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language: displacement and condensation. Jane Haggis in her chapter on the politics of whiteness highlights the problems of *theorising togetherness* as we worry endlessly over difference. Cowlshaw is interested in how we talk about history without being offensive, a question which, in my experience, has often been asked by Indigenous students in anthropology. This book then, is about how we can develop links with others to address the unequal power relations that have historically divided us.

In conclusion, I would like to return to where I started, namely with the story about the girl in the café at Bourke. English and the way it is used in many Australian contexts demands that its speakers interpret and judge, and this situation is difficult to avoid outside narrativisations. Martin Nakata has highlighted how Indigenous academics and students have had to negotiate their way through an overdetermined white academy. Something similar is at work in our daily relationships where our slights and barbs can position the ego in a chain of endless substitutions and judgements. This is Cowlshaw's cross to bear with the girl in the coffee shop.

A MAN OF ALL TRIBES: THE LIFE OF ALICK JACKOMOS

Richard Broome & Corinne Manning

Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2006, xiv+298pp, ISBN 0855755016

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The last time I saw Alick Jackomos was at Fitzroy Stars Gymnasium. Alick was then in his seventies and had finished a workout and was freshly showered, neatly dressed, and radiating goodwill; at ease with himself and open to other people. A modest man who never pulled rank as he would have been entitled to do, he wore the weight of his great experience easily.

Richard Broome and Corinne Manning's, appropriately titled, *A Man of All Tribes*, is a magnificent tribute to Alick Jackomos that fills in the detail for the many who knew the man but not the full extent of his varied life, or the circumstances and experiences that played a role in forming him. We learn that there were parts of his rich personality that were unknowable; possibly even to those who were closest to him, an explanation for how he was able to spend time with so many people without being exhausted by them. Broome and Manning refer to the subject of their biography as Alick throughout their narrative, and I'll continue this practice so obviously in keeping with the character of Alick Jackomos.

Issues of race and ethnicity and identity were central to Alick's childhood. His parents were Greek migrants from Castellorizo, an island which is part of the Dodecanese chain in the Aegean Sea. There was a confidence and intelligence about the manner in which his parents settled into Australian life. During Alick's early boyhood the family was living crammed into a few rooms in a shared terrace house but life was value-driven and oriented toward aspirations and principles. For instance, the family ran the cannily named Magpie Fish, a fish and chip shop situated in football-mad Collingwood and evoking one of Australia's iconic birds. As an example of the family's openness to Australian culture the Jackomos family listened to radio broadcasts of *Dad and Dave*, and test matches, and Alick would sneak in to Collingwood Football Ground to support his favourite team.

The dark side of this childhood was young Alick's experience of Anglo-Australian racism and race-hate as a boy. Once, waiting to enter a football ground, a racist called him a "little dago" and crushed a hot pie into his face which burned Alick so badly he required medical treatment. Broome and Manning relate other instances of race-hate experienced by Alick and one can't help reflecting on contemporary Australia when reading of these instances. Have we, as a society, progressed as much we might have? Probably not. One is reminded of the situation of more recent migrant groups negotiating nostalgic attraction for an originary culture with the challenges and attractions of contemporary Australian culture and society, all tempered by the experience, or threat, of Anglo-Australian racism.

It seems from Broome and Manning's biography that Alick's ethical philosophy was formed during the Great Depression of the 1930s. It goes without saying that times were hard but, at least in the working class suburbs, there was a culture of mutual support that impacted on Alick as a boy. Alick's early contact and growing friendships with Aboriginal youths at the Exhibition Police Boys Club is addressed by Broome and Manning, including his two week "disappearance" when he was 14. Without his parent's knowledge he went to Lake Tyers reserve where he stayed with the Moffatt family. Yet the depth of Alick's connection with the Aboriginal community remains something of a riddle. Perhaps as a boy proudly Australian and interested in Anglo-Australians, and Australia, he sensed in Koories a more benign way of being Australian, or even a more profound connection with country. Or perhaps, in light of the ethical frameworks he was developing at the time, Aboriginal people may have been the best exemplars of his core values of accepting other people, and caring and sharing (values he was later to find among the show people when he joined the boxing tents). In some other cultures they would say simply of Alick, "he had an Aboriginal soul".

Serving in the army with the 2/14th Battalion during World War II provided Alick with an opportunity to

expand his connections with Aboriginal families along the east coast and develop an understanding of the Malay language. After the war, travelling as a wrestler with tent boxing troupes provided an outlet for the restlessness resulting from war service and a continuation of the male camaraderie he'd grown used to. It was a hard life but I suspect that like many Aboriginal men of his generation he was "easy-going" in the best sense, able to bear physical hardship, and with a greater interest in people and connections than material comforts. Eventually Alick worked with Pastor Doug Nicholls and played important roles in the development of the first Aboriginal organisations in Victoria.

Broome and Manning make it clear that wrestling was an important part of Alick's life for many years and they relate some absurdly funny tales of Alick's role as a gee (a member of the boxing troupe who pretends to be a member of the public). In one prearranged script, boxing tent owner Selby Moore disqualified Alick during a bout and refused to pay him. Alick made a fuss, and, speaking in broken English, found a policeman and brought him back to the tent to plead his case. A crowd gathered and Moore said, "He's rough and he's dirty, the Greek, and I don't want him near the tent. I'm disqualifying him. You people don't want him near the tent do you?". Inflamed by a sense of natural justice of course the crowd did, and trouped into the tent to see Alick wrestle for another sold-out house.

Alick left school at the age of 12 and his intelligence actualised in an inexhaustible interest in people. The negative consequence of his lack of formal education, and qualifications, as Broome and Manning show, was that Alick was somewhat adrift in the latter stages of his career, in the newer, more rigid, impersonal bureaucracies of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. One aspect of Alick's intelligence was his recall of facts, faces and families. This provided the impetus to his copying and recording of historical photographs and later, the undertaking of major genealogical projects on behalf of Victorian Koories in the 1980s. Professor Colin Tatz noted that the genealogies, notwithstanding the complexity of the family structures, and Alick's lack of formal educational qualifications, were done "in a thoroughly professional way". The results of this research are now stored in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

Alick wasn't one of those angry, disappointed non-Aboriginal people who use Aboriginal people to ventriloquise their own resentments. And despite his long involvement with Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal politics one never had the sense of the political operator when meeting him: there was no furtive sizing-up, or evaluation on the basis of some imputed political alignment, or fragment of gossip;

when you met Alick you met him as a human being. With this in mind it's disappointing, if understandable, that Alick's motives in carrying out this research were misunderstood or misrepresented by some Koories.

Most people who knew Alick in a professional capacity would have been surprised at the affinity he had with the citizens of the tiny Muslim nation of Brunei Darussalam. Broome and Manning relate that while travelling in England Alick struck up a conversation with a Brunei family, calling on the Malay language he had learnt some 30 years before in the Australian Army. A private and important friendship developed with this Brunei family and their relatives, and in the latter part of his life he visited regularly. As you would expect, the Islam that Alick related to was an Islam that mirrored his own philosophy of brotherhood. Brunei played an important role for Alick in his final illness and Broome and Manning describe how Alick, when he knew the end was coming, prepared himself for that transition by making solitary journeys throughout Brunei, often into the forests. This is a particularly poignant section of the biography as it describes a gregarious man with a passion for people and life making his final farewells.

In a fine passage Broome and Manning write that for Alick life "was a journey to oneness". There was certainly an element of genius in Alick's ability to untangle and identify the essential connections and commonalities under the diversities of individual temperament, race, religion and culture. For those who never had the chance to meet Alick, Broome and Manning recreate the remarkable life and personality of an exemplary Australian. As intercultural and racial connection becomes more the norm, and to an extent, inevitable, the complexities of identity and genealogy should be a matter of acceptance and celebration rather than denial. *A Man of All Tribes* is a timely production that provides us with more generous perspectives for thinking about the nature of identity and what it means to be Australian.

ABORIGINAL VICTORIANS: A HISTORY SINCE 1800

Richard Broome

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Over the past few years we have witnessed a vociferous and often vitriolic set of debates around the Indigenous histories of Australia. These have been popularly labelled the "history wars". These "wars" have emerged broadly along political lines, with "black armband"