

Book Reviews

Dan Yashinsky, *Suddenly They Heard Footsteps: Storytelling for the Twenty-first Century* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2004). Pp. xviii, 318. ISBN (pbk) 1-57806-927-0. US \$25 [Also in hardback, ISBN 1-57806-926-2.]

The oral tradition of storytelling is experiencing resurgence and renewal in the Twenty-first Century. Although we live in times of unprecedented change where instant global messaging, immediate information retrieval via the internet and exponential technological advances are commonplace, Dan Yashinsky, one of North America's best known storytellers, believes that 'storytelling is a living art for our times' (p. xvii). In his book *Suddenly They Heard Footsteps: Storytelling for the Twenty-first Century*, Yashinsky maintains that the oral tradition can assist in addressing many of the concerns of the digital age.

Indeed, as Yashinsky, points out 'although we have invented amazing technologies for saving data, we are at risk of forgetting our personal, family and cultural stories' (p. xiv). To off-set this risk Yashinsky passionately believes that the ability to memorise good stories and tell them to a circle of listeners provides a sanctuary for the human spirit to thrive and a way to mend damaged lives. He explains this conviction in this text by melding his own personal memoirs with social commentary; and by providing a handbook for prospective storytellers that also offers an anthology of tales for the telling. The work is personal, practical and committed.

In upholding and celebrating the storyteller's art, Yashinsky reveals that a good story (or even a 'bad' one—see pp. 64-66) can show us what it is to be human. He explains that his Jewish grandmother left Europe with only her stories (some distressing and almost impossible to tell) and he grew up feeling responsible for keeping alive the stories of people he had never had the chance to meet. So stories continue a personal and family history and culture: 'Everybody grows up surrounded by a web of narrative' (p. 67). Yashinsky's skill as a storyteller is obvious and his own narrative takes the reader on an emotional roller-coaster where, on a very personal level, one cries, laughs and gasps with the author. His honesty, warmth, humour, depth and creativity fill every page.

While one might often wish for the inclusion of an index, this book will be an extremely important part of one's storytelling collection. It is authentic, passionate, and cleverly written. Over one third of the book is dedicated to a collection of seven stories from Yashinsky's personal repertoire. He encourages the reader to add his/her own 'spice' to each and find your own voice, repertoire and artistic purpose (p. 185). Readers will come away from *Suddenly They Heard Footsteps: Storytelling for the Twenty-first Century* not only well-equipped with the tools that they will need to begin their own storytelling journey but they will also be stimulated, encouraged and inspired. As Yashinsky rather ethereally comments,

By the time an oral story reaches our ears it has passed through many memories, been uttered by many tongues. Stories passed by word of mouth move through the air from teller to teller, always arriving in new places carrying the whispering voices of ancestors: as we held this tale in our remembrance, may you shelter it in yours. (pp. 85-86)

Karen Hawkins

Bruce Moore, *Speaking Our Language: The Story of Australian English* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2008). Pp. xix, 225. ISBN (pbk) 9780 19556 5782, \$32-95. [Also in hardback, ISBN 9780 19556 5775.]

This volume is one of proud celebration, being issued especially to mark the hundred years of the Oxford University Press's functioning in Australia, even as it also celebrates the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the *Australian National Dictionary*, edited by W.S. Ramson. Both works grew out of the ongoing and meticulous research of the Australian National Dictionary Centre at the Australian National University, a group whose auspices were difficult if not controversial due to earlier lexical developments in the Sydney universities.

Both these works—like their cousin, *The Dictionary of New Zealand English*—are focused on the particular or regional southern variety of speech and lexicon that complement the mother tongue, 'English English'. In the case of *Speaking Our Language*, there is no attempt to deal with the more than 14,000 words that make up the body—and so the history—of the distinctive Australian vocabulary (p. xiv). Rather is the persisting and most proper concern is to focus on many of the words that make Australian English different from other Englishes, as well as on many of those words/idioms that shape Australian identity, the Australian mindset and the significant/cultural lingua franca that one finds in the diverse ethnic and other strands in the ever more culturally mixed general society.

In this last sense, the text is clearly one moving steadily to the style of charting the present generation's (overly metropolitan) mindset in the like ways laid down for their respective countries by

- a) Alan Metcalf, Secretary of the American Dialect Society, in his *Predicting New Words: The Secrets of Their Success* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, Company, 2002); and
- b) John Humphreys, in his *Beyond Words: How Language Reveals the Way We Live Now* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2006). [in paperback, 2007].

But this is something of an anticipation, yet quite valid in view of the fact that historical sweeps over the nearly 1400 years of written 'English' are much less popular / graspable than they were even forty years ago.

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In this new Australian work, the treatment is one in some fourteen chapters, each largely treating of a recognizably sequential stage, with numbers Two and Three both identifying overly ‘The World Upside Down’, first in the ‘Natural World’ and then in ‘The Social World’ respectively. The method throughout has two helpful yardsticks—

- (i) the (as of) now accepted first significant citation date; and
- (ii) the need to give an historical/cultural setting or explanation of the context, users, and (cultural) significance of the selected term/phrase/word and of its modern context.

In these ways it profits much from the more exhausting/exhaustive lists/clusters of terms presented by the standard (tertiary level) textbook, A.C. Baugh and Thomas Cable, *A History of the English Language*, 5th edition, 2004, perhaps returning to the between-the-wars style of informing the reader, as used by E. Weekley or L.P. Smith in Great Britain’s more popular scholarly studies of the language then.

Thus the first chapter on the Indigenous borrowings is both expansive—adjudicating on Cook and on *kangaroo*—and finally coming down to later uses like *kangaroo court*, *kangaroo paw*, *kangaroos* for members of sporting teams, and even the *kangaroo route* [the Qantas route to London via Singapore). Here, as elsewhere, engaging later uses are dropped in to assist some readers to be confident that the usage link is as they may have suspected it to be.

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There is considerable acknowledgement of one of the *AND* team, J.M. Arthur, especially for her *The Default Country: A lexical cartography of twentieth century Australia* (UNSW Press, 2003), a work closely exploring the relations between language and the strange and challenging landscape; for we are we still persisting with a colonizing relationship to land and landscape, and she arguing that—linguistically—we may still be (early on) in the process of discovering where we are, and where we are not.

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Chapter One then proceeds, helpfully, to an in-depth analysis of the Australian English debt to Aboriginal languages, from which about 440 words have been borrowed from some 80 languages, most of these items being nouns acquired relatively early in the (regional) colonizing process. The Sydney and Swan River (Perth) regions are shown as the major contributors, with 55 and 57 borrowings respectively, and the next largest numbers come from what may be called the larger inner regions of ‘New South Wales’. A feature here is the contrast with the many more terms borrowed from (the standard, and almost ubiquitous) Maori that are to be found in New Zealand English, especially in the North Island, for water names and social artifacts and aspects of the folklife.

After this there is much subtle distinction made between the convict and the free in both the spoken and official lexis, as with the progression—and highly symbolic—uses of the word *muster*, through from its military, naval, convict and, finally pastoral uses. Like semantic nuances are explored in Chapter Four, ‘Currency Versus Sterling’, and in Chapter Five, ‘Establishing the Accent’,

where helpful comparisons are made with New Zealand recordings, and there is exploration of some of the similarities between Australian and Cockney vowels and diphthongs, but the conclusions reached favouring the ‘mixing bowl’ effect, whereby the accent was produced by a mixing of the many accents that were present in the colony. (p. 69)

Hereafter the progressive stages of the insightful chronicle treat of: the gold rushes; the evidence of the discrete British regions in the emerging common lexis of Australia; the explosion in the population; the influences of distant wars and of national campaigning for England, the vast social changes after the post 1945 migration, and the moves towards a much delayed, and yet more confident nationhood.

To rush ahead we may quote the defiant conclusion to Chapter Eleven:

The wheel has turned full circle, and we are back at the situation that characterized the nineteenth century—most Australians speaking with much the same accent, even if there have been some slight changes in the quality of the vowels... Many people complain about the effects [here] of American English... the extraordinary thing, however, is that after sixty years of being subjected to American films, American television, and American music, the Australian accent remains utterly unaffected by American accents. (from pp. 162-163)

Thus there follows his concluding comment:

This suggests that it is the accent, even more than the vocabulary, that is the important linguistic marker of identity. With Cultivated Australian almost eliminated, and Broad Australian in serious decline, in the future most Australians will speak General Australian, or, more accurately, Australian—‘a nation at last’. (p. 163)

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Chapter Twelve, ‘Regional Australian English’ then picks upon the more recent books on Regional Australian, as in

- *Words from the West: A Glossary of Western Australian Terms* (1994), edited by M. Brooks and J. Ritchie;
- *Tassie Terms: A Glossary of Tasmanian Terms* (1995), with the same editors;
- *Voices of Queensland: Words from the Sunshine State* (2001), ed. J. Robinson (2001), and
- *Bardi Grubs and Frog Cakes: South Australian Words*, ed. D. Jauncey (2004).

The obvious point to be stressed here is that the regions are more significant than the ‘states’, as culture/concepts/issues owe no allegiance to any traditional settler nomenclature of special organization—any more than are there clear regional demarcations in Joseph Wright’s *English Dialect Dictionary*, where

terms were often shown to occur in a dozen counties, with a preference for the usage in several areas, not necessarily adjacent.

Chapter 13, the last in the present compilation, focuses on ‘Other Australian Englishes’ much as Michael Clyne had done in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Folklore* (1993), or in the B. Moore (ed.) *Who’s Centric Now?: The Present State of Post-Colonial Englishes* (2001).

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Moore’s book is not exhaustive/ does not attempt to be so. Rather is it a series of insightful reflections with generous footnotes, memorable examples and an infectious and enthusiastic scholarship that makes it Australia’s answer to earlier overviews of English English, as in the smaller handbooks produced by E.W. Weekly, L.P. Smith, [Professor] C.L. Wrenn, or the late Dr. R.W. Burchfield when his considerable *S.O.E.D.* labours were over.

As the ‘Word Index’ (pp. 221ff.) makes clear, Moore’s treatment focuses on particular words/phrases that are important to the general argument and progression—one concerned with experience and emergent identity, like all true biographies. What is also very clear is that Australia has at last produced its own reflective biographer of its language. For of the earlier scholars labouring in this field, E.E. Morris was an academic from India, while Graeme Johnson, George Turner and W.S. (‘Bill’) Ramson all came from New Zealand and its universities and had their formative training there and, usually, elsewhere.

This book, like *The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary* or *The Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary* and the second edition of *The Australian National Dictionary*, has the stamp of Moore’s authority as *the Australian lexicographer*, Australia-trained and Australia-achieving, while, in this volume, also contributing an engaging, reflective and convincing portrait of the kinds of words and meanings that constitute the core of the evolving and long very much home-grown Australian identity.

J.S. Ryan

Ryan, J.S., *Tolkien’s View: Windows into his World* (Zurich and Jena: Walking Tree Publishers, 2009). 286 pp. ISBN 978-3-905703-13-9

This is a fascinating book, full of delightful and informed detail not just about Tolkien’s work, but the context of his life and times. It should be of value not only to the many Tolkien aficionados, but to anyone interested in the mythopoeic origins of north European folklore, and the great scholarly quest in the early 20th century to lay the boogies and pukas behind that folklore. John Raoul Tolkien is the one figure in that chapter of scholarship known to all, by the seeming accident of his phenomenal ‘best seller’ status, though his fellow Inklings C.S. Lewis and W.H. Auden also achieved their modicum of fame. In fact, Tolkien’s ability to write heroic and monumental stories of widespread appeal was a consequence of his thorough understanding of the roots of story in European tradition.

Few people are better qualified to write about the context of Tolkien’s work than J.S. Ryan (English, University of New England, Australia), and himself

one of the last living students of the great man from his years shared with him at Merton College, Oxford. As a young student Ryan was an intimate acquaintance of many people in the Inklings' circle, especially those who most influenced Tolkien. He also was inevitably steeped in the investigations into philology and mythology—the union of which two disciplines gave power and edge to the re-interpretation of the past that this guild of scholars achieved. Indeed, there is a chapter in the book dealing with Tolkien's concept of philology as mythology: the seminal proposition that word history can tell us as much about the deep past as the regrettably few surviving fragments of the literature and lore of lost worlds.

So for those, like myself, who have always been (probably unhealthily) obsessed with what lies hidden behind not-so-harmless faery tales and legends, this book is a feast! My favourite is the article, rather curiously located at the end of the book in an extended appendix, titled 'Othin in England'—that's Odin, Woden, the variously named trickster God whom we still all acknowledge every Wednesday. What is doubly curious is why devout and dedicated Christians such as Tolkien had such a thing about tracing the living presence of rather unsavoury heathen Gods. But this is the book to begin to give answers to such questions. Tolkien was the mess of contradictions that we probably all are, and certainly the inspired and famous ones such as Tolkien whose fate it is to have their life and influences thoroughly investigated in the way this book does.

I await eagerly the next book in this two-part series, where a few more personal questions might be answered—for instance, how did the overtly gay and sometime radical Communist Auden fit into this gentlemen's club of conservative Christians? And how did Tolkien manage to transmute the soft porn and erotica of William Morris's mediaeval fantasy sagas—his acknowledged literary models—into some of the most sexless popular literature ever written?

Walking Tree Publishers, a scholarly, not-for profit Swiss foundation, are to be congratulated on the whole Cormare series of which this book is a part. The series comprises 23 works by various authors on Tolkien and his work, of which *Tolkien's View* is the latest.

Robert Haworth

Ryan, J.S., *Tales From New England* (Armidale, NSW and Lane Cove, NSW: Heritage Futures Research Centre, University of New England, and Woodbine Press, 2008). Pp. xiv, 284. ISBN 978-0-949557-22-3, pb.

In Australia, 'New England' is a region also known as the Northern Tablelands of New South Wales. It is a high plateau prone to bleak weather, is broad in space (similar to the area of New Zealand) and has a small population of just over 100,000. Its European origins were predominantly Scottish, and the early squatters established themselves over large land-holdings in a manner that was almost baronial. There has been a long tradition of independence from outside authority, and for more than its first century of settlement the region had

a strong separatist movement (i.e. advocating separation from the state of New South Wales). Also the region has had a continuing interest in education—for which purpose the bracing weather was seen as efficacious. This long-time focus upon education has meant that there are many more people who have spent part of their time in the region—this New England ‘diaspora’ perhaps doubling the region’s current population. As an external student there in the 1970s, one occasionally heard the area described as ‘the Athens of the North’, delivered with some wry amusement but also, to some degree, capturing the clarity of air, land, thought and potential that so differed from the commercial/consumer/fashion-driven buzz of metropolitan universities. Spending part of one’s formative years in such a retreat-like environment is likely to have a longer-term impact—and the detail on several of the writers treated in *Tales From New England* is evidence that this is so.

Part history, part literary study, part local studies, *Tales From New England* is a follow-up to *High Lean Country: Land, People, and Memory in New England* (2006). Where the earlier work presented a broad overview of the area, with its different aspects treated in individual chapters by separate authors, this recent work has its focus upon narratives, and represents the many-decades commitment and labour of its one author on these topics. And so *Tales From New England* is a regional study of prose works, predominantly of fiction but also including factual texts, and the title’s ‘Tales’ is a broad term which can capture this range of works which variously address images, culture and those long-pervasive influences of this characteristic region.

The work focuses upon distinctive writers, those with a national, or international reputation, and deals with them in chronological order and with varying degrees of emphasis:

- Rolf Boldrewood (two chapters, 68pp.)
- Tom Keneally’s Jimmie Blacksmith/Jimmy Governor (74pp.)
- Dymphna Cusack (34pp.)
- Gwen Kelly (30pp.)
- Geoff Page, David Crookes, and D’Arcy Niland (30pp.)
- Robert Barnard (50pp.)
- Gabrielle Lord (26pp.).

Recurring themes are signalled as:

- the long lingering *woolocracy* and its range of assertive social mores;
- the romance of local alluvial gold mining and the louche attraction of the ‘bushrangers’, as well as the exoticism of the Chinese;
- the long anticipated coming of the railway and so the closing of the frontier;
- the ultimate tragic encounter between Aboriginal and settler along the southern and eastern pastoral frontier
- the struggles towards democracy of the ‘small selection’ settlers on the eve of Federation;
- the characteristics and trials of education;
- questioning of the style of the major denominations’ religious observances.

Supporting the claim that ‘it is obvious that the space and light of New England has prompted many of the treated writers’ (p. xii), together, the texts and themes are presented to show ‘the clarity of thought that these uplands seem to encourage, as well as the mocking conscience and disquieting satire that writing so often assumes in our ‘high, lean country’.’ (p. xi)

Perhaps most memorable will be the attention to *class* differences—aspects pervading Australian society, but seldom thrown together as in this region. Dymphna Cusack’s coinage of *woolocracy* will not easily be forgotten. More particularly, the class differences can be seen in action in Robert Barnard’s depiction of the destabilising of the local Establishment by the arrival of university academics:

You remember what a nice little circle we were in the old days ... I keep seeing people I don’t know. One can’t be sure whether they’re academics or real people, so I don’t know whether to be friendly or just—kind? (p. 216),

and similarly destabilizing the local police:

The trouble with University people was that you couldn’t thump them and they couldn’t afford to bribe you. (p. 207)

The free-flowing text of description and analysis is nonetheless deceptively dense with comparisons with national events, literary antecedents, other events in the region—in short, providing on-going insights into the broader cultural context, relevance and achievement of those under consideration in each ‘Tale’. The whole is supported by copious illustrations with 69 photographs, maps, book covers, line drawings and a family tree, there is also a detailed Index.

The work’s format is a little unusual. On the one hand there is the full scholarly support of references, bibliographies, notes, comparisons, suggestions for further study and asides, that not only make the work essential for future work on any of these authors, but also fascinating in its many implications. (Many times one wished that footnotes had been employed, thus avoiding the frequent switch to the appropriate endnote). On the other hand, the large format, large font, generously spaced lines, and frequent illustrations suggest that the work is also intended for the casual reader or for the elderly or the young. This is an interesting response to the needs of regional publishing, where topics are necessarily already narrow in focus and where a restricted intended readership could narrow this further.

There are minor awkwardnesses, such as the purpose of the Armidale water supply map (p. 256) not being made evident (although hinted at in that chapter’s note 14). Amongst the occasional typos, stray double spaces and omitted spaces are an on-going distraction—but lingering there would be to quibble.

Not attempted is a timeline which might show the ‘Tales’ in a brief overview, and also thereby provide a framework for the inclusion of other events and for subsequent writers. The current work does not claim to be comprehensive, and the notion of ‘Tales’ is suitably modest here, yet the work does establish a framework on an imaginative terrain that is both accessible and readily expanded. For example, there is clear potential for a follow-up work on the many poetic works which have drawn inspiration from the New England

region—indeed, the author was the convenor of the ‘Poets on the New England Landscape’ conference (U.N.E., 1988). Such possibilities could have been addressed in a Conclusion or Afterword.

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The work is intended for those within the region who wish for a more detailed view of their own land, its past and its people. Similarly it is for those at a distance who may be interested in the region or the writers (and here, distinctive insights may emerge from this work’s regional mission and its detail). And finally it would be for those not-of-this-region who may see herein a model which could be used for serious modern analysis of the historical/written/imaginative culture of their own region(s).

What is achieved here for this one region, is indirectly a celebration and endorsement of study of the culture of all regions. For those of us for whom New England signaled a pause for thought, a retreat, a realignment/recommitment, then this work is a special delight.

Robert James Smith

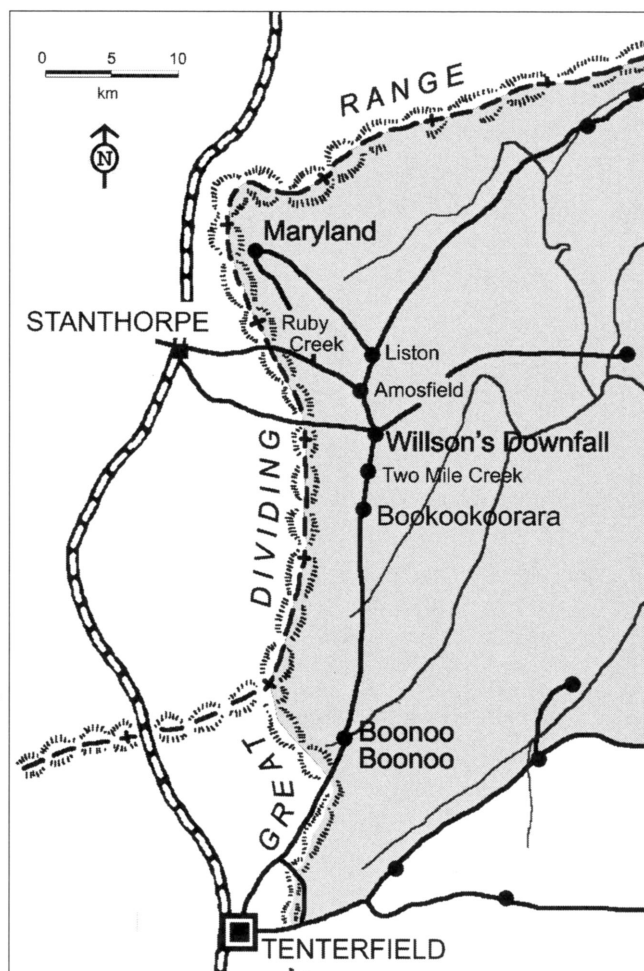
Brett J. Stubbs, *The Gold Digger’s Arms: Pubs of the Upper Clarence River District, New South Wales*. East Lismore, NSW: Tankard Books, PO Box 5098, 2009). Soft covers, A4 format. Pp. viii, 120. 53 Figures, mainly original photographs. \$30.00, postage free within Australia.

How to review a work amazingly *sui generis*? The title of this neat A4 sized volume—like its cover—focuses the reader on a series of variously spaced hamlets, long-time micro-communities once socially significant, but historically valuable in the Upper Clarence District of northern New South Wales. Unlike so many local histories with a funding source and so a focus in local government and its obvious tourist beckoning interests, this work is a curiosity-driven labour of love, illustrated by photographs from varied minor collections in parts of Eastern Australia. And, as the several hundred footnotes make clear, this has been an enormously difficult assemblage of the relevant facts—numbers, dates, details in official reports—from a bewildering array of forgotten documents, reports and newspaper references. In short, it has gone to the vestigial sources with tenacity and particularity.

But first, to locate the general area, a rugged one,

roughly rectangular, bounded on its northern and western sides by the Queensland border (which coincides with the main drainage divide, and in the east by the Richmond Range (which divides the waters of the Clarence from those of the Richmond). (p. 1)

The region thus located and covering about 4,000 square kilometers is the northern portion of the goldfields of the Upper Clarence, a forgotten country (once) containing mining settlements, these largely prospecting for gold, but also concerned with tin in several circumstances. Bold and easily understood maps—and one is reproduced here—assist the reader’s comprehension of a strangely persisting historical template of an area once bound by a significant railway link to the west, but largely shaped by mountains or the upper



Map of the western portion of the study area for The Gold Digger's Arms (2009). Note the proximity to Queensland and the rail line.

Interestingly, here one can travel west from NSW and arrive in Queensland.

tributaries of streams contributing to the great river whose outlet would be far away to the south east on the Pacific shores of northern New South Wales.

Accordingly the drivers of human activity—almost all from white settlers—are concerned with gold, transport, thirst and communication, and the antecedents to the six operational pubs in a region which had variously 'supported more than fifty'. (p. 3) As we are told perceptively at the outset:

The spatial and temporal patterns of pub development in the study area resulted from a combination of two main factors. The first of these was the settlement history of the area, itself a reflection of its physical geography and resources . . . The second crucial factor was the (cautious) licensing system operating in the State from time to time. (pp. 3-4)

Principally, however, the writer seeks to tell some of the fascinating history of the Upper Clarence River district, through its pubs and the people who ran them.

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Clearly Brett Stubbs is concerned to suggest a 19th century NSW pattern of coaching that mirrors that of (southern) England in the 18th century, notably in his terminology in pp. 1-20 with use of 'Wayside Inns', 'Grafton Road' or 'Warwick Road', and his description of the first pubs of the [train-free] area being established—

To provide accommodation and sustenance to travelers, and often to serve as change-stations for horse-drawn coaches. The hey day of the wayside inn was the period until the early twentieth century when the supremacy of the horse-drawn coach for the conveyance of passengers and mail was terminated by the ascendancy of the motor vehicle. (p. 5)

While the book is peculiarly *sui generis*, and the focus necessarily on the nexus between gold, roads, houses, modest hostelries, and relatively short lives of so many of the publicans, the text can be read with some profit against the fiction of Keith Garvey. For he has some similar hostelries to the west in the late Victorian era and the Edwardian period.

What this reader seeks now is more detail, some speculation as to schools provided and the catalyzing gold buyers. Essentially we have places, the names of licencees and many evidences of particular people. But what of the life, the passions, the mingled races, the itinerant clergy and the businesses? This reader appeals for more, or, better, a fictional chronicle set in one such place in the Federation period.

J.S. Ryan

Drawing the Line: Using Cartoons as Historical Evidence, ed. by Richard Scully and Marian Quartly (Clayton, Vic: Monash University Press, 2009) 272pp. A\$49.95. ISBN 9780980464849 (pbk), 9780980464856 (online).

Drawing the Line is a clever pun on the lines drawn in a cartoon, and setting a limit, beyond which it is unwise to go. It suggests the topic will be either drawing technique or the boundaries of decency, or both. It is not really about these, although Chapter 1 does mention social constraints.

The subtitle 'using cartoons as historical evidence' does accurately describe the book's topic and the joint editors discuss this in their introduction, the first chapter.

Lots could be said about the problems of the cartoon which transgresses taste and decency. For example, Michael Leunig has had threats made against him. He showed Christian sympathy for Osama bin Laden and he had a baby in a crèche wondering what it did wrong to be abandoned by its mother. Andrew Denton asked him in a memorable interview how he handled expressions of anger. He paused and replied 'First I try soaking them in the bath'.

The ten chapters after the introductory Chapter 1 are all written by young scholars about how each has used cartoons in their historical researches. As the topics are diverse it is doubtful if one reader would find every one of them of interest. It is only fair then to list the ten topics for potential readers of this

learned volume, impressively replete with copious footnotes and extensive bibliographies, including websites.

- Chapter 2 Madness and masculinity in the caricatures of the Regency Crisis, 1788-89 – *Jamie Agland*.
- Chapter 3 ‘Oppose everything, propose nothing’: Influence and power in the political cartoons of Thomas Nast – *Fiona Deans Halloran*.
- Chapter 4 ‘A pettish little emperor’: Images of Kaiser Wilhelm II in Punch, 1888-1901 – *Richard Scully*.
- Chapter 5 Wavering between virtue and vice: Constructions of youth in Australian cartoons of the late-Victorian era – *Simon Sleight*.
- Chapter 6 ‘All the world over’: The transnational world of Australian radical and labour cartoonists, 1800s to 1920 – *Nick Dyrenfurth and Marian Quartly*.
- Chapter 7 ‘What’s so funny?’ The finding and use of soldier cartoons from the World Wars as historical evidence – *Jay Casey*.
- Chapter 8 Propaganda and protest: Political cartoons in Iraq during the Second World War – *Stefanie Wichhart*.
- Chapter 9 ‘Forgotten legacies’: The case of Abdullah Ariff’s pro-Japanese cartoons during the Japanese occupation of Penang – *Cheng Tju Lim*.
- Chapter 10 Cartoons as a powerful propaganda tool: Creating the images of east and west in the Yugoslav satirical press – *Ivana Dobrivojevic*.
- Chapter 11 ‘Teh futar’: The power of the webcomic and the potential of Web 2.0 – *Marianne Hicks*.

The cartoon on p. 05.5 is most appealing. It is titled ‘Young Australia’ and was published in *Australian Tit-bits* on 12 November 1885. A very proper mother, with the bosom and bustle of the period, says to her recalcitrant daughter, about 10, ‘Now darling, I don’t like to take medicine any more than you do, but I just make up my mind to do it, and then do it.’ The daughter responds ‘And I just make up my mind that I won’t, and then I don’t’.

The commentary on this is intriguing:

Here mother’s attempt to reason with her daughter prove similarly ineffective, with the young girl forthright in her opinion that her way is best. Understanding the objective of this cartoon is not entirely straightforward. Is the viewer, one wonders, intended to side with the young people against the adult injunctions, smile at the children’s trifling impertinence or instead criticise them as young upstarts? Taking this cartoon in isolation, each of these interpretations would appear plausible...these imagined children are also ‘knowing’; indeed they know too much, even if they retain, in something of a paradox, a certain childish naivety. Their appearance in late-Victorian journals

like the *Melbourne Punch* and *Australian Tit-bits* serves to indicate a society with mixed feelings about the young people in its midst. (p. 05.4)

Surely the real point of the cartoon, as well as making us chuckle, is the natural irony that we want our children to grow up and be independent adults but without being disobedient, spirited or cheeky. Young Australia must have seemed to those many colonists born in Britain to illustrate this paradox. The parallel of Australia then with a growing child is easy, apt and amusing.

There are perception pitfalls in both the present and the past. Cartoons can be misunderstood at the time or now, or both. Hindsight can distort with our present point of view, being sage after the event. There is no one true interpretation of a cartoon from years ago. This is all pretty obvious but easy to neglect and hard to correct.

Cartoons seem insubstantial and ephemeral at the time, but somehow they solidify enough to become valuable historical humus, the way almost everything else, even light-weight novels, serve the purposes of social and political historians eventually. I think of all those delightful *Punch* cartoons so full of details of how people dressed and lived. They are part of our culture and folk memory which will be relished surely for a long time yet. *Punch* cartoons are referred to often in this book.

Post-modern jargon is the fashionable 'bling' of contemporary academic writing. It is a showy sham, and, reader beware, this book has a lot. For example:

* The bodies of animals also carry symbolic meanings. These allegories need to be deconstructed in their original context before the cartoon can be mined for more concrete evidence... The biographical model usefully enables the historian to present key contextual analysis of a series of cartoons while also detailing the specific factors influencing a cartoonist (such as personal politics, the relationship with editors, or technological issues) with implications for the broader study of cartoons in general. (p. 01.4/5)

* Whether intending to bolster or belittle their subjects of their cartoons, cartoonists turn repeatedly to signifiers of youth to mediate their respective messages. (p. 05.2). [My translation is 'Children were often used as symbols'].

* This marriage between a context-and text-driven analysis allows historians to maintain a sense of rootedness in the past, whilst at the same time appreciating that the message of a particular cartoon lies not solely with the intention of the cartoonist but also with the circumstances of its reception and the unique linkages that observers make between one image and other.' (p. 05.2).

Post-modernist rhetoric is an elaborate Heath Robinson affair which uses familiar words in unfamiliar ways such as agenda (meaning aims), texts and narratives. Big words are often used when a short one would be superior, such as *objective* instead of *object*, *linkages* instead of *links* and *methodologies*

instead of *methods*. It avoids everyday idioms as if they were inferior. It strives to be profound, by using the mystifying and unappealing phrases of the discredited ideology of the French deconstruction movement. It dresses ideas in inappropriate language. It is a rough equivalent of wearing a Tuxedo to a barbeque. We certainly do need different language styles for different purposes, such as figures of speech to express genuine appreciation, or to intensify criticism. Plain English is perfectly adequate to discuss how cartoons can help historians. There are innumerable examples of plain English writing to follow, such as William Hazlitt, George Orwell, E. B. White and most newspaper leader writers and top journalists.

Our task of understanding is made more difficult by this style. It seems to me that I understand something when I have turned the words I read or hear into my own words and then impute this version of the idea to the writer or speaker. It is very difficult to read a book where virtually nothing is stated in the way that I habitually think. The task of translating and imputing is too great for comfortable reading.

There is another disappointment in what is in many places a tedious book about cartoons. Its style and approach nearly overwhelm the humour. It is boring to take a joke seriously, to analyse and dissect it for its unintended significances and to ignore its humour. The wonder of humour, however, is that it persists in thumbing its nose at the whole world and cannot be destroyed even when exploited or subverted by an historian. It is irrepressible. The best parts of this book by far are the cartoons themselves.

Ian Johnstone

Clarkson, Janet, *Pie: A Global History*. The Edible Series (London: Reaktion Books, 2009). Pp. 136. ISBN 978-1-86189-425-0, hb. RRP \$25.95.

This is a small-format book (197x120 mm), firm in the hand, with a dust-jacket the colour of pale baked pastry. It promises to be a delectable work—particularly to an Australian readership familiar with the ubiquitous ‘meat pie’. That the author of this London-based work, Janet Clarkson, is actually based in Queensland adds to the promise, as indeed does the serious approach to the material and the craftsman-like production of the whole.

The publishers, Reaktion Books, present ‘The Edible Series’ as

a revolutionary new series of books dedicated to food and drink that explores the rich history of cuisine. Each book reveals the global history and culture of one type of food or beverage.

Works already published in the series are: *Pancake* (2008), *Pizza* (2008), *Hamburger* (2008), *Spices* (2009), and *Hot Dog* (2009). Twenty further titles are listed, with authors identified (p. 2), and from a folk perspective the forthcoming *Fish and Chips* looks particularly intriguing. As more works in the series become available, these can be followed on the publisher’s site <www.reaktionbooks.co.uk/series.html?id=19> The evident quality of this

current work, combined with the rapid publishing schedule, suggests that this ambitious Series is likely to be both achievable and influential.

The Contents sets out the ‘global’ approach to the topic:

- A Brief History of Pie
- The Universal Appeal of Pie
- Pies by Design
- Filling Stuff
- Special Occasion Pies
- Around the World with Pie
- Imaginary Pies
- Epilogue: The Future of Pie

As might be presumed, in most of this international coverage, the ‘pie’ in focus here is of a size which Australians would generally refer to as a ‘family pie’. There is no mention of the size of our individual-meal pies, and certainly none of the smallest—the ‘party pies’. Similarly the treatment has an emphasis upon sweet or dessert pies which is well out of alignment with the Australian experience (these two traditions are explored on p. 90).

Indeed, the work is aimed at a trans-Atlantic readership, and to be an Australian reader is a disadvantage in that we have our own rich vernacular culture of ‘pies’, and would hope for more acknowledgement of this. Australia and New Zealand are treated briefly (pp. 92-94), with a neat linking of the emergence of pie-eating to the colonial promise to prospective-emigrants of ‘meat three times a day’. Still, a trans-Atlantic reader would assume that, like themselves, Australians were eating slices of large pies. It remains for the image of the pie-floater, with its vaguely square shape, underneath the green and red, to let the reader know that Australian and New Zealand pies are small and different.

Still, all authors must work to their aims and within their constraints—and so it is perhaps an advantage to be an Australian reader when watching the Australian author navigate this terrain. The long exploration of definitions (pp. 7-16) begins with the epigraph ‘I may not be able to define a pie, but I know one when I see it’ (Raymond Sokolov—a leading US food journalist), and then spills over into the first chapter. With the confidence of our Australian certainties on ‘what is a pie’, this can all seem most amusing. (In Australia, even a single-word sign, ‘Bakery’, means that one could buy a ‘plain pie’ there.)

The major satisfaction of the work does not come from a wry Australian eye, nor from the work’s coverage of contemporary uses. Rather it comes from the examples from the past—showing the emergence and uses of pies from mediaeval times onwards. This is grounded upon knowledge of flours, oils and baking (the food technology), all explained simply, and the whole showing much scholarship and judicious selection of information from historical and varied cultural sources. All this learning is worn lightly, for the style is easy and even at times witty.

This accessible approach is signaled by the many images included. All but eight page-openings have an illustration (ignoring the cover and chapter logo of a pot pie). Most of these images are in colour, and there are broadly informative captions, such as—

Woodcut from the late 15th century *Le Grant Calendrier et Compost des Bergiers*. It was common in medieval times for feasts to include nude bathing. Here a raised pie awaits the couple finishing their frolic in the bath. (p. 26)

An Australian might consider the offer of ‘skinny-dipping followed by a pie’, to be much less elegant—but perhaps not unknown, and, if so, to have an antecedent.

Completing this joyful work are eleven pages of recipes, a Select Bibliography (but no Australian item), a list of relevant Websites and Associations (including www.greataussiepiecomp.com.au), as well as a detailed Index. Within its scope, one might have hoped for a reference to the work of Michael Symons or to that of Warren Fahey, as support for the points on Australian pies.

Janet Clarkson’s other work in the planned series is *Soup*. It may be too much to expect her dual interests to emerge there in an extended treatment of the ‘pie-floater’. For that, Australian readers must wait for a less ‘global’ work. In all, the many glossy images, the author’s insight and her sheer delight in the topic, make this work more than a snack—a sumptuous feast.

Robert James Smith

[We are pleased to note the following item as recorded on page 2 of the *FLS News*: The newsletter of the Folklore Society, No. 59, p. 2, November 2009.]

M.Litt. in Scottish Folklore

As from September 2009, the University of Glasgow’s campus in Dumfriess will be offering a taught postgraduate degree in Scottish Folklore. The degrees will focus on the folklore and ethnology of lowland and highland urban and rural, historical past and present day Scotland at both a local and an international level. As well as writing a dissertation, students will complete a survey course on folklore genres and a practice-based class on fieldwork and research methodologies, and will choose a further two courses on such topics as Scotch witch beliefs, folklore of animals ballads and storytelling.

For more information about the programme contact Dr Lizanne Henderson at l.henderson@crichton.gla.ac.uk or visit the website:

[www.gla.ac.uk/departments/dumfries campus](http://www.gla.ac.uk/departments/dumfries%20campus)

To request an application form contact Marketing and Recruitment Office, Tel: +44 (0) 1387 702131 or email: admissions@crichton.gla.ac.uk