Reviews


‘Then and now’ books are a reminder that one of the staple themes of historical study is change over time. Gibbon, in a famous passage of his *Decline and Fall*, has the mythical Seven Sleepers wake to see how much their surroundings have altered in their nearly two centuries of slumber, whereas people who were conscious from day to day in this period would scarcely have noticed change at all, it being so incremental.

*Sea Change* presents many images of the City of Holdfast Bay over a period of one and three-quarter centuries, and is a contribution to the commemoration of South Australia’s 175th anniversary. As an index of change, the city’s name of Holdfast Bay dates from only 1997, when the cities of Glenelg and Brighton were amalgamated.

The book is divided into four chronological sections, with the ‘then’ illustrations beginning roughly in a particular period (there is some overlap), and more recent illustrations being added up to the present day. So in Part One, ‘Tents to stone mansions’, ‘then’ runs from 1836 to approximately the turn of the twentieth century, and by Part Four, ‘Surge to the seaside’, ‘then’ has become the period just after World War Two. The images - some paintings, but most photographs - are accompanied by succinct commentaries.
Issues of taste come into play, but we suspect that many readers would see deterioration rather than improvement as, where an older building has been replaced, they contrast the ‘now’ with the ‘then’. So with the gracious mansion ‘De La Haye House’, replaced by a crass supermarket. Nostalgia is involved here too, as so many devotees of local history suspect that the past had good things we have lost. In view of the above, there is a certain irony in the choice of ‘Sea Change’ as the title for the book, with the epigraph from *The Tempest*: ‘Nothing of him that doth fade, /But doth suffer a Sea-change /Into something Rich, and Strange.’ Many see the past rather than the present as what is ‘rich and strange’, and so for them this book would depict a change away from rather than towards that condition, to something poorer and less interesting, the ‘fading’ having gone the other way.

One wonders for example why Sir Douglas Mawson’s home was demolished in the 1960s, considering he is one of South Australia’s greatest figures and an icon of adventure and heroism. There is nowadays so much concern over his hut in Antarctica, but who thought about his house in Brighton?

But who is consistent? The theme of progress holds sway as well, from pioneering days to the present, and big and shiny modern structures can be sources of satisfaction, especially if they replaced small and drab buildings. The habitués of the surf lifesaving clubs must be glad they enjoy more salubrious premises than the little sheds they used to put up with.

Furthermore, the fact that so many of the older illustrations are of necessity monochrome photographs, and these are contrasted with brilliant full-colour modern shots, can give the impression that it’s the past that is drab and the present which has more life. Mind you,
the older pictures are usually given a larger format than the more recent.

The more contemporary use of the term ‘sea change’ gets an airing as well, to reflect that so much of the history of these coastal communities involves the aspiration to live by the water, as a highly desirable location.

Despite ‘change’, many features remain: buildings, trees, businesses. Kithers’ butchering business is in its fifth generation at the original location in Jetty Road, Glenelg.

The illustrations and commentary do not deal with buildings and views alone. We are reminded how the minutiae of daily life have changed. So with the supply of milk to the home: ‘There were many dairy farms in Brighton, producing milk that was delivered to houses with a horse and cart, and ladled from a bulk container into a “billycan” on the front verandah’. In some old photographs the reader’s eagle eye detects horse manure on the roads, and memories of childhood bring back the smell.

It is striking how busy the beaches can be in some old photographs, packed not just with people and vehicles but also with temporary structures, tents and kiosks and so on. And it’s piquant that people at the beach wore so much more in those times than they usually do nowadays.

The natural world gets some attention, as it is damaged and sometimes fights back. How sad that the Tjilbruke Spring has deteriorated so badly, as the photographs clearly show. Sandhills and foreshores were cleared, but nature threw frequent storm damage at the ‘improvements’ of man. Now some attempt is made at salvage, with revegetation projects.
The illustrations end with aerial shots, from the days of aeroplanes to the days of satellites, so that changes in the very coastline can be studied.

Two indexes are provided, one expectedly of Places, but another thoughtfully of People.

Wakefield Press has produced another handsome volume, with design by Mark Thomas, and a stunning cover photograph. Jim Blake is to be commended for suggesting the book in the first place, and for taking most of the contemporary photographs. Also to be thanked and congratulated are the Local History Coordinator, Dieuwke Jessop, and her numerous volunteers at the Holdfast Bay History Centre, which has done such sterling work since its formation in 2000. Many others contributed as well, even ‘the two truck drivers who held back traffic on Brighton Road to allow the Brighton Primary School to be photographed’.

The prolific Hispanist, Paul Preston, has deliberately chosen a provocative title for his latest book, *The Spanish Holocaust*. Preston first started work on the book in 1999, in an attempt ‘to show as far as possible what happened to civilians and why’, during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and in the years afterwards (p.xi). As if the use of the word ‘holocaust’ in the main title of the book is not contentious enough, Preston compounds controversy by using the words ‘inquisition and extermination’ in the subtitle. This was a painstaking decision by the author who ‘thought long and hard about the title’ (p. xi). He feels strongly the need to present the reality of Francoism to a public both inside and outside Spain that still, thirty-seven years after Franco’s death, holds mythical representations spawned by Cold War politics; that General Franco was a ‘soft’ dictator unlike Hitler and Mussolini; that he ‘masterminded Spain’s economic “miracle” in the 1960s and that he heroically kept his country out of the Second World War’ (p.xii). Such myths emanated from Francoist image-makers but were disseminated over the years by a compliant western media that accepted Franco’s rebranding after the Second World War as the centinela de occidente (protector of the West) rather than pro-Axis sympathizer. Franco was reincarnated, if not exactly as a ‘good guy’, but as a harmless and stable bulwark in the fight against an expansionist Soviet Russia. This is an image that is anathema to Professor Preston, who has always made it clear to
his readers where he stands vis-à-vis Franco. One of his early books is dedicated ‘to the memory of David Marshall and to the other men and women of the International Brigades who fought and died fighting fascism in Spain’, and in the acknowledgements to his 1993 biography, *Franco*, he writes, ‘For many years, my wife Gabrielle put up with the presence in our home of an uncongenial uninvited guest in the person of Francisco Franco.’ This latest addition to the Preston corpus has an agenda to destroy the ‘soft’ dictator image by recounting case after case of heinous murders perpetrated in Franco Spain.

Whether the title is appropriate in the Spanish context is debatable. The word holocaust is somewhat problematic and has experienced several linguistic shifts. For years it was used to describe violent death, often involving fire, of large numbers of people. In the early twentieth-century it was applied to great massacres with a genocidal intent, such as the Armenian genocide. However, from the mid twentieth-century onwards it has commonly and uniquely been associated with the Nazi genocide of six million Jews. During the Cold War the phrase ‘nuclear holocaust’ was coined, without any reference to genocidal intent, to describe a future conflagration scenario. The one common element to all usage of the word is large scale slaughter, although what qualifies as large scale is a relative concept in itself.

The Spanish death statistics are on a scale considerably smaller than the Jewish holocaust in Europe. Preston writes ‘200,000 men and women were murdered extra-judicially or executed after flimsy legal process’ (p.i). He believes that the same number of men were killed on the various Spanish battle fronts and he adds that another 20,000 Republicans were executed after
the official ending of the war. His reckoning of the death count is further increased, although he doesn’t give any actual figures. He writes: ‘Unknown numbers of men, women and children were killed in bombing attacks’ and more died ‘of disease and malnutrition in overcrowded, unhygienic prisons and concentration camps’ (p.i) and others died because of the slave-labour conditions of the regime’s work battalions and also as a result of being forced into exile and ending up in French and Nazi concentration camps. Like many other conflicts, it is of course impossible to be definitive with Spanish Civil War death statistics. Records are hard to come by and many were ‘lost’ or destroyed either inadvertently or intentionally and many deaths were probably never recorded.

Preston’s rationale for a ‘Spanish Holocaust’ however, rests not so much on the scale of the slaughter, but on the premeditated, systematic and genocidal way the Francoists carried it out. In the first chapters he traces the roots to the sporadic ‘class’ violence of the late nineteenth century which became more demonstrative and unrestrained during the years of the Dictadura of General Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923-30). A culture of violence gradually became ‘legitimized’. Right-wing organisations such as Unión Patriótica and Acción Popular ‘attacked’ groups that they considered to be ‘anti-Spain’ for advocating fundamental and progressive, but not necessarily a revolutionary, overhaul of Spain’s obsolete social and economic structure. With the advent of the Second Spanish Republic in 1931 the opposition to the left became more vocal. A concerted hate campaign of vile rhetoric was mobilized at levels resembling the Nazis in Germany. Republicans were represented as ‘sub-human’ who like ‘pestilent vermin’ needed to be ‘eliminated’. José Monge Bernal of the right-wing party, Acción Popular, described
Republicans as ‘dregs of society’ coming from ‘sewers’ who ‘inundated’ the streets and squares ‘convulsing and shuddering like epileptics’ (p.14). This irrational rhetoric became transformed into a ‘rationalized’ dogma in which the left were portrayed as a disease that required a crusade of national purification. The myth of the ‘Jewish-Masonic-Bolshevik’ international conspiracy gained currency in the right-wing press, and was embraced by the latifundistas (large landowners), Catholic hierarchy and military officers alike, whose entrenched powers were threatened by a reforming Republic. Liberals and the left-wing were portrayed as racial inferiors and the Republic and its supporters were represented in the same vein as Spain’s two archetypal others – the Jew and the Moor. Acts of violence against the Spanish working class became patriotic and legitimate acts of national survival.

In many ways this is a work of scholarship at its finest. Preston includes 119 pages of footnotes, the majority of which cite three or more references. However, presumably in the interest of balance, Preston describes the slaughter and atrocities that took place at the hands of the Republicans. Such discussion is important but it is problematic in the context of the title of this book. The slaughter carried out by the rebels was three times greater than that committed by Republicans. Furthermore, Preston points out that Republican violence was spontaneous and happened in response to the rebel coup. The Republican leaders were disgusted and ashamed by the violence and sought to bring it under control (p.384). This is a significant difference between the two sides and should enable Preston to exclude ‘Republican’ atrocities from being labelled in a book as part of a holocaust.
Preston makes a strong case for labelling the rebel atrocities as a holocaust. The rebel leadership encouraged and used violence in order to annihilate a class enemy and developed a philosophical – ideological basis derived from a patchwork of right-wing theorists to justify this end. He also reveals the ‘industrial scale’ of the Francoist slaughter and persecution by describing the military court system that was set up during the war and that ‘intensified’ in activity after the war (p.476). Such measures certainly mirror the process that took place in Nazi Germany.

Preston draws a portrait of a Franco who believed in the fundamental tenets of hate ideology and who is committed to implementing it in his actions without constraint. For Franco a bloody resolution to left-wing unrest was the best resolution and Preston relates how Franco never forgave General Domingo Batet for negotiating a peaceful solution to the Catalan leader, Lluis Companys’ 1934 declaration of Catalan independence instead of making a bloody example of the Catalans (p.81).

*The Spanish Holocaust* is not published by an academic imprint but by mainstream publishers Harper Press in the United Kingdom and W.W. Norton in the United States at a price point that in theory should make it accessible to a more general readership. However, I suspect this will not happen, not because of any dryness of style or of the intensity of the subject matter, as readability and academic rigor are two basic hallmarks of writing that Preston holds dear, but simply because it is a work of 700 pages.
1 There are now fifteen major works in the Preston corpus.
2 This phrase was used by the Franco apologist, Luis de Galinsoga for his book, *Centinela de Occidente: Semblanza biografica de Francisco Franco*, that was published in 1956 at the height of the Cold War.

As a descendant of Irish immigrants reading *Out of the Silence: The History and Memory of South Australia’s Frontier Wars*, led me to reflect on relationships between these families and the Aboriginal inhabitants of their regions. A locally produced 1988 publication states that in 1879 when my Wicklow forbear died in the South East, ‘Small groups of aborigines (sic) followed [the cortege], and many stood along the way because they sincerely mourned the man, who had always been a good friend to them. It is reported that they were inconsolable for days.’¹ But in the fairly extensive family records of the Clare Valley family, the silence in relation to any surviving Aboriginal residents or to interaction is deafening. Inheriting this mixed record of knowledge and understanding about the role played by previous generations towards Aboriginal peoples, places me and those of my era, interested in making sense of family history and the past, in potentially uncomfortable positions. A local history of the Clare Valley, written in the 1970s, refers to ‘the natives (sic) becoming ‘troublesome” by 1841, but that ‘[i]n time [they] were brought under control.’ No mention was made of ‘control’ measures, but Noye reports that ‘it was stated that the white settlers ‘always went about well armed’’.² So what had happened by 1862? Does the absence of Aboriginal people sanction relief that forbears were not involved in violence? Or does absence implicate the earlier generations in the very act of
dispossession – they could only acquire their land because the Ngadjuri people had been driven away.\(^3\)

The title of Foster and Nettelbeck’s book deliberately resonates with WEH Stanner’s powerful 1968 characterisation of ‘the great Australian silence’ to describe this nation’s capacity to obliterate memory, mention or marking of its Aboriginal past or present. In presenting a detailed and accessible account of both the actual record of frontier violence between 1840 and 1878, and the ways it has been documented over time, the authors present contemporary South Australians, ordinary citizens and those in positions of power, with a series of discomforting challenges.

The book has a two part structure, the first part titled ‘The war between the races.’ Here the seven chapters detail the chronology of violent episodes as Europeans strengthened their occupation of the colony in the nineteenth century. Alongside the narrative, the playing out of the complex legal, administrative and operational issues about what constituted British citizenship and protection, and how anomalies were resolved (or ignored), about how the legal system responded to known crimes where suspects or witnesses vanished, where witnesses were subject to equal compulsion with suspects, and where the declaration of martial law ensured that legalities were bypassed. Some of the violent incidents are widely known – the Maria Massacre of 1839, the Rufus River events of 1841 and perhaps those of the Port Lincoln region in the 1840s – but many others are acknowledged only within their region. The 1841 introduction of the Mounted Police to the troubled Port Lincoln area (after a brief military intervention), led to some protection for settlers, but expectations that the latter would also
use their firearms when necessary against Aboriginals, underlined the fact that all three groups were combatants in frontier wars.’ (p.120). That the colony had Native Police will possibly surprise many readers who may be cognisant of the violent reputation of such groups in Far North Queensland, but ignorant of South Australian versions operating firstly during the early 1850s, and then on the Central Australian Frontier from the mid 1880s. This final policing episode, according to the authors, shows ‘it was only possible to fulfil the rule of law when Aboriginal resistance had been effectively suppressed, and Aboriginal people themselves effectively subjugated.’ (p.124).

Within the second section, headed ‘Negotiating the Past,’ the three chapters show how these dimensions of the state’s past have been dealt with at significant points since Federation, the times when any Aboriginal connection was minimised, when features of Aboriginal occupation were idealised and their post-1836 ‘adjustments’ romanticised, through to the challenges which followed the 1967 Referendum, and the dismantling of layers of controlling legislation through to semblances of greater equality, and perhaps acceptance. The authors ensure the text’s immediacy is emphasised by focusing on the changing nature of Proclamation Day. The official annual repository from 1857 of the pious restatement of the original declaration of the colony’s intentions towards the original inhabitants – more than half of the Proclamation of South Australia read first by Governor Hindmarsh on 28 December 1836 was devoted to Aboriginal rights and welfare - functioned more of a celebration of hypocrisy than anything else. As Foster and Nettelbeck make clear, the recycled oratory from 1836 meant little or nothing until very recently, perhaps supporting the truism about the
paving of the good intentions road as far as South Australia’s Aboriginal population has been concerned.

Within the text, a number of paradoxes emerge: The founding of the colony at the point of Westminster’s intense preoccupation with Indigenous rights in the Empire, questions of Aboriginals as British subjects, and conflict between the roles of Protectors of Aboriginals and Police Commissioners. By 1836 Colonial Office recognition of violence towards Aboriginals was reflected in its resolve that the extension of British legal rights would prevent ‘the kind of settler excesses’ seen in earlier colonies. (p.2) Foster and Nettelbeck pinpoint the continuing administrative debate about whether the Aboriginal population was amenable to the rule of law – and the subsequent role confusion between their ‘protectors’ and those whose overt role was the support of the settler population.

In conjunction with the text’s recurrent theme - that the South Australian has cherished its ‘sense of difference,’ having a ‘reputation for the humanitarian treatment of Aboriginal people,’ and a ‘better’ history of interaction than elsewhere on the continent, but that this position is more than ‘fatally flawed’ – the writers construct a careful, layered argument. The colonial story of race relations has dimensions identical to other colonies. And while the national story, especially in pre 1970s texts might encompass more of Stanner’s silence, Foster and Nettelbeck demonstrate the ways that local histories always included dimensions of Aboriginal and European conflict. They argue strongly that these events and their recording and remembering are ‘inexorably linked.’ (p.9). Their goal is enlightenment, locating and understanding the past in the present, where aspects
of its stories are remembered locally, but somehow limited beyond that level.

Perhaps the text’s ultimate sting for the many South Australians with a past like mine comes briefly within the Conclusion’s section, ‘Reconciling history and memory.’ Here in half a page, Mike Brown’s story is presented. Brother of a former premier, Mike’s unexpected recognition of his family’s participation in Flinders Ranges violence of 1852 provoked not only further research, but also public acknowledgement of his forbear’s actions. As Foster and Nettelbeck comment, this ‘foregrounds some of the unresolved questions that face the descendants of pioneers.’ (p.183).


3 Fred Warrior, Fran Knight, Sue Anderson and Adele Pring, Ngadjuri: Aboriginal People of the Mid North Region of South Australia, Adelaide: SASOSE Council, 2005.
For an Indian historian the central event of the twentieth century is the success of the nationalist movement led by Gandhi and Nehru against the British – one of the greatest imperial powers of all time. The source of this success has been searched for in the activities of a range of Indian groups: from the ‘elites’ of the Cambridge School to Ranajit Guha’s ‘Subalterns’. Neither of these groups had the financial resources to mount the civil disobedience and electoral campaigns that comprised the critical contests of the movement. Most of these resources came from the business classes – despite their concerns about mass action.

The ‘big’ question addressed by this book is whether the capitalists’ increasingly positive relations with the Indian National Congress meant that the latter became the puppets of the bourgeoisie? To answer this question, the author first addresses the problem of how the industrialists related to the British-controlled Indian state. With careful analysis of the connections between the industrialists and the Government of India, he establishes that the British, to meet the challenge to imperial security during the First World War, at first encouraged the ambitions of the industrialists for an industrialised India. This attitude changed after the War – first in London and then in New Delhi. With state support for tariffs and other aids for industrial development denied them, the bourgeoisie turned to the ‘counter-
state’: the Congress. They did so at a time in the early 1930s when, under the influence of Jawaharlal Nehru, many in the Congress were turning to the Left, calling for the nationalisation of industry, state controlled planning, and even ‘confiscation’ of property. The industrialists’ concerns about the Left prompted them to support the Gandhians (i.e. the Right of the Congress), but their experiences of British policy during the Second World War secured their broad support for the nationalist movement.

During the Second World War the British were less interested in developing Indian industry for strategic purposes, arguing for the specialisation of armaments production, limiting the growth of ordnance factories, imposing an Excess Profits Tax and, in the face of Japanese invasion, advocating a ‘Scorched Earth’ policy that would have seen Indian industry destroyed to deny it to the enemy. The British also abandoned the movement towards an Indian Federation, further disappointing the industrialists’ hopes for an autonomous India. Because the British were not prepared to grant either political or economic development to India during the War, the bourgeoisie lined up with the Congress on major political and industrial questions. The industrialists not only believed that India needed self-directed industrialisation, but they agreed with the Congress that this required planning. Taking the initiative the leading industrialists produced ‘the Bombay Plan’ in early 1944: The Bombay Plan not only called for independence, the reduction of inequality – including land reform – and the development of heavy industry, but it also called for state control of the economy. As Lockwood comments, their approach was to accommodate rather than to confront the Socialists.

Pointing, perhaps, to a successor volume, the author concludes by suggesting that the industrialists quickly became disenchanted by
the planning and control regime they had initially welcomed. Nehru’s government certainly did not feel beholden to those who had provided the finances for many of their campaigns. It took nearly half a century before the exigencies of living in a rapidly globalising world economy forced the Government of India to abandon what had become known as ‘Licence-Permit Raj’ and to allow the bourgeoisie to chart their own course.

The significance of the book is that it fills a major gap in our knowledge about the relationship of the industrialists and the Congress. There are studies that deal with short periods, but this is the first book that takes a look at the relationship over the long term, and importantly, traces the changes in the views of the major industrial families, especially the Tatas and Birlas. The author underpins the book with his understanding of the theory of historical materialism: indeed he challenges the Marxist idea that the state is part of the superstructure, asserting instead that the state is part of the economic base, that is, part of the framework of power in which production occurs. In this book he is also able to consider ideas he examines in his theoretical articles: that military threats and war have a special importance for the development and nature of the state, and of its relationships with the capitalists who control the productive forces. Though this theoretical framework is a great strength of the book the reviewer would like to have learned more about the personalities and motivations of the Indian industrialists, and how far their relations with Congress leaders were significant in the choices they made over the crucial years of the nationalist movement. This is not to say that the book is a dry theoretical treatise: it is not – the narrative flows easily and the analysis emerges naturally through discussion of the events.
This detailed analysis of how British intransigence towards the development of Indian industry moved the Indian industrialists to support the Congress makes a considerable contribution to our understanding of the success of the nationalist movement, and of British imperialism in the twentieth century. It also helps us understand the motivations of the industrialists who produced the Bombay Plan, and then acceded to the planned economy of independent India. A considerable achievement.