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This revised and updated edition of *Claiming a Continent* has been extended in order to cover the events of the past five years, most importantly, the republic referendum and the reconciliation process. While both republicanism and Aboriginal reconciliation are interpreted as a means to establish a sounder moral legitimacy for the non-indigenous Australian claim to the continent, the faltering of these processes is seen as a recrudescence of outdated notions of Australia’s legitimacy and location. The themes of conquest, dispossession and race relations predominate. Day’s reference to Blainey’s *Tyranny of Distance* (1966) and to Dixson’s *The Real Matilda* (1976) as capable of expressing the preoccupations of their respective decades may be an indication of the author’s conscious adoption of the Aboriginal/white relation as the interpretative paradigm for the 1990s (and 2000s). In this intellectual operation, *Claiming a Continent* has also been successful. While other recent overviews such as Macintire’s *Concise History* (1999) have also placed an emphasis on Aboriginal history, *Claiming a Continent* brings this attention to a higher level. Aboriginal history is not only acknowledged Day’s book; rather, Aboriginal experience is the main interpretative category. It should not be forgotten that this work proposes itself not as ‘Aboriginal history’ or a national overview containing also Aboriginal history: *Claiming a Continent* is a truly new ‘national’ history. One result of this paradigmatic shift is that while in previous narratives acceptance of multiculturalism was perceived as functional to Aboriginal agendas, in Day’s interpretation this hierarchical relation is inverted and acknowledgement of the Aboriginal claim is seen as the intellectual prerequisite for multicultural policies. This book explicitly proposes to discard Manning Clark’s interpretative tradition (and its more modern versions) and replace it with a vision capable of laying to rest the notion expressed in his famous assumption that ‘civilisation did not begin in Australia until the last quarter of the eighteenth century’. Highlighting the preoccupations of the 1990s about the post-Mabo ‘end of the great lie’, the stress on the historical fact of different and overlapping claims (‘claim’ and ‘invasion’ are terms incessantly used throughout the book), further indicates the author’s concern with the perceived fragility of non-indigenous Australians’ moral standing. Here are two strategic examples of Day’s interpretative ‘reversion’. In *Claiming a Continent* Aborigines are seen repeatedly as the first ones among human civilisations capable of performing something (the oldest paintings, the oldest stone implements, the oldest ritual burials, the first crossing of the open sea, ‘a landmark voyage in the world’s maritime history, the first and only seaborne occupation of an uninhabited continent’), which is an explicit denunciation of any notion of Aboriginal perceived primitivism (to Phillip Ruddock’s dismay, as the author points out). This constitutes an important intellectual shift: Aborigines are ideologically transformed from being the last ones doing something primitive to being the first ones performing ‘civilised’ acts (including the all important capacity of ‘living off the land fruitfully without placing their environment under intolerable stress’).

*Claiming a Continent* also insists that the British were latecomers in gathering knowledge and ultimately in accessing Australia. Portuguese and Dutch activity (and their claim) is referred to, and the author also insists on Spanish exploration and on the detailed knowledge of the continent displayed by French cartographers. The British claim to the continent is not only shown as irrelevant in relation to Aboriginal occupation: far from being the first ones (at least in relation to its eastern half) as
suggested in previous narratives, the British are shown as the last ones among the colonising nations of Europe to stake a claim (and the author does not forget to mention Macassan traders). Moreover, the various acts of annexation performed by the British are narrated in conjunction with the French presence in the area, a detail that previous historical narratives had typically eluded, and which further emphasises the fragility of both claims to the continent, the original British one and that of today’s non-indigenous Australians. In his insistence on fragility *Claiming a Continent* performs a groundbreaking exercise. This is a book that frankly acknowledges and summarises the slow interpretative revolution of the last three decades and it is the first to perform this comprehensively in an historical overview. Ultimately, while not being afraid of challenging Australia’s more conventional historical narratives, *Claiming a Continent* provides the reader with an interpretation that goes beyond ‘black armband’ interpretation and its detractors.

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