Reviews

Paul Longley Arthur a, Joy Damousi b, Stephen Garton c, Richard Nile d, Anna Shnukal d, Robert Mackie e, Frank Bongiomo f, Trevor Warren g, Katy Nebhan d, Michele Langfield h, Nobuaki Suyama i, Lyndall Morgan d, Angela Smith j, H P Heseltine k, Ingrid Woodrow d, Mary Spongberg l & Libby Connors m

a University of Western Australia
b University of Melbourne
c University of Sydney
d University of Queensland
e University of Newcastle
f The Australian National University
gh Flinders University
h Deakin University
i Melbourne Institute of Technology
j University of Stirling
k University of New South Wales
l Macquarie University
m University of Southern Queensland

Available online: 18 May 2009


To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14443059909387465

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.
REVIEWS


How did European thinkers imagine the legendary Great South Land of Terra Australis in the many hundreds of years leading up to the late eighteenth century when the region was finally colonised and fully explored? What influence did ancient myths, such as the belief in a southern earthly paradise, have on early explorers as they tried to make sense of the unfamiliar places and people they discovered in the south seas? And what kind of people were the famed navigators who left the familiar safety of Europe to sail for years into uncharted waters following dreams and fantasies of knowledge, wealth and power?

These are the broad and alluring historical questions which Miriam Estensen responds to in *Discovery: The Quest for the Great South Land*. The first impression on opening this beautifully produced hardback book is an aesthetic one. Inside the front cover is a spiralling letterform design made up of the many different names which have been given to the land mass of the Australian continent through time. Inside the back cover is a similar design, but instead of including the names of places the space is covered with the names of prominent explorers and theorists of the ‘Great South Land’. Both designs are overlaid onto sections of an ancient world map which is reproduced faintly in the background, evoking the elusive and mysterious qualities that made unknown earthly regions such as Terra Australis so intriguing for Europeans. These designs signal what is to come in the bulk of the book: *Discovery* is a chronological study of European explorers, mapmakers, their accounts and their maps, and of the many ways in which forces combined to historically transform Terra Australis from a myth into a reality. Estensen begins by chronicling the birth of the idea of the Great South Land in the European imagination, but the book centres on the myriad European voyages of discovery that took place between the sixteenth century and the late eighteenth century. She describes these voyages in detail, lucidly supplying the reader with ample contextual information, citing extracts from various accounts, discussing what motivated the explorers themselves, and, in every chapter, strategically returning to the gradual ‘background’ process by which mapmakers presented the latest discoveries in the south seas at the same time as speculating on what might yet to be found.

The strength of *Discovery* is in its punchy style which makes readers feel as though they, like the early explorers themselves, are always on the verge of making some new and long-awaited discovery. Chapter and section headings ask short and enticing questions such as ‘Visitors from Asia?’, ‘Beyond the Indies?’, ‘But was it undiscovered?’, ‘Could other outsiders have already reached it?’ and ‘Was the south land inhabited?’, all of which promise answers. Those answers are not immediately delivered to the reader. Instead, Estensen tells an intriguing story which explains how Terra Australis gradually became a reality for Europeans through a process of sequentially eliminating or modifying ancient myths. At the same time, she explains how technological advances, such as the development of reliable techniques for gauging bearings, distance and direction, made the voyages themselves more practicable. Because of the carefully planned way in which it is written, *Discovery* is an engaging book which leaves readers with the sense that they have been presented with a broad-sweeping but balanced history. It is told with a convincing narrative voice which gives readers a sense of confidence in the information which is being put forward.

It is difficult not to be impressed by the sheer readability of *Discovery*, and yet I do have two serious reservations about the book. Firstly, there are very few notes and citations. For a book which seems to be reasonably substantial on a first handling, there are surprisingly few words, even though they span 286 pages. The page size is small and the type is large and spaced out. All this, of course, may have been a marketing decision, but the impression it inevitably gives is of an abridged, concise or ‘pocket’ version of something much larger, more
detailed and better substantiated. I found myself pausing on nearly every page and wishing that I knew exactly where Estensen’s information had come from, not because the information itself seemed questionable but because it was so fascinating that I wanted to know where to find original sources or more detailed information. My second reservation is that Estensen tells the story of European discovery from a proudly European historical perspective. This indicates a complete lack of awareness or ignorance of the complex politics of European colonial encounters in Australia and the Pacific. Moments of cross-cultural encounter, on the rare occasions when they are addressed in Discovery, are quickly passed over. Without adequate explanation, discussion or even passing comment to justify their scanty presence in her account, non-European people are variously referred to as ‘native warriors’ (p 16), ‘only very primitive people’ (p 48) and ‘warlike’ islanders who ‘frustrated attempts at exploration’ (p 103). Colonialism, equated with nationalism, is only mentioned on a couple of occasions, when it is described as the ‘potential key to wealth and power’ which would positively force the ‘emergence of a continent from millennia of isolation’ (p 60). As if to make up for the fact that she fails to consider the multi-sided politics of colonial contact, Estensen pays excessive attention to the character and even appearance of individual European explorers. Magellan, for example, is described as ‘a complex man, sombre, remote and hard, given to fits of temper but possessed of enormous drive and an undeviating will’ (p 84). Dampier, on the other hand, she describes as having had a ‘deeply tanned face with dark brows, a rather long nose and an obstinate lower lip. The eyes are deep-set and thoughtful, almost sad’ (p 233). At best, this kind of character study adds to the reader’s understanding of a particular aspect of an explorer’s approach to seafaring. At worst, it signals a nostalgia for the long-gone days when European ships heroically rode the waves as keepers of the world’s largest empire.

I have noticed that Discovery is selling well in airport bookshops all around Australia. It is a book that has been packaged very thoughtfully in order for it to appeal to a wide readership. On the one hand, this is giving a general readership access to a field of study which has become increasingly important and popular in the humanities in the past ten or so years. But on the other, the alluring simplicity and narrow eurocentric focus of Discovery threatens to undermine or overshadow more deserving and detailed work which has already been done on the history of discovery in the south seas, work which actively confronts the unavoidable political issues of cross-cultural contact.

Paul Longley Arthur
University of Western Australia


In Punishment in Australian Society, Mark Finnane makes a convincing case for a history of punishment to be written which moves beyond convict history. He argues that a study of punishment which addresses issues other than the convict period needs further attention. Whilst the focus of the book is on the prison, Finnane explores themes and issues which extend beyond it. Some of its considerable strengths are the ways he considers the discourses in circulation about punishment at particular historical moments; the choices which are made about punishment; who and why we choose to punish; the policy decisions which are made; the attitudes by groups to various forms of punishment; and what limits are placed on punishment and why.

As an overview, Punishment in Australian Society can do no more than provide the most general information and comment on overall trends and developments. Within these limitations, Finnane manages to marry both the detail and the general, with apposite illustrations which highlight the complexity of the points he makes. Finnane covers the transportation debates and the historiographical issues related to this literature, which is a useful and engaging
summation of these issues. The analysis of the plight of Aborigines and women during the
nineteenth century provides fascinating and important reading. He foregrounds the treatment
of Aborigines against ideas and current thinking of the day, and examines the ways in which
femininity and Aboriginality shaped and determined forms of punishment. The emergence of
the juvenile criminal and youth crime are also integrated into the study and into understandings
of the cultural construction of the criminal. Prevailing attitudes towards punishment, and the
forms it took, are understood within a broad cultural and social context. The shift from bodily
punishments, to capital punishment as a form of deterrence, to abolition of the death penalty,
are examined. Penal reform is also considered, most interestingly in terms of it as a social
movement, upholding and maintaining civic values, especially in relation to women and
Aboriginal groups.

In many general histories, the voices of historical actors are often lost. Another strength of
this book is the lively descriptions of those who were involved in these processes. The stories
of various organisations and individuals are vividly told within a broad historical account
which takes into consideration the wider social and political currents of the day, such as
environmentalism and hereditarianism, which influenced and shaped social policy and
institutional practice from the late 1880s to the 1930s. Prisoners are seen as agents and not just
recipients of punishments within the criminal system, and an account is given of the transition
from the prisoner as a citizen to a prisoner into a citizen. Another aspect Finnane explores is the
experience of prison life and how this differed for men and for women. In the early 1930s, for
instance, women prisoners were evidently subjected to 'drab and uninteresting sewing' while
men were relocated to prison farms.

The voices of prisoners themselves could have been given further space in the book — this is in large part the history of those who administered punishment, argued about, and
sought to reform it. The prisoner's voice could have more pronounced and foregrounded
when considering how the prisoners themselves experienced punishment, how they rebelled
and why and what they considered to be effective forms of punishment.

Finnane has produced an important and valuable overview of punishment in Australia. In
this account he opens up new perspectives in the field of the history of crime and punishment
and makes a significant contribution to a more complex understanding of the history of
Australian culture.

Joy Damousi
University of Melbourne

Anna Rutherford and James Wieland (eds), War: Australia's Creative

This book is a little like an eighteenth century gentleman's 'cabinet of curiosities' — to modern
eyes somewhat puzzling in its arrangement and principles or organisation but full of interest
and occasional gems. This engaging collection contains literary and film criticism, poems,
short stories, documents, cultural histories, photographs, cartoons, posters, paintings, memoir,
reminiscences and comments by authors on the meaning of Anzac for their work, in no particular
order (except perhaps a vague chronological one) or thematic organisation, other than the
rather broad and encompassing one of war and Australia's creative response to it.

There are a few oddities here. The 'War' referred to is largely the first world war. There is
a chapter which mentions colonial wars, one on the Boer war, a couple on the second world
war, one mentions the Korean war, and there is a chapter and a poem whose focus is the
Vietnam war, out of more than thirty items. The vast majority of the collection concerns the
first world war, Anzac and the continuing fertility of Anzac for Australian culture. No doubt
this imbalance reflects a broader bias within Australian scholarship (and culture) more generally.
The origins of the Anzac legend and the creative response to it have dominated Australian
culture to a much greater extent than later wars (despite the efforts of historians such as McQueen and politicians such as Keating to redress this imbalance). Even so, this collection is remarkable for its neglect of later wars. The other curious feature is its use of ‘creative’, for no real definition is offered here. From the bulk of the collection it seems that what is meant is formal cultural production — poems, novels, stories, films, art and the like. Some more adventurous articles justifiably expand the domain of the ‘creative’ into little explored areas of popular culture, notably postcards and cartoons. But what has an article on the politics of conscription got to do with ‘creative’ (despite the editors’ conceit of having a few posters reproduced within the chapter, ones that receive no discussion, analysis or even mention in the work itself). More interesting for this rationale of ‘creative response’ are the contributions of Richard White on soldiers as tourists and John McQuilton’s on the impact of the Great War on a local rural community, as reflected in the local newspaper and the poignant letters and notebook of a Yackandandah man who did not return. These are creative responses, but more in the sense of what Michel de Certeau has called bricolage, rather than the more formal sense implied by the other chapters. Some argument around this in the volume’s introduction might have done much to enhance the focus of the collection.

These reservations aside, there are some wonderful chapters here, particularly those on postcards and cartoons, as mentioned. Equally those on war memorials, films, and television offer much of interest. There is also some insightful literary criticism. I particularly liked the articles on Malouf, Martin Boyd and John Romeril. The statements from authors are brief but illuminating and the book has some excellent illustrations, reproductions and photographs. All in all it is a very well produced volume. And although much of it has appeared in other publications (either in whole, in part or here given a very light rewrite, though curiously not all of this ‘reproduction’ is actually acknowledged), it is certainly very useful to have many of these impressive and very useful pieces between the same covers.

Stephen Garton
University of Sydney


Ever since the 1960s and the publication of his now famous article, ‘The Anzac Tradition’ in *Meanjin* K S Inglis has been highly regarded as a historian with very important things to say about the ‘One Day of the Year’, a phrase popularised by the success of Alan Seymour’s 1960 play. Since the early expression of his themes on the Anzac tradition, Inglis has published many astute articles on the civilian observance of Anzac Day. Along the way he has written other books on history. The Anzac articles, if collected into a single volume, would constitute an impressive book in their own right. It might be hoped that a publisher will exercise this option and consolidate into one text these widely scattered writings for a new generation of readers and scholars.

Sacred Places, has been, by the historian’s own admission, forty years in the making. The subject itself goes deep into his own childhood, as it goes deep into the cultural memories of his generation. Certainly a major work on Anzac by Inglis has been anticipated by a wider reading public since about the mid 1960s. At times it seemed very close indeed. Counting Inglis among the cultural nationalists of the time, Russel Ward defending his 1958 thesis, *The Australian Legend*, looked forward to the what sounded like ‘immanent’ publication of Inglis’s interpretative history of Anzac. That was in the 1970s. After about 1983 Inglis began focusing more precisely on war memorials and their meaning. Fifteen years later, Sacred Places has appeared.
Reviews

If Ward explained The Australian Legend as being concerned with 'mystique, rather than being an empirical history of the labour movement, Inglis has been noted for his interests in the observation of Anzac day more so than the history of the campaign or more broadly the course of First World War. Moreover, Inglis has argued that Anzac day is a civilian commemoration rather than a military one. Australian commemoration, he has maintained, is distinguished from similarly conceived memorial days in other countries because Anzac does not narrate classic heroism but rather marks a defeat in a campaign that was waged thousands of miles from home.

In making this point, Inglis encourages a view of Anzac at odds with, say, Robin Gerster's Big Noting, which argues for the persistent presence of a bragging tradition, something, Sacred Places argues Anzac is not. More widely, Inglis's writings are concerned with the 'democracy' of C E W Bean, the tragedy of Bill Gammage and, more recently, the remembering of Alistair Thomson. His work may also anticipate Joy Damousi's soon to be published history of grieving and loss. In this peculiar blend of democracy, tragedy and remembering, Sacred Places argues that Anzac meanings are more varied, complex and problematic (now a much overused term) than might otherwise appear to be the case. The story, like The Australian legend, may be simple in outline and easy to remember, but the politics of remembering are very much more elusive, and they change with time.

With the expectation surrounding the appearance of this book, a major concern must surely have been that Sacred Places would not live up to the promise of its long gestation. That did not seem to bother publishers, however, and industry rumour has it the book was highly sought after by at least a couple of companies. To its credit, Melbourne University Press, through Miegunyah secured the rights to publish the Sacred Places. Perhaps they won over the historian with the promise of fine printing. This spacious and beautiful book does justice to its remarkable contents. It was designed by Lauren Statham who deserves special notice. For those who appreciate fine printing, the details appear at the back of the book: 'The text was set in 11 point Berthold Baskerville with four points of leading. The text was printed on Impress Matt 115 grms'. It is rather too heavy to read in bed but should be taken in the deep chairs of the common room of the mind.

Sacred Places is concerned with an interpretation of arguably Australia's greatest enterprise in public art, the creation and maintenance of memorials. Yet, as Inglis points out, very little work has been done on war monuments. Among the few, John Fiske, Bob Hodge and Graeme Turner attempted a semiotic analysis of the Kings Park memorial in Perth in their discursive essays Myths of Oz (1988), though Inglis seems to prefer the French historians to semiotic theory. Among the Australians, he references his own works, alone and in collaboration with Jock Phillips. Sacred Places has benefited from the assistance on Jan Brazier who Inglis generously mentions on the title page — an acknowledgment which should appear more commonly on other Australian books.

Because of their abundance, and one might argue, their centrality to Australian imagining, and because the great war of 1914–1918 has been by far our largest war in terms of casualties, Anzac memorials are central to Inglis' consideration. From these, Sacred Places covers a span dating back to 'colonial monuments' and forward to Korea and Vietnam. Sacred Places concludes with 'Australia Remembers' which incorporates an important section on 'Aboriginal presences and absences', in which Inglis makes a claim for memorials to acknowledge the 'unrecorded battlefields' of dispossession. Inglis revisits some other old sites such as 'civil religion' and new interpretations such as 'multiculturalism', but perhaps most movingly he writes of 'The unknown Australian soldier'.

The subject matter is absorbing but Sacred Places is a grand book also in an Australian narrative tradition of historical writing. Inglis has never moved far from this style of presentation which has stylistic links back to the great nineteenth century realist novels and which survives into the twenty first century despite the upheavals of the 1970s and the claims and counter claims of the 1980s and 1990s concerning the 'end of history'. In tapping
this rich vein but now often neglected tradition of Australian historical writing (can I call it vernacular history in the most positive sense of that phrase?) Inglis presents writing filled with imagination, images and stories. His prose disguises in the ease we experience in reading, the detailed research and close analysis that has gone into its making. We may well want to engage him on some issues and disagree about some interpretations and conclusions, but the historian, at the height of his writing and imaginative powers, has created his own lasting monument.

_Sacred Places_ invites (and I stress that term) its readers to consider the commonplace and the everyday to discover deeper meanings embedded in the ways we live and share, or live and disagree, about stories of the past. In terms of the trade, _Sacred Places_, helps breathe life back into the discipline of history which is currently suffering a great lack of confidence. It ought not lack this confidence. Our historians need it would seem not only stronger boots but a less defeatist attitude. Inglis has been counted favourably among the of story telling historians Manning Clark, W K Hancock and Geoffrey Blainey, but in _Sacred Places_ he is clearly among the best contemporaries such as Stuart Macintyre, Henry Reynolds, Marilyn Lake, Ann Curthoys, David Walker, Tom Griffiths and Joy Damousi.

The rhetorical abilities of the story-telling historian — to teach and delight — the charm of _Sacred Places_, begin early with apparently easy personal asides. Inglis revisits his school days and the ‘Fourth Grade Reader of the Victorian Education Department’ to engage our ways of remembering: ‘Private Simpson, the Man with the Donkey ... Here was one story from the war which all our mentors, the most bellicose and the most peace loving, could agree was entirely edifying. (The Reader did not tell us about the most famous Australian fighter of the war, Albert Jacka, from Melbourne, awarded the Victoria Cross for killing seven Turks the Day Simpson died)’. Each semester over the last decade, I have applied Inglis’ test to undergraduates. They don’t know Jacka, very few know the names of generals in any wars, but virtually all have heard of and know the story of ‘Private Simpson’.

Staying with school days, Inglis reminds us of his civilian credentials: ‘In my class at North Preston, most of us, born in 1928 or 1929, had fathers who had been just too young for the war; an envied minority wore their dads’ medals, and most admired of all, my friend Wally, wore medals of a dad who was dead’. From here _Sacred Places_ teases out the links between the democracy of Anzac commemoration, its inclusions and its exclusions, but more importantly its vicarious function for those who are not its subject. These sacred places commemorate those who fought and particularly those who have died in war — and who those unnamed who did not return. But more broadly and more deeply _Sacred Places_ argues, memorials are the physical embodiment of ‘others’ — the grieving family and friends seeing off young men to their almost certain mutilation or death. The memorials are also an embodiment of a national grieving which exists outside historical immediacy to include contemporary Australians who have re-invented Anzac in their own image. The most moving monument for Inglis is the war memorial at Thirroul in New South Wales. He quotes from D H Lawrence. More immediately, however, I think there is a literary connection with George Johnston in _My Brother Jack_, whose young narrator was born after the war but grew up in a household suffused with its memory. In this connection, Inglis set out to explore a relatively simple proposition that while Anzac is military in origin, its commemoration is not, that to write a history of memorials was not necessarily to write a history of war. ‘Most of the present book is about the years since 1915’, he explains, ‘its themes are those I had in mind when I set out, though at first I had not intended to put war memorials at the centre of the story’. The history, that is to say, is not about bricks and mortar, but spirit and meaning.

Richard Nile
University of Queensland

Two years ago, before a surprised but approving local crowd at the Thursday Island Anzac Day celebration, both the veteran Torres Strait Islander politician, George Mye, and the state parliamentary representative, Steve Bredhauer, broke with tradition by publicly lauding the courage with which Islander women had faced and surmounted considerable hardships during the second world war. To my knowledge this was the first time the wartime experiences of Torres Strait women had been acknowledged in a public forum and given parity with those of their menfolk.

The catalysts for the reappraisal were Betty Osborne’s ground-breaking MA and PhD theses, which scribe, describe and contextualise the experiences of Islander women and children during the second world war and which have been distilled into this fine book for the general reader.

To the Islanders (and other indigenous people of northern Australia) the Pacific war signified something like liberation. For the first time for a generation, the men at least were free from the most demeaning restrictions of the Aboriginals Protection Acts and could mix relatively freely with Europeans on relatively equal terms.

The war marked a watershed in indigenous-European relations: contemporary race relations in Torres Strait cannot be understood without knowing how it broke open the cocoon of ‘innocence’, isolation and exploitation, produced by four decades of ‘internal colonialism’ (Beckett’s term).

The Japanese bombed the war into Torres Strait with their attack on Horn Island in March 1942. Almost every able-bodied adult Islander — almost 800 men — joined units of the Australian Army, stationed on Thursday and Horn Islands; but their wives, children and elderly parents were, according to prevailing racial classification, either forcibly evacuated to the mainland or abandoned on small, remote island reserves to their own resources and the advancing Japanese.

Osborne lived for some time in Torres Strait from 1967, where she got to know many of the women whose experiences she chronicles. The stories are not new to Islanders: their mothers, grandmothers and aunties have long yarned these stories to family members and privileged outsiders, but always in private settings. Publicly unacknowledged — ‘devalued and suppressed’ are Osborne’s terms — they were until recently excluded from public Torres Strait lore.

Osborne knots together almost 200 oral testimonies which, while focusing on wartime experiences of isolation, alienation, hunger and poverty, nevertheless range more widely. They chart women’s evolving roles from traditional to contemporary times, showing the importance of women’s traditional skills and knowledge of gardening, fishing, food-gathering, house building, preparing medicines — as well as their wages as fishery, domestic and store workers outside the home — to individual and group survival. In privileging female voices for the first time, Osborne shows how dependent families were during the war on the skills of the women, either evacuated to an alien mainland or penned up on their remote islands.

Through the women’s words and wartime experiences, the reader also gains a sense of Islander history, values and worldview, as well as glimpses of the physical character of the region, gender relationships, the centrality of family, religious belief, pre-war racism, fears and hopes for the future, ties to homeland. These things are important for us all to know. The 40,000 Torres Strait Islanders may be a minority within a minority and the women a minority again — triply invisible — but it is Torres Strait Islanders who spearheaded many of the changes which, when later adopted by Aboriginal people, have created our contemporary ideational landscape: Islanders chose their own leaders from 1879; they established local government, i.e., ran their own community courts and police, from the 1880s; they were the first indigenous Australians to form a cohesive supra-local identity during the first decades of the century, through reconciling the interests of the disparate peoples of the Strait for the common good; they were the first indigenous people to strike (in 1936) over long-standing grievances; they pioneered the CDEP (a local variant of the work-for-the-dole) scheme; three Murray
Islanders initiated the Mabo case, which overturned our hitherto impregnable legal principle of terra nullius and whose success depended crucially on local court documentation of ongoing native title; their leaders' calls for sovereignty, reaching back over forty years, saw the recent acceptance of regional autonomy proposals by the federal government.

We are fortunate to live at a time when indigenous stories about past events are piercing the thin white crust of Australian studies. Osborne offers us outsiders a previously undocumented dimension, which I recommend to readers with an interest in 'hidden' Australian stories, the Pacific war, indigenous and women's studies, and Australian history and historiography. My one reservation — nothing to do with Osborne, whose loyalties are clear — is that even today the legitimation of Islander experience remains largely in the hands of non-Islanders, betraying a lack of confidence engendered by decades of 'protection' and analogous to the Australian cultural cringe of yesteryear. Whatever their provenance, let us hope that many more once-marginalised stories will cross the now permeable race barrier and find a wider audience than immediate family.

Anna Shnukal
University of Queensland


Why a book on the Communist Party of Australia? Well last year was the thirtieth anniversary of the death of that most un-Australian figure Che Guevara, and that brought forth three full-scale biographies, while the year before Donald Sassoon completed his magisterial One Hundred Years of Socialism. And this year, a century and a half since The Communist Manifesto burst onto revolutionary Europe, has seen celebratory conferences in London and Havana alongside numerous reprints and reinterpretations. So in that context a volume on Australian commos and their activities might not seem out of place. Yet when we learn that The Reds is only volume one of the history, and that, to borrow Dorothy Hewitt's phrase, the chapel perilous of Australian communism emerges triumphant from the war only to enter the four decades of geo-political permafrost and pass, so to speak, into history with the collapse of the Berlin Wall, then the possibility of self-indulgence appears.

The point gains pertinence when we read Francis Beckett's lively and lucid study of the rise and fall of the British Communist Party, Enemy Within. The Australian Communist Party was formed a mere three months (October 1925) after the British one and in similar postwar conditions of loss and desolation, compensated for with the militant optimism of October 1917. The British party grew to a maximum of 50,000 compared to its down under counterpart's 20,000 by the late 1940s, and while the CPA did not attract scientific luminaries of the calibre of Haldane and Bernal in Britain, it did boast Kath Pritchard and the young Noel Counihan, and overseas support in Gordon Childe and Jack Lindsay. Again the British party had its domestic historians, in James Klugmann and Noreen Branson, whose labours in many ways eased Beckett's task. Here Macintyre was not so lucky. Diligent and assiduous recorders of party congresses, plenums and committees they may be, but Australian communists were keener to praise Comrade History than understand its taxing demands. Memoirs and reminiscences have been more the Australian forte and while these often illuminate, the bricks and mortar of Macintyre's account are found in the huge bibliographic resource of Beverly Symon, the Search Foundation archive, and in Barbara Curthoy's enormous generosity in bringing home the Comitem papers on Australia. Little wonder that a multivolume publication beckoned. Nonetheless can two lengthy volumes on this political and cultural minority be justified?

For many on the left, those born in the cold war especially, it has always been easy — perhaps too easy — to castigate communists as Stalinists, "Moscow liners," or worse. And this because of perceived doctrinal rigidity, fidelity to the October model and tight party
Reviews

discipline. Yet on a closer and more fairminded inspection we find, as Macintyre did, examples of enormous bravery, sacrifice and courage. Whatever the specific issue — Spain, the eight hour day, racial equality, unemployment — party members could be relied upon to advance the anticapitalist line. Holding the scarlet banner high, they were staunch in the belief that if only we could lose our chains we would gain everything. If only.

For Australian communists, like their comrades elsewhere, October 1917 was not simply a romantic epic by Sergei Eisenstein. It was the political motif, example, and, in an interwar world increasingly plagued by unemployment and poverty, Moscow shone brighter than Milton’s morning star. It was as clearly visible to Paul Robeson in the US and Harry Pollitt in London as it was to comrades in Sydney and Melbourne. However flawed, this one example was not only better than none, but in the vastness of its unquestioned success dwarfed the Utopian failures of William Lane and Mary Gilmore in Paraguay.

It is the tragedy lying just behind the fervent ardour of these beliefs that forms the major theme and dominant emotion in Macintyre’s account. How could so many decent, intelligent, hardworking and high-minded people give their life and allegiance to an ultimately mistaken and fraudulent political experiment? The answer is that in 1942 the tanks in Budapest and Prague were still a long way off.

What was an Aussie commo like in the interwar years? Macintyre’s work does not make answering such a question easy. But one thing seems clear, Australian communists didn’t see themselves as the heart of a heartless world. On the contrary, they appear dour, somewhat humourless — not at all like Frank Hardy — beset by a fear of spies, a touch puritanical. Bodyline and the abdication clearly belong to a different world. True, some, like Fred Patterson, were extremely gifted and highly principled. On closer inspection though who would swap places with the Patterson children or wives? Chronic factionalism dogged the party from the start and cost it valuable skills in the case of Jack and Edna Ryan and, in the case of Jean Devanny, being a writer was sufficient to incur a three month probation on party membership.

There is no doubt that Stewart Macintyre’s *The Reds* will be the definitive work on Australian communism up until the early 1940s. In its thorough, indeed exhaustive, coverage of the party and period it far exceeds Alistair Davidson’s earlier work, and provides the necessary scaffolding upon which to enrich our understanding of interwar political history.

*The Reds*, like Beckett’s *Enemy Within*, is partly a homage to a noble failure, and partly an explanation of that failure. It is obvious that the right and ultra right are dominating Australian politics at the end of the century. What is imperative, although less obvious, is the critical historical study of past failings. It is imperative because only through such means can the political reconstruction of marxism occur as a framework for human liberation.

Robert Mackie
University of Newcastle


John Dedman was, with John Curtin, Ben Chifley and Bert Evatt, one of the giants of federal Labor politics in the 1940s, and, until the appearance of this study by Andrew Spaull, the only member of this coterie not to have attracted a full-length biography. Curtin, Chifley and Evatt each gave rise to a legend; they have an acknowledged place in the Labor pantheon. Dedman is also the subject of a legend: he was the dour Scot who, during the second world war, banned pink icing on wedding cakes, fathered the Victory Suit, and killed off Santa Claus (when he banned Christmas advertising).

Dedman arrived in Australia in 1922, his studies at the University of Edinburgh having been interrupted by war service. Active in public life in the interwar years, first as a dairy farmer in milk politics and then in the Labor Party, his rise in an organisation often alleged to be hostile
to University-educated radicals was rapid. He entered parliament as the member for Corio in 1940. After playing a key role as minister for war organisation of industry in placing the Australian economy on a war footing, Dedman took over the post-war reconstruction and defence portfolios and became a pivotal figure in postwar politics and administration.

This book would be an important contribution to Australian political history if for no other reason than that it is a detailed exploration of the career of a significant, controversial yet neglected figure in the Labor governments of the 1940s. Yet it is also an impressive study of some key areas of Australian public administration during the war and its aftermath. Spaull examines Dedman’s ministerial activities in areas such as industry policy, science, higher education and international economic diplomacy; and, having drawn on an enormous body of sources, he explains some bewilderingly complex developments with admirable clarity.

Other aspects of Dedman’s life and times receive less substantial treatment. While the author examines Dedman’s involvement in producer politics — and his membership of the Country Party — he does not have much to say about Victorian rural politics at this time. There is nothing especially ‘unexpected’ about Dedman’s drift into the Labor Party once we recall B D Graham’s portrait of the Victorian Country Party’s radical wing, which strongly advocated ‘compulsory produce pools, rural credit reform, and state-aid for co-operative enterprise’. Nor should we be surprised that a devout Presbyterian such as Dedman should find in Labor politics an outlet for his Protestant social idealism, especially if we take into account the attachment to liberal causes of his father and grandfather.

By Spaull’s own admission, however, the book ‘is less concerned with the whole person or “a life”, than with Dedman the political, public man’. Dedman’s family background is thus disposed of in a few paragraphs; and his private life, while not ignored, is touched on lightly. The paucity of surviving materials on Dedman’s private life meant that this emphasis was perhaps unavoidable. We do, however, gain a sense of what Dedman was like as a man, not least in Spaull’s account of Dedman’s erroneous belief in his own invincibility in the lead-up to the 1949 election, and his impetuous outburst at the declaration of the poll, followed by his inability, in the years after his defeat, to come to terms with his rejection by the electors. Dedman, however, later found satisfying work with the World Council of Churches, and in retirement even completed a BA degree at the university of which he regarded himself the father, the ANU.

If there is anything ‘unexpected’ about Dedman, it is the balancing act he managed to perform between an older, populist politics based primarily on hostility to the ‘money power’, and the newer keynesianism that dominated the thinking of the postwar planners such as H C Coombs over whom Dedman exercised ministerial authority. Dedman, like Chifley, stands in an ambiguous relationship to social-democratic modernity: an heir of William Jennings Bryan, Ignatius Donnelly and Major Douglas, who also came under the spell of keynesianism, and has strong claims to be taken seriously as a Labor intellectual.

As a study of Dedman’s political career, this book is unlikely to be surpassed. It is another important contribution to uncovering the values of that group of politicians and planners who directed Australia’s war effort, and, with a modicum of success, sought to create a fairer society in the postwar years.

Frank Bongiorno
The Australian National University


The origins of this timely and important book lie in a thesis on the NSW Branch of the Builders Labourers’ Federation, completed in 1981 by Meredith Burgmann, now a NSW Labor MLC, which has been reshaped, updated and otherwise supplemented by her sister, Verity. Green
Reviews

*Bans, Red Union* is thus the product of an unusual, but fruitful collaboration by two scholars and activists. Their subject, the NSW BLF, came to national prominence from the late 1960s under the leadership of Jack Mundey largely on account of its ‘green bans’ on sites of ecological or historical significance. These bans were usually the product of cooperation with local resident groups, conservationists, student organisations, professional associations (eg of architects), opponents of freeways, historical societies and the National Trust. Indeed, the authors consider the branch to have been a pioneer and prototype of ‘social movement unionism’. The campaign that commenced with the ‘green ban’ on Kelly’s Bush in Hunters Hill, instituted when a group of well-to-do women approached the union for assistance in saving some local land from the ravages of a construction company, was ‘the first of its type in the world’ (p 4: the term ‘green ban’ itself, they point out, was first used in Australia).

The activities of the NSW BLF attracted international attention, and the authors concur with the view that they influenced overseas environmentalists such as Petra Kelly and Paul Ehrlich. Moreover, they accept the opinion that the BLF’s green bans not only helped to shape modern Sydney, but also contributed to a transformation in community and government attitudes towards the environment (and especially urban planning). The book provides a detailed account of these bans, but the union’s lesser known campaigns also receive attention. It was involved in struggles against the Vietnam war and apartheid in South Africa — in 1972 a BLF official was fined for having sawn through an SCG goalpost during the Springbok Rugby tour — and supported campaigns for Aboriginal rights, prison reform, and homosexual and women's liberation. It also assisted the efforts of women to enter the male-dominated building industry. This is not an uncritical account, however, for the authors note the lack of enthusiasm among members for the BLF’s support of gay liberation, and note the limits of BLF enlightenment in regard to gender questions. All the same, they successfully challenge an interpretation of social movements, increasingly popular in recent years, that the labour movement by its very nature is concerned only with the material interests of its members and ignores broader concerns.

One of the many strengths of this book is that it blends concerns that are currently fashionable in political science and history, such as the analysis of social movements, environmental history, and heritage matters, with more traditional labour history. The authors examine the building industry of the 1960s and 1970s, the nature of its workforce, the structure and ideology of the union during the years of its greatest militancy, its industrial campaigns, and the politics of its downfall in 1974, which occurred largely at the hands of an alliance between that scourge of ‘residents and poofers’ (to borrow his own phrase), Norm Gallagher of the Victorian (and federal) BLF, and employers. The authors explore the peculiar but potent blend of anti-intellectualism, larrikinism, humour, syndicalism and New Left political commitment that was the possession of the what they see as the typical NSW BLF activist during the period. I would be inclined to add ethical socialism to this catalogue, for in Mundey’s condemnation of development for its own sake, regardless of the human element, and in his emphasis on socially useful labour and industry, one hears echoes R H Tawney’s rejection of ‘the acquisitive society’.

In many respects, this book deals with events that seem an eon away: the last years of postwar prosperity, when communist union officials advocating the Moscow line, the Peking line or (like the NSW BLF) independence from both, jostled for power in the booming Australian building industry. This was a time in which a government proposal to build a sports stadium with a capacity of 80,000 in Sydney’s Centennial Park could still be treated seriously. Yet it also examines issues that are relevant to our own times: the difficulties of resisting development-at-any-price governments and their business friends; the problem of preserving the environment from ‘progress’, as that term is defined by these vested interests; and the difficult task faced by the labour movement of reaching beyond its membership to a wider public in the quest for social transformation. Indeed, the experience of the NSW BLF, and Meredith and Verity Burgmann’s excellent account of it, reveals some exciting possibilities for both the labour and environmental movements today.

Frank Bongiorno

The Australian National University
Reviews


FitzSimons has produced a very readable, accessible, and enjoyable account of Kim Beazley's life up to just before the calling of the last federal election. The book is more than a simple telling of Beazley's rise to power or a background study of his character. FitzSimons provides us with a useful look into the politics and policy processes of the Hawke and Keating governments; it is also in part a social history, both of Australia and the ALP.

The influence of the Moral Rearmament Movement (MRA) on Beazley's early years is told well but its lasting effects are not clearly drawn. Certainly Beazley himself seems unsure but acknowledges a lasting impact. FitzSimons does well to highlight the impact of the movement and provides a short but interesting account of its wider political impact.

Beazley's accomplishments and political progress are well laid out. His basic study of Beazley's ministerial work in terms of policy formulation and delivery is generally good noting both immediate policy successes and failures. In some cases though a more critical and broader analysis is required. Within the area of defence reform FitzSimons concentrates on three main areas: strategy, force structure, and defence industry and efficiency. Missing though is the 'fourth' and often forgotten element of Beazley's (and Labor's) reform of the military — social reform. Through Beazley significant improvements were made to defence housing and the welfare of defence families. This process included the establishment of a ministerial consultative body to allow defence spouses a direct line to senior defence managers, the minister for defence personnel, and Beazley himself. As well as missing these reforms, decisions over equipment purchases, such as the decision to build submarines in Australia against defence advice, require a fuller accounting. In contrast FitzSimons' treatment of the battle over telecommunications policy between Beazley and Keating is very good and goes a long way to bolstering the credentials of Beazley as a tough political fighter. This toughness is tempered by Beazley's reputation for playing the 'ideas' and not the 'man'.

This view though did not mean Beazley couldn't be passionate nor that he wouldn't play the man when necessary, as evidenced by his attitude over Howard. Within the space of about a year Beazley had gone from praising Howard, 'I have a great deal of respect for John Howard ... He is the most substantial conservative politician of his generation' (p413), through to a public repudiation. The cause was Howard's failure to tackle Hanson and Liberal policy direction over Mabo and Wik.

As Beazley saw it Howard was playing the race card and had gone 'as far as any person could conceivably go, to let all the racist dogs, racial dogs of war loose' (p 248). As Beazley's observers and his eldest daughter noted these issues ignited Beazley, 'he actually truly got angry, and with that anger his whole approach changed. He really began to go after the Government on all fronts' (p 249). Beazley's reaction is passionate, deeply felt and one of higher principle rather than sectional political advantage — the values installed as a youngster by his parents and MRA can be seen at work here.

No book dealing with modern Labor politics can avoid the wider themes of mateship and factionalism. The book gives a number of examples of these themes at play but fails in most cases to provide a critical assessment of where Beazley really stands (what are his limits?). Certainly Beazley sees a difference between 'mates' and 'friends' which goes some way to explaining his loyalty and actions towards Mick Young, Brian Burke, and Bob Hawke (in particular Beazley's differing attitude to the removal of Hayden and Hawke). Nonetheless the implications of these beliefs and how they relate to Beazley's concept of public duty deserve to be more critically examined.

The assessment of Beazley's lasting legacy is more problematic (not unreasonable given the immediacy of the events) and the issue of how much was Beazley and how much was the 'times' is not seriously addressed. Certainly Beazley had a lasting effect on defence with praise for his efforts both in Australia and overseas well documented and deserved; but even here there were
Reviews

other voices and forces operating, this is not to diminish his efforts but to note a wider setting.

Overall FitzSimons' treatment gives the reader the 'feel of the man and his work' but leaves unfulfilled a rigorous appreciation of the real substance of Beazley and his achievements. Nonetheless this edition is well worth reading and should prove a useful resource to students of Australian politics, culture, and history. A second volume that picks up the missing threads and fills in the next phase of Beazley's life would be a welcome addition to the works on Australian political and social history.

Trevor Warren
Flinders University


This book marks a decisive move in the historical understanding of immigration patterns and processes in Australia from 1788 to the present. Written at a time when both immigration and multiculturalism feature strongly in contemporary political and social debates, Jupp aims to 'show that the history of immigration is essential to understanding how Australia got to be the way it is' (p vi). Jupp examines many of the long held 'Australian traditions' and 'myths' which have shaped both past and present attitudes towards immigrants, including those surrounding the 'pommy migrant', 'Australia for the White Man', migrant 'ghettos' and the 'race war'. He avoids simplistic assessments of immigrants as passive members of Australian society, arguing that 'Australia is one of a handful of “settler societies” that cannot be understood without placing immigration at the centre of their history and culture' (p 151). The ways in which Jupp approaches the various debates surrounding controversial issues like the concern over the economic utility of immigration is commendable. As well as giving a general overview of these debates, Jupp places their significance within a wider context. He does this through complex analyses of topics relating to globalisation and the nature of Australian policies in the context of a general shift away from Britain to 'Asia'.

Immigration is arranged into chronological chapters with thematic sub-sections. The chapters explore the manifold relationships between Australia and Britain, non-Europeans and white Australia, immigration and multiculturalism, as well as political and social policy, through extensive use of historical and statistical evidence. The thematic sections offer more specific insight into the issues which have often been at the fore in immigration debates; for example, Jupp discusses refugee migration, labour protection and exclusion, xenophobia, ecological concerns and the Labor and Liberal shifts in immigration policy. Beginning with the first recorded contact between Europeans and Aborigines in 1606 and ending with the founding of the One Nation party in 1997, a brief but comprehensive chronology is given at the end of the book. It outlines the arrival of migrants to the various Australian states and territory throughout this period, the shifts in government policies, and the establishment of migrant and multicultural services and government agencies. It also includes the dates when particular terms and definitions like 'white Australia policy', 'enemy aliens', and 'Australian citizen' were adopted, and when the distinctions between 'British' and 'aliens' ended.

Jupp concludes that debating immigration through propositions of population limitation, reduction or zero population growth, and the idea of a post-immigration society pose both internal and external pressures for a modern Australia 'created by mass migration. Its future will depend on resolving further arguments about mass migration' (p 175).

The general overview of immigration which Jupp presents is of critical importance for our understanding of the historical construction of migrants, immigration, and questions regarding the creation of an Australian identity through both. However, whilst Jupp's analysis of government policies, shifts in immigration patterns and statistical evidence are thorough in the first nine chapters, they lack the more reflective style of the final two. In these two chapters, Jupp
Reviews

broadens the scope of the theoretical discussion with relation to contemporary immigration debates and controversies, gender and class politics, and the continuities of immigration over time. The cultural aspects of immigration which Jupp mentions throughout this study could have been further integrated into his theoretical discussion. I felt that his earlier chapters could have taken the cultural context of immigration and this reflective theoretical approach which they fleetingly touch on a bit further, in what is otherwise a thought-provoking and accessible study.

Katy Nebhan
University of Queensland


*Maltese Voices Down Under: Memories of Malta and Gozo and the Voyage to Australia*, accompanying audio CD, 1998, $25.00, cassette version, $20.00. Both are obtainable from the Europe-Australia Institute, VUT, PO Box 14428 MCMC, Melbourne, Victoria.

Barry York’s latest book on Australia’s Maltese was written to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Australia-Malta Passage Assistance Agreement of 1948, under which some 46,500 Maltese came to Australia. It provides an overview of important phases of Maltese immigration from 1788 to 1998. The usual strengths and weaknesses of the overview approach are apparent: useful for the general reader rather than the specialist, inadequate detail, some imbalance, yet providing context, trends and signposts to further reading. Understandably, the emphasis is on the three decades after 1948 when the bulk of Maltese immigration to Australia occurred. With varying effectiveness, it ‘wanders’ through time and place; the nineteenth century section moves directly to the failed assisted passage scheme to North Queensland in 1883, before returning to consider individual migrants from earlier years.

Maltese immigration has been predominantly working class. The first phase of the twentieth century was the recruitment between 1912 and 1914 of labourers for Mt Lyell in Tasmania and the Pine Creek to Katherine railway in the Northern Territory. The arrival of 214 Maltese on the eve of the first conscription referendum in 1916 constitutes the second phase. This incident has long occupied a prominent place in the annals of Australian immigration history. Known as ‘the children of Billy Hughes’, the group was persecuted for racial, economic and political reasons, given the dictation test, declared prohibited immigrants, and deported to New Caledonia. After ten weeks they were returned to Sydney but not before their families in Malta, dependent on their income, had suffered considerable hardship. Despite their British status, they were perceived as ‘semi white’ and in later years subjected to an immigration quota of 260 per annum.

Small centres of Maltese families developed in east Sydney, Mackay and Innisfail during the 1920s but the depression hit hard. Ironically, Maltese were excluded from employment policies which favoured Britons. As with other ethnic groups in the early 1930s, more returned home than arrived. From 1900 to 1939, Maltese-born in Australia increased from approximately 200 to nearly 3000. Thereafter there was little progress until 1947.

The 1948 assisted passage agreement constituted an historic change from restriction to encouragement of Maltese immigration. York details the background and provisions of the agreement in the context of the postwar migration scheme and the history of Australian racism. Despite official acceptance of the Maltese as ‘white British subjects’, the rate of return migration, high for all ethnic groups, was even higher for the Maltese. Diplomatic relations between Malta and Australia are documented along with the crucial role of the
Reviews

clergy in preserving traditional values.

Contemporary press reports and a wealth of individual stories of postwar shipboard experiences enliven the text. Tales of the *Strathnaver*, the troop transport in 1948, the *Ocean Victory* on which 'meat was maggoty and spaghetti weevil', and the *Skaubryn* which sank in 1958, make fascinating reading. Chain migration through nominations led to concentrations of Maltese in the western regions of Melbourne and Sydney. Two schemes of group nominations are briefly described, the Child Migration Scheme and the Single Young Women Migrants' Scheme. The first is of particular interest in light of recent disclosures of child migrant exploitation and abuse.

York explains the decline of Maltese emigration from the mid 1970s in terms of Malta's evolution from colonial dependency to democratic republic and Australia's changing economy and relations with Asia. Notwithstanding this decline, Maltese community life thrives through radio and television, the Maltese language press, and numerous community organisations. The last section evaluates the contribution of Maltese to Australian life and speculates about the future retention of Maltese identity, language and culture in Australia.

The presentation of the book does not do justice to the material and would have benefitted from closer editing. Errors appear on pages xvii, 6, 61, 67 and 85. Numerous examples appear of headers on blank pages and orphan lines. The placement of footnote numbers is unusual and the heading 'Back Cover' on the back cover was obviously an oversight. While the substantial Maltese language sections are a welcome addition, there is no explanation of why they are significantly shorter than their English equivalents.

This new publication builds on the body of work already existing on the Maltese in Australia, notably York's own, and foreshadows his next book on the post 1949 period. Much is familiar from earlier works. Oral testimonies are extensively utilised and it is these which, in my view, provide the most valuable sections. The accompanying CD, *Maltese Voices Down Under*, comprises excerpts from York's sensitive interviews with twenty-one Maltese migrants. Covering a wide period from 1916 to 1958, the two themes of memories of the homeland and the voyage to Australia reveal the diversity of Maltese life and cultural heritage. Gentle and evocative Maltese mandolin and guitar music, recorded by Kevin Bradley, provides interludes between the stories, adding to their poignancy.

Michele Langfield
Deakin University


This book is a welcome addition to the ever-growing literature on Australian-Asian relations. For many Australians, Asia never ceases to be an enigmatic theme because, however swiftly Australian society may be transformed due to an increasing number of Australians of Asian origins as Pauline Hanson spooks so-called mainstream Australians, Asia remains fundamentally different from Australia. It is possible to argue that Australia belongs to the Asian region although the concept of 'region' is subject to various interpretations. It is, however, merely a political slogan to insist that Australia is an Asian country with no substantial evidence. This reminds me of that of a modern Japan, 'Getting out of Asia and entering Europe', which was espoused by Yukichi Fukuzawa more than a century ago. You do not need to consult Samuel Huntington to know how absurd these assertions are.

Dominant realist thinkers in international relations tend to think of every state equally like a billiard ball and maintain that the multitude of similar states all act to maximise their own national interests. In this view, the fact that Australia turned more towards Asia in the postwar period, especially since the 1970s, does not defy the standard thinking along the line as Australia is alleged to have found it in its interest to do so. It is to be remembered that
relationships are always two-way. Thus, Asian countries also have come to strengthen their relations with an erstwhile aloof nation, Australia, for their own benefits. However, cultural dissimilarities, separating Australia from Asia, are masked in such a simple interest-centred explanation.

The book reviewed presents us with an assortment of case studies, which bring these often neglected cultural dimensions, or overemphasised by some excessive culturalists, under a light. The countries dealt with in nine chapters are Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, and China. The topics range from territorial issues and trade disputes, to legal contracts, human rights and education. The ways in which Australians and Asians are influenced by differing values, perceptions, and conceptualisations are dissected in these various events. The book is surely useful for enhancing Australians' cultural literacy of Asia. A sender of a message must be aware of how the message is understood by the receiver for achieving a fruitful dialogue. Upon receiving the message, it is also wise to think how it was framed up and transmitted. If the sender and the receiver exist in culturally different realms, misunderstandings naturally tend to arise because the message is put out of context. What makes sense perfectly in one context may not at all in another or at best be warped. Cross-cultural communication is unavoidable in Australia-Asia relations, and it is vitally important to bear its effects in mind for attaining goals in bilateral and multilateral relations. Anyone who has experienced intercultural marriage can dwell on these aspects of personal relations, likened to international relations.

Finally, we should not forget the cardinal fact that even the relationships among Asian countries themselves are not free from cross-cultural frictions because Asia is not an amorphous entity congregated easily under one bloc. Japanese and Koreans misperceive each other because they work on different assumptions. Indians and Pakistanis misunderstand each other because of their differing belief systems. Australians' Asian literacy does not become complete without a full grasp of the inside-Asia situation, especially if Australia wants to move into Asia. The complexity and diversity of the Asian region never stops intriguing Australians.

Nobuaki Suyama
Melbourne Institute of Technology


It is almost axiomatic that Australians are preoccupied by the impression they make on visitors to their land. For those who are curious to learn what the Russians thought of Australia in the last century, then this is just the book to consult. As far as I am aware it is the first monograph to deal with this topic, all previous research having been published in article form. Based on a doctoral thesis, it has all the virtues of such a background — meticulous research, exemplary translations and consistency in the rendering of Russian names, but if you are thinking that all this makes it sound quite dull, then you are quite mistaken. The material of the book, the evolving Russian view of Australia, provides a fascinating canvas for the meshing of two cultures which exhibit some ostensible similarities but simultaneously fundamental and striking differences. It is a rich pattern of changing perceptions, contradictory expectations and personal idiosyncrasies that Elena Gover charts so competently. The book is divided into three sections: Paradise in the South Seas, 1770-1850; In the New Land, 1851-1900 and Between Hell and Paradise, 1901-1919. The chapters are generally short, each being devoted to a separate theme within each of the time frames and the presence of a number of identically named chapters in each section serves to unify the material. There is a distinct evolution from the elevated and positive views of the naval officers at the beginning of the nineteenth century to the less complimentary ones of the
immigrants and refugees at the beginning of the twentieth. Most interesting are the changing terms used by the Russian visitors to describe the inhabitants of the land they were visiting. The initial references to 'the English, then 'the English in New Holland', and the 'New South Welsh men' gave way in time to the terms 'the Australian English' and finally to 'Australians'. The author contextualises the observations of the Russian visitors most competently and while we may gain insights into Australian life, the book says much about the Russian national character and Russian social values. Elena Govor provides information on those Russian events and customs which contributed to a less than successful cultural understanding by the Russians of Australian reality. And there are some delightful examples, such as the following evaluation of the style of hospitality accorded to the Russian naval officers by Governor Macquarie: 'The soup ... I suppose, was served especially for the Russians because Englishmen do not eat it during dinner ... They do not use napkins during dinner and wipe themselves with the table-cloth, though when we were present at the table, napkins were always provided' (p 31). The author does not spare her subjects as she delineates a familiar tale of initial naive belief in an unspoiled paradise turning into disillusionment when the paradise is experienced at first hand. The book ends on a sombre note with the return of many of the disillusioned Russians to the land of their birth. It is only there that they are able to appreciate the virtues of the Australian situation.

It is to be hoped that Elena Govor will follow this volume up with a companion volume on Australia through Soviet eyes, one which would chart a very different, but significant, style of interaction.

Lyndall Morgan
University of Queensland


The word 'Celebrating' in the title of this handsomely produced book sets its tone. Its immediate focus is the Literary Links exhibition of 1994, co-sponsored by the British Council and the National Library of Australia, for which the author selected the illustrations and produced the text. The fifteen posters in the exhibition provide the nucleus for the chapters of the book; the well-attended Literary Links readings by Australian writers, which are held regularly at the Australian High Commission in London, arose out of the exhibition. Within this context of cultural diplomacy, conventional metaphors are not interrogated; the 'Mother Country' metaphor underlies the structure of the text, with no hint of matrophobic impulses within the 'child'. If it were questioned it would surely seem a dark view of motherhood that images infancy in a situation of enforced exile, brutality, and attempted genocide.

Russell makes clear that her project is descriptive rather than analytic, and that indigenous literature has not been included; the reader is rather mysteriously directed to the work of David Malouf and Xavier Herbert, as well as Mudrooroo, 'for insight into these perspectives'. Within the parameters offered, the patchwork of well-researched and lengthy quotations is often fascinating. Myths about the Great South Land give way to the detailed observations of Cook's journals and to vivid accounts of the penal colony. Charles Lamb writes to his friend Barron Field that the 'weary world of waters between us oppresses the imagination... It is a sort of presumption to expect that one's thought should live so far.' And yet the appetite for thoughts travelling across the globe, in the form of books, was enormous in Australia in the late nineteenth century: 'one-third of the books published in Britain in the 1880s were sold in the Australian colonies'. The vitality of individual chapters of Literary Links is undermined by the determination to celebrate, and further the metaphor of the growing child. The affirmation that expatriate writers at least 'return to Australia at regular
intervals, demonstrating that the country they left is now a worthwhile place to come back to’ reveals unexamined assumptions: was it worthless in the past? Has it not got something to do with ease of travel, and the substantial incomes of such expatriates as Clive James and Germaine Greer? Did Patrick White return to Australia because it had become a better place?

The latter part of the book becomes less interesting as it turns into a list of British Council-sponsored exchanges, with the writers’ enthusiasm for Australian conveyed but not much sense of how the very metropolitan Literary Links project needs to be supported if it is to have a pervasive impact in Britain. The comment that Australian books are not easily available in Britain could have provoked some research on Australian publishers’ distribution networks; anyone who tries to teach courses on Australian writing in Britain knows the depressing difficulty of obtaining books, or getting any response at all out of the publishers. The wonderful visual material at the beginning of the book gives way to publicity portraits of writers, and to such optimistic statements as this: ‘In the age of airline travel, easy telephone access and the Internet, no one now need feel themselves an exile.’ The reader may wonder about Aboriginal readers of this book who are represented only as ‘wild blacks’ and servants with ‘odd ways’ in the nineteenth century, and in the twentieth by Bruce Chatwin reading the whole of Australia as a musical score in The Songline. It is not evident from this book that the British Council sponsors tours by writers that include indigenous Australians, just as the varied ethnicities of contemporary Britain are represented in the Council’s visitors to Australia.

Angela Smith
University of Stirling


In 1939, with Oxford eight years behind him and the second world war just over the horizon, A D Hope could be no more than tentative in his celebrated assessment of Australia’s cultural possibilities: ‘If still from the deserts the prophets come’. In 1973 Geoffrey Serle removed any suggestion of conditionality from the clearly affirmative title of his pioneering interdisciplinary work, From Deserts the Prophets Come. By 1998 Roslynn Haynes was so confident in the viability of her enterprise as to reverse the direction of earlier inquiries and direct her gaze towards, rather than out from, the ‘dead heart’ of the continent. Seeking the Centre: The Australian Desert in Literature, Art and Film, is a splendid contribution to the now flourishing area of Australian studies.

Professor Haynes has excellent credentials for undertaking such a work, which amounts to nothing less than a survey of the whole sweep of both Aboriginal and white Australians’ dealings into our social culture. She is thoroughly versed in the history, methods and philosophic assumptions of western science, at the same time as being well informed about Aboriginal cultures and belief systems. Her easy command of core issues in (among others) geography, biology, ecology, and cartography gives Seeking the Centre one of its great intellectual strengths.

At the same time, as she acknowledges in her Preface, Professor Haynes’ approach to textual analysis has been focussed through the twin lenses of feminist and postcolonial theories, both of which are usefully and tactfully deployed in this book. I would simply wish to add that Seeking the Centre is founded on thorough and wide-ranging scholarship — it is clearly the product of a dedicated and loving investigation of what she has now established as a major subject.

The volume is presented in two parts, the division falling roughly between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Part 1, ‘Encountering the Desert’, concentrates very much on the
Reviews

1840s and 1850s, the great decades of desert exploration, and has much to tell us about all the famous (and some not so famous) names. In particular her commentary on the explorers' journal records and their subsequent re-workings for popular consumption is authoritative and full of interest. Of equal value is her account of the explorer artists who often accompanied the more famous expedition leaders. Part 2, 'Apprehending the Desert', picks up the narrative in the twentieth century, and offers stimulating interpretations of virtually every Australian artist who, in words or in paint or on film, has responded to the complexities of our desert environment.

Particular points of historical judgment may invite discussion and debate, but I doubt if anyone will be able to find serious fault with the grand sweep of Professor Haynes' account of how the deserts of Australia have been absorbed into the texture and dynamics of our culture at the end of the twentieth century. At this moment in our history it is especially pleasing to note that one of the leading themes of Seeking the Centre is of the misunderstandings, multifarious interactions, and clashes between the values and ways of knowing introduced into the continent in 1788 and those of its indigenous peoples. In laying out the issues so thoroughly, sympathetically, and cogently, this study is far more than a symptom of our times; it is a guide to a fuller understanding of the problem and perhaps, therefore, to a reconciliation between cultural systems which seem, in so many ways, to be fundamentally at odds.

Seeking the Centre is an extremely handsome book, splendidly designed, and blessed with first-rate colour reproductions of many of the paintings and artworks which are central to its argument. The individual threads of that argument, it may well be, have all been spun before, and on many different looms; but they have never before been so expertly woven into a single and coherent design. Professor Haynes is surely right to conclude her Introduction with these words: 'I believe that this work is original in its scope and in its tracing of interconnections and influences between literature, art and science to provide an overview of the cultural importance of the Australian desert'.

H P Heseltine
University of New South Wales

Marion Halligan and Rosanne Fitzgibbon (eds), The Gift of Story: Three decades of UQP short stories, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1998, pp xiii + 466, cased, $22.95.

The Gift of Story is a small-format 'cased' book that looks, indeed, like a gift, with elegant gold stamping, a muted gold dust jacket and a simple, non-image cover layout designed by Kate Barry. Released late last year along with UQP: The Writer's Press 1948-1998 (edited by Craig Munro), The Moment Made Marvellous: A Celebration of UQP Poetry (edited by Thomas Shapcott) and new editions of Peter Carey's The Fat Man in History and David Malouf's Johnno, the book commemorates UQP's contribution to Australian short fiction over the last thirty years.

The editors, Marion Halligan and Rosanne Fitzgibbon, claim in the introduction to The Gift of Story that they had 'no polemical intentions, no canon to identify or thesis to promulgate' (p x). But the very fact of a story's inclusion or exclusion is a form of thesis, an idea, perhaps a story in itself. The canon, in this case, is the fifty-plus volumes of UQP short story collections from which they have culled a who's who of Australian fiction. As Halligan puts it, 'UQP in its heyday was just about THE place to be published — note all who began with it' (email correspondence, 27 January 1999).

This short story collection enters a market that 'doesn't want to know about' short stories, according to Susan Hawthorne of Spinifex Press. Hawthorne's comment is echoed by other publishing houses. Caroline Lurie of Hodder Headline says that her company 'cannot afford to publish short stories, which (in most cases) sell in very small quantities. They are harder to market and sell about half to two-thirds what a novel will sell'. Deonie Fiford of HarperCollins
concurs: ‘short stories are much harder to publish [than novels] — short story writing is a very precise art’ (written response to questionnaire, December 1998).

Perhaps this explains why, when faced with the choice of authors to include, Halligan and Fitzgibbon have gone for the big names. This, for me, resulted in a few disappointments: Nick Earls’ ‘Plaza’ isn’t one of his best, Venero Armanno’s ‘Now that the wall is gone’ reeks of mawkish sentiment and Peter Carey’s ‘Conversations with unicorns’ I find simply incomprehensible. And I was intrigued by the selection of Thea Astley’s ‘Cubby’. Not only is it the first story in the book (understandable, perhaps, since the stories are arranged in order of publication date), but it is also the only story excerpted on the book’s cover. The featured quotation about ‘long summer days of apricots and kisses’ is a little cloying, and I think displaying it so prominently underrates both Astley and the book itself which, it must be said, does contain some good stories, and a couple of great stories. Edward Berridge’s ‘Speeding’ stands out. Okay, so it’s grungy, there’s swearing and drugs but it comes across as somehow more real than the literary pretensions of, say, Gerard Lee’s ‘Pieces for a glass piano’. I liked Gillian Mears’ ‘Our position on the map’ for its honesty and lack of contrivance. And the final story in the collection, Cassandra Pybus’ ‘Till apples grow on an orange tree’, evokes the sense of longing and nostalgia for the past that is a defining feature of this collection. But what I like about Pybus’ story is that she doesn’t overdo it, which is a rare thing in the world of the short story.

In Angus & Robertson in Newcastle I found The Gift of Story on the shelves with other books that could be given as ‘gifts’: illustrated women’s diaries, the newly released set of the first twelve books of the King James version of the Bible (beautifully presented in a miniature format from Text Publishing) and various other books with ‘novelty’ value. This leads to the obvious question: how is The Gift of Story selling? Rosanne Fitzgibbon says that sales have been ‘adequate’ but that the ongoing life of the book will be as a paperback, to be released in September 1999, from which UQP expects ‘good trade and educational sales’ (email correspondence, 27 January 1999).

The Gift of Story as a celebration of the short story, and as a commemoration of UQP’s 50th birthday, is a collector’s item. But is it a good read? Well, I would have probably chosen different stories. And so might you. I guess it’s like Marion Halligan says: a collection of short stories is ‘like a box of chocolates; you read one story and it’s wonderful; and rich and it impels you to read another; that’s also fantastic and then you read a third and it becomes like that third chocolate — ‘what have I done?’, you ask, because the diet is a bit too rich’ (M Waldren, ‘Sister Act’, The Weekend Australian, 14-15 November 1998, p R10).

Ingrid Woodrow
The University of Queensland

Jane Long, Jan Gothard, Helen Brash (eds), Forging Identities: Bodies, Gender and Feminist History, Nedlands, University of Western Australia Press, 1997, pb, xx + 251 pp, $24.95.

When I started reading Forging Identities: Bodies, Gender and Feminist History, I kept coming back to something that I had seen recently while writing my own book on feminist historiography. It was a paragraph in R G Collingwood’s The Idea of History where he defines the purpose of writing history: ‘It is generally thought to be of importance to man that he should know himself: where knowing himself means not his merely personal peculiarities, the things that distinguish him from other men, but his nature as a man ... The value of history, then, is that it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is’. This unselfconscious assertion that there is a connection between masculine identity and the writing of history both delighted and bemused me. I was forced to ask the question, ‘what sort of history should I read to teach me about being a woman?’
Reviews

Reading *Forging Identities* might be the perfect place to start. This is an important collection of articles that go along way to exploring the complexities of femininity, the construction of gender and gendered identities, the ambiguous interaction between sex, class and race, the complicated relationship between citizenship and embodiment.

The collection brings together eleven articles around these themes; Ann Curthoys writing on 'Sexism and Racism in Australia in the 1960s' explores a complex nexus of sexuality and race as she recalls her experiences on the Freedom Ride of 1965; Catriona Elder moves into the realm of ficto-criticism, exploring through both visual and verbal images the dominant representations of white national identity in Australia; Cathy Colebourne, Christina Twomey and Jane Long write on outcast women, examining the ways in which the construction of deviance both bolsters and undercuts dominant discourses around gender; the body at the beach is recreated by Nancy Cushing in an article on Newcastle surf culture that never allows nostalgia to override incisive historical insight; the body at work is explored in Diane Kirby’s article on barmaids; Suellen Murray and Rosemary Berreen explore the pathological female body; the collection concludes with an article by Marilyn Lake on feminist conceptions of citizenship in the first half of the twentieth century. My favourite article though is by Heather Gunn on women’s bodies as a site for rural politics. While much effort has been spent analysing women in progress and reformist movements, Gunn’s article is a timely reminder that women may perhaps be most politically effective when they are embracing reactionary and conservative politics. (Was Pauline Hanson ever a member of the CWA?)

This is perhaps one of the most important collections to come out in Australian women’s history in a long time. Far from teaching ‘us... what it is to be a [wo]man* it disabuses us of the possibility of any certainties about the history of sexuality, race and class in this country.

Mary Spongberg
Macquarie University


Gender seems to be currently influencing Australian national life in ways many of us could never have predicted. Pauline Hanson’s femininity actually appears to be an electoral asset. I nearly choked on my breakfast, however, when I read Peter Craven’s comments in the *Australian* a couple of weeks back proposing Cheryl Kernot as an antidote to Hansonism.

Such a reaction epitomises the superficiality of Australian public discourse. The Australian and international literary scenes may have heaped favours and awards on Judith Wright yet it seems doubtful that few of its members have had more than a superficial commitment to what she stands for. According to this biography Judith Wright had little time for the shoulder-rubbing and name-dropping of academics and critics or their adoption of philosophical fashions. In the 1990s she wrote to her friend, the ecologist Len Webb, ‘One of the worst features of post-modernity ... is this academic approach, usually quarrelsome and always self aggrandising, where there are real jobs to be done in the real world ... (p.501)’.

Yet Wright herself was committed to the philosophical scepticism that has been a feature of the second half of the twentieth century. She was enormously influenced by her husband Jack McKinney whose philosophical questioning arose from his experiences in world war one. He believed that the human disaster of the Great War had its origins in western misunderstandings of the world and without any academic training set himself the lifelong task of exploring where western philosophy had gone wrong.

Judith Wright and Jack McKinney did not meet until she was based in Brisbane during the second world war but the war, its nuclear climax and the cold war which followed confirmed her belief in Jack and his quest. The west’s instrumentalist understandings of
the world had produced a shallow materialism which swamped all other human values to the point where the possibility of nuclear and ecological annihilation had become a taken-for-granted part of everyday life. While Jack was alive, and after, she used her university and publishing contacts to have his works published and to seek the acceptance of his ideas by a wider audience.

The primacy she gave to her male partner's intellectual work and the seemingly traditional domestic life which they adopted, particularly after their daughter was born in 1950, might suggest that even someone of Wright's stature suffered psychically from the sexism of her times but nothing could be further from the truth. She felt a deep sense of desolation on Jack's death in 1966 yet her writing and her activism continued apace. There was no crisis of confidence, no submerged identity. Her poetry continued to explore their metaphysical interests but even more her personal commitment to them emerged as public activism on environmental and Aboriginal causes. Despite denunciations that she was a communist she persisted with the campaign to save the Great Barrier Reef and her victory belongs not just to us but to the whole world.

Veronica Brady was an inspired choice to write this biography. As a Catholic nun she obviously empathised with Jack and Judith's disenchantment with western philosophy in spite of their secularism. One of the most rewarding aspects of the book is Brady's selection of excerpts from Wright's poetry to illuminate aspects of her life. Yet in Wright's case this is a thankless task for any biographer because the emotional intensity of the poetry leaves you wishing for more of Wright's own words and regretting the fact that she was not prepared to complete and publish her autobiography.

Wright's refusal makes this biography all the more important and the publishers are to be commended for the project and for the book's fine presentation. There are some factual errors, perhaps not surprising in a book of this scale but which editors should have picked up; eg, the Soviet invasion of Hungary was 1956, Teronia I think should be Terania Creek in New South Wales. Some incorrect historical assumptions left me wondering whether they were a product of Veronica Brady's or Judith Wright's bias such as the demonising of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen throughout the section on the 1960s even though he did not become premier until August 1968.

Veronica Brady has succeeded in capturing the inner emotional drive while interweaving the wealth of milestones that make up this great Australian's life. The example of Judith Wright's life and vision is a wonderful antidote to the poisons that threaten not just Australia but this frail little globe we share.

Libby Connors
University of Southern Queensland