly suggests the most painful impacts of the war on all the individuals of the nation: it forced them to choose between sides, it confronted them with violence.
Adair has constructed his narrative by the collation of numerous contemporary accounts, the whole being presented in the context of his own commentary. While in his role as historian he writes with the continuity and direction that are the benefits of hindsight, he preserves the sense of the personal and immediate in his chosen texts, creating through them a discourse of bewilderment and anguish that has keenness and poignancy still. From Ralph Verney’s report of King Charles’ intrusion into the House of Commons to arrest five rebellious members to John Rushworth’s vivid description of the King’s execution, the tragedy of civil war unfolds as a series of events which were alarming and frightening, different and strange. As well as written texts, Adair has included many fascinating pictorial records - portraits, plans of battles, pages from propagandist publications, political cartoons - many of which are presented with captions that offer considerable enhancement to an understanding of the accompanying picture.

This is primarily a story of conflict, and accordingly the majority of the quoted texts describe battles or their effects. In keeping with the author’s aim, there is no attempt to enter into debates about the causes and effects of the Civil War. Adair skirts around the historiography: it is in the events of war, and their immediate impact on the people involved, that the reader’s attention is engaged. As a result, the text has lost little of its interest in the 15 years since its first appearance, in spite of the extensive discussion which has gone on about the place of the Civil War in the history of Britain. Indeed, while it was an event of great national significance, it is salutary to be reminded of the personal meaning of the conflict to men, women and children, which is the aspect of war which does not change with the passing of time. The dilemma of the war is encapsulated in a few sentences from a letter written by Sir William Waller, a Parliamentarian commander, to his old friend Sir Ralph Hopton, a Royalist commander, while they were encamped at Bath and Wells respectively:

That great God which is the searcher of my heart,
knows with what a sad sense I go upon this service
and with what a perfect hatred I detest this war
without an enemy, but I look upon it as opus domini,
which is enough to silence all passion in me. The God
of peace in his good time send us peace and in the
meantime fit us to receive it. We are both upon the
stage and must act those parts that are assigned us in
this tragedy. Let us do it in a way of honour and
without personal animosities. Whatever the issue be,
I shall never willingly relinquish the dear title of your
most affectionate friend and faithful servant ...

Adair’s book will be enjoyed by the interested layperson and appreciated by students of Early Modern English studies, for whom it offers new insights
into a key historical turning point. In this respect it is unfortunate that the
author, while including a bibliography of his source material, did not choose
to give references for the selected texts, so limiting his work’s usefulness as
a starting point for further study. On the other hand, the method he has
adopted has made his book more engaging for the general reader. The book
is copiously illustrated, and for the most part the selections make an
excellent accompaniment to the text, although the caption for one
reproduction of a contemporary painting has unfortunately been omitted.
This is neither a scholarly nor an analytical work and, while it does not
seek to contribute to historiographical debate on its subject, it offers a
reading which will serve as a very satisfying supplement to the study of
the various political, social, economic and religious developments which
preceded and followed the Civil War.

University of Notre Dame

CHARLES LANCASTER

Wayne Hudson and Geoffrey Bolton (eds), Creating Australia: Changing
Australian History, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1997; pp.viii + 187; RRP
$24.95 paperback.

It is as an attempt to answer some of the key questions arising within
Australian society at the close of the twentieth century that Geoffrey Bolton
and Wayne Hudson have released this collection of essays called Creating
Australia. Here they have enlisted 18 of the country’s leading historians in
a bid to address a few of the most explosive and emotive issues facing
Australians today. Familiar names such as Richard White, Marilyn Lake,
Ann Curthoys, Peter Read and David Walker tackle subjects including
ethnicity, citizenship, gender, sexuality and identity.

At the outset it must be noted that Creating Australia is hardly the right
name for this book. For while the verb ‘creating’ implies a forced construct
of identity, it is this kind of unnatural or unreal construction which the
authors of the essays speak against. Instead they implore their readers to
appreciate the multiplicity of cultural, social and political experiences in
Australian history. In this manner Hudson and Bolton introduce their first
chapter with the comment: ‘A better approach to understanding Australian
achievement since 1788 is to emphasise the extent to which multiple identities
have been available to Australians during the last two centuries.’ (p.1)
‘Multiple identities’, then, becomes the rallying cry of all the authors of
Creating Australia and would probably have served as a more appropriate
title.

The stage is set to Creating Australia by two early chapters in the book.
The first of these is from Richard White, revisiting the themes of his
repeats his argument from the 1980s that there is not one national identity
or image of Australia, but a multiplicity of these. Furthermore, White suggests that these images are dynamic and changing concepts which are representative of the different times, places and personalities surrounding their acceptance. White’s chapter, though, appears to sit uncomfortably within this book. On the one hand it serves as a kind of prelude to the rest of the essays in *Creating Australia* and to the theme of multiple Australian identities. Yet on the other, it is an answer to some of the criticisms or confusion surrounding *Inventing Australia* which would have been better answered 15 years ago.

The second of these chapters features Ann Curthoys’ discussion of history and identity. In this essay Curthoys suggests that Anglo-Celtic Australians are now an ethnic group of their own and as much a member of Australia’s ‘cultural community – as “ethnic” – as anyone else’. And according to Curthoys, few have thought out the ramifications of this new perception of ethnicity (p.23). Curthoys’ final plea that the debate over national identity would cease searching for a complete and unique Australian experience (p.36) is then reflected in the succeeding chapters of *Creating Australia*. Whether discussing areas of the Australian social discourse such as Chinese-Australians (p.71), the gay and lesbian community (p.52) or just the ‘ordinary Australian’ (p.86), the authors of this book seek to suggest complex levels of participation in Australian history which go well beyond the accepted topical norms.

*Creating Australia* is an intriguing book. In theory it should have been a highly interesting text and the ‘timely’ contribution it claimed to be (p.ix). After all, a collection of essays by prominent and experienced historians on important issues in contemporary Australian society should be a recipe for success. But in reality it is a dry and somewhat disappointing book. It may be that the very familiarity of the historians it features is to its detriment. On the whole, this is a collection of writers who have many agencies through which to voice their thoughts, and as a result much of what they have said here will already be familiar to students of Australian history. Little is offered in *Creating Australia* which is a surprise or which is particularly engaging, and its only novelty may in fact be the collection of these writers together. In a sense, we have heard it all before.

It is time, I believe, to hear more frequently from the emerging practitioners of Australian history. Of far more appeal and vitality would be the views of those young historians actively engaged in the future of the Australian historical profession and interested in the relationship between history and current national issues. These are the people who will soon be leading the debates found within *Creating Australia*, and it is time for them to be given a greater voice.

The ‘dryness’ of this book may also come from the monotony by which the theme of multiple identities is enforced throughout the narrative. The concluding paragraph to each chapter dutifully explains that the multiplicity of experiences or identities feature clearly in the authors’ fields of research.
In fact, it soon begins to feel as though each author has been set the undergraduate-style essay or exam question: ‘Demonstrate the multiplicity of identities in the … [fill in the blank] experience of Australian history.’ This lends little sense of creativity or diversity.

Historians should always be encouraged to participate in public discussion, and for that reason Creating Australia will still provide a valuable contribution to Australian historiography and to Australia’s social discourse. Individual chapters, in particular, will be of great use in discussions surrounding issues such as Aboriginality, ethnicity, sexuality and other topics which they deal with. But it is unable to fully satisfy its readers as a whole unit, and I remain disappointed by Creating Australia’s attempt of an argument.

University of Western Australia

DEBORAH GARE

Harry Phillips, David Black, Bruce Bott and Tamara Fischer, Representing the People: Parliamentary Government in Western Australia, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, South Fremantle, 1998; pp.328; RRP $24.95 paperback.

This latest overview of the State government’s functions, responsibilities and powers is a welcome contribution to an otherwise deficient field of scholarship. Western Australia in particular has been always a neglected state in both federal- and state-based studies of government. With this in mind, the authors have attempted to provide a ‘comprehensive overview of parliamentary government in Western Australia’ (back cover) discussing, respectively, the constitutional framework, the Parliament, Cabinet and Premier, the public service, the judiciary, local government, political parties, the electoral system, the Royal Commissions and Commissions of Enquiry, the role of federalism, women in Parliament and political education and participation.

Representing the People usefully informs its readers of the roles and functions of each of the above sections of public life. It was written clearly for younger readers, and as such is a valuable textbook for secondary students and first-year university undergraduates. The authors are aware that Western Australians currently face ‘unparalleled activity and interest in constitutional and political reform’ (p.11) triggered by the Republic debate, the Constitutional Convention, and the forthcoming referendum. These recent events have led both the politicians and general public to examine our national identity and the processes of its formation. Admittedly, Representing the People is not a most theoretically sophisticated attempt to tackle Western Australian politics, but it does not pretend to be one. Instead, it is strictly an empirical study that partially accomplishes its aim to ‘fill a long-felt need to satisfy the demand for more literature on the State’s governmental system’ (p.12). If you are confused - as many of us are - about...
the functions and the processes of the institutions which govern us, then this book is a good place to start.

The authors appear to work from a fairly traditional definition of politics restricted to ‘formal’ arenas of governments and public institutions. Lobby groups or trade unions, for example, are not included in this study, largely, I suspect, because their activities are not necessarily thought of among ‘mainstream’ political scientists as ‘politics’. This is the major weakness of this book, illustrated in the final chapter where the authors attempt to explain the perceived rise in more recent times of public interest in politics. It is concluded that public political education has bloom in recent decades due to, among other factors, increased politicisation of women since the 1970s having ‘nearly doubled the market of interested citizens willing to participate in public politics’ (p.300). This statement perpetuates two very common academic assumptions: that women in pre-1970s era were somehow ‘apolitical’ and disinterested in politics, and that their newly found politicisation coincided with the emergence of the feminist ‘second-wave’. Although histories of Western Australian feminism from the nineteenth-century suffragist movement to the present day remain largely unwritten, work by Dianne Davidson (particularly *Women on the Warpath*) and other historians has shown that feminism and women’s political activism both have had a continuous and strong presence in the state’s political culture since at least the last decade of past century. In other words, Western Australians have always had an interest in the affairs of their own state, but positivist methodologies have neither allowed scholars to capture the degree of politicisation among ‘ordinary’ citizens nor led them to identify this interest as in itself strongly a political feat.

There are other glaring gaps in the book which should not pass uncriticised. In the discussion of the Western Australian electoral system, electoral laws and compulsory voting, no mention is made of previous exclusions of non-Anglo-Europeans from the state franchise. The Aboriginal people were not given the state franchise until 1962; the Aboriginal individual, unlike her/his White European counterpart, was not legally required to be registered with the State Electoral Commission until 1982. The laws of 1936 which effectively introduced compulsory voting for some are, therefore, not relevant to all. A discussion which examined the silences, the gaps, the unspoken assumptions, and the overt legal discrimination in the state political arena would have been far more educative and interesting. Given that this book was intended to inform about the functions of our political institutions, is it still fair to perpetuate the idea that we have all been treated equally by our successive governments? I am always cynical about books whose authors strive very hard to present them as ‘politically neutral’, ‘objective’ and ‘comprehensive’ studies, particularly as these very works often neglect the oppressed, the disenfranchised and the most vilified groups in society, or view people’s politics with a paternalistic, patronising attitude.
These weaknesses are not to be taken lightly, and this is why I also question the book’s purpose as a secondary educational tool. Although its outline of governmental processes is useful, its blind assumptions may do more damage than good.

*University of Western Australia*  

JASMINA BRANKOVICH

**William J. Lines, False Economy: Australia in the Twentieth Century, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, South Fremantle, 1998; pp.364; RRP $22.95 paperback.**

William Lines is not out to make friends with *False Economy*. Almost everyone - from consumers to conservationists, communists to conservatives - receives a serve of Lines’ vitriol by the last page of the epilogue, as in Lines’ view all are implicated in the promulgation of a humanism antithetical to the protection, or even survival, of the natural world: ‘Humanism replaced a belief in God with a belief in reason and humanity and promoted an ideology of self-concern and egoism that proved conspicuously destructive.’(p.21) It is the shameful mark of this humanism, and its twin henchmen economics and science, on the Australian landscape in the twentieth century that forms the main focus of the book. Lines’ stance is at all times clear: this was a sacred land, and we have profaned it.

This message is driven home to the reader through a mix of historical narrative, philosophy, etymology, biography and autobiography. The latter two often sit uncomfortably with the former, and the purpose of the segments about the various members of Lines’ family and their experiences is often not readily apparent. There is a conspicuous attempt to link the fate of the natural, public and private worlds on the cover of the book:

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The natural life, the autonomous life of nature, was vulnerable, just as Nancy’s life and that of her family and of her state and of her country were vulnerable. In each case, vulnerability arose from the same cause: the construction of a social order based on bureaucracy, science, and technology that profaned nature and human life and reduced both to resources. (front cover)
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We do see nature through the eyes of the family members, and particularly Lines himself, and the biographical material certainly assists to convey a sense of the magnitude of change in relation to a human lifespan, particularly with respect to Lines’ grandmother, who appears at the beginning of the book and passes away at the end. For the most part, however, the biographical information does not obviously illustrate the
impact on the personal and private of the grand humanist narratives Lines sees as being played out on the landscape, and rarely does it demonstrate how the ‘common people’ took up or promulgated humanist discourses. Rather, to me it appeared to propose that people ultimately live small, ephemeral lives, affected by momentous events such as war, certainly, but more deeply affected by personality and chance. Perhaps this thought-provoking juxtaposition is Lines’ way of showing that although living in a ‘humanistic’ century, most humans had little ability to effectively control their own destinies; in life, as in our relations with nature, we are for the most part stumbling around in the dark.

*False Economy* may thus be seen in some respects as a ‘deep ecological’ or anti-anthropocentric history of twentieth-century Australia. Humans come and go, but nature, and the damage wrought on it, remains. Always vehemently on the side of nature, Lines traces the development and maintenance of a national mindset which saw Australia not so much as home, but as a land to be controlled through population, and as a set of resources to be developed. With often startling clarity, Lines traces, one by one, the mental and physical means by which Australian nature was subdued in the twentieth century - deconstructing concepts such as ‘information’ to show how their original meanings were bastardised, even on an epistemological level, as they were brought into the service of an exploitative humanism:

The verb *inform* came from the old French *enformer*, meaning to give form to, to shape, fashion, form an idea, and describe. *Inform* gave rise to *information*, which described the action of informing, as in training the mind or character, especially by imparting learning or instruction. Under the modern world-view, information became instrumental and lost its affective meaning. Information denoted fact and circumstance. Information became data - most of which never entered a single human mind as a thought - with a limited capacity to inform anything. Information became a device to conquer nature. (p.197)

Although Lines sees a humanistic outlook at the heart of this perversion of human relations with the natural world, he argues that humanism was ineffectual without its compliments in economics and science. Keynesian economics in particular is thoroughly condemned, and its promulgation within political circles - left and right - portrayed as the cause of a relentlessly destructive and wasteful consumerism. Although occasionally presented more as rant than reason (unsurprising from a self-confessed anti-humanist!), the focus on consumption was, I felt, one of the strongest points
of this history. Although it is clearly critical to our understanding of twentieth-century Australian society, the mechanics and consequences of consumer society remain, at least overtly, underexamined in Australian environmental historiography. Science also comes in for its fair share of vitriol as an approach which turned, during the twentieth century, from a search for understanding to a mere producer of technology, slave to the twin needs of war and industry.

Lines is persuasive, although his denunciation of the unholy trinity of humanism, economics and science is at times repetitive, and occasionally delivered with a fervour that the evidence does not appear to support. Specialists in various areas of Australian history will no doubt take issue with parts of Lines’ sweeping and often partial coverage of twentieth-century events. Furthermore, those conservationists who, as Lines acknowledges ‘in the 1960s and 1970s ... challenged a scientific and economic world view that regarded undisturbed nature as stagnant, deficient, defective and detrimental to human welfare’ (p.306), will be disappointed that their efforts receive only a paragraph, whilst much more space is devoted to demonstrating how conservation later ‘sold out’ to humanism and its ideals. Lines appears determined that there should be no human heroes in this narrative.

It was somewhat disappointing to find upon reaching the end of the book that after so much anger, Lines would offer no suggestion as to a way out of the mess, as only ‘humanists want manifestos, blueprints and policies’ (p.312). Although there is much writing by deep ecologists on paths to a non-anthropocentric future, Lines offers no reference to this for the interested reader, concluding instead with only a derisive denial of human agency:

In pursuing humanist goals, people spend much time and cause much damage pretending that their efforts in politics, economics and technology achieve the ends they intend. Their own humanist cant beguiles them into thinking that humans are actually learning to steer the planet in its orbit. (p.312)

University of Western Australia

ANDREA GAYNOR


Women’s voices and immigrant’s voices are relative newcomers to mainstream Australian historical writing so it is very pleasing to see this book published. It is particularly significant that Irish women’s voices from the nineteenth century be heard as by 1900, one quarter, perhaps even as
much as one third of the racial pool of Australia were Irish born or of Irish
descent. Irish women came to Australia in numbers nearly equal to men
yet the historical record and popular consciousness resonates predominantly
with male voices and names – Peter Laylor, Ned Kelly, Redmond Barry,
Paddy Hannan, Daniel Mannix.

Close attention to and careful critical re-analysis of archival sources is
the strength of this volume. As the essays in the book show, the women
share no unified voice or common experience. That said, broad trends have
been suggested by the authors from their close examination of the evidence
be it archival sources such as convict records, criminal records,
parliamentary papers, shipping records or from personal letters. Most of
the evidence led the writers to conclude that the women, regardless of their
particular circumstances for arriving in Australia, adapted well to the
colonial conditions and were able to raise their status beyond what it ever
could have been in Ireland. Some of course did not succeed or even survive.
The book does not deal with women from Irish religious orders.

Eight of the nine essays use a quote from the period for their title, usually
attributed to one of the immigrants. This is an effective attention-arresting
device with such evocative titles as ‘Thank God It Can Be No Worse’ and
‘The Priest Made a Bother About It’ and ‘If she was to be hard up she would
sooner be hard up in a strange land than where she would be known’ to
attract the reader. As the titles suggest, it is an eclectic book in the sense
that each essay deals with localised studies and different time periods. As
with any collection of essays, this makes for rather disjointed reading if
read one after the other but it is a particularly appropriate format as it
reflects the diversity of the women’s experience and the gaps which remain
in the historical record. Research on women in New South Wales, Victoria,
Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia is included but unfortunately
none from Western Australia.

Irish Women in Colonial Australia is an excellent publication, full of
meticulous research and always striving to hear the voices of the women,
not just those who wrote about them. It is as it claims ‘but the beginning of
an exciting adventure’ (p.xiv.), but it is an adventure worth pursuing to
discover the women for their own sakes and to consider the effect they had
on the shaping of Australia.

University of Western Australia

Jean Chetkovich

Quentin Beresford and Paul Omaji, Our State of Mind: Racial Planning
and the Stolen Generations, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, South Fremantle,
1998; pp.296; RRP $19.95 paperback.

Our State of Mind is concerned with the policies of removal and
assimilation that for much of the twentieth century were the main
instruments of Aboriginal dispossession and control. In particular, it considers the reasons behind those policies and their enduring effects on the lives of Aboriginal people. It also offers an ‘interpretative framework’ which, according to the authors, helps to explain why white Australia’s belief in the practice of removal was so unshakeable.

The study begins by taking issue with the view that the policies of removal and assimilation were enacted for the good of Aboriginal people. Instead, it suggests the white society initiated a racial experiment calculated to hasten the passing of ‘full-bloods’, to ‘breed the Aborigine out of half-caste children’ and to ensure that survivors of these measures never threatened white jobs. The authorities were aware of the great physical, mental and emotional damage entailed by their experiment but were unwilling to abandon practices which in many respects equalled the Nazi genocide against the Jews. The consequences have been cultural destruction, loss of identity and the insuperable task of trying to put shattered lives back together.

Some readers might welcome this text as a timely challenge to the notion that removal and assimilation were well-intentioned. Others, however, could be less enthusiastic, for the book says nothing new, is badly written and objectifies Aboriginal people as victims. Moreover, its ‘interpretative framework’ is an outmoded positivism that allows it to speculate on how the past shapes the present but not on how the present shapes the past.

To take the last point first, the authors never consult the extensive theoretical literature on the extent to which the meaning of a historical narrative is determined by historian(s) in prefigurative decisions about what to represent and what to exclude. Given the exclusion of Aboriginal voices from Australian history (or their mediation by non-Aboriginal scholars), this literature is highly relevant to studies like Our State of Mind. Not only does it subvert their positivist assumptions but it also lends weight to the view that Aboriginal history should be controlled by, and reflect the interests of, the Aboriginal people.

It is in this connection that the book’s lack of novelty has been noted, for it does little if anything to advance Aboriginal interests. Its three main themes - the malevolence of removal and assimilation policies, the voices raised against them and their devastating effects - have already been developed convincingly elsewhere. It uses quotations effectively to illustrate the commitment of certain high-ranking individuals to a programme of racial engineering, but its subsequent claim that their views reflected a prevailing mentality is asserted rather than demonstrated.

The conviction of the book is further undermined by careless writing and editing. In what is meant as a comment on attitudes to inter-racial marriage, for example, the authors observe that ‘marriages between women of European-Aboriginal descent were clearly approved’ (p.52). This outlandish statement conspires with a long list of grammatical, syntactical and other errors to trivialise deeply important issues.
Meanwhile, through its overriding emphasis on victimisation, the study effectively denies Aboriginal agency. That Aboriginal people have resisted attempted genocide and maintained a dynamic culture is an extraordinary historical achievement. So too are their individual successes against overwhelming odds. Yet Beresford and Omaji seem reluctant to address Aboriginal achievement in any shape or form. Hence, in a discussion of two women removed as children who have since risen to professional status, success becomes a dubious material benefit that cannot compensate the women for their victimisation (p.13). Another success story does not count because it refers only to the external circumstances of the woman in question (p.159). In one sense, these constructions are appropriate - nothing could be worth the physical, mental and emotional trauma of being torn from one’s family and culture. In another sense, however, to diminish the achievements of the women in question is to deny their agency and perhaps even to reinforce Darwinian assumptions about the fate of the powerless.

Most of these problems follow from prefigurative decisions the authors have made about how to define and represent their subject. Historical narrative cannot proceed without such decisions and the meanings it figures forth are necessarily contingent on them. Under Aboriginal control, Aboriginal history would be no less contingent. The difference is that it would reflect the concerns not of non-Aboriginal historians but of Aboriginal people themselves. Had Beresford and Omaji recognised this difference, they might have written a different book.

University of Western Australia

JOHN HOST


‘In the period since 1910, the year of the formation of the modern party system, 387 minor parties have contested one or more elections, and 140 other minor parties were formed, announced their existence, even registered with an Electoral Commission, but did not nominate candidates.’ (p.3) Despite the existence of a great number of minor parties in Australian history, the academics have tended to focus, with some diversions from this rule, on Australian politics as a contest between Labor and Liberal-National Coalition. Dean Jaensch and David Matheson seek to redress this lack of scholarly interest in Australian political ‘outsiders’, and their book has several goals in mind: to make information about many of the minor parties easily accessible; to examine the explosion of the numbers of minor parties in the past two decades; and to examine the nature, relevance, origins, roles and functions of some 523 minor parties in Australia since 1910. Their fundamental premise is that a number of seats won by a party
is not a reliable indicator of that party's contribution to Australian political culture.

The major part of the book - more than half - gives useful statistical information about each one of these parties: a brief outline of party policy, number of candidates contesting a particular seat, and the number of votes achieved by each candidate. The parties are divided into 13 categories: post-material/new politics/green; single issue parties; religious/moral/Christian/humanist; local/regional; idiosyncratic; personality; frivolous; secessionist; race/immigration/anti-racism; social base; doctrinal; the New Right; and, finally, 'kaleidoscope' parties. While this classification system may have assisted the authors in grouping voluminous and extensive information, some of their categories are rather dubious. The concerns of minor parties often escape categorisation, and privileging one set of issues over all others gives a wrong impression that a party has one-dimensional policy. One example is the inclusion of Greens(WA) under the 'green' banner, which obscures its 'non-environmental' concerns equally important to the party, certainly to many of its supporters. I query also the category of 'social base' parties - those seeking to address Aboriginal issues, women's issues, or the concerns of the elderly - because all parties, major and minor, have some electoral social 'base'. Similarly, the 'doctrinal' category is justified by the parties' 'rigid policies' and 'inflexible organisational style' (p.130), while those included are of all shades of the Left-Right spectrum. Labelling of 'frivolous' parties is based on some of their policies: the National Colonialist Party sought power on the basis that they were 'more stupid' than others; the party's two Senate candidates won about 11 000 votes in 1980. My favourite has to be the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Party, formed in 1979 by Richard Bellinaire, which claimed that 'joggers, conservationists and the Country Women's Association are threats to national security' (p.90). It numbered three members in 1980.

This highly amusing statistical section is followed by a general analysis of the minor party phenomena, their roles and functions, their rare electoral successes and more frequent failures. This is the section where the book does not exactly live up to its stated aims. It is written from a much-maligned (and deservedly so) positivist approach which gives us the 'naked facts' but little else. The electoral policy of a minor party is not the most reliable tool to analyse the reasons behind its electoral success or failure. The book is devoid of both historical context and social and political fault-lines which give rise to these parties and force their issues onto the political 'mainstream'. The One Nation Party and its leader are doomed from the start, so the authors imply, the party's efforts to capture electoral seats undermined by a history of minor-party failure. Perhaps One Nation has not lived up to the electoral expectations, but the racist discourse propagated by the party and its social implications for Australia and for its indigenous and migrant population are perennial concerns in this country, and one which its subjects know all too well. To conclude that Australian society
has never experienced ‘deep social and economic political cleavages’ (p.173), and that this explains the electoral defeats of most minor parties is, therefore, highly questionable when placed in the social context. If anything, this statement undermines the authors’ original premise citing important contributions by minor parties to the Australian political culture.

The book is useful as a reference tool for those interested in Australian politics and would perhaps provide secondary or undergraduate students of political science with useful statistical material. Scholars searching for a sophisticated analysis beyond mere statistics and quantification will be, however, less than impressed.

University of Western Australia

JASMINA BRANKOVICH

R.S. White, Charles Edelman and Christopher Wortham (eds), Shakespeare: Readers, Audiences, Players, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1998; pp.286; RRP $34.95 paperback.

Shakespeare: Readers, Audiences, Players is a very wide-ranging collection of 21 essays selected from papers presented at the third symposium of the Australian and New Zealand Shakespeare Association, held at the University of Western Australia in 1994. The three words of the subtitle, ‘readers’, ‘audiences’, ‘players’, signal a relatively recent shift in Shakespeare criticism away from examining the plays as pure text, and towards a form of criticism that places more emphasis on the kinds of things people actually do with Shakespeare’s plays - reading, editing, performing, watching, listening - the various cultural practices for making meanings. R.S. White, in his introduction to the essays, refers to these practices as ‘processes of mediation’ (p.1), a term which acknowledges the simple fact that like all texts, Shakespeare’s plays are, and have always been, shared between people who use them and remake them in all sorts of ways. The notion of mediation implies that a Shakespearean text, rather than being seen as a precious object containing universal truths, can only ever mean anything when it passes perilously between people. Kay Stevenson strikes this key-note at the beginning of her article ‘Listening to Coriolanus’, when she asks: ‘Which Coriolanus?’(p.233), acknowledging the fact that the play, as something that is seen and heard, exists problematically in its various historical performances, each a complex matrix of selection, adaptation, emphasis and reception, rather than as merely a given and unitary textual object.

But while the striking simplicity of Stevenson’s question challenges more traditional notions of Shakespeare’s timeless textual authority, we should not take the concept of mediation as signalling an extreme theoretical position which sees the plays as entirely provisional in meaning, or hopelessly dispersed along endless trails of signification. Most contributors, including Stevenson, depend on written Shakespeare texts as more or less
stable sites of signification, to which dynamics of production and reception contribute inflections and critical problems of various kinds.

As might be expected, many of those critical problems have to do with issues of identity and difference central to the current interests of cultural studies. Essays by Jenny de Reuck, Lloyd Davis, and Derek Cohen, for example, are concerned with mediated representations of race, gender, and class in Shakespeare’s plays; and in these essays the plays themselves are treated as a kind of cultural utility, as politically loaded and (by implication) as critically useful as anything else the culture may produce. As de Reuck says: ‘[Shakespeare] was as much inscribed by the spacio-temporal, class, racial or sexual background as any sixteenth- or seventeenth-century artist.’ (p.227)

Other essays in the collection work together to provide the reader with a critical conversation about the current dominance of these kinds of politicised approaches to Shakespeare. Derick Marsh, for example, sees the trend in political criticism of Shakespeare as stemming from a ‘self-inflicted ideological blindness’ (p.94); a failure to recognise that what is relevant or valuable to say about the politics of Shakespeare’s plays is best said by Shakespeare himself in dramatic form. Jonathan Bate is more conciliatory, arguing that while it is not incorrect to suggest that reading, watching or performing Shakespeare is always a political act which mediates the plays, it is wrong to ‘homogenise’ the politics of producing Shakespeare as always conservative or oppressive. He goes on to say:

A persistent feature of the Establishment or Tory or English Nationalist construction of Shakespeare during the last two and a half centuries has been the attempt to make him into such a [conservative] voice; yet it has been an attempt that has been met with resistance at every point down the line. The supreme irony of the Anglo-American New Iconoclasts is that in their desperate attempts to sound like pioneers, they have achieved what the pro-Establishment Shakespeareans of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries failed to achieve: they have silenced the voices of the radical Shakespeare of the past. (p.8)

The debate is a lively one, and readers moving from one essay to the next will be struck by differences in critical alignment. Do not imagine, however, that the collected essays merely constitute an in-house squabble over the state of Shakespeare criticism fought along political lines; the writers are generally more concerned with exploration than with critical introspection. Indeed, it’s pretty difficult to draw any kind of critical orthodoxy from, say, Madge Mitton’s interest in Shakespearean allusions in detective fiction, Kuniyoshi Munakata’s adaptation of Hamlet to the conventions of Noh theatre, and Robert F. O’Connor’s application of chaos theory to Macbeth.
Add to these John Wilders’ account of what went wrong with Shakespeare in the studios of the BBC, Penny Gay’s analysis of what happens to the trial scene in the *Merchant of Venice* when translated into French and German, and Charles Edelman’s painstaking attention to problems with exclamation points in Shakespearean editions, and mediated Shakespeare turns out to be a fairly broad and inclusive kind of concept.

Indeed, it is fair to say that the value of *Shakespeare: Readers, Audiences, Players* depends very much on its readers and the various interests they bring to it. The essays are certainly diverse in subject matter and approach, and some are much less rigorous than others, but within the various fields of interest developed by the individual essays there is a wealth of expert material on offer. Several essays provide detailed and incisive commentary on particular plays, such as Juliet Dusinberre on literary sources in *Much Ado About Nothing*, R.D. Bedford on problems and possibilities in playing *Measure for Measure*, Cherrell Guilfoyle on medieval imagery in *Othello*, and David Ormerod on the significance of dreams in *The Winter’s Tale*.

Taking the collection as a whole, its strength lies in its imaginative expansiveness and general accessibility, drawing as it does on the ability of contributors, in the original context of the symposium, to engage a scholarly audience assembled from a variety of fields. Indeed, the volume works best as a symposium in writing, a gathering together of different voices to give stimulating expression to the scope and eclecticism of contemporary Shakespeare scholarship.

Some readers may find in *Shakespeare: Readers, Audiences, Players* proof that Shakespeare is, after all, utterly unique among dramatists, if only in the boundless reach of the intertextual and cross-cultural connections made in his name. As many others have observed, at a time when there is supposed to be no privileged centre to the expanding, postmodern universe of texts, Shakespeare seems to remain that singular field of textuality capable of implicating itself into relations with all others. But it may also be that the continuing emphasis on the mediation of Shakespeare - on the ways in which Shakespearean plays are, like all texts, made and remade by his readers, audiences, and players - will be convincing enough for some readers, next time they are offered a book or a film or a university course using the word ‘Shakespeare’ as a promotional banner, to pause and ask with an invigorated scepticism: Shakespeare? Which Shakespeare?

University of Western Australia

STEPHEN NICHOLS


The name ‘Simone de Beauvoir’ conjures up a myriad of images - fervent feminist, devoted follower of Jean-Paul Sartre, hater of the female anatomy,
social agitator, writer, philosopher, intellectual. De Beauvoir filled these and many other roles during her time as a prolific commentator and thinker in post-war Parisian society. Born in 1908 and brought up in a conservative, bourgeois environment, de Beauvoir radically altered the course of the path set out for her after her father failed to provide her with a dowry. She revealed her academic and imaginative gifts early in life and went on to become one of the most significant intellectuals of the twentieth-century. Perhaps best known for her exhaustive feminist tome, *The Second Sex* (published in France in 1943), de Beauvoir is renowned for the always controversial reception of her work. Particularly in the English-speaking world, de Beauvoir was and continues to be the subject of much animated debate and disagreement. A new collection of essays edited by long-time de Beauvoir scholar, Elizabeth Fallaize, pays tribute to the enduring importance of Simone de Beauvoir.

Fallaize describes her book as a gathering together of critical responses to de Beauvoir, its aim
to explore the changing nature of that debate, to offer a sense of the differing cultural and theoretical assumptions which readers have brought to their engagement with Beauvoir’s work, and to give a sense of why her writing continues to matter to readers today. (p.1)

De Beauvoir’s published life began in 1943 with the appearance of her first novel, *She Came to Stay*. From this illustrious beginning, she went on to cover many different genres in her writing output. Fallaize capitalises on this diverse range of writings and divides the collection into three sections with readings on *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir’s autobiographical volumes and her fiction. In this way, Fallaize’s offering allows the reader a multi-faceted view of a highly complex writer and individual.

As appropriate to such a controversial figure, the tone of the contributors varies greatly in this volume. The reader is made patently aware that there are many limitations inherent in de Beauvoir’s work. In the intellectual environment of the late twentieth century where writers must be consistently conscious of the speaking position they occupy, de Beauvoir appears clumsy and naive in her sweeping generalisations and ethnocentric assumptions. Her loathing for female biology comes across as inappropriate and outdated in a feminist movement which is now working to embrace woman’s difference from man. Indeed, her reification of ‘masculine values’ and all that is related to the male sex seems pitiful to the modern feminist. However, Fallaize has included writers who look past these flaws in de Beauvoir’s work to see a woman who has bequeathed a wealth of ideas to the modern generation. Toril Moi, for example, describes a woman who has analysed in minute detail the structures operating under patriarchy.
which have led to female oppression. In her life and in her work, de Beauvoir offers a fresh vision of freedom and an alternative to the status quo.

By taking as her point of departure a story of historical and social transformation or, in other words, by giving feminism an end, by imagining a society in which there would no longer be any need to be a feminist, Beauvoir provided women all over the world with a vision of change.

Sonia Kruks further develops this idea and argues that de Beauvoir provides an essential passage between the limitations of the Enlightenment subject and the postmodern lack of a subject. De Beauvoir’s situated subjectivity allows for the possibility of and responsibility for political action as well as for the constraints of oppression. Her work forges a radical path between essentialism and the dissolution of subjectivity. Through de Beauvoir it becomes possible to address more fully the question of the simultaneous separateness and interdependence of freedoms. It becomes possible to rethink the notion of the subject in full recognition of what “encumbers” it, and yet to do so without reducing it to a mere “effect”. (p.68)

Fallaize has put together a powerful collection of essays which serves above all to highlight the complexity of de Beauvoir as a writer. Whilst shedding light on the limitations and irrelevance of some of de Beauvoir’s ideas, it shows above all that this extraordinarily talented woman continues to matter in the contemporary intellectual environment. Her thoughts may need to be seen in both their cultural and historical perspective, yet they cannot be ignored. Elizabeth Fallaize’s Simone de Beauvoir: A Critical Reader offers a valuable contribution to the ongoing debate about Simone de Beauvoir.

University of Western Australia

BONNIE THOMAS


It would be difficult to argue that Penrod Dean has not experienced more than the average Australian who served in the armed forces during the Second World War, and Singapore Samurai is an attempt to apprise us of one man’s extraordinary war. But the result fails to convey the full horror of his ordeals.

Dean, a lieutenant in the Second AIF, found himself in Singapore in January 1942 just as this supposed impregnable bastion of the British Empire was in its death throes at the hands of the advancing Japanese forces.
Although the saga of British arrogance in Singapore has been chronicled previously, Dean’s narrative again illustrates the brave yet fruitless actions of Allied forces during those last desperate weeks. But, to his credit, Dean does not paint a rosy picture of all Allied soldiers in Singapore, a course he continually maintains throughout his book. At this particular time, he scorns individuals and units for their lack of discipline and refusal to face the enemy.

Together with 90,000 others Dean was captured and marched into Changi, but he and another prisoner decided to take advantage of the crowded prison and inadequate initial security arrangements, and without much trouble they escaped into the jungle (two of the very few who did escape from Changi) in the hope of eventually reaching Allied territory.

Dean and his companion faced starvation, suspicious locals and Japanese forces while on the run. After a stint with Chinese Communist guerrillas and a couple of minor two-man guerrilla raids on Japanese-run plantations, the two were recaptured. Here Dean’s story varies from the many other accounts of Australian POWs, and this section of the book enters its most inspiring phase. Dean’s account of his torture is graphic and harrowing, but their cover as two ordinary soldiers was maintained (discovery of their escape and guerrilla activities would have meant certain execution) and both were sentenced to three years solitary confinement back in Singapore.

To the Japanese, solitary meant exactly that - no contact with other inmates. However, Dean becomes obsessed with learning his captor’s language, which ‘would ensure that they would at least listen to me’ (p.96). It became a tactic that helped him and others later and he eventually learned enough to become a translator when needed by the Japanese. Dean spent his three years in solitary, being released back into the general Changi compound in the last months of the war, but again details are sparse and bland. He criticises some Australian officers in Changi - accusing them of apathy, greed and exploitation of fellow prisoners - which injects some controversy into the narrative but again this simply evaporates. He survives work camps outside Changi, and the Japanese surrender sees Dean sent back to Australia.

Back in his native Western Australia, Dean is placed in command of Italian POWs working on farms to the north-east of Perth. Dean notes the comparatively easy lifestyle of the Italians, but, as a former POW himself who suffered unbelievable hardships, he fails to fully extract the irony of the situation by merely passing over this period. This cursory style typifies the entire book, and the reader is always left with the feeling that Dean could have said much more.

His last assignment came in October 1946 when he was one of only 10 Australians sent to Tokyo to give evidence in the war-crimes trials against the Japanese. Contempt is heaped upon the Americans for their shoddy and arrogant running of the trials and Dean is in no doubt that ‘Hirohito
was a major war criminal’ (p.138), blaming American political pressure for the failure to prosecute the Emperor. He managed to explore parts of Japan, but again the irony of being a former prisoner in the land of his captors is not explored.

For all of his accomplishments, Dean’s book is at times pedestrian and lacking in depth. One gets the feeling he was in a rush to finish the book, and as a result the reader is left with a sense that, while the book is interesting, it fails to add further to the historical record of this horrifying element of the war, when it could have done so with more detailed descriptions and commentaries. His story is written as if looking from afar at another person’s experiences and lacks his innermost emotions.

However, Penrod Dean’s exploits are a reminder that the human spirit contains strengths which defy being classed into neat categories. His literary style may be lacking, but his survival against overwhelming adversity should be acclaimed.

University of New England

JOHN HALL


As the title of Ken Gelder’s and Jane Jacobs’ book suggests, *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation* is a study of the ways in which the authors describe as ‘the discourses of the sacred’ operate in a postcolonial nation. How, when and to what extent Australia has come to be postcolonial, however, is something the book does not address in a very clear way. Indeed, for a study characterised by its erudition and the sheer breadth of its scholarship, *Uncanny Australia* is somewhat shy about dealing with that one term which singularly situates it as an important work at a particular juncture in Australian studies and politics. That such a discussion would have required a closer engagement with postcolonial theory, and in turn undermined a certain ‘true-blueness’ Gelder and Jacobs seem to be careful to attach to their work, might explain this gap. The fact is, however, that whether one likes it or not, the term ‘postcolonial’ now carries with it such an array of critical layers of meaning that it is simply impossible to pretend that it just is there for the taking. By all means, let us give the term new and perhaps far more imaginative uses, but let us also at least gesture towards what has gone before us. Given the rather old-hat, even if tongue-in-cheek, in-house jokes about ‘the French theories’ *Uncanny Australia* indulges in, that might be asking too much.

Yet, in *Uncanny Australia* Gelder and Jacobs offer an interesting discussion of the ways in which the condition of postcoloniality has set in motion a multitude of processes of organisation and counter-organisation
of knowledge which are themselves absolutely central to a wider re-signification of power structures in contemporary Australia. Ironically, by borrowing from the work of Emile Durkheim his notions of the sacred in society, the authors seem to try to validate their approach by appealing to one of the really big names in European thought. For if Jacques Derrida, Gayatri Spivak, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari are always guaranteed to provoke howls of derision in some academic circles, Durkheim and other theorists of his generation generally get away with almost general acceptance. That in some of his earlier writing Durkheim actually focused on Australian Aboriginal peoples is then used to make the thesis argued in Uncanny Australia that much more authoritative.

Such an argument, however, is itself not devoid of difficulties, particularly insofar as it fails to account for the changes that have taken place in Australian society (another way of putting it might be to say that it never quite historicises its theoretical premises very soundly). The Aboriginal sacred of Durkheim’s time is not that of today, or 1992 (Mabo) or 1996 (Wik). This sacred that is ‘now all over the place’ is not the same of Durkheim’s work. For one, it has new meanings, new shapes, and, more crucially, new spokespeople. Unlike notions of the Aboriginal sacred in Durkheim’s work and time, today’s Aboriginal sacred is spoken about just as much by eminent sociologists, anthropologists or, indeed, Quadrant commentators as it is by Aboriginal peoples themselves. Gelder and Jacobs’ case on the sacred of Aboriginal Australian society overlooks the fact that notions of the sacred too operate as differend, in the Lyotardian sense. It, too, is black and white, and grey, and much more besides. Its polychromy, together with the multiplicity of meanings that have attached to it across the last two hundred years, is inextricable from any discussion of ‘discourses of the sacred’. David Tacey can argue in the way he does (and spell ‘Aboriginal’ with lower case ‘a’) because he is unable to attribute to the Aboriginal sacred the same value as other notions of sacred. To Tacey, it is - again, two centuries later - the black and white version which appears so tantalising. Chic, even, but not quite the same as the Real McCoy. If the Aboriginal sacred now appears that much more complex and ‘all over the place’, it is only because we (myself, the reader, Gelder and Jacobs, but more generally all of us non-Aboriginal Australians) have been forced to see it for what it really is.

However, Gelder and Jacobs manage to expose very cleverly the way in which ‘mainstream Australia’ has appropriated the conditions set in place by such landmark decisions as the High Court’s rulings on the Mabo and Wik cases. They note, with close attention to factual evidence, the ways in which both the mining industry and the established grazier community represented by the Farmers’ Federation of Australia (the ones with the $100 million to back Patrick Stevedores in its fight with the Maritime Union of Australia) have attempted to re-situate themselves as the really disempowered groups. In Uncanny Australia Gelder and Jacobs make plain
moreover that such stances have only been made possible because of the millions of dollars available to pay for advertising campaigns, strategic media releases and ‘matey get-togethers’ of the sort witnessed in Western Australia, where the Court dynasty now controls just about all the important power levers. But then, as Gelder and Jacobs note, the nation’s Prime Minister, John Howard, reacted to the High Court’s Wik decision ‘by noting ... that the High Court’s advocacy of “co-existence” had meant that “the pendulum had swung too far towards Aborigines and had to be re-set”’ (p.136). Uncannily (it is catchy), precisely the point Pauline Hanson has been trying to make, only with not quite as much success.

Equally interesting is the point they make with reference to the US-based, Australian-born Michael Taussig’s work, The Nervous System (1994). Gelder and Jacobs suggest that the diffidence with which the Australian postcolonial nation has behaved in relation to reconciliation and co-existence is to be found even in the actions of those generally, and often very vociferously, sympathetic to the Aboriginal cause. Thus, wishing to include in his book an illustration of an Aboriginal artefact, Taussig checked with a fellow anthropologist, based in Australia, about the ethics of the issue. The advice, which he heeded, not to do so in order not to offend the community to whom the item belonged, elicit from Gelder and Jacobs the following comment: ‘Anthropological authorisation [has come to stand in] for Aboriginal authorisation.’ (p.100) Uncannily, yet again, as the Australian government engages in a protracted dispute over mining in the Kakadu National Park, a similar situation has emerged. Having opted for overlooking the wishes of the land’s traditional owners, Robert Hill, the Minister for the Environment, now awaits what he hopes will be a kinder report form the United Nations’ World Heritage Commission. Even though he already dislikes them almost as much as the legitimate Aboriginal peoples with whom he has refused to deal, the minister is willing to play ball with a bunch of (White?) people from elsewhere on the basis that their report will be the result of ‘scientific investigations’. The shuffling of paper endemic to commissioned reports stands here as the epitome of a preoccupation with the management of knowledge that once characterised colonialism and now continues to mark postcoloniality.

Ultimately, then, Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation offers some important and insightful new ways to read what the authors term ‘the discourses of the sacred’. Overall, the book is invaluable research tool for anyone interested in the profound transformations we, as a nation, are at present undergoing. But Gelder and Jacobs are perhaps a little too optimistic when they refer to ‘an ongoing dialogue between White Australia and Aboriginal Australia’, a central premise both of their definition of postcoloniality in Australia and of the sacred that is now said to circulate so widely and subversively. For a dialogue presupposes equality of positions, or, at the very least, a disposition to consider the means of achieving that stage. Gelder and Jacobs, and I
suppose most of their readers might scoff at the arguments mounted by the Richard Courts, the Hugh Morgans, the John Mulvaneyes or Geoffrey Blaineyes of today’s Australia. They might speak of Barry Hill’s study of Uluru in almost reverential terms, but ultimately that is not yet the view most Australians hold. John Howard himself has, on any number of occasions, produced as aberrant assertions as Hanson (and Gelder and Jacobs cite one of the most obvious ones, on the High Court’s rulings), yet he is accorded the benefit of reasoned debate. He, our Prime Minister, is after all, the embodiment of the most calcified blend of suspicion, bigotry and arrogance presiding at a period where we are also allegedly engaged in a celebration of tolerance and joie de vivre. Or so David Malouf’s A Spirit of Play, the collection of his 1998 Boyer Lectures, would suggest. The current events outside the National Parliament in Canberra, involving the Aboriginal Embassy, would seem to speak otherwise.

University of Western Australia

TONY SIMOES DA SILVA

Notes

1 Oliver MacDonagh, The Sharing of the Green, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1996, p.xi.
2 Editors’ note: Our State of Mind recently won the History and Critical Studies category of the 1998 West Australia Premier’s Book Awards. The Collective would like to congratulate the authors on this achievement.