

***Journeying and Journalling: Creative and Critical Meditations on Travel Writing*, edited by Giselle Bastin, Kate Douglas, Michele McCrea and Michael X. Savvas (Wakefield Press, 2010)**

This is more than another book on the art of travel-writing. It includes everything from travel/blogging as life narrative to indigenous cultural theory discourse. Local historical research sits beside works on distant imperial structures. This broad church is based on the Journeying and Journalling Conference held in Penneshaw, Kangaroo Island, December 2004 and is edited by two staff and two past and present PhD students of the Department of English at Flinders University, South Australia.

Readers would be advised to pay attention to the Introduction as it provides the key to the way the essays are arranged: travel writing and craft; South and West journeys; colonial journeys; symbolic journeys, mythical journeys. Unfortunately the body of the text is presented as a whole and does not reflect these four distinct sections. Grouping the essays under headings would clarify its underlying structure. It is unclear whether the topics are based on the Conference program or were used to edit the material thematically.

Despite its title, the collection is more obviously a discussion of the significance of colonialism in Australia. Several of the writers examine evidence of the lives of men and women, indigenous people and colonisers, in the early part of our history, described by Anthony J. Brown in his narrative of the early sealing industry here as 'paid-up members of the brotherhood of the deprived' (100). His essay concludes with a pre-colonial New Zealand folksong based on the loss of a sealer ship in the Tasman Sea in 1809. Kay Merry's fascinating yet disturbing essay views the same topic from the standpoint of abuse of Aboriginal women by sealers of Bass Strait and Kangaroo Island in the early nineteenth century. She makes extensive use of the journals of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Protector, George Augustus Robinson, 'who meticulously recorded the experiences, stories, folklore and songs of the last Tasmanian Aborigines in the early 1830s' (112) and who was informed by sealer James Munro 'that the "greatest and most barbarous cruelties" were practised by the sealers of Kangaroo Island' (115). Meanwhile, away from the southern oceans, in Mauritius, the colonial navigator and cartographer of Australia's shoreline entered the first of his six and a half years of imprisonment by the French. Gillian Dooley combs out pertinent aspects of Matthew Flinders' private journal in the light of his many misfortunes and presents an effortlessly written revelation of character. Passages of the subject's self-analysis are put in perspective. 'This is a private journal after all. His only audience was himself' (123).

The subjugation of other people and places in the west's consciousness initiates a critique of the writing and rhetoric of William Dalrymple, the British travel writer and historian on India. Reviewers should probably declare their prejudices and I have to admit to being something of a fan of Dalrymple's writing. I was unconvinced by Tim Young's condemnation of the author as a 'mockers of foreign accents' (4) and by inference an agent of 'imperialist and neo-colonial ideologies' (1). Young charges him with manipulating the travel narrative to please his readership and

Book reviews: *Journeying and Journalling: Creative and Critical Meditations on Travel Writing* edited by Giselle Bastin et al. Ingrid Birgden.

*Transnational Literature* Vol. 4 no. 1, November 2011.

<http://fhrc.flinders.edu.au/transnational/home.html>

aims to detract from his overall success as a cultural interpreter. Accusations of this nature are more suited to Margaret Allen's subject in 'Through colonial spectacles', a newspaper columnist for the *Register* and the *Adelaide Observer* in 1902 and 1903, writing under the pseudonym of 'Unohoo'. The columnist is identified as a doctor working in the Indian Medical Services and makes loud observations reflecting the imperial and racial hierarchy of the period. Allen points out an underlying insecurity in the author's perceptions of masculinity within the complex structure of subordination and the ruling class, concluding that 'his concern about his own position as a white colonial is paramount' (145).

The experience of being indigenous in the post-colonial era is the subject of several essays. Mark Minchinton's 'Kellerberrin walking...' is an attempt by the author to reconnect to his indigenous past by undertaking a 600 kilometre walk through Western Australia. This experiment in turning 'being to becoming' (74) is recorded in a lyrical way. The quest is expressed through performance, philosophy, cultural observations and even self-mockery. He is one of the two subjects of the next essay by Michele Grossman. A common thread is Deleuze and Guattari's concept of nomadology, here applied by Stephen Muecke in a complex analysis of the meaning of place, 'of being simultaneously "always there and always on the move"' (81). In an essay on Australian rail, Bruce Chatwin's songlines are evoked by Peter Bishop. Trains decorated with dot paintings as a signifier of all Aboriginal art sparks a discussion of reconciliation or appropriation, where 'a superficial tokenism ... substitutes a feel-good factor for real social change' (162). Another essay is a critique of the work of Colin Johnson, nom de plume Mudrooroo. Although the essayist Clare Archer-Lean acknowledges the controversy around his identity as an Australian Aboriginal, she shifts the focus to textual strategies of journey instead. Her interpretation of his *Master of The Ghost Dreaming* series, analysed through theoretical notions of trickster narrative, is convoluted and difficult to follow for those unfamiliar with the work. Only serious editing could rescue its argument.

Another genre in post-colonial writing is examined in a critique by Michael X. Savvas on the importance of place in Australian crime fiction. He traces the historical 'zero setting' in Australian works of the genre, compared to those of its English and American counterparts. Savvas looks forward optimistically to overcoming our cultural cringe, especially here in South Australia, claiming light-heartedly, 'let's face it; we have had enough crimes here for people to believe that fictional crime stories could be set here' (210).

The editors pull the essays together under the umbrella of 'contemporary travel writing scholarship' (xi). It is probably aimed at an academic audience rather than a general readership, and as such is able to juggle such diverse methodologies as soliloquies, historical research and cultural theory. As one would expect, the articles are well-referenced and despite adopting radically different styles, are on the whole well-written. Travel-writing is by its nature transnational, but the collection takes predominantly topics of local history as its starting point and is published by the independent publishing company, Wakefield Press, based in Adelaide, South Australia. A discussion of Dalrymple or Jean Rhys or an English blogger informs our own understanding of the post-colonial world and how others see us, but it detracts from the book's core. The inclusion of certain essays implies that an international

accent is sought to validate travel-writing scholarship in our region, neglecting the opportunity to celebrate the journey as an archive of our own cultural memory and sense of place.

**Ingrid Birgden**