

***Migration and Cultural Contact: Germany and Australia* edited by Andrea Bandhauer & Maria Veber (Sydney University Press, 2009)**

While conducting genealogical research at Adelaide's Lutheran Archives in the late nineties, I often shared the reading room with two volunteers, who told me they were transcribing documents in the Arrernte language, as set down by Carl Strehlow. They eagerly elaborated when I asked for more information and they described his linguistic endeavours at the Hermannsburg Mission and his contribution to recording and preserving several indigenous languages of Central Australia. When I first glanced through the contents of *Migration and Cultural Contact: Germany and Australia* I was delighted to see the name Strehlow mentioned in several chapter titles. Closer inspection revealed four of ten chapters devoted to his life, work and influence and I wondered why the theme wasn't expanded to fill a dedicated release. This publication by Sydney University Press is split into four sections and the first two sections pay homage to Carl Friedrich Strehlow (1871-1922), who is described as 'one of the great philologists of Australian native languages' and 'one of the most impressive ethnologists at the turn of the century' (48).

Ortrud Gutjahr of the University of Hamburg describes the enthusiasm of nineteenth-century European 'ethnologists, cultural anthropologists, sociologists and religious studies scholars' for Aboriginal cultures (15). The linguistic efforts and close consistent access of Strehlow placed him in a pre-eminent position as an 'adept mediator between Australia and Europe' (16). Strehlow recorded oral traditions detailing complex social structures and fed Europe's fascination for the romanticised experience of the Australian outback by translating songs of the Arrernte and Luritja language into German for European publication. Although a Lutheran missionary, Strehlow moved far beyond the prescribed sphere of learning the language, custom and mores of those to be converted to Christianity (16). Gutjahr emphasises the contribution Strehlow, as a field researcher, in providing the primary source material to support the 'armchair ethnology' of sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) (30).

In the second chapter Walter F. Veit continues the theme of Strehlow's influence on European culture. Veit also highlights the reliance of Germany's 'armchair anthropologist' on Strehlow's ethnological field work (47). Veit enticingly links Carl Strehlow's European publications to the early phase of the Dada movement, which saw Dada's 'High Priest' Tristan Tzara, perform Indigenous Australian songs in French (45). Chapters three and four seem to have been included to provide a biographical background to Carl Strehlow and his wife Frieda. Anna Kenny describes Strehlow's less successful missionary work at Hermannsburg, giving an insight into the influence of German mission work on Australia. In chapter four Andrea Bandhauer and Maria Veber use letters of courtship to provide insight into how the outback of Australia was presented to a young European woman, in Frieda Strehlow, who was preparing for migration and marriage.

After this extensive focus on the work of one individual, the text dramatically changes tack to explore the diverse topics of; historical accounts and motivations of German migration, German-Australian experiences of World War I and account of

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Cook's voyages published in Germany. The fourth and final section of this text focuses on stereotypical presentations of Australia in German fictional literature. This section provides evidence that the Australian Outback, whether it is presented as a vast and pristine space or a dumping zone for nuclear waste, occupies a prominent place in the German psyche.

I was intrigued by Gerhard Fischer's description of Australians with German heritage as Australia's 'hidden migrants' who have, in the past few decades, began to disclose themselves in national censuses (131). This evoked my childhood when I asked both my maternal and paternal grandfathers about the origins of their last names. My paternal grandfather answered 'Dutch', although I now know that his own grandparents, whom he knew well, spoke German as their first language. My maternal grandfather was at least a little more forthcoming when he answered 'Prussian' and allowed me to spend hours futilely looking for this mysterious country in an atlas.

Fischer provides a valuable literature review of writing on the 'German presence' in Australia then dedicates a significant proportion of his essay to demonstrating that his own study, *Enemy Aliens*, filled a different niche in the research. Fischer questions the 'assimilation-integration-multiculturalism' model of Australia's non-British migration (142) and compares detainment of German-Australians in internment camps during both world wars with the 'so-called war on terror or the policy of mandatory and indefinite detention of asylum seekers' (144). John F. Williams continues the examination of the complex German-Australian relationship before and after World War I, and shows that the self-perceptions of German-Australians clashed with the image projected onto the German migrant community by the majority of Australians.

Kathrine M. Reynolds incorporates an interesting element of an 'individual's psyche' to the 'push-pull' theory of migration (190). Reynolds describes personality types ranging from 'migration-prone' to 'stay-at-home', drawing upon research into the high level of immigration from the Duchy of Nassau to Australia in the nineteenth century (187). Fredericka van der Lubbe then gives attention to the German accounts of Cook's Voyages, particularly those of Johann Reinhold and Georg Forster but also unauthorised accounts and biographies of Cook originally written in German. An interesting segue from Van deLubbe's accounts of Cook's Voyages to the depictions of Australia in German literature is the paper by Judith Wilson. Wilson focuses on the writings of Therese Huber, a German writer who was the wife of ethnologist, Georg Forster. Although their marriage was brief, Wilson shows that Huber was inspired by Forster's journeys into the South Seas in her depiction of Australia, which 'inscribes Huber's text in a tradition of island utopias' (230-232).

The discussion of Utopian novels leads neatly to Birte Giesler's paper, the final in the text, on Australia's depiction as 'Europe's Utopia or Paradise Lost?' (241). In the novel by Swiss author Urs Widmer, *Liebesbrief für Mary [Love Letter for Mary]*, outback Australia moves from the 'emphatically politically incorrect' depiction as an innocent untouched Aboriginal country (243) to a 'radioactively contaminated central Australia' from which the heroine may need rescuing (245). And so this compilation, which at times feels disjointed in the selection and weighting of contributions, ends as it started, once more in Carl Strehlow's central Australian desert.

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