can societies could not by definition be
dynamic, inventive, or expansive. (284)

Since the arrival of the first Europeans in the Pacific, we have heard a
steady litany of regrets about "dying cultures." This is precisely why metropoli­tan audiences are repeatedly
astonished when enough French blood
is spilled to draw attention to the
Kanak resistance, or Fiji is banned
from the Commonwealth for Colonel
Rabuka's apocalyptic behavior.

The importance of this book lies in
its persistent recognition that informed
social history must (or as Clifford has
it, is "condemned to") oscillate between
tales of homogenization accompanied
by loss and emergence along with
invention (17). Political economy and
demography tell us of the mighty forces
now squeezing the lives being lived in
the contemporary Pacific. But in a pro­cess that is perhaps analogous to the
transformation of coal into diamonds,
such pressure may also meet with lapi­dary toughness and brilliance.

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I've explained it to white people, I've said,
"Look, say I built a tent on your lawn.
What would you do?" "Oh," he said, "I'd
get the police and move you off." Well,
there you are . . . you'd run to the law. You
want things exactly according to the law.
But when it comes to the Aboriginal land
right you disregard the law. •

Henry Reynolds, known for his pio­neering work recognizing the long­
ignored Aboriginal perspective of Aus­
tralian history, returns to the white side
of the frontier in his latest book on
Australian land and law. In exploring
the Australian application of nine­
teenth century European law, Rey­
olds reveals the deep contradictions
and legitimizing myths central to the
colonizer's claims of land ownership.
His conclusion is painstakingly docu­mented and startling: the European
invaders, by their own then-applicable
standards of domestic and interna­tional law, never achieved legitimate
land tenure in Australia. Non-Abori­
ginal claims to land ownership in
present-day Australia are, all the more
beyond question, a fraud. It is one thing to
make this claim using appeals to higher
morality or to Aboriginal concepts of
ownership—the political appeal famil­iar in anticolonialist movements. It is
quite another to make this claim, as
Reynolds has, from within the mindset
of the colonizer. Foregoing the rhetoric
of moral discourse, Reynolds meets the
mind of the colonizer. He accepts the
colonizer's worldview. He then shows
how the Australian newcomers failed
to achieve legitimate title even under
their own, presumably self-interested,
and the proclamations of

The Law of the Land, by Henry Rey­
monds. Ringwood, Vic: Penguin Books
Australia, 1987. xii + 225 pp, notes,
bibliography, index. A$12.95
Crown and colonists, he shows that title to occupied, "discovered" land could vest through treaty or through purchase and in no other way. The idea that title to private land could vest by forceful eviction of existing occupants was universally rejected. While title to vacant land could be claimed through discovery and settlement, soon after the 1788 landfall it became clear that the whole of Australia was occupied by Aborigines.

Because the colonists never purchased the land, and never obtained it by treaty, their only possible claim to legitimate tenure was through the theory of terra nullius: no one was there. Reynolds documents the absurdity of the terra nullius position. He cites numerous letters, memoirs, government memoranda, and other contemporaneous commentary that show the colonists and the Crown knew of the Aborigines' tenure. Indeed, European exploration of the continent depended on Aboriginal guides and carefully solicited permission to enter the territory of different groups. The initial misconception that the continent was barely populated by a few aimless nomads who held no territorial claims was quickly dispelled. As Reynolds' earlier work has shown, the Aborigines were spiritually and economically attached to their lands, and they actively resisted the European invasion. The Europeans could not fail to notice that the Aborigines valued and claimed the land as theirs. The survival of the Aborigine had—for a longer time than the entire history of England—depended on careful use of their land. Instead of being confused wanderers, the Aborigines were skillful managers. They returned regularly to various parts of their domain for food and other necessities of life. They punished trespassers and memorized boundaries. The Europeans knew this.

On the North American continent, the tenure of hunter-gatherers by occupancy was recognized by Europeans. If the lands of North American hunter-gatherers were desired for settlement, they were bargained for. However duplicitous the bargains may have been, it was never considered possible to establish colonial title without first extinguishing native title.

Of the English colonies, Australia stands alone in its failure to extinguish native title in any manner. As a consequence, Australia has had to rely on a series of myths to maintain a claim of white land ownership. In addition to the myth of terra nullius and the landless nomad, the myths of racial supremacy and white charity provide a shaky foundation for white Australian land tenure. The supremacy argument presents the white race as better able to use the land and therefore entitled to take it. The Aborigines who failed to make the land productive had no legally cognizable claim. It is easy to see why this argument fails. Aside from the discredited racism and ethnocentrism at its core, the idea that land should belong to the person who can make best use of it would destroy the central pillar of capitalism and of Anglo-American law: the concept of private property. If it were true that owners who allow land to lie fallow lose title, many lords and ladies of Britain would have found their pristine hunting grounds invaded by hardworking, landless hoards ready to put the
vacant land into production. Title has never depended on productive use.

The related myth of white charity attempts to account for and discount the times when Crown and colonial governments did acknowledge Aboriginal title in Australia. The patents and memoranda from London exhorting the colonists to compensate for appropriated land are dismissed as acts of aspiration and charity rather than obligation. Reynolds notes that the illegitimacy of the Australian land-grab did not go unnoticed in either England or the colonies. The members of the anti-slavery movement were quick to see land-stealing as an evil analogous to slavery, and to push for compensation. Imperial officials were caught between the growing pressure for emigration and settlement in Australia, and the recognition of the need to extinguish native title in accordance with law. The Crown attempted ineptly to guard Aboriginal land rights. Reynolds describes one Quaker settler, disgusted with government failure to compensate the Aborigines, who sent in a payment in protest, pleading with the government to disburse it to the Aborigines in accordance with the obligations of a colonizer. The settler added, “I disclaim this to be either donation, grant or gift; but a just claim the natives of this district have on me as an occupier of those lands” (120).

With several equally telling documents, Reynolds paints a picture of contradiction, deception, and evasion by colonial governments, as they rejected imperial requests to honor Aboriginal land rights.

The picture of Europeans defying European legal standards is painted so convincingly by Reynolds, that the reader is tempted to believe that adherence to legality could have saved Aboriginal land. Unfortunately, the comparative perspective shows that law is a false savior. The North American, New Zealand, and Hawaiian cases show that native peoples lose their land in many different ways—some legal, some illegal, but all at the behest of colonizers relentless in their lust for land. Recognition of native title does little good in the face of all the legal ways to grab land: eminent domain, adverse possession, tax sales, mortgage foreclosures, and quiet title actions, to note a few. Indigenous people unfamiliar with Western concepts of title and valuation often fail to protect their claims. Faced with disease, social dislocation, and loss of a subsistence lifestyle, they sell land at less than market value, leaving righteous missionaries like Lorrin Thurston to exclaim that nobody “stole” the Hawaiians’ land.

The observation that recognition of native title may not have much altered the path to Aboriginal landlessness does not obviate the importance of Reynolds’ book. No one can take good title from a thief. The questionable basis of colonial title in Australian land creates for contemporary Australia a fundamental dilemma in the realm of legal consciousness. The legal mind values private property and chain of title. The entire system of private property can disintegrate if title is not traced to a legitimate beginning. This logical obsession is central to Anglo-American concepts of land ownership. In order to maintain the logic, Australian jurists must either rely on the old myth of

If anthropology is to serve the needs of Pacific peoples rather than those of its Euro-American practitioners, Lindstrom’s collection of ethnographic descriptions of drug use in the western Pacific is a good start. The essays in this volume make clear that a subject once treated as peripheral to ethnographic interests is not only important but indeed central to an understanding of culture change, modernization, and public health in the Pacific.

Lindstrom’s introduction points the reader toward some of the many dimensions of the subject. How do both traditional and introduced drugs become part of an exchange system?