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still found on Thursday Island. Certainly, the book illustrates that music and dance “provides means by which [Indigenous Australian] people recognise identities and place” (Stokes, 1994, p. 5).

One disappointing aspect of the book is the number of typographical errors and inconsistencies in the presentation of words and author names. While this is not a major flaw of the book it is a shame that such avoidable errors are evident in the text. Another slight shortcoming of the book is the lack of closure at the end of text. The final chapter is a detailed musical analysis by Anderson of a Central Arnhem Land song series. While the chapter is no doubt useful to some scholars and students undertaking musical analysis of Aboriginal songs, the reader is left suspended and with a feeling of a lack of cohesiveness. Perhaps if Magowan and Neuenfeldt had included a final chapter which summed up the book, or perhaps a different chapter to conclude, it would have made a more satisfying and unified ending to the text.

Overall, the book is a useful tool for researching and teaching some aspects of Indigenous Australian performance. Magowan and Neuenfeldt acknowledge that “there is a need for greater public understanding of these cultural forms and for comparative analyses of alternative and competing histories and historicities of Indigenous music and dance in these regions” (p. 2). The collection successfully takes up this call by exploring some of the wide-ranging forms of Indigenous performance. *Landscapes of Indigenous Performance* could be used to help tertiary students think critically about the complexities and issues surrounding performance traditions of Indigenous Australian people. As a whole, the collection importantly draws attention to the diversity of songs and dances performed by Indigenous Australian people from the Northern Territory and the Torres Strait and successfully places the performance practices of Indigenous Australians in their musical, social, cultural and political contexts.

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A BEND IN THE YARRA: A HISTORY OF THE MERRI CREEK PROTECTORATE STATION AND MERRI CREEK ABORIGINAL SCHOOL 1841–1851

Ian D. Clark & Toby Heydon

Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2004, 90pp, ISBN 0855754699

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In 1843 an area of land at the junction of Merri Creek and the Yarra River, several kilometres to the northeast of Melbourne, became a Station of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate. A school for Aboriginal children operated in various forms at the site until 1851. *A Bend in the Yarra* provides a detailed narrative of the school from its early successes through its gradual decline as attendance by Aboriginal students declined. To a great extent, though, the value of this book lies in the larger picture it paints of early culture contact between white migrant settlers and Aboriginal people in the surrounding region of Victoria. This larger picture helps explain the motivation for establishing schools like the one at Merri Creek and clarifies the problems such schools encountered. The book is particularly useful and fascinating in the tension it depicts between white attempts to settle Aboriginal people in a limited number of locations, of which Merri Creek was one, and Aboriginal intentions to remain free and mobile agents in their own country.

Part of this tension has to do with the desire of Aboriginal people – mostly members of the Boonwurrung and Woio-wurrung clans – to be close to the novel centre of activity that the town of Melbourne represented and the counter desire of the white townfolk and authorities to move them away. The initial intention of the authorities was to “civilise” these Aboriginal people, people who the white townfolk seem to have regarded as visitors to the town, despite the fact that the town was situated in Aboriginal country. In 1837 an Aboriginal “village mission” was established on the outskirts of Melbourne and between 60 and 80 Aboriginal residents were engaged in building a schoolroom-dormitory there. As we know, schools occupied a central role in the “civilising” project and while Aboriginal people

were clearly amenable to the idea of schools and education they were evidently not prepared to cease moving around their country and were frequently unwilling to leave their children behind while they did so.

From the point of view of the white missionaries and educators it was essential that the children stay put in order to facilitate learning. Education thus became one of a suite of reasons why white authorities wanted to stop Aboriginal people moving around. The other reasons included the alarm – warranted or not – that free-ranging Aboriginal people caused to white settlers and the desire of the white authorities to have administrative control over Aborigines, an ambition that could not be realised if they had no way of knowing where these people were at any particular time.

To the extent that Aboriginal people were amenable to the idea of schooling it is reasonable to see this as part of a general interest in and openness to white culture. As elsewhere in Australia, Aboriginal people in the vicinity of Port Phillip seemed open to change and to sampling the products and practices of white settler society. But it would be mistaken to assume they equated this borrowing with a breakdown of the integrity of their own culture. Europeans, for their part, were keen to obtain “Aboriginal products” – by 1840, for instance, Aboriginal people were selling lyrebird feathers, possum and kangaroo skins and baskets in the streets of Melbourne. The fact that children were so readily removed from schools to accompany their families as they moved around the country in itself might be taken to suggest that schooling was seen as peripheral to the core of Aboriginal life at this point in the history of contact. Later in the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century, as “white” education came to be seen as central to participation in the mainstream economy, many Aboriginal people went to great pains to get their children into schools and to keep them there.

The town of Melbourne was obviously an uninvited imposition on Aboriginal country. Once it was there, however, it was contextualised into local Aboriginal culture. The authors note the attraction that “Melbourne held as a place of gaining resources and meeting other Aboriginal people”. The large Aboriginal camps on the fringes of the town and their ability to attract Aboriginal people from far afield made possible the staging of very large corroborees. While the fringe-dwelling life was injurious to Aboriginal health it also enabled particular forms of Aboriginal sociality. Another way of saying this is that the meaning of Melbourne was not immune to Aboriginal appropriation. The Assistant Protector, William Thomas, who had expended significant energy in trying to persuade Aboriginal people to move to the Aboriginal Station at Narre Narre Warren, by 1843 had accepted that they preferred to be close to Melbourne and he began to shift his attention to the possibilities of the Merri Creek site.

In this slim volume, Ian Clark and Toby Heydon have compressed an enormous amount of historical detail on Aboriginal-white relations at this historical “moment” (1841–1851) and have provided us with an unusually fine-grained picture of the cross-cultural landscape. The theme of Aboriginal mobility, noted above, runs through the volume. The authors succeed in conveying the frustration of missionaries like William Thomas who spent so much of their time running around the landscape after their Aboriginal “charges”.

Archaeological investigations at the Merri Creek have failed to find traces of the buildings associated with the Protectorate there. Using historical records, however, Clark and Heydon have pieced together quite a comprehensive picture of the place. They also present a detailed commentary on the operation of the school. This detail includes the names of many of the Aboriginal students, fluctuations in attendance, and the nature of tuition at the school. Particularly interesting is the attention the school received in 1846 in a newspaper debate about the wisdom or otherwise of devoting energy to the education of Aboriginal children whose behaviour and thinking, some commentators believed, was intrinsic, environmentally-determined, and not available to change. On the other hand, it is striking that a meeting of the school’s supporters in Melbourne in 1846 attracted over 600 of the town’s citizens.

A Bend in the Yarra is a valuable, exhaustively researched addition to our understanding of the history of Aboriginal education in Australia.

SEEKING RACIAL JUSTICE: AN INSIDER’S MEMOIR OF THE MOVEMENT FOR ABORIGINAL ADVANCEMENT, 1938–1978

Jack Horner

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Over the last few decades there has been a slow building of autobiographies and biographies of both black and white activists involved in Indigenous Australian struggles for rights and social justice. Many of these also act as a major contribution to the history of organisations and high profile protest events. The growing list of books includes Margaret Tucker’s, *If everyone cared: Autobiography of Margaret Tucker MBE* (1977); Faith Bandler’s *Turning the tide: A*