

## **Community Relations Commission Award (\$15,000)**

**Anna Haebich, *Spinning the Dream: assimilation in Australia 1950-1970*  
Fremantle Press**

After the heyday of the White Australia policy but before the introduction of multiculturalism, assimilation was heralded as the solution to the challenges posed by Australia's increasingly diverse population in the post-World War II era. Anna Haebich's book provides a comprehensive overview of the policies and practices of assimilation as applied to both 'New' and Indigenous Australians, tracing government action as well as rhetorical constructions of national identity at a time of massive change in the social and cultural fabric of the nation.

Thoroughly researched, and never losing sight of the underlying issues of race and culture as they weave in and out of debates about nationhood, *Spinning the Dream* makes an important and timely contribution to the history of the Australian people. Assimilation, though often decried, has received considerably less scholarly attention than the White Australia policy and multiculturalism. This book provides a compelling account of how a policy devised to reconcile a diverse population with an ideology of national homogeneity ended up exposing the paradoxes which led to its own undoing. A particularly instructive aspect of Haebich's account is its comparative dimension: parallels between Indigenous and immigrant communities exposed to the ideal of assimilation and gradual loss of distinction.

**Philip Jones & Anna Kenny, *Australian Muslim Cameleers: pioneers of the Inland 1860s–1930s***

**Wakefield Press Pty Ltd**

This book documents the little known history of the Muslim cameleers who were an integral part of the exploration and settlement of outback Australia for one hundred and fifty years, from the Burke and Wills expedition on. Camels were the only pack animals able to survive the harsh, arid conditions, providing supplies and communication to outback settlements, but they were best handled by experienced cameleers who arrived from Afghanistan and what is now Pakistan. Two thousand cameleers came, bringing twenty thousand camels. Most returned home after fulfilling their contracts and having passed on their skills and knowledge, but a number stayed, marrying indigenous or white Australians.

Many artefacts and photographs survive and have been brought together for the first time by historian and South Australian Museum curator Philip Jones and anthropologist Anna Kenny. The book constitutes an important record of the Muslim cameleers' contribution to Australia's cultural landscape and economic development, the challenges and prejudices they faced, and their successful integration with Australian society, both white and indigenous.

**Jacqueline Kent, *An Exacting Heart: the story of Hephzibah Menuhin*  
Penguin Group (Australia)**

Jacqueline Kent's biography of Hephzibah Menuhin examines the life of Yehudi's equally talented pianist sister, one of three Menuhin children who were all musical prodigies. Hephzibah defied all expectation by walking away from a brilliant career as a soloist on the world stage, marrying Australian Lindsay Nichols, heir to a pharmaceutical fortune, and joining him on his Victorian sheep property where she was to build a life for sixteen years and have two sons.

Life in rural Australia was predictably awkward for Hephzibah at first but she gradually saw opportunities to contribute to the community in which she lived and took them up with great enthusiasm and perseverance. Her humanitarian projects included starting up a travelling outback library, which she seeded and ran in a way that ensured it became self funding. However Menuhin was to abandon her life in Australia to embark on another and again very different phase of her life.

Kent's literary, contemplative style results in an engaging, gratifying book, as she invites us to consider the twists and turns of the life of a fascinating woman from an extraordinary family and the prevailing culture in which she lived, the dynamics and the personality that at times drove her to succeed but equally at times derailed her.

**Michelle Offen, *East West 101: Chapter Five – Haunted by the Past*, Knapman Wyld Television Pty Ltd  
SBS Television**

Episode Five of the popular crime drama *East West 101* follows Detective Zane Malik on the trail of an unresolved crime: the shooting of his own father by a masked gunman. Haunted by childhood memories he struggles to maintain his professional distance, the case becoming further complicated when he discovers that his boss has secret dealings with the suspect. In a parallel plot line, past atrocities return to haunt perpetrators and survivors of Balkan war crimes.

The suspense, pace and intricate plotting of *East West 101* make for excellent television drama. This series combines personal and political conflict in its depiction of migrant characters and communities in Sydney's western suburbs coming to terms with their traumatic past. Steering well clear of sentimental multiculturalism and ethnic stereotyping, the portrayal of a Muslim detective in a culturally complex setting offers a credible alternative to the monochrome mainstream which populates most Australian television drama.

**Malcolm Prentis, *The Scots in Australia*  
University of New South Wales Press Ltd**

This well-researched contribution to 'migration history' demonstrates the wide-ranging contribution of the Scots to all levels of life in Australia. While looking to temper standard stories of triumphalism, it relates the many successful examples of Scottish influence on Australian life. In addition to outlining the contribution of Scots to the domains of law, medicine, architecture, education, literature and the arts more broadly, it is careful also to highlight their contributions to various aspects of popular culture, including sport and music, and one chapter considers the relationship between the Scots and Aboriginal communities. We hear of Sir Fergus McMaster's part in the foundation of QANTAS and also of Scottish contributions to poetry (from John Shaw-Neilson to Les Murray), music (Vince Jones, AC/DC, The Easybeats, 'Jimmy Barnes'), cinema (Peter Weir, Russell Boyd, Colin Friels), television (the Lamb family), and sport (golf, of course, with Peter Thomson as a main name).

**Eric Richards, *Destination Australia: migration to Australia since 1901*,  
University of New South Wales Press Ltd**

In its broad coverage of the period 1900-2000 *Destination Australia*, written by a 'ten pound pom' who arrived in 1963, offers a fascinating, detailed account of the many waves of nationalities whose arrival into Australia was central to a 'grand plan of immigration' that has led us to our multicultural present. Richards' history crucially

involves the two major twentieth century wars and the immediate post-war issues that confronted Australia on each occasion. He records the many changes in immigration policies across the period of his study.

Inevitably the story contains many examples of various harsh exclusions, racisms, and 'internal racisms' and Richards does not flinch from saying that at certain times it was difficult to be Japanese, Maltese, Bulgarian or caught up in the Tampa controversy (among others). Richards leads the reader through changes in economic arguments that underpin justifications for demographic projections and specific immigration policies, 'liberal', welcoming or otherwise. Many prominent political figures (Billy Hughes, Robert Menzies, Arthur Calwell, John Gorton, Gough Whitlam, Malcolm Fraser, Bob Hawke, Paul Keating, John Howard) figure in a story covering the history of the many interest groups, from politicians to unions to environmentalists, which have participated in the vigorous debates that shadowed official immigration policies. As it records the history as experienced by those people whose journeys to Australia provide the subject of the book, this wide-ranging study of 'the politics and demography of immigration' balances economic opinion and humanitarian obligation.