BOOK REVIEWS

TITLES REVIEWED

REVIEW ARTICLE
Barbara Glowczewski
_Dream trackers_
(Review by Christine Nicholls)

BOOK REVIEWS
Neil Thomson (ed.)
The health of Indigenous Australians
(Review by Gordon Briscoe)

Mary Ellen Jordan
_Balanda_
(Review by Jennifer Cramer)

Rene Powell and Bernadette Kennedy
_Rene Baker file #28/E.D.P._
(Review by Jilpia Nappaljari Jones and John E Thompson)

Amee Glass and Dorothy Hackett
_Ngaanyatjarra & Ngaatjatjarra to English dictionary_
(Review by Doug Marmion)

Beryl Cruse, Liddy Stewart and Sue Norman
_Mutton fish_
(Review by Daphne Nash)

Richard Broome
_Aboriginal Victorians_
(Review by Bruce Pascoe)

Colin Tatz
_Aboriginal suicide is different_
(Review by Damien W Riggs)

Ivan Jordan
_Their way_
(Review by Carolyn Schwarz)

Maria Nugent
_Botany Bay_
(Review by Dr John E Thompson)

REVIEW ARTICLE
Dream trackers: Yapa art and knowledge of the Australian desert
Barbara Glowczewski

Reviewed by Christine Nicholls, Visiting Professor of Australian Studies, University of Tokyo, Japan <Christine.nicholls@cpas.c.u-to>

In 1979 Barbara Glowczewski, a young Parisian student undertaking doctoral research in anthropology, made her first trip to the Warlpiri settlement of Lajamanu. Since then, Glowczewski has frequently returned to Lajamanu, sometimes living for extended periods in the Warlpiri women’s camp, and staying for considerable lengths of time. Over the years Barbara Glowczewski has also travelled with Warlpiri people through the length and breadth of their country, participating in ceremonies and being educated about the intricately intersecting networks of Warlpiri _Jukurrpa_ (‘Dreaming/s’). These _Jukurrpa_ pathways, founded and grounded in the specificities of local environments, and expressed or manifested through narrative, song, visual art, dance and kinship relationships, are the subject matter of this CD-ROM. _Dream trackers_ has been created by Glowczewski in close collaboration with Warlpiri people who are the owners of this knowledge.

While these _Jukurrpa_ and the knowledge systems accompanying them encompass a practical dimension, they also have cosmological and religious significance, embracing many additional layers of meaning, not all of which may be shared with outsiders, or even with all Warlpiri. In the past, Barbara Glowczewski has represented the complex interweavings of Indigenous knowledge systems and their modes of production, distribution and exchange, through numerous scholarly books and academic articles. Deservedly, today she enjoys a considerable international reputation for her anthropological publications, many of which relate to Warlpiri epistemologies and kinship practices, especially those pertaining to Warlpiri women. Glowczewski’s metaphor and model of the _hypercube_ as a means of explaining the elaborate Warlpiri kinship ‘web of relationships’ is frequently cited in anthropological circles and, while not uncontested, garners a high level of respect in the field.
But the truth of the matter is that anthropological writing about the lifeways and knowledge systems of Indigenous people usually reaches only a minority audience. The readership for anthropological literature mostly comprises other anthropologists, academics and students working in related fields, and a handful of others. Sometimes it extends to teachers, nurses or people in other service industries who, because of their daily encounters with particular groups of Indigenous peoples, are motivated to understand and learn more. Even then, the general reader often finds the terminology and specialised academic discourse of anthropological texts intimidating.

It is even less common for such anthropological writing to be read by its Indigenous ‘subjects’—the same Indigenous people whose knowledge systems and lifeways, in this era of rapid globalisation and late capitalism, are severely threatened. In the final analysis it is the latter group who has the most at stake in terms of critical engagement with such texts. An allied but no less important ethical issue is the entitlement of those Indigenous people to know how they are being framed within the anthropological discourse, in other words, to find out and to exert control over what is being said or written about them.

When I first went to live in Lajamanu in 1982, a surprisingly large number of Warlpiri people (perhaps 20) possessed their own battered copy of Mervyn Meggitt’s Desert people. While people were clearly interested in the book, mostly they couldn’t or didn’t read it, although sometimes they would ask others (including myself) to read or explain small, usually ‘spicy’ excerpts, especially those relating to their own family histories. Warlpiri people were making a statement about their desire to engage with the book’s contents, to know what was being said about them and ultimately to insist upon (if only implicitly) their own right of reply.

The late Maurice Luther Jupurrurla was the only Warlpiri person living at Lajamanu in the early 1980s who had actually read Desert people (or for that matter, the Bible) from cover to cover. The polyglot Jupurrurla had in fact read Meggitt’s book more than once. As a result Jupurrurla had developed strong opinions about Meggitt’s representations of Warlpiri people in his book. The tendency for Indigenous constituencies to be excluded from the academic or other public discourse that focuses on their selves and their belief systems (which ultimately amounts to a form of epistemological and ontological violence) is exacerbated when a thesis or book is written in a language other than English. This enduring struggle over the accuracy and probity of representations continues into this putatively post-colonial era.

These days, to give credit where it is due, many anthropologists return to their host Indigenous communities once they have completed their research and sit down with groups of people explaining and translating what they have written, sharing their findings with those who generated the source material. This is something that Barbara Glowczewski does quite routinely with the Warlpiri people at Lajamanu. Politically, Glowczewski has been a fellow traveller with the Warlpiri for more than a quarter of a century. She has been active, in a range of international contexts, in drawing attention to the precarious position of the Warlpiri. Because her efforts have not always resulted in plaudits from some of the self-appointed non-Indigenous ‘gatekeepers’ of the Warlpiri people, this has taken courage on Glowczewski’s part.

Notwithstanding, many of the current methods of providing socially useful feedback to Indigenous communities about research are imperfect. For example, dialogic interchange and research feedback of the kind that I have described often doesn’t extend to the young, the very group for whom the endangered state of Indigenous epistemologies is, in some cases, nearing crisis point. Of course, this doesn’t apply exclusively to the Australian situation, but is a global issue of concern to many Indigenous peoples.

There are a number of reasons why Barbara Glowczewski’s co-production with Warlpiri people of the Dream trackers CD-ROM represents a truly significant cultural and political intervention in terms of Indigenous knowledge maintenance. Foremost among these is the collaborative model that underpins Dream trackers. Another reason of practically equal magnitude is that the young are especially drawn to attractive new computer technologies and enjoy using them.

The CD-ROM comprises many photographs of Warlpiri environmental and cultural landscapes, short film clips, songs, fine-looking Jukurpa paintings, most of which have been painted by artists of the Lajamanu Warnayaka group, and public versions of Warlpiri Dreaming narratives (with special access to ‘inside versions’ available only to the appropriate Warlpiri persons), as well as numerous explanatory texts and hyperlinks. Warlpiri taboos, including those pertaining to death, have been properly observed throughout.

The Dream trackers CD-ROM enables viewers to navigate their way through Warlpiri ‘country’, following the journeyings of specific Warlpiri Dreamings.
and Dreaming Ancestors. In its graphic representation of the criss-crossings of Dreaming pathways, it demonstrates how the entirety of Warlpiri country is deeply etched and encoded with meaning. (When the complex of interconnected Warlpiri Dreaming sites becomes illuminated on the screen, it looks, momentarily, like a map of the Tokyo subway system, or the Parisian Metro of Glowczewski’s own homeland!)  

*Dream trackers* provides much insight into Warlpiri ontologies and ways of thinking, strongly supported by pertinent audiovisual material. Importantly, because of the approach taken, it avoids the Scylla of sensationalising Warlpiri experience, as well as the Charybdis of ‘dumbing it down’.

Furthermore, *Dream trackers* encapsulates great promise for young Warlpiri children and adolescents growing up with incomplete knowledge of their own *jukurpa*, by enabling them to explore these in contemporary, non-linear net-navigating ways. The approach taken not only reflects Warlpiri realities more closely, but importantly also has the potential to make a major contribution to a Warlpiri cultural future. This is highly significant because the intergenerational transmission of Warlpiri systems of knowledge is now under immense pressure.

Perhaps *Dream trackers* isn’t as ‘slick’ or as easy to use as some commercially available contemporary CD-ROMs, but this could be addressed with relative ease in its next iteration. In terms of the underlying concept, however, the content and the multilayered approach to its subject matter, it is not only a brilliant idea but a very necessary resource, primarily but not exclusively for Warlpiri people and their fellow travellers, for the reasons that I have explained.

At present, it exists in bilingual form: English and French. My suggestion would be to develop a third, entirely Warlpiri, version as soon as practicable.

I believe that Barbara Glowczewski in conjunction with her team of Warlpiri collaborators has achieved something remarkable in *Dream trackers: Yapa art and knowledge of the Australian desert*. While new technologies have the capacity for less than socially beneficial outcomes, they also have the potential to support Indigenous peoples and other minorities in advancing their political, social and cultural agendas. If properly managed these new technologies can contribute to Indigenous social and cultural maintenance, thereby enriching all human beings. Despite its minor flaws, I believe that *Dream trackers* represents a potentially generative paradigm shift, and feel confident that it will become an important resource for future generations of Warlpiri. Equally, in terms of ‘how to do’ the anthropology of the future, and by addressing the need for more innovative, culturally inclusive approaches than have often been taken in the past, *Dream trackers* provides a template. It is because it expands our thinking in these ways that I feel unreserved admiration for this project and all of those associated with it.


**The health of Indigenous Australians**

Neil Thomson (ed.)


Reviewed by Gordon Briscoe, National Centre for Indigenous History, Australian National University, Canberra <gbriscoe@coombs.anu.edu.au>

Western settler societies’ brutal colonisation produced genocidal policies towards Indigenous peoples; the British in Australia persisted with their assimilationist policy to rid Australia of Indigenous peoples and their heritage by denying them a capacity to remain different and not returning rights taken from them. This book, the product of recognising Indigenous rights to better health, is a new approach building on the work of some conscientious Australian scholars.

The overburden of poor health is clearly stated in this new ‘handbook’ of Indigenous Australian health, which will be essential reading for those engaged in redressing the awful impact of nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries’ destruction of Aboriginal society through policy and practice.

This book, edited by Neil Thomson, has had a lengthy gestation. I first met Neil when he came to the then Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS) in Canberra in 1981. His main objective there was to create a sound base from which to understand Aboriginal health. An information bulletin on Aboriginal health was his first production, and this was followed by *Aboriginal health: an annotated bibliography*, co-authored with Patricia Merrifield and published in 1988 by the AIAS and the Australian...