Book Reviews

Australia, a Biography. By Eric Rolls. (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000), xi + 316 pp. $35.00.

Usually we have biographies of individual people — but the genre is extendable, to groups of people, and more recently we have embraced large entities of people, cities such as London and Sydney. Eric Rolls goes much further. Here he has written a biography of Australia — and there is really not one person in the book.

Biography here embraces life, living; it is a story of how the continent of Australia came alive. The book has an extended sub-title: The Beginnings from the cosmos to the genesis of Gondwana, and its rivers, forests, flora, fauna, and fecundity. And that is precisely what Rolls delivers — an account from the beginning, through to the unstated arrival of mankind. As to the beginning Rolls is not so impressed with the big bang theory but looks rather to swirling masses of gases — and gradually form, structure, and life emerges.

The book is arranged in five sections: — Australia infinite, from the beginnings through to the dinosaur age; Australia finite, from a ten kilometre-wide asteroid striking the Yucatan 65,000,000 years ago through climatic influences such as the ice ages and El Nino; Australia floral — the emerging plant species from mangroves through to kangaroo grass; Australia faunal — an amazing world of animals, birds, insects, living in the dry, in the cold, living in grasslands and with fire; and Australia fecund — or reproduction, pollination, fertilisation, the “peopling” of Australia by different species. On the last page of text we have “an abrupt new element was added to fecund Australia. A small part of Homo erectus arrived”. Volume 2, to follow, will pick up this story.

This is not the regular fare of an historian. It provides the natural history setting upon which we regularly get our players to act. We have volcanic explosions such as Mount Warning; we see the emergence of the Gondwanan rainforest trees; we consider the intelligence and communication skills of animals; we learn the reproductive techniques of geckoes and ferns.

Rolls provides a staggering amount of information about past life and species that have settled Australia. Not a specialist in palaeontology, botany or zoology, Rolls has sought his evidence mainly from soundly edited journals appealing to an intelligent general audience — especially from Nature and ANH (the natural history magazine of the Australian Museum Trust), as well as newspaper reports. The trouble is that there is often such a welter of information provided that the reader can become rather overwhelmed with a long listing of species, sometimes in an arrangement that is not so apparent. I was wishing for some visual relief — in the form of charts, tables, maps, even illustrations.

W. Ross Johnston
History, The University of Queensland

I. Kepars’ annotated bibliography of Sydney, a recent addition to the World Bibliographical Series of Clio Press, fails to achieve the compiler’s stated claim. The informed general reader may indeed find Sydney a good starting point from which to delve more deeply into the literature on Australia’s first permanent European settlement. So, too, may tourists and migrants, though one would hope that they do not wish to dwell on the chapter entitled “Crime and Social Problems” for a few insights on the seedy aspects of Sydney’s past. Serious scholars, on the other hand, would find little to interest them in this work, even if they were seeking information in a field other than their own, “his own” as the compiler insists. Presumably, there are no female scholars. Regardless of their gender, they would undoubtedly find it far more fruitful perusing the vast array of journals which are not included in this volume.

Clearly, the addition of journal articles was outside the publisher’s prescribed limitations, and to be sure, such an inclusion would be an immense task in itself. That omission nevertheless highlights the restricted scope of this work and its usefulness. Relying solely on published books, there is simply too little on any particular topic, although from an historical point of view a number of sections do offer passing interest. The section entitled “Food and Drink”, for instance, serves to remind us that they are very much an under-researched aspect of our social history. This is particularly applicable to our culinary tastes, which have altered significantly over time, but until recent decades have been virtually ignored by scholars. They are still virtually ignored here, for of the seven entries, two are on wine and four are solely concerned with Sydney restaurants. Such a focus is likely to date this book very quickly indeed. Food for thought perhaps?

It also appears rather absurd that an annotated bibliography on Australia’s largest city is dependent on a Canberra repository. Surely the works referred to would be, or should be, available in the subject city, or is it simply that this work is intended as an advertisement for the National Library of Australia? Put succinctly, this work has little to recommend it, and both the informed reader and the scholar could find much more of interest by searching a library catalogue. For that, they do not have to venture to Canberra.

MURRAY JOHNSON

History, The University of Queensland


In this “year of the outback”, it is timely to reflect upon public history, public memory and the Northern Territory as “A Past Displayed”. This monograph enables us to consider the many strategies by which public historians have interpreted and made historical sites and themes accessible. A Past Displayed presents a respectful though unabashed overview for this vast region of Australia provided by a historian who originally came to the Territory as Director of the National Trust.

The first chapter provides an extremely valuable survey of the literature and issues relevant to cultural resource management. Carment is well versed in the debates on cultural landscape, history curatorships in museums and the challenges of integrating cross-cultural perspectives in heritage legislation. Controversies include the
relationship between heritage and history, the possibilities of “shared heritage” between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, and the gradual achievement of federal and state heritage protection.

Carment surveys cultural resource management in national parts including Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Northern Territory Parks and Reserves, the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, non-government museums, heritage trails, highway monuments and urban heritage. The range of public historical display on offer is mind boggling. That a single author would attempt to cover the whole gamut of public representations across so much geographical space and variety of medium is awe-inspiring. On the down side, it has deterred Carment from following through some of the big issues raised in the excellent first chapter.

Carment is even-handed about what he judges as limitations and failures of historical displays. For example, he notes what is not displayed in a heritage building that once served as an Aboriginal children’s home. Given the small community he addresses, he is brave in naming the names, the exhibitions, the places. He hints that there is sometimes a too-small pool of sufficiently qualified historians and financial resources to do the work required.

*A Past Displayed* is well researched and clearly written; its subject matter should ensure the book is recommended for courses on public history and heritage. The Northern Territory University Press is to be commended for the vital role it plays in regional publishing. Regrettully, Carment explains that, in the interests of accuracy, he had to stop in 1998 because so many small museums and other places had changed significantly in the years since his research trips. While all the “in 1998s” are irritating, this feature underlines the dynamic nature of such public presentations.

Readers of *A Past Displayed* will now not need to travel the thousands of hot, petrol-guzzling kilometres that David Carment obviously clocked up. Public historians and amateur enthusiasts will or will not be pleased to see that the products of their work have been seriously scrutinised. Yet everyone who reads *A Past Displayed* will witness how, over the past two decades, the public display of the Territory past has become far, far more inclusive. During my own residence there from 1979, the society was so polarised that I could not have imagined the current diversity and richness of current historical displays. Yet as Carment reminds us, with fresh stakeholders entering the display economy, community ownership can lead to new sets of omissions. As he aptly demonstrates in regard to an exhibition called *Sweet and Sour: Chinese Families in the Northern Territory*, this can make for history that is more functional than balanced. In this case, the community’s agenda to create a positive community-building story made its flavour way too sweet.

*ANN MCGRATH*

*National Museum of Australia*


This biography discusses the concerns of the early settlers in Victoria and New South Wales during the pre gold-mining period in Australian history. As stated by the author, Paul de Serville, he set out to present his view that Thomas Alexander Browne, writing under the nom-de-plume of Rolf Bouldrewood, was much more than a bridge between two cultures as he has previously been regarded by well-known Australian literary critics and historians. He succeeds by showing Browne to be representative of his fellow Australians in the nineteenth century in his outlook and interests.
The book has been extremely well researched. De Serville seems to have left no stone unturned to provide the evidence necessary to support his argument. He states that Browne kept extensive diaries but only a very small part of his papers including the diaries was located. However, as shown in the detailed notes, evidence of Browne’s interests and values was substantiated in a wide variety of significant sources. The novel for which the name Bouldrewood is famous, *Robbery Under Arms*, was in its day adjudged to be comparable with works by Henry Kingsley and Marcus Clarke. Browne readily admits that his stories were based on real people and real events. This has been corroborated by de Serville’s use of documentary evidence, letters and diaries and genealogical research. Historically one of the main strengths of this biography is that it clearly portrays the social values of the early pastoralists in Australia. Just as importantly to social historians it gives a very clear picture of the loyalties which coloured the lives of Browne and his contemporaries.

Browne based many of the events in his stories on his own and his friends’ experiences as pastoralists, and his experience as Gold Commissioner and Police Magistrate also provided him with valuable material. Additionally it is shown that Browne was a man of his class. England was “home” and English cultural mores were practised by the early pastoralists and their families. Dressing for dinner was an established custom. Browne like many others was widely-read and music was an integral part of many of the social gatherings which he attended. However notwithstanding his loyalty to England he also took pride in the achievements of his fellow pastoralists, and this according to de Serville, was an essential part of the ruling culture. The author highlights the importance of class to the pastoralists, as is evident in the characters in Browne’s stories, and in Browne himself, despite popular opinion in England at the time that Australia was a classless society and every man was as good as his master. In his epilogue de Serville correctly states that Browne’s world “did not die with him” (p.294) and to some extent survives today.

**Grace Johansen**

*Central Queensland University*

**Beside the Seaside: Victorian Resorts in the Nineteenth Century.** By Andrea Inglis (Melbourne: The Mieguyah Press, 1999), pp. x + 116. $34.95.

Andrea Inglis has produced a social study of the rise of seaside resorts in Victoria as definitive of class structure in the nineteenth century.

The book outlines the social history of seaside resorts around Melbourne in the nineteenth century, and key factors in their development, including historical influences, physical and class access to various seaside resorts and the reasons Melburnians embraced the seaside. The content is structured to take the reader through the evolution of the resorts from their early beginnings, through a search for a unique identity, the ensuing breakdown of class restrictions and the new accessibility for the general public.

Inglis draws on historical sources, including personal letters, diary entries, newspaper and journal articles to challenge the notion that nineteenth-century Victorians accessed the seaside resorts around Melbourne much as people do today. She argues that levels of participation in the Victorian seaside resorts in the nineteenth century were restricted by class and status, and social rules and rituals of the time, which resulted in a very restricted and rigid experience.

Readers will recognise the well-know *plein-air* artists such as Charles Conder and Tom Roberts whose works are used to illustrate social differences by the seaside.
Conder’s *Mentone* is elegant, his subjects most likely to be accommodated in one of the elegant seaside establishments, whereas Roberts’ *Mentone* is relaxed, depicting lovers and a woman, skirt raised, assisting to launch the dinghy. The choice of illustrations adds charm to the work while the archival photographs bring the text to life.

The tenet of this book is that portrayals of the early seaside resorts of Melbourne, through promotional material, paintings and other writings do not pose a realistic image of the seaside experience of the nineteenth century. Inglis is thorough in accessing sources to support her tenet that a day visit, or a summer, spent in one of the resorts, entailed a rigid application of social rules, rituals, behaviours and dress.

The material is laid out in five chapters, with a preface, notes and select bibliography. Material in each chapter is accompanied by captioned illustrations and photographs. The illustrations and their captions should be read as part of the text. It is suggested that the book be read in conjunction with a map of Melbourne and environs to enhance the reader’s understanding of the region discussed. The omission of a map of the Melbourne, and the seaside resorts referred to in the book, is a weakness in an otherwise excellent social history.

Inglis has an easy, narrative style. Propositions are supported by excerpts from historical sources which are incorporated into the general flow of the narrative.

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**Fighting Back: The Politics of the Unemployed in Victoria in the Great Depression.** By Charlie Fox. (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2000), pp. xii + 281. $32.95

Paul Keating once told some protestors to “get a job”. Tony Abbott accused the unemployed of being “job snobs”. Talk-back radio shock-jocks, the tabloid press and prime-time current affairs programs regularly remind hard-working tax-payers that they’re surrounded by bludgers who don’t want to work. Unemployment, in the hands of these influential opinion-makers and those who believe them, means something other than simply lacking a job. It amounts to something more serious than a mere economic stumble. To be unemployed is to be a moral failure. *Fighting Back* is, among other things, a reminder that this process of exclusion and stigmatisation has a history.

As the author says in his opening sentence, his book “has been a long time coming”. Fox’s 1985 University of Melbourne doctoral thesis on the politics of the unemployed in Victoria during the 1930s depression is well known among scholars working in the fields of Australian social, political and welfare history but, almost incredibly, he was unable to attract a commitment from a publisher until over ten years later. Happily, Melbourne University Press has now ensured that Fox’s important research will reach the wide audience it richly deserves.

*Fighting Back*, however, is by no means the product of a decision by Fox and Melbourne University Press to dust off an old thesis and send it to the typesetters. Not only does it draw on up-to-date scholarship in a range of disciplines, I have rarely encountered a history book that so ablly exposes and explores abuses in the author’s own society without losing sight of the otherness of the past. Fox deftly surveys the major strands of unemployed politics during the depression, from the radical agitation of the Communist and militant Unemployed Workers’ Movement through the Melbourne Trades Hall Council’s Central Unemployed Committee to “independent” bodies with titles such as the Bendigo Unemployed Ratepayers and Citizens
Association and the Unemployed Returned Soldiers Association of Victoria. The book contains a great deal of valuable information about the administration of unemployment relief in Victoria during the depression — and the diverse responses of its recipients — but its most important finding is that political agitation did often yield modest, yet tangible, benefits to those without jobs. Indeed, Fox goes so far as to suggest that “practically every improvement in the unemployment relief system came about as a result of [unemployed people’s] agitations” (p. 9).

Importantly, Fox challenges the idea — as dear to the hearts of conservative Australia in the interwar years as in the Year 2000 — that unemployment, by its very nature, leads to the demoralisation of the unemployed. On the contrary, the unemployed of the depression years often vigorously resisted their oppression by politicians, bureaucrats, police and charity officials, engaged in co-operative self-help activities, and refused to concede that they should be treated as charity-cases rather than as the bearers of inalienable rights and the victims of a system gone bung. This is a story of defiance, not demoralisation, and Fox pursues it through many a protest march, dole strike, anti-eviction riot and free-speech fight. John Howard would, of course, call it “black armband history” because it exposes the sheer bastardry of elements in the Australian ruling class during the depression of the 1930s. Yet Fox is hardly gloomy about Australia’s past. On the contrary, Fighting Back is a story about the spirit of working-class endurance and resistance under often appalling adversity. Meticulously researched and written with a controlled passion, Fighting Back is both first-rate history and a model of politically-committed scholarship.

FRANK BONGIORNO
History, University of New England


In this book Martin Crotty seeks to investigate the pressures brought to bear on the grandfathers and great-grandfathers of Australia’s Protestant middle-class, as they assumed the responsibility of easing the anxieties of Australian society while the country transformed from a collection of colonies into a nation. Crotty identifies four significant sites where the custodians of middle-class morality sought to inculcate the scions of bourgeois Australia with “manly” virtues: the greater public schools, juvenile literature, boy rescue movements and the Australian Boy Scouts.

Crotty’s work is part of an evolving body of literature on Australian masculinities. Clive Moore’s and Kay Saunders’ Australian Masculinities: Men and their Histories, offers a collection of articles exploring a range of Australian masculinities from the convicts through to the “sensitive new age guy”. In The Men and The Boys, Bob Connell devotes several chapters to an investigation of the construction of masculinity in the lives of several Australian men including a professional sportsman, two men raised in the middle-class, and a number of working-class gay men. Mike Donaldson’s “Growing up very rich: the masculinity of the hegemonic” in the Journal of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies examines the masculinities of Australia’s elite by analysing the childhoods of men born into wealthy, ruling class families. Further afield, there is a body of work, such as that of John Tosh and Anthony E. Rotundo, which interrogates the evolution of Victorian middle-class masculinities in British and American societies. Crotty’s book adds an Australian dimension to the history of masculinities.
Crotty argues that, in late nineteenth-century Australia, people were concerned with what they perceived to be the “boy problem”, that is, the supposed moral and physical degeneracy of Australian youth and its consequences for the emerging nation. Much of his book is devoted to the role of elite public schools and their headmasters in solving this “problem” by engineering a shift in masculine ideals from those of godliness and good learning to the qualities of athleticism, physicality, determination and discipline. By the early years of the twentieth century, athleticism, while never completely dissipated, gave way to the cult of militarism. Masculinity was increasingly defined in terms of national priorities, and the defence of Australia was foremost amongst these. The ideal boy was defined by his performance in the cadet training system, his loyalty to King, Empire, and Australia (in that order), and by his physical fitness. Crotty demonstrates that the values promulgated by the schools were also purveyed by the juvenile literature of the time, and attempts to spread them across class boundaries were made by boy rescue movements and the Boy Scouts.

Crotty argues that middle-class masculinity in this period was hegemonic. That is, not only were these ideals prevalent among the middle-class, but this class had the power to disseminate them among others, so that they permeated society and were accepted by all. While it seems clear that certain ideals of manliness were prevalent amongst Protestant middle-classes, Crotty is less clear how these ideals were received outside this group. Crotty acknowledges that Catholic middle-class schools did not take up the physical ethos which dominated ideals of manliness and were opponents of this ideology. Nor were Catholics generally as supportive of the Empire as Protestants. The success of the boy rescue movements in converting working class (predominantly Catholic) male youths to middle-class ideals of manliness must be in doubt due to the relatively short life of such organisations, and the continuing decline of the religiosity they sought to inculcate. It seems that there were significant sites of resistance to the middle-class male ethos, and therefore its hegemonic nature is uncertain. Martin Crotty has written an illuminating account of a social milieu that had at its disposal almost irresistible forces to indoctrinate and mould its members. The operation of counter-hegemonic forces would make an interesting study to determine the complete shape of masculinities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

ROBERT HOGG

History, University of Queensland


Sunshine and Rainbows is an important contribution to Queensland historiography. Its focus is on the development of gay identity and culture in Queensland and in doing so the book highlights the durability and longevity of homosexual practice despite legal and social prohibitions. It begins with a useful discussion of the way customs and theoretical conceptualisations of sexuality have changed over the centuries and then presents examples of homosexual relationships through ten periods of Queensland history from colonial separation through to the present. It draws many examples from the regions and also stresses ethnic participation in homosexual behaviour.

Anyone interested in women’s history may be disappointed, however, as coverage of lesbianism is significantly over-shadowed by the masculine experience. As Clive Moore points out, this bias is a product of the available sources; his prewar coverage of the male experience relies on legal records whereas lesbian acts were never explicitly
prohibited under the Queensland criminal code contributing to the invisibility of gay women.

The book is informed by theories of sexuality which emphasise the social construction of sexuality and its historic variability. Consequently its narrative builds towards the evolution of gay, lesbian and queer identities and culture in Queensland. Moore argues that the gay and lesbian scene only took on a political character once gay identity and an accompanying social base had been established.

Consequently, explicit protest activities and the appeal to political power through sophisticated lobbying did not emerge in Queensland until the 1980s. The downfall of the National Party government in 1989 after thirty-two years of continuous conservative government was a welcome breakthrough for gay activists but Premier Wayne Goss’s personal conservatism and the Labor Party’s last minute watering down of law reform to exclude anal intercourse from the age of consent provisions meant that Goss Labor also had to be treated with caution by gay law reform advocates.

The gay movement’s frustrations with right-wing ALP government under Goss in the midst of extraordinarily high levels of popular support for reform echo the problems faced by other progressive causes in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It is in these latter chapters that the insights of social movement theory could have added to the book’s analysis. Moore passes over internal tensions in the movement’s AIDS committees, refers to disputes over attitudes to transgender and cross-dressing queers and alludes to the power of commercialism and the “pink dollar” to subvert gay culture. Each of these phenomena is common to other social movements; historians need not treat diversity of groups and internal tensions defensively; they may also be a sign of a protest movement’s broad appeal. Pressures to incorporate may also be interpreted as an indication that a movement’s demands are being taken up by mainstream culture although they may also demobilise a movement if activists do not seize the opportunity to make fresh claims. Although ideological debates can waste activists’ time in pointless internal struggle and turn off supporters, productive discussion about vision can help focus on the movement’s future strategic goals.

These questions of future strategic direction would have helped us to understand where the movement is at and where it wishes to head. As Moore argues, the acceptance of queer theory in the 1990s has helped to extend out understandings of masculinity, femininity and sexualities, enriched mainstream culture and led to greater acceptance among young people of their sexuality. Yet it would be wrong to assume that the gay and lesbian struggle is over. One of the disturbing recurring themes from the historic record is the propensity for male-to-male violence even among men who themselves engage in male-to-male sexual relations. Queer theory has enhanced our understanding of masculinity but there is much yet to be understood and confronted about our culture’s construction of masculinity.

A comment must also be made about University of Queensland Press’s editing. There was hardly a page where there was not a glaring typographical error. It would also have helped to have had a list of the many groups, social and political, involved in the Queensland gay scene as an appendix.

These are minor technical problems which should not detract from the book’s overall contribution to Queensland scholarship. The study of social movements is one of the best ways to understand the subversive and political nature of social history and this book marks an important contribution to Queensland social history.

Libby Connors
University of Southern Queensland
There is little to commend about Jack Gallaway’s *The Odd Couple: Blamey and MacArthur at War*. The book purports to provide a comparative biographical assessment of the two generals. In reality, *The Odd Couple* is little more than a character assassination of US general, Douglas MacArthur. Australian general, Sir Thomas Blamey, the other subject of the study, receives noticeably less attention than that of his immediate superior.

MacArthur has been a source of endless fascination for military historians and biographers — he remains, perhaps, the most controversial figure in American military history. While laudatory works, such as Francis T. Miller’s *General Douglas A. MacArthur: Soldier-Statesmen*, do little to separate myth from reality, so too, it must be said, do works that completely denigrate MacArthur professionally and personally. It is into this category that *The Odd Couple* must be placed. Gallaway’s work is littered with misrepresentations, misinterpretations and unsubstantiated assertions. Only a few of these shall be dealt with here.

Gallaway insinuates that MacArthur lacked courage thus deserving of the hackneyed epithet, “Dugout Doug”. While MacArthur was over-decorated, as are most American officers compared to their British counterparts, his personal courage cannot be called into question. This was amply demonstrated in the Second Battle of the Marne — indeed, he was gassed during World War One — and on Corregidor where, contrary to Gallaway’s assertions, the retreating Americans did not serve in comparative ease. There is ample testimony of the American experience on Corregedor, December 1941-March 1942, but this has been ignored. That Blamey had more battle-field experience than MacArthur is hardly MacArthur’s fault. Gallaway states that while Blamey was planning the Battle of Pozieres in 1916 (surely too important and onerous a task to be left to one colonel), MacArthur was enjoying the high life in Washington. Gallaway seems to have neglected the fact that the United States did not enter World War One until April 1917. Gallaway’s treatment of MacArthur’s World War One experience is alarmingly superficial.

While analysis of MacArthur’s command during World War Two is more substantive, it still contains inaccuracies and is open to interpretation. Gallaway asserts that MacArthur’s knowledge of Asia consisted of a brief tour of Japan in 1904, neglecting to mention his extensive experience in the Philippines. MacArthur’s defeats are attributed to deficiencies in his generalship and his victories to the planning of others and an overwhelming use of force. (This is not reconciled with the author’s own analysis of MacArthur’s campaigns in the Admiralty Islands). MacArthur’s “name”, therefore, was all down to his spin-doctoring. A reader could be forgiven for thinking that this is too simplistic given the author’s reticence to engage with existing interpretations of MacArthur’s military success. Blamey’s troubles, meanwhile, with John Curtin and his government are attributed to their different ideological backgrounds. This conclusion rests more on the author’s political assumptions than on any concrete substantiation. Curtin is also labelled a pacifist — a label in its proper form that most scholars would find difficult to accept. Similarly, Franklin Roosevelt did not assert that MacArthur would be capable of overthrowing the US government given the right conditions, but rather, he was the second most dangerous person in the United States.

Gallaway also takes MacArthur to task for his tenure as Commander of occupation forces in Japan. The author asserts that everyone expected the US Navy to be given
control of these forces, though there is no evidence of this. Harry Truman’s motivation for appointing MacArthur, it is argued, was to expunge a possible rival in the 1948 presidential contest. In 1945, however, Truman was still finding his feet as president and had given little thought to the 1948 election. Gallaway further opines that from the foundation laid by MacArthur and the American occupation Japan has gone on to achieve its war aims. One must ask, surely it is better that these aims have been achieved peaceably by a democratic nation than under the guise of the Greater South-East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere? Given MacArthur’s success in Japan, Truman’s choice seems well vindicated.

Stylistically, *The Odd Couple* is marred by the author’s constant and sarcastic use of journalistic monikers to describe MacArthur. This renders the work less than scholarly, as too does the sloppy referencing.

All of this is not to say that MacArthur was not without his faults — MacArthur was woefully underprepared for the Japanese attack on the Philippines, his failure to give credit to the efforts of Australian troops was ingratitude of the highest order and he was responsible for much of his own press. If scholars, however, are to lift the fog that surrounds MacArthur then more balanced studies are needed than this. In decrying MacArthur’s use of the “Ripping Yarn”, the author may have delivered one of his own.

MARK DASH

*History, University of Queensland*


This is the fifth volume of the series: *The Official History of Australia’s Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948-1975*. It is divided into two parts, with the first written by Peter Dennis, a History professor from the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra and the second written by Jeffrey Grey, a History senior lecturer, also from ADFA.

If the Korean War is Australia’s “forgotten war”, then Australia’s military involvement in the Malayan Emergency of 1948-1963 and in the Konfrontasi Campaign against Indonesia of 1964-1966 could be dubbed “the unknown wars”. Few Australians are aware that thirty-six of our servicemen died during the Malayan Emergency while another sixteen service personnel lost their lives participating in the Konfrontasi Campaign.

In detailing Australian operations in Malaya, Dennis first provides a good background chapter that explains how the Emergency arose. The Australian forces came out of World War Two with a solid reputation for jungle fighting. As well, as a consequence of the rise of the Cold War, the British planned a Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve that would provide a multinational force to combat any communist threat to British Commonwealth nations in the Pacific region. Thus when a communist insurgency erupted in Malaya in 1948, the British called upon Australia to furnish troops to help defeat these guerrillas in their jungle hideouts. But the Australian experience in jungle fighting had been against the Japanese, who fielded conventional military formations that had access to heavy weapons and naval and air support. Guerrilla warfare was unfamiliar to the Australian forces and they had to learn some new tactics in order to defeat a small and elusive enemy who engaged only in hit and run raids.
Dennis gives a good account of Australian Army operations and he tries to give some credit to the limited role played by the RAN and the RAAF in the Malayan Emergency. In 1957, the new nation of Malaysia was formed from Malaya, Singapore and the British territories in northern Borneo. Indonesia, under President Sukarno, was opposed to the British colonies of Sabah, Brunei and Sarawak joining Malaysia. Emboldened by his victory in forcing the Dutch out of West Papua in 1962, Sukarno turned his diplomatic and military efforts towards inciting a rebellion in Borneo. Because Australian forces were already stationed on the Malayan mainland, it was a simple matter for the British to call again upon Australia for assistance. Grey explains how the Australian Army put the lessons of the Malayan Emergency to good use when it began patrolling the Indonesia/Malaysia border in 1964. As the Indonesians were adept at using mines and mortars to harass the Australians, Konfrontasi provided the kind of battle experience that would soon confront the Australian Army in Vietnam.

If this volume is reprinted then I would suggest a few changes. Dennis refers to air missions but sometimes fails to tell the reader what type of aircraft was used. I still have no idea what an RAF Brigand is and so a glossary of military equipment used in these campaigns would be useful. Grey may need to expand upon the small section he has devoted to explaining why the Sukarno government was so opposed to northern Borneo joining Malaysia.

This is no light read but it remains an extremely useful as a reference source. Unlike the Second World War official histories, there are few mentions made of specific individuals to elicit the interest of the families of those who served in these post-war campaigns. But Emergency and Confrontation will appeal to those seeking details of Australia’s military involvement in the Cold War.

Jack Ford

Brisbane


Waking Up to Dreamtime makes only a superficial pretence of providing an intellectually balanced view of the contemporary politics of difference. This is a pity given that ten years on from the Mabo judgement, the realities of bicultural identity in the context of the intersection of aboriginal and white Australia are becoming increasingly evident. These realities, based on the historical narratives of settler-colonialism, should, in the view of the editor (and principal contributor) be addressed by either ensuring a return to the dichotomous centre and periphery model of white colonial dominance, or updating the assimilative policies of Paul Hasluck to complete the paradigm of cultural absorption.

Nowhere within the text is any argument developed that pays regard to the aspirational aspects of indigenous identity. The hypothesis is based on the assumption that post-1967 policies, particularly those which were directed at self-determination, have not been fully successful. Consequently the principle of self-determination must itself be faulty and inherently unsustainable; and in any event antipathetic to the national interest. Apart from the faulty logic, this ignores the existence of a political tradition that has emphatically discouraged the growth of an environment in which self-determination could flourish.

The contributions have been limited to seven and in some instances it is not entirely clear why some selections have been included. Jarrett, for example, gives a competent exposition of the complexities of aboriginal gender politics with which it would be
difficult to argue. But how her text can be usefully applied to any argument that either supports or refutes the assimilationism that is the preferred theoretical position of the editor is somewhat obscure. Jarrett presents no cogent summation of her data, except to offer the arguable conclusion that human rights cannot be “[…] conditioned by the application of ‘cultural rights’”. Hardly the stuff of robust debate.

Professor Tom Flanagan of the University of Calgary develops his thesis on the back of a number of uncited assertions that purport to “prove” that the basis for individual wealth is the sale of one’s labour, and not from “exercising control over land and resources”. This is a quite remarkable, if not startling proposition in the era of global capitalism. But on closer examination, Flanagan’s text is not really rejecting capitalist ideology, but is rather rejecting the principle of indigenous collectivism. The largely anecdotal evidence he presents concentrates on the implied threat such collectivism would pose to the Canadian economy — a threat that does not appear to have eventuated following the many positive land rights judgements, including the defining Delgamuuk v British Columbia (1993). He exhorts Australians to take regard of the conclusions he has drawn from his Canadian experience. (Flanagan spends much of his time as an expert witness for oppositional parties in land claim cases — with minimal success.) The nub of these conclusions is the proposition that collectivism must be resisted and self-determination only tolerated if it is practised individually in a profit-oriented environment. This would entail the sublimation of the cleavages that were characteristic of settler-colonialism in Australia. According to Flanagan, relations with indigenous Australians should not be hampered by any “sense of guilt” arising from the colonial past. Apparently Flanagan believes that the effects of dispossession should be subject to a sunset clause — notwithstanding the judgements of Mabo and Wik.

Johns extends the theme by speculating that aboriginal social organisation was doomed, even had the incursion of settler-colonialism been accomplished without violence or the vitiating effects of introduced disease. This is a specious argument of rather bold proportions. The historical narrative of settler-colonialism describes a process of cultural domination that was characterised by the elimination of the original inhabitants. There was nothing serendipitous about this. The colonisers came deliberately under the direction of the British Crown, to establish permanent settlements and develop their own economic, juridical and bureaucratic infrastructures. The disregard for the rights of the indigenous inhabitants occurred regardless of the viability or adaptability of their culture.

To sum up, this book is not very helpful in advancing the debate on the reconstruction of aboriginal identity and the issue of what response is most appropriate for the historical consequences of two hundred years of dispossession. In fact although presented as a scholarly work, it is, beneath the surface, little more than Hansonism dressed in an academic gown.

Neill Phillipson
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This is a very timely and welcome addition to the literature on elections. As such it falls between a work on electoral behaviour and one dealing with the nuts and bolts of electoral administration. The editor has assembled thirteen other authors to examine the
phenomenon and characteristics of Australian elections past and present. Virtually everyone will be enlightened by the data thus assembled.

Virtually every aspect of the past and present conduct of elections is covered, with important original research on “Delivering Democracy to Indigenous Australians”, (Will Sanders), “Exporting Expertise in Electoral Administration”, (Michael Maley), “Inventing Hare-Clark: The Model Arithmetocracy”, (Judith Homeshaw) and “Chartism in Colonial Australia”, (Paul A. Pickering) to name just four.

In many edited works the standard of contributions is uneven, but this is not the case with this volume. Not only is the range comprehensive — this reviewer cannot think of any aspect left uncovered — the contributions are well written and informative. It is particularly pleasing to have another piece of work on electoral matters from Colin A. Hughes, “Institutionalising Electoral integrity”, given his lifetime of experience as an electoral analyst, election commentator and first Australian Electoral Commissioner. The book closes with a joint contribution “Political Parties, Partisanship and Electoral governance” from two well respected academics in the field, Jim Jupp and Marion Sawer. The latter, as editor, contributed the first chapter “Pacemakers for the World?” exploring the extent to which Australia’s innovative approach to electoral matters served as an example for others to follow. Some readers may be surprised at how advanced the Australian colonies were in their approach to electoral reform, and not only for pragmatic partisan related reasons, as has often been the view advanced hitherto.

As one who has just completed the post election ballot paper survey for Electoral Commission Queensland, I feel that electoral reform is alive and well. Voters are apparently well used to electoral experimentation. At the 2001 state election 40 per cent ignored their party’s How to Vote cards and 60 per cent voted only for their candidate and did not preference. Electoral changes therefore continue, perhaps despite the parties’ electoral strategies. With our various Electoral Commissions as independent statutory authorities, answerable to Parliament and administering detailed and specific electoral legislation, Australia continues to be innovative in its approach to electoral matters. With this has come a general bipartisan consensus on essential electoral issues, including those bitterly contested by the parties in the past (e.g. quotas, redistributions, weightage etc.)

This volume is a solid scholarly account of where we have come from in electoral terms and will prove a very useful companion to those who teach and research in the area.

PAUL REYNOLDS

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Researchers were not in favour in Vanuatu, formerly the New Hebrides, for eight years in the 1980s and 90s. Margaret Rodman was one of the first scholars welcomed back when the country “opened” again in 1993, a tribute no doubt to her earlier work on the islands of Ambae and Santo. During her 1993 visit she contributed to Vanuatu’s historical documentation by identifying locations for inclusion in a national register of significant cultural and historic sites. An anthropologist, Rodman has written extensively on the concepts of “place” and “space” and their significance to traditional
societies. In this book she widens the discourse to embrace those same concepts as they applied to the British colonial presence in the twentieth-century New Hebrides, viewed through the buildings they inhabited. While Rodman’s theoretical approach is that of the social anthropologist there is much of interest to the historian.

When Whitehall eventually accepted the inevitable and agreed to set up on land a Joint Administration with the French, the Condominium of the New Hebrides was signed into being in 1906. Present-day Vila, where there was then barely a building to be seen, was chosen as the site of this central administration. Plans for buildings to house that administration were put forward, discussed in minute detail, orders for materials were placed in New Caledonia and Australia and builders sought. On one point there was agreement — the buildings had to be “suitable”; what that meant led to much correspondence. Due to the dual nature of that administration, the number of officials to be housed was more than twice the usual four required to set up a normal British colony. The New Hebrides British Service and Western Pacific High Commission Archives, now housed in England, include the many letters which passed between the two administering powers which were responsible for three separate administrations, before work on any building commenced. Progress was so slow that housing had to be juggled for years, a tricky task when individual status had to be reflected in the level of accommodation.

The book is a social history of some of the buildings in Vila and on outer islands provided for officials who moved further afield to better administer the Group. Mission buildings also feature. Each chapter deals in the main with a different structure: from the grander to the most humble; from the building which housed the Joint Court to the hut in the village of Waileni, on Ambae Island, whose construction the Rodman family arranged and in which they lived while conducting field research over several years. The archives, the navigation of which was greatly aided by a former British colonial officer, are not the only source used by Rodman to reveal the roles played in and by these colonial spaces. She conducted extensive interviews with many who lived and worked in the selected buildings. All had returned to live in Britain and most were willing to talk at length about memories of their time in the New Hebrides. Some, however, doubtful of the reliability of memory and perception of events of up to forty years ago, were not.

Recollections of the occupants of a given house over several decades are often widely different; an accompanying wife and family might give a different perspective. All seemed confident in the occupation of their temporary homes, if not necessarily happy with the physical condition of the houses and offices. Some expressed doubts about the spaces beyond the physical boundaries, and even fear of eyes gazing inward from the surrounding bush. In the three outer areas the District Agents of both powers (they addressed each other as “colleague”) were supported by members of the New Hebridean police contingents raised and trained by each national administration. The community might be completed by the occupants of the prison (almost invariably New Hebrideans), also housed within the area devoted to the District Agencies, and sometimes by specialists such as an Education Officer.

The reaction of New Hebrideans to the colonial spaces carved out of their homeland is harder to elicit. It appears that it is rarely recorded in the archives, evidence given following the death of the D.A. on Tanna being a notable exception. The Melanesian view of their colonial masters is one area which remains to be investigated, along with that of the settlers. Many settler families had been in the New Hebrides for several generations and it was their home. They did not occupy official quarters which
temporarily became home before they left the islands and returned to the real “Home”. Their nostalgia for the islands is different from that felt by the British. And then there are the French. The study is not complete without the French side of the equation. Of this Rodman is all too aware and hopes to correct.

This is an engrossing first volume, its text enhanced by illustrations — architects’ drawings, sketch plans drawn from memory, photographs, maps. I look forward to its sequel, which I expect to be equally enlightening and entertaining.

MARNEY DUNN

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The Enlightenment witnessed a new phase in the evolution of the western encyclopedic tradition. Encyclopaedic Visions seeks to analyse this new phase through a contextualised appraisal of English scientific dictionaries and related works published between 1700 and 1820. At first glance this may seem a curious strategy, given the centrality of d’Alembert’s and Diderot’s Encyclopédie within the historiography of the Enlightenment. However, as Richard Yeo convincingly demonstrates, received opinion has overlooked how heavily the encyclopédists and their successors in France and Britain drew on the work of earlier English compilers of scientific dictionary writers, notably John Harris and Ephraim Chambers and, somewhat later, Abraham Rees. In their design of Encyclopédie, and reflections on the extent to which an encyclopaedia could encapsulate knowledge, Diderot and d’Alembert were clearly influenced by the achievements and mindful of the shortcomings of these earlier British authorities.

By focusing on English scientific dictionaries, Yeo not only situates the Encyclopédie in a richer historical context, but he also extends Enlightenment historiography in two further important respects. Firstly, he provides new insights into how exactly knowledge of natural philosophy and the arts was organised and routinely transmitted during the first half of the eighteenth century. Secondly, he says much that is new and remarkable about how the form and function of English scientific dictionaries of the first half of the eighteenth century were shaped by earlier encyclopaedic traditions, the growing cultural authority of science and the growth of print capitalism.

From the early 1600s, truth increasingly came to be seen as acquired by collection and interpretation of facts about the world, rather than gained by scholastic analysis of a circumscribed collection of truthful texts. Yeo describes how the purpose of the encyclopaedia shifted accordingly. By the early eighteenth century, the encyclopaedia had evolved from a means of preserving a stable body of knowledge into a device for systematically documenting flows of new knowledge, while at the same time correcting errors disclosed in the process of recording new facts. The ways in which scientific dictionary writers such as Harris and especially Chambers sought to manage knowledge within the constraints of the printed codex reflected a growing cultural commitment to experimental method, but one inflected by awareness that human knowledge had increased beyond what could be ever held by any one mind. Hence they sought to organise their dictionaries in ways that could accommodate new knowledge through the production of successive editions, while striving through innovative textual
and visual means to illuminate interconnections and meaning within this dynamic body of knowledge. In this sense, Yeo argues, early eighteenth-century English encyclopaedists were inspired by much the same ambition as medieval and renaissance authorities. They too employed the book to capture what it was deemed essential humanity should know.

How British dictionary writers consciously drew upon and sought to refashion earlier encyclopaedic traditions is only one theme in this fascinating study. Yeo also explores how in their modes of organising knowledge, Harris, and more importantly Chambers, were indebted to the tradition of commonplace books, notably in their striving to balance the respective advantages of alphabetical and thematic organisation. What is particularly interesting and thought provoking in view of current debates over digital copyright is the concluding part of *Encyclopaedic Visions*, which examines how the work of English compilers of artistic and scientific dictionaries was shaped by newly emerging conceptions of authorship and intellectual property. Yeo has much of interest to say about the difficulties dictionary writers had to negotiate by virtue of the fact that they drew upon the work of fellow writers in an era when publication was increasingly becoming a means of living and subject to copyright. He explores the legal debates surrounding copyright and the strategies by which the authors of scientific dictionaries sought to present their work as championing the public good through free circulation of knowledge, while at the same time seeking to guard their own rights to ownership in an increasingly competitive market. In particular, Yeo shows how British encyclopaedists sought to appeal to a growing middle-class audience by invoking the ideal of a universal republic of letters, while simultaneously ensuring sales through courting royal and aristocratic patronage.

As Yeo points out, during the second half of the eighteenth century the growth of knowledge accelerated to such a degree that it came to defy meaningful summation or abstraction. Natural philosophy increasingly became transformed into specialised disciplines. This, together with the development of new processes in manufacturing, resulted in a market for exhaustively comprehensive technical treatises. What one could learn about navigation and seamanship from Chambers or other earlier eighteenth-century scientific dictionaries, for example, paled into insignificance when matched against works such as William Burney’s seven hundred-page edition of William Falconer’s *Dictionary of the Marine Terms* (1815). Generalist encyclopaedias continued to enjoy popularity with middle-class readers, but no longer were they careful abridgements of general knowledge, produced by one or two specialist writers. They were increasingly bulky collections of specialist essays by many expert hands, directed by editors who subscribed to no other guiding principle other than the goal of ensuring essays were as authoritative and extensive as their balance sheets allowed.

*Encyclopaedic Visions* will be of great interest not only to Enlightenment specialists, but also students of the history of communication. Yeo offers a timely corrective to the easy but historically questionable assumption that there is something radically new about the “information explosion” wrought since the early 1990s by advances in networked digital communication. Whereas the scale and diversity of contemporary information production and circulation dwarfs the output of western European print culture during the course of the Enlightenment, Yeo shows us that there are still intriguing points of similarity. He reminds us that us that “information anxiety” is really nothing new. Within Enlightenment scientific and intellectual circles there were similarly fears that the wealth of new knowledge generated by scientific observation and overseas exploration threatened the best efforts to organise it into usable forms.
More importantly, Yeo demonstrates that the Enlightenment was a period of experimentation and innovation in the management and dissemination of knowledge. As networked communication becomes increasingly integrated within intellectual life, there is arguably much to be learnt from this excellent study of the work of British Enlightenment encyclopaedists.

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In *Reading Revolutions*, Kevin Sharpe observes that the modern method of reading “sequentially through a book,” “annotating as we proceed [...] privileges the text” — so much so that “to a great extent what we annotate is prompted and conditioned by the text” (p. 180-1). To be forewarned is to be forearmed, perhaps; nevertheless, this reviewer must confess to having read and annotated Sharpe’s latest book with the stodgiest linearity. Granted, it is almost impossible to read (that is, to understand) an academic monograph any other way, and this one is no exception: Sharpe’s study is the product of extensive research (fifty-four manuscript volumes, not including numerous annotated books); it is moreover an impressive feat of synthesis, incorporating a wide range of relevant secondary literature, much of it drawn from different disciplines; finally, it advances an argument that, if ultimately quite ambitious, is both complex and subtle. In short, this is not a book that lends itself to early- (or post-) modern “dipping.”

*Reading Revolutions* is a case study of the way in which one member of the Long Parliament “read” — in the sense of appropriating, constructing, and deconstructing — the English Revolution. Reading is thus presented as the most political of acts (“language is politics, not the means of articulating Politics” [p. 15]), while the “politics” of the long title is defined broadly, as comprehending “all social intercourse, the act of being in the world” (p. 260). Sharpe’s sources are the papers, journals, annotated library, and (most importantly) the commonplace books of Sir William Drake, who began the 1640s a lukewarm Parliamentarian, but was politic enough to accept a baronetcy in 1641, and to spend most of the Civil War-Interregnum period on the continent, travelling for his “health” (p. 71). An examination of his reading and writing reveals Drake as a hardheaded opportunist, a devoted student of “Realpolitik”; his favourite writer, not surprisingly, Machiavelli.

But Drake was anything but the passive recipient of the written word, according to Sharpe, who situates his argument within a sixty-page-long introductory chapter synthesesing recent theories about textuality and reception. (A chapter that, while useful as a kind of literature review, may overwhelm the general reader). Here Sharpe invokes the trend among New Historicians such as Stephen Greenblatt to view the reader as an active participant in the construction of meaning, and to see texts not as hegemonic, but rather eminently open to negotiation and/or contestation. Renaissance readers were “sensitive to the genre, form and materiality of their texts” (p. 26), and steeped in a “humanist rhetorical tradition” which recognised “the independence and power of readers, as well as authors, to construct their own meanings” (p. 40). According to Sharpe, historians who have traditionally characterised early modern English society according to either a “conflict” or a “consensus” model should rethink such a “simplistic dichotomy” in light of this dialogue between the Renaissance reader and text — a dialogue, he believes, in which “authority” was “more indeterminate, more open to multiple meanings and interpretations” (p. 17). Drake’s own reading and
writing. Sharpe argues, reflected the “multivalence” inherent in seventeenth-century culture. Drake read actively, with the self-conscious purpose of “fashioning” or “writing” himself; he routinely “plundered” texts to serve his own ends (p. 277), often reading “against the grain of the text, let alone authorial intention” (p. 260). Drake not only tended to read all literature through a Machiavellian lens, but, by appropriating and adapting Machiavelli for his own purposes, “out-machiavel[led] even Old Nick” (p. 189).

Sharpe’s efforts at reconstructing Drake’s reading practices constitute one of the strongest — and for me, the most interesting — parts of the book. The evidence of Drake’s marginalia and commonplace books suggest that, unlike most modern readers, Drake read laterally rather than sequentially, selecting material according to his own preconceived subject headings, and ranging across different volumes at once. This was the commonplace method endorsed by Erasmus and Bacon, and exemplified by the “book wheel” — a machine enabling the simultaneous reading of many texts (and depicted on the jacket illustration). Early modern “strategies of reading” in general, and that of the commonplace in particular, facilitated the “personal construction of meaning” (p. 279); moreover, “this practice of fragmenting texts, opening them to other words, detaches them from their own historical context of and from the ‘meaning’ they had and performed in it” (p. 184).

Sharpe disarmingly, if somewhat equivocally, addresses the troublesome but inevitable “problem of [the] case study”: how representative was Drake? (p. 269). Like Menocchio, the subject of Carlo Ginzburg’s famous study, Drake was atypical — his literary tastes were as eclectic as his reading habits were idiosyncratic (his library included not only works by Jesuits, Puritans and Anglicans, but also the Koran). Sharpe moves from the admission that Drake was “exceptional” to the assertion that “there is no such thing as a typical reader” (p. 270) to the conclusion that “his case” may allow us to “better comprehend how early modern Englishmen read as well as wrote their world” (p. 270). Sharpe’s invocation of Stanley Fish’s notion of “interpretive communities” is, it seems to me, intended not only to reconcile the historian to a “marriage between theory and empirical research” (p. ix) by relocating “reader-response criticism” to a “historically specific” context (p. 37), but to provide a basis on which to “write” Drake (as it were) onto a larger canvass.

On the other hand, alternate (“conflict”, rather than “multivalence”) readings of early modern society, such as those gleaned from “radical Protestant literature” are dismissed as the product of a “small and idiosyncratic section of the literate public” (p. 67). In contrast, Drake’s “secular, Erastian spirit” (p. 139), and his view that “the principal role of religion” was to promote political stability, are implicitly invoked as evidence that by the mid-seventeenth century not only Drake, but many others, anticipated “the deism of the Augustan age” (p. 317).

Those familiar with Sharpe’s earlier work will not be surprised that his argument ultimately hinges not on the causes but on the “facts of civil war” (i.e., its consequences). The failure of “godly politics” marked the “dissolution” of the ideal of “one faith, one Christian community”, and a shift towards “a more utilitarian language of politics” (p. 237) and “a growing emphasis on individual judgement” (p. 191). According to Sharpe, “the site of that fissure” was the Renaissance commonplace book (p. 191); and, “if [Drake] is at all representative of other readers” the “politicisation of the reader” facilitated by such reading practices “was not just a freeing of the reader to dispute and contest authority, but a broader freedom to construct a personal identity, a personal politics, a political self” (p. 277). Sharpe’s claim is an ambitious one (at least
for the seventeenth century), if tempered by an apologetic comparison of “the self” (always emerging) to the middle class (proverbially always rising) (p. 338).

One obvious criticism of this argument is that it tends to place undue weight on commonplace reading and writing practices; after all, less secular genres, such as the spiritual autobiography, continued well into the eighteenth century if not to script, at least to inform written self-expression. Joseph Mayett’s autobiography constitutes both a late, and popular example of the persistence of the providentialist gloss. Readers hoping to resolve the historiographic “conflict-consensus” deadlock may find Reading Revolutions disappointing (although by now most are surely inured to such disappointment). This complex and learned study should, however, appeal to those interested in New Historicism and/or the history of the book.

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Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650-1850. By Paul Langford. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. x+389. $95.00 AUD (hb), $49.95 AUD (pb).

Few historians have described so remarkable an arc over the course of their career as has Paul Langford. His first book, The First Rockingham Administration, could sit comfortably on a shelf with several other close studies of individual ministries that were deeply influenced by the work of Sir Lewis Namier, some of them published as far back as the 1950s. Two short years later, however, The Excise Crisis (1975) presented a pioneering study of the impact of public opinion on the government of Robert Walpole, and it did so more than a decade before other English historians “discovered” the work of Jürgen Habermas on Hanoverian England’s emergent “public sphere”. Langford’s pursuit of bold new historiographic vistas reached a new peak with the near simultaneous appearance of two large-scale, interrelated works. A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727-1783 (1989) defied its formal status as a synthetic volume in the New Oxford History of England. Its seemingly quixotic (since nearly total) neglect of the role of the aristocracy was somewhat compensated for in Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1689-1798 (1991), but the impact of that book’s important argument — about the widespread social character of “property” and its centrality to shared notions of governance amongst landed and middling orders alike — was somewhat diffused by a plethora of details, some of them delightful, all of them testimony to an unparalleled energy for research and an ineffable talent for the telling example.

With Professor Langford’s new book, Englishness Identified, the emphasis is decidedly upon the telling details rather than close historiographic engagement, with both the gains and losses that follow from such an approach. It is essentially a richly-detailed tour of impressions of the character and manners of the English people, primarily through the eyes of sometimes bemused and occasionally offended foreign observers. Most of the details are amusing and interesting. One section proclaims the Hanoverian parliament to be the supreme example of English social clubbing, with members valuing a jovial demeanour more than an eloquent phrase. Younger M.P.s of the 1790s often took the long-winded Edmund Burke’s recognition by the Speaker as a signal to hasten out of the chamber to seek dinner in one of Westminster’s well-appointed kitchens (pp. 206-16). So much for Conor Cruise O’Brien’s “great melody”!

In other places, we learn that European visitors were struck by the frequency with which they observed young women in the uncomfortable and potentially indecent
position of riding on top of carriages. This they attributed not only to a general taste amongst the English for speed and incessant motion, but also to their baffling insistence upon keeping even their most trusted servants at arms length whenever possible (pp. 42, 245). This latter characteristic is said to have seemed odd alongside a professed English taste for liberty. The solution Langford proposes is that English uncertainty as to the permanence of one’s social standing demanded at the very least that inferiors be more definitively separated from their betters so as to avoid raising uncomfortable questions about the practical realities of social position (pp. 242-6).

For all these pleasures, one sometimes wishes however that the whole enterprise were guided by a more explicitly stated perspective. It is not always clear how often the overall pattern that emerges amounts to a concrete, widely-shared phenomenon of “Englishness” and how much might simply be the result of Langford’s artful stitching together of hundreds of quotations. Herbert Spencer’s lengthy characterisation of his uncle, presented at the book’s end, does indeed suggest that the characteristics with which this book is principally concerned — energy, candour, decency, taciturnity, reserve and eccentricity — could be seen as residing side-in-side in one particular English person (pp. 313-14). But was such conjunction as routine in the minds of observers as the structure of Englishness Identified would have us believe? One might also quibble about how the vast majority of the contemporary writings deployed here suggest that this book is far more a study of only the one century, indeed perhaps just the eighty years, rather than the two centuries that preceded 1850. Nor, finally, do many of the characteristics described here seem all that surprising, or even necessarily historical since, as Langford himself notes in his conclusion, many of these qualities continue to be both attributed to and cherished by the English.

Most problematic for some will be Langford’s general evasion of the issue as to where his focus on “Englishness” fits with the larger historiographic project, pursued during the last decade or so, of devising a history of “Britain” that gives full weight to its various constituent peoples. The Celts certainly get a looking into now and again in those instances where their characters are perceived to be different from those of their richer and more influential neighbours, most notably (if predictably) their superior friendliness and hospitality (pp. 256-8). Interestingly, indeed, we are not given many impressions of the English from their Celtic neighbours, with the exception of the occasional well-educated and oft-travelled Scotsman. The question of how far this wide-ranging study of “Englishness” might mitigate or even overturn Linda Colley’s famous argument for the emergence of a common British identity, at least amongst the English and the Scots, during the same time-frame covered by Langford is not so much directly confronted as it is coyly evaded (pp. 12-14).

Such cavils, especially the last, are probably inevitable in the present historiographic climate. Yet a dogged insistence upon them may not do proper justice to this immensely enjoyable book. One doubts somehow that all that many readers would really want such analyses deployed if, as seems likely, it could only be done at the expense of this volume’s simpler and richer pleasures. In the end, we should appreciate Englishness Identified for what it is: an excursion into a fully-realised world of impressions and opinions, rather than a rigorous effort to distinguish the “English” from the “British”, a project which in any case Professor Langford doubts many contemporary English people concerned themselves with overly much. That the English, on the evidence of this study, remained so distinctive in the eyes of their European and American contemporaries is probably, in the end, all the argument that need be presented so far as the Britishness agenda is concerned.

This is the second study of Helmuth von Moltke (1800-1891) by Buchholz, Professor of History at the State University of New York, College at Brockport. In the introduction he poses the question, is it forever necessary to blame the sins of the sons on the fathers? — one of the major questions facing historians of Prusso-Germany before 1914. This is evidenced in the initial “Fischer controversy” of the 1960s, the Sonderweg dispute of the 1980s, and the Goldhagen interpretation of the 1990s.

He makes an interesting comparison of forces at work then and in the last decades of the twentieth century: rapid technological change, an arms race of costly and complex weapons, two large competing alliance systems, and specialisation of labour in the servicing bureaucracies. The “German wars” which led to unification (against Denmark 1864, Austria 1866, France 1870) were the first to be preplanned in detail: specifically laid out on paper in mobilisation orders, complex timetables, and planning for men, weapons, equipment and supplies. All this was practised in war games and manoeuvres on an annual basis. Moltke and his organisation of the Prussian General Staff applied the systematic use of organised knowledge to the practical skills of warmaking. This enabled the Prussian Army to benefit from “double loop learning”, where errors are detected and corrected in ways that modify policies and objectives. It is from this starting point that Buchholz describes and analyses Prussia’s wars under Moltke within organisational, knowledge, and learning theory. Moltke was also responsible for the refining of the intelligence gathering process, and by 1870 the Prussian Army had an unrivalled degree of specialisation in this. He also recognised the novel conditions of industrial mass warfare: the decisive battle, not the occupation of territory, was the means to break an enemy’s will to resist.

This work looks more closely at Moltke the man, and those life experiences which influenced him. He was frugal and abstemious, and had the ability to mix with all manners and ranks. This added to the almost hagiographic image that became popular after his death. There is a detailed examination of Moltke’s life, with the aim of rectifying what Buchholz considers the overlooking of his personal part in establishing the officer corps after his own persona: the modern, self-made, technically educated, professional soldier. Indeed he was a remarkable individual who, in the sixth decade of his life, developed future-oriented war planning processes. The Leitmotiv of Moltke’s life and career can be summed up as “realism, no heroics or romanticism, confident, but not enthusiastic […]”. (p. vi). Intellectuals in armies are often considered a contradiction in terms, but the highly educated and talented Moltke (he was also an artist) negates this. He believed that through the life of the mind, one could address practical realities.

Some heated discussion may be caused by Buchholz’ proposition that Moltke’s achievements were not “militaristic” but, like all technology, essentially neutral and without political baggage, and did not doom Prussia-Germany to its subsequent path. How is Moltke relevant to the shaping of the modern world? Apart from the emphasis on intellect and application of knowledge, he put together and perfected existing processes and technologies to create the format for all large-scale twentieth century wars.
Buchholz does not see this work as a definitive statement, rather as intending to open discussion on the methodology of the study of armies and the process of warfare. The book is detailed in its examination of military-technical aspects, but eminently readable with illuminating contemporary anecdotes. Buchholz has produced a quasi-biography while successfully analysing the nature of change and its effective implementation within a specific technological and social framework.

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According to President George W. Bush, in the current “war on terrorism” every state is either on America’s side or against her; there is, to adopt the parlance of the day, zero tolerance for neutrality. This bifurcation of the world into friend or foe in the style of Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt was, not surprisingly, also the approach favoured by Adolf Hitler, who disdainfully dismissed neutrality as nothing more than a cowardly cop-out. But despite his scorn for neutrality in both theory and practice, Hitler was forced throughout the Second World War to deal with five European neutrals: Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Turkey. Christian Leitz’s book provides an excellent, concise survey of the diplomatic and economic relations between Nazi Germany and these five neutrals. In the process he demonstrates quite convincingly his central contention that each of the five states made a vital contribution to the German war economy and that each profited handsomely as a result.

Leitz devotes separate chapters to each of the five countries. Each case study provides a succinct overview of wartime diplomatic relations between the Third Reich and the country in question followed by a more in-depth account of the course of economic activity over the war years. Leitz makes clear that each of the neutrals had something which was essential for the Nazi war effort: gold and banking services (Switzerland), wolfram (Spain and Portugal), chromite (Turkey) and iron ore (Sweden). While the degree of cooperation and warmth between the individual states and Germany differed from case to case, with Spain, Sweden and Switzerland exhibiting the greatest sympathy with Nazi Germany and Turkey and Portugal maintaining more distance to Berlin, all five neutrals shared one thing in common: a strong and distressingly persistent commitment to trade with the Nazi regime, without a trace of moral scruple. The responsible politicians and businessmen showed, in Leitz’s words, “a shocking unwillingness to sever their economic links with the Third Reich.” He dismisses the exculpatory claims that neutral policy was driven primarily by the motive of self-preservation and argues persuasively that profit considerations are the key to explaining neutral behaviour. Leitz’s analysis leads one to conclude that none of the five neutrals conducted itself in a manner calculated to bring credit to the concept of neutrality.

In his conclusion Leitz touches on the important issue of the role and influence of private entrepreneurs and also briefly mentions the corruption and profiteering which was a distinguishing feature of the economic dealings between the Third Reich and the neutrals. One wishes that much more attention could have been paid to both of these critical aspects in the body of the book or in a more expanded conclusion.

Throughout the book Leitz displays a firm grasp of the relevant historiography. He impressively draws upon a very wide range of secondary material in German, Swedish, Spanish, Portuguese and French and in several cases also incorporates findings from
his own archival research. He succeeds admirably in achieving his primary goal of
providing a reliable and readable overview of the relations between Nazi Germany and
the European neutrals. This is a valuable and welcome synthesis which can be
consulted with profit by both specialist scholars and students.

STEVEN R. WELCH
History, University of Melbourne

Historiker im Nationalsozialismus. Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft und der
“Volkstumskampf” im Osten. By Ingo Haar (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht,
2000), pp.433, maps and figures, DM78.00.

In the mid-1980s, the (West) German historical profession was agitated by a “dispute
of the historians” (Historikerstreit), which attracted international attention.
Representatives of the school of “critical social historians” criticised right-wing and
conservative historians for statements which were seen as tending to relativise the
crimes of the National Socialist régime as part of a campaign to foster a more
“positive” sense of identification with the German nation and its past. Since then, the
German historical profession has been confronted with its own past, with a lively
controversy which came to a head at the 1998 German historians’ conference, over the
entanglement of various distinguished historians in the formulation and implementation
of Nazi racial policies, especially in German-occupied Poland. Some of the more
outspoken protagonists of the Historikerstreit, such as Hans-Ulrich Wehler, found
themselves on the defensive when it came to the role of some of their former academic
teachers in the Nazi era.

The involvement of such leading German postwar historians as Hermann Aubin,
Werner Conze, Theodor Schieder and Reinhard Wittram in the formulation of racist
Nazi policy towards the population of Poland is one of the themes of Ingo Haar’s
study. While other writers have focussed on the writings of prominent historians, Haar
traces the institutional and prosopographical dimensions of the evolution of the
German historians’ complicity in Nazi population policy. About a third of his book
deals with the pre-Nazi period, showing how politicised research into questions of the
population history (Volksgeschichte) of the German-Polish borderlands became
following Germany’s territorial losses under the Treaty of Versailles. Haar follows the
development of institutionalised networks of right-wing and conservative nationalist
historians, who were committed to providing academic ammunition for the campaign
to revise the Versailles settlement. Polish and German academic institutions both
received support from their respective governments to support research into the
controversial area of the cultural and ethnic heritage of the contested territories, and
German archivists and historians conspired secretly but effectively even before 1933 to
deny access to relevant German archives to Polish researchers.

Haar identifies networks of both political and academic influence: right-wing
nationalist student fraternities and pressure groups constituted a formative milieu for
scholars concerned with the ethnic politics of the Eastern borderlands, and networks of
academic patronage played their part in getting financial and institutional support for
such research. Hans Rothfels, a conservative nationalist Professor of History at
Königsberg in East Prussia, used his influence to support scholarly revisionist efforts.
He was ultimately marginalised and forced into exile by the Nazi régime, despite his
sympathy for many of their foreign policy objectives, on the grounds of his Jewish
ancestry. Haar shows how some of Rothfels’ less encumbered academic protégés were
more successful at surviving the transition from the nationalist right-wing academic
milieu of the Weimar Republic to the Nazi régime. One of the key figures in this transition was Theodor Oberländer, nationalist-racist activist and academic entrepreneur (whose appointment to a government ministry by Konrad Adenauer in postwar West Germany was to cause a major scandal). Another key figure was Albert Brackmann, whose publications office at the Geheimes Preussisches Staatsarchiv played a central role in the organisation and dissemination of Ostforschung (research into the East).

The instrumentalization of Ostforschung and Volksgeschichte by the Nazi régime took on a fatal new dimension after the occupation of Poland in 1939, as the work of Brackmann’s office and the Volkshistoriker increasingly interested the SS. Conze advocated the removal of Jews from Polish urban areas, to encourage the economic development of the Polish rural population. His (fast-tracked)教授ial dissertation was seen by Nazi policy makers as a useful contribution to the planning of racial policy. Brackmann’s office provided essential knowledge to the SS, as the latter sought to identify and ghettoize the Jewish population of Poland. Aubin advocated the thorough Germanization of tracts of western Poland at the expense of the Polish and Jewish population, while a memorandum by Schieder at the end of September 1939 warned against the “dangers of race mixing” in occupied Poland, and recommended the removal of Jews from Polish cities. His subsequent research charted the progress of the removal of Jews from particular districts of Poland.

Ingo Haar’s work partly revisits ground opened up by Michael Burleigh in his pioneering 1988 study of German Ostforschung, but adds considerable detail to the institutional history of the relevant sections of the German historical profession. Haar rejects the classification of the Ostforscher as “intellectual planners of genocide” (in the phrase of Götz Aly and Susanne Heim), but argues that their work provided indispensable information to the actual planners of genocide. He also rejects Winfried Schulze’s provocative thesis that Nazi Volksgeschichte was an innovative progenitor of postwar West German social history (in which some of the same historians later distinguished themselves). In Haar’s view, the Volksgeschichte of the 1930s was terminally handicapped by its racist assumptions and incapacity for critical self-reflection, and methodological innovation in the German historical profession required the return of émigré historians and social scientists from the United States, and the re-importation into Germany of Weberian social science methods. Haar avoids moralising or a prosecutorial tone, but his book provides material for grim reflection on the dangers of scholarship subordinated to ruthless state power.

ANDREW BONNELL
History, University of Queensland


Germany’s epidemic of remembrance of its Nazi past, apparent since the early 1980s, has shown few signs of abating in recent years. The epidemic has well and truly found its manifestation in the field of cultural history; this study by Klaus Neumann is a recent and outstanding example. But where similar works undertake to “read” the texts of public memory — above all monuments and memorials — Neumann shifts his attention to their social and political contexts.

The largest of those contexts is that of “the New Germany”, and that means a primary but by no means exclusive focus on public memory as practised in the unified Germany. His interest in the genealogy of memory and its many manifestations
necessarily transports him and his reader back to the Nazi origins of “authentic” sites and to their postwar conversion — in both East and West — to monuments or memorials. However, the main emphasis lies on contemporary debates in Germany about the place of the past in the present, and the moral and political issues that the grappling with a notoriously sinister past generates.

Where the subtitle might suggest the application of a national paradigm, in fact a central feature of this book, and one which distinguishes it from most of the work on Germany’s vigorous memory culture, is that Neumann observes the practices of public memory as they are played out at local levels. The national discourse is useful only in so far as it contextualises the local. This by itself constitutes significant step forward in the literature in the field, which tends to understand remembrance as the activity of some form of national collective. Neumann does not eschew the national, but he reminds us that even public acts of remembrance are often locally generated and are the outcomes of an often extremely complex interweaving of needs, interests and fears.

The refreshing shift away from the national paradigm is reflected in the choice of case studies which make up the book’s chapters. The national capital Berlin does not feature; instead, Neumann draws his examples from such relatively obscure places as Salzgitter, Celle, Hildesheim and Fürstenberg. The difficulty, if not the impossibility, of finding a place or practice of remembrance which might serve satisfactorily serve some national collective is further reinforced by a chapter on the city of Wiesbaden and its ultimately unsuccessful attempt to establish a central memorial for all victims of Nazi rule.

The case studies present meticulously recorded genealogies of many forms of public memory, from monuments and street names to days of remembrance and films. Apart from encouraging a need for responsibility toward the past, Neumann avoids a moralising tone. But he does occasionally inject his authorial voice into the narrative, in part to describe his own participation in discussions, but also to convey an awareness of the complexity of Germans’ relationship with their past. The reader should not expect a unified thesis replete with the appropriate jargon. Rather, by adopting the view that agency and responsibility for engagements with the German past “rest in the final instance with private individuals” (p. 8), Neumann’s detailed and compelling studies lead him to reject any notion of clear patterns of remembrance or neat conclusions.

PETER MONTEATH
History, Flinders University


When looking at China’s economic history one immediately thinks of the inertia of its feudalistic economy, its huge population growth and slow technological development in the pre-modern period. It should be pointed out, however, that China’s economy did show signs of overall prosperity in the Ming and Qing periods. In *Chinese Capitalism, 1522-1840*, Xu Dixin, Wu Chengming and their team have effectively pieced together a comprehensive description of China’s embryonic capitalist development in late imperial China. The 2000 Macmillan edition is the translation of the book entitled in Chinese *Zhongguo zibenzhuyi de mengya*[The embryonic capitalism in China] which was first published in 1985 by the People’s Press as volume one of the four volumes series on the History of Chinese Capitalist Development. Subsequently a new
The term “embryonic capitalism” is taken from the Chinese term mengya, which can be translated as “seeds”, or “sprouts”. Embryonic capitalism is therefore a form of capitalism in its early, or emergent stage. It is interesting to note that the idea of the “sprouts of capitalism” or an embryonic capitalism existing in China’s late Ming period can be traced back to a statement made by Chairman Mao Zedong in 1939. Mao had argued since “China’s feudal society had developed a commodity economy and so carried within itself the seeds of capitalism, China would of herself have developed slowly into a capitalist society even without the impact of foreign capitalism (p. 1).” Chinese scholars’ studies during the Maoist period were dominated by these Marxist and Maoist orthodoxies. Both emphasised the failures and backward nature of the Chinese “capitalist” mode of production in the late sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A nationwide debate and international response developed around the themes with several hundred essays and books appearing by leading scholars in major publications in China, Japan and the US between 1950s and 1980s. Consequently, Chinese economic historiography at present remains focused on this topic. More recently, Bin Wong in China Transformation: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience (Cornell University Press, 1997), Kenneth Pomeranz in The Great Divergence (Yale University Press, 2000), Andre Gunder Frank in ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian age (University of California Press, 1998), Bozhong Li in Agricultural Development in Jiangnan, 1620-1850 (Macmillan, 1998) and Ray Huang’s studies have drawn our attention to this well-developed debate on the nature of pre-modern Chinese economy. This translation of Chinese Capitalism thus is very timely in providing insights for this debate.

One of the major themes of this book is to explain China’s progression to a “capitalist” mode of production and the new relations of production in the pre-Opium War period. Guided by a Marxist paradigm, the authors also attempt to draw parallels between China and the West in order to explain China’s previously hindered development. They discuss how China had the possibility of becoming industrialised but missed the chance. They describe in factual detail the different stages of increasing wealth, throughout the Ming and Qing periods, that was being generated not only from the traditional agricultural aspects of the Chinese economy but from cities through increasing scale of production, commercialisation and trade. Examples are the large-scale production of silk, cotton cloth and ceramics; and trade in salt and cereals. They divide each of these stages to form the chapters of the book. Even though cut short by Western imperialism some of the prosperity was also sustained by the momentum of the economy through subsequent commercialisation and privatisation of business. Even though capitalism never really took off in China (with an argument that Western imperialism stopped its spread) there were capitalist tendencies often called the “sprouts of capitalism” at least in some major cities that contributed to prosperity. They use the case studies of different industries to form the backbone of their discussions, analysing the unique features of these “sprouts” and the impacts that they each had upon different regions in China. Interesting cases from the agricultural sector are also explored in order to give a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of embryonic capitalism in agriculture.

Bramall and Nolan begin the introduction by briefly discussing the literature on embryonic capitalism in East Asia. Part one explores the subjects of commodity circulation, state workshops and handicraft industry, silk weaving and iron factories in
the late Ming period. Wang Shixin describes how embryonic capitalism was established in Suzhou, Hangzhou and Foshan. In Part Two Shi Qi and Fang Zhuofen analyse the impact of production relations upon agricultural change. The changes in tenancy and labor relations, and the spread of cash crops were just some of the agricultural changes that were occurring in the early and middle Qing period. Part Three and Four detail the growth of commodity circulation and the changes in merchant organisation during the early and middle Qing period. Chapters ten to twenty two examine the development of various handicraft fields where the infusions of capital by merchants or landlords either allowed home-based commodity production such as silk weaving to occur or more large scale enterprises to be established in tea, tobacco, distilling and oil pressing, sugar refining, silk weaving, cotton cloth processing, paper-making, publishing, the timber industry, the iron foundry industry, copper mining and smelting, coal mining, the porcelain industry, salt and sea-going junks in various regions. There was thus a general prosperity in Ming and Qing cities due to technological change, an export boom and agricultural commercialisation.

In the final two chapters Fang Xing continues to investigate the influence of embryonic capitalism in China and why China did not develop along the lines of Western capitalism. Fang Xing argues in chapter twenty-three that population growth, the feudalistic mode of production and the negative role of the state were factors which contributed to the retarded development of Capitalism. In the final chapter, Fang examines the influence of embryonic capitalism in Chinese thought, class struggle and the evolution of the Chinese economy after the Opium War. This team strongly believes that Chinese capitalism should not be confused with industrial capitalism, which the West had developed and introduced into China after the 1840s. However, to deny that any form of capitalism existed in China before the coming of the West is to “disregard internal causation and deny the existence of any dynamic factor within Chinese society” (p.17). Wu Chengming also states “embryonic capitalism was both rare and weak” in Ming and Qing China but “nevertheless represented new relations of production, and fulfilled an historical function” (p.18). Wu argues that these “sprouts of capitalism” did not die out after the Opium War.

Although the authors generally achieve their objectives in providing reliable source materials and an extremely careful interpretation of the topic of “embryonic capitalism” in China, there are some issues which could have been further addressed in the book. Further insight into the lives and events outside the industrial developments could have provided a more rounded insight into the mainstream Chinese economy throughout these years. They could have also gone into further detail into what it would have involved for China to become an innovative and productive capitalist state. However, due to the very nature of the topic, only limited and preliminary information could be provided on each case. The authors competently illustrate in this book the vast and dynamic nature of China’s long history and its continual transformation into an embryonic capitalist economy. Moreover they demonstrate that the conventional view of Qing China as a hopelessly backward economy is quite inaccurate.

CHI-KONG LAI

History, The University of Queensland

The linked questions Stephen Morris sets out to answer in this book are: Why did the Khmer Rouge regime so provoke the Vietnamese that they finally invaded Cambodia on Christmas day, 1978? And why did the Vietnamese invade, despite this provocation, knowing how this would rile the Chinese?

In both cases smaller powers pursued actions that they must have known risked war. Their leaders were not stupid. They could make the calculations of relative size and weaponry of armies beloved of realist theorists in international relations. So was each relying on what they reasonably believed to be staunch and powerful allies: Cambodia on China and Vietnam on the Soviet Union? If so they miscalculated. China did attack Vietnam but much too half-heartedly to force a withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia. And when China attacked, the Soviet Union did nothing to aid Vietnam. It is extraordinary, if each weaker power was depending on its powerful ally, that neither so much as informed its ally of its plans.

One possible explanation is that the leaders of Cambodia and Vietnam were suffering from some psychotic state of mind, such as delusions of grandeur, that warped their reason. Morris does advert to state of mind, but his diagnosis that political elites in both countries were suffering from “paranoid personality disorder” is a function of the political culture of revolutionary Marxist-Leninist regimes rather than of mental instability.

In neither Cambodia nor Vietnam, however, did a single psychotic leader wield absolute power in the way Hitler of Stalin did. Pol Pot built the Khmer Rouge as a Stalinist party, secret and all-powerful, but in a far more self-effacing way. It was the organisation, Angkar, that stood supreme rather than Pol Pot as leader. And in Vietnam a leadership group exercised power, rather than any individual.

Morris turns to “political culture” to supply the deep level of explanation missing from any realist account of the behaviour of Cambodian, Vietnamese and Chinese political elites. All three, Morris argues, crucially combined two components in their political culture: “traditional” drawing on centuries of history and ethnic stereotyping (Vietnamese disdain for Cambodians; Cambodian hatred of Vietnamese); and “non-traditional” emphasising the triumphalist millennarianism and paranoid suspicions of revolutionary Marxism-Leninist parties, to which should be added, especially in the case of Cambodia, the voluntarism of Maoism. Together these fatally distorted perception of the enemy (disdainful underestimation) and of the threat posed (paranoid overestimation).

Morris argues his case persuasively. The analysis is divided into two parts. The first examines the “local genesis” of the conflict in the vexed relationship between Vietnamese and Cambodian communists from the founding of the Indochina Communist Party in 1930 to the radical breakdown of “militant solidarity” between the two revolutionary movements between 1970 and 1978. The second part places these events in the broader international context of relations and alliances between communist states, notably Sino-Soviet rivalry. By the end of 1978 suspicions and enmities already ran deep.

Morris concludes that the provocations and actions of all three belligerent states are intelligible only though the prism of political culture, by understanding the cultural values and paranoid worldview of the decision-making foreign policy elites of each state. I entirely agree, but the causal connections are hard to pin down. Political culture is messy to deal with, empirically and conceptually. It is so much easier to assume ideal rational decision-makers and to count troops and tanks and aircraft in international relations — just as it is so much easier to assume ideal self-interested
actors in economic modeling. Morris has shown that it is possible to provide a more subtle and convincing explanation, and in doing so has produced an analytical example that one can only hope others will follow.

MARTIN STUART-FOX
History, University of Queensland


The figure of Suharto looms like no other Indonesia’s history in the last third of the twentieth century. President of his country from 1967 to 1998, Suharto presided over the blooding ending of Sukarno’s Guided Democracy, over continuing repression and restriction, including the invasion and annexation of East Timor in 1975-76, and over a period of sustained economic growth which turned Indonesia from one of the poorest countries in the world to an apparently shining success story of Third World modernisation. Yet in 1997-98 Suharto’s mastery of Indonesia crumbled. The country plunged abruptly into violence, disorder and economic disarray. Suharto fell from power, and he escaped being put on trial only because an indulgent legal system accepted evidence that his failing health made it impossible for him to appear in court.

The scholarly and popular judgement of Suharto is deeply divided. For some, he is the baleful nemesis of Indonesia’s prospects for justice and prosperity, a mass murderer, a narrow-minded Javanese chauvinist, and an immensely corrupt pawn of Western economic and strategic interests, whose political and economic house of cards collapsed at the first serious challenge. For others, Suharto is the man who redeemed Indonesia from penury and intense political polarisation, a man no more brutal and ruthless than the circumstances called for. In this view, he was a man who gave Indonesia more than it could have hoped for, who was flawed only his indulgence of his children’s greedy business activities, and who was brought down by hostile international forces.

Suharto: a political biography is a remarkable, fresh work which aims above all to uncover the personality of this enigmatic man. It does not retreat into the crude culturalist analysis which has marred earlier attempts to understand culture, never arguing that Suharto is merely a product of Javanese culture. Nor is it a work of psychohistory: there is no pop theorising about Suharto’s id and ego, just a cool appraisal of the man’s evolving personal style and a straightforward reflection on the factors that may have contributed to it. Elson traces the development of Suharto’s self-reliance, his aphoristic philosophy and his remarkable ability to manage people. In particular, he highlights Suharto’s knack of keeping his options open until the last moment in times of political crisis, and then moving decisively and unambiguously to force events to a conclusion. It is a style which led many people to read Suharto as a plotter, a master-manipulator of events from behind the scenes. Elson’s overall picture of Suharto, however, is of a man with impeccable timing.

Elson’s style is forensic. He works steadily through Suharto’s career, uncovering a remarkable range of conflicting evidence about every significant event in which Suharto was involved. He notes Suharto’s lack of modesty, but never dismisses his accounts out of hand. He doubts the official story that Suharto was just a village boy who made good, concluding that he may well have been the illegitimate child of a man with at least local power and wealth. But he concludes — to what will be the great disappointment of many readers — that Suharto did not mastermind the still-mysterious 1965 coup which was the catalyst for Sukarno’s overthrow, the destruction
of the communist party and Suharto’s own accession to power. Rather, he identifies Suharto’s capacity to remain ambiguous and to move decisively at the right moment as the reason for his success on this occasion, as so often, before and after.

This sceptical style gives the book both freshness and authority. Elson comes with no apparent prejudice for or against Suharto. An unexpected consequence of this style, though, is that the book says less about Indonesia than one might expect. Elson’s sense of time and place is impressive, but he does not use Suharto to reflect on broader issues in Indonesian history in the way that the biographers of Sukarno (Dahm, Legge and Penders) did. And yet, Elson places Suharto more firmly at the centre of the long New Order era in Indonesian politics than any previous author. Whereas previous accounts of Suharto’s style have largely portrayed him as a relatively uncomplicated authoritarian ruler with good (or bad) advisers, Elson highlights the energy which Suharto put into learning to be president after 1965 and the impressive grasp of policy issues which he developed as a result. On issue after issue, Elson argues that it was Suharto who had the vision and who shaped the policies. While Suharto was in power, his claim to be the “Father of Development” in Indonesia always seemed to be the hubris of a leader who had forgotten what his subordinates had done for him. Elson, however, credits Suharto, despite his limited intellectual horizons, with a truly outstanding mastery of the issues. In this respect, the book actually tells us a great deal about the New Order, though it is another conclusion which will be unwelcome to many of Elson’s readers, and perhaps the only aspect of the book which may be challenged seriously by future research.

Suharto’s rule unravelled while Elson’s research was in progress and it is still impossible to say how much of the New Order will survive — or be reconstructed — in coming years. We are fortunate, however, to have such a fine book for reference as we watch the process unfold.

ROBERT CRIBB

History, University of Queensland


This book began as a country study — presumably of Malaysia, Indonesia, and Australia — but was expanded at the publisher’s encouragement into a much broader survey of “the politics of human rights” throughout Southeast Asia. Eldridge takes a fairly loose view of what constitutes “the politics of human rights”, and the reader is treated to an informative tour of many aspects of governance in Southeast Asia, with brief stopovers in every ASEAN country, and much closer inspections of Indonesia, Malaysia and Australia. The latter is, of course, not part of Southeast Asia, but it is an immediate neighbour that interacts with it so much that Eldridge is justified in including it — though it is a moot point that China could have been included on the same basis.

The book is focused on the 1990s and very early noughties, and was completed in the last months of Abdurrahman Wahid’s presidency — an interesting and frustrating time to be finishing a book with a focus on contemporary Indonesia. One positive aspect of this timeframe is that Eldridge has not allowed the short presidency of B.J. Habibie to fall through the cracks of history. He presents a convincing case that the Habibie interlude was critical to the development of post-Suharto Indonesia. Being basically a work of political science, the historical dimension is kept well in the
background, but there is sufficient historical depth to set the context, especially in the chapters on Indonesia and Malaysia.

Eldridge’s specialisations are NGOs and development in Indonesia, and Australian aid to Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia. The three chapters based loosely on these specialisations (covering Indonesia, Australia and East Timor), along with the chapter on Malaysia stand out as the core of the book. The other half of the book is informative and lucid, but is clearly not in the same academic league. This includes a worthwhile survey of ASEAN’s approach to human rights, both as an institutional grouping and country-by-country; and a more historical survey of “human rights, democracy and development” in Southeast Asia, mostly through the prism of the “Asian Values” debate.

The book has a thorough index and extensive notes. It is written clearly in the main, though there are lapses in the presentation and ordering of details that can send the reader checking the index, the bibliography or the glossary of abbreviations to follow details of the narratives. There are also small errors with people’s names that are perhaps the price of moving outside one’s area of specialisation. For instance Eldridge refers to the Singapore opposition figure, J.B. Jeyaretnam as S. Jeyaretnam. It is of less significance, but still annoying, to find Anwar Ibrahim listed under “I” in the index.

I suspect the original idea of a narrower country study might have produced a more even and academically satisfying result, but Eldridge has nevertheless produced an excellent text that will be very useful to students of contemporary Southeast Asian governance and international relations, and the discourses over democratisation and human rights.

MICHAEL D. BARR,
Centre for Community and Cross-Cultural Studies, Queensland University of Technology


Herbert Spencer is amongst the most remote and forbidding of eminent Victorians and the fourteen enormous volumes of the Synthetic Philosophy, which were painstakingly compiled over 36 years, are nowadays barely looked at let alone read. Even if one turns with a huge sigh of relief to the Autobiography, completed in 1889, one is still facing a book of over 400,000 words packed into two fat volumes. There are, indeed, as J.B. Schneewind once remarked, “yards of Spencer”. Professor Weinstein should be thanked for writing an interesting and useful book which makes Spencer’s system both more accessible and more intelligible. I hope it will be widely read.

His thesis is simple and may be stated without nuance or detail. Like John Stuart Mill, Spencer began and ended as a liberal utilitarian, being, that is, a believer in an indirect utilitarianism which stressed the development of individuality as an essential constituent of happiness and believing also in the permanence and indefatigable nature of basic rights to both self-development and happiness. This thesis further allows Weinstein to claim that Spencer’s thought shows greater systematic integrity than is usually acknowledged, even reconciling the tension between Spencer’s individualism and his organicism.

What can be said about this thesis? First, despite acknowledging considerable irony in Spencer’s mature doctrine, Weinstein only recognises very limited differences between the liberal utilitarianism of Spencer and Mill. Yet in a crucial and famous letter to Mill, used by Weinstein himself on several occasions, a letter reprinted
virtually in full in the *Autobiography*, Spencer argued that “certain faculties of moral intuition” had been produced by transmission and accumulation into emotions which had “no apparent basis in the individual experience of utility”. This was a kind of intuitionism Mill had always found to be metaphysically and morally unacceptable, a doctrine making the whole notion of rational, individual choice problematic. And Mill surely had a point here. Second, most scholars accept that Spencer stopped creative thinking in 1860. The next thirty-six years were devoted to recording ideas already settled or to more and more frenetic defences of the inheritance of acquired characters and of Lamarckism in general; frenetic defences, one might add, which were matched by a personal descent into despair, frustration and solitude. In effect, longevity was Spencer’s worst enemy, and I cannot see that Weinstein’s thesis does much to explain all of this. Third and finally, this book is one in the Ideas in Context series where part of the aim is to set the thinker within the contemporary frameworks of ideas and institutions. While I appreciated Weinstein’s discussion of ethical naturalism and his subtle handling of phrenology, the context would have become fuller and more rewarding with much more discussion of Spencer’s biological thinking, Lamarckist or otherwise. Still, as I have already said, I hope the book will be widely read. It deserves to be.

R.J. HALLIDAY

*University of Warwick*


This will be a very useful book for Honours seminars in history as it provides both a judicious selection of primary texts of major philosophers of history and substantial introductions to the movements they represent. The ten chapters begin with a discussion of how philosophy applies to history and they cover the Enlightenment, classical (German) historicism (Herder to Ranke), positivism, “suprahistory” (Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche), secular historicism (the German school from Dilthey to Weber), hermeneutics, *Kulturkritik* (Marx to Habermas), narrativism and posthistory. Four chapters are introduced by Rayment-Pickard and six, including the introductory first chapter, by Burns, a division of labour that presumably reflects the philosophical interests of each.

The usefulness of any such compilation depends on the choice of whom to include. This selection spans the Enlightenment to Postmodernism, so it excludes the long line of earlier thinkers who turned their minds to the understanding of history and time (though Burns in his introduction does skim across Western philosophy in relation to the problem, by no means confined to history, of the particular versus the universal.) The selection also excludes all but Western philosophers of history: no other ways of thinking about the past, from Sima Xian to Ibn Khaldun, are considered. Moreover within the European tradition, the bias is strongly towards German philosophy of history: twenty of the thirty-three thinkers chosen are German, seven French, three British, two American (Hayden White and Francis Fukuyama) and one Danish (Kierkegaard). Overwhelmingly they are philosophers and social theorists rather than historians, Ranke and Buckle being exceptions.

All this might be expected, but there are some surprising omissions. Collingwood is one, all the more so as Burns in his introductory chapter defines philosophy in Collingwood’s terms as “the science of absolute presuppositions”. For Collingwood, if he was a philosopher first by profession, was also an accomplished historian (as was
Hume) in what is arguably a more orthodox sense than are either Foucault or White, and this deeply influenced his philosophy.

The problem of selection is a difficult one for any historian, and has to be made in relation to either causal analysis or narrative structure; that is, to interpretation, which implies theory. Selection in a collection like this also relates to interpretation, to how philosophy of history is understood. Here the focus is on the philosophical tension between realism and relativism, between Hume’s empiricism and Kant’s transcendentalism. More precisely it is on how we come to experience time past. The editors have little interest in speculative metanarratives about the shape of the past: Spengler and Toynbee find no place, though Condorcet, Comte and Marx do. Nor are they interested in analytical philosophy of history in the Anglo-American tradition, as investigation into the epistemological claims historians make (neither Mink nor Danto are, for instance, included.) This is a selection, by and large, of those continental European thinkers for whom the phenomenology of historicity has been of greater interest than any study of actual histories produced by historians. Given this interpretation of philosophy of history, and the level of neglect it has generally received, this is a timely compilation.

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