

sense of himself as both a casualty of colonialism and a displaced person living in the West.

Barbara Creed identifies the film *Jedda* (1955) as a reverse captivity narrative. Here, a pastoralist family “rescues” Jedda from her own people to transform her into a “white” girl. A second capture concerns Jedda’s abduction by a “wild” tribal Aborigine to whom she is attracted, although she was meant to marry the half-caste Joe. This tale of sexuality and eroticism documents the range of cultural spaces occupied by indigenous people when assimilation was the official policy of the Commonwealth government.

Finally, Freda Freiberg recounts the sorry tale of the comfort women of World War II, incarcerated in houses of prostitution from which they were unable to escape except by suicide. Commissioned to do research on documentaries about the comfort women, Freiberg provides a nuanced account of the terrible evidence of the abduction, rape, and forced labor of women by Japanese military forces. She also shows that the filmmakers provided a forum for the women to express grievances, revealing areas of experience largely ignored by historians.

The August 2002 repatriation to South Africa of the remains of Saartjie Baartman, the “Hottentot Venus,” underlines the relevance of these marvelous essays, which link body talk to a broad range of potentially sensational topics in a dignified manner.

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Mr. Tulsi's Store: A Fijian Journey, by Brij V Lal. Canberra: Pandanus Books, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, 2001. ISBN 1-74076-007-7; xi + 209 pages, bibliography. A\$26.00.

When a political historian writes a collection of autobiographical essays that he describes in the preface as a work of “faction”—a work, that is, in which the author has “privileged truth over accuracy, attempting to catch the thoughts and emotions rather than dry facts” (x)—a number of intriguing questions are raised about how the book is to be read. How is this book related to the body of academic writing, works of history, and political commentary, for which Brij Lal is already known? And more generally, how are academic, literary, and journalistic genres related to one another and to the social reality that spawns them, generating not only specific content, as refracted by disciplines, but also the understandings and motivations of the readers and writers themselves?

The anthropologist or historian interested in Fiji may approach *Mr. Tulsi's Store* as a highly unusual form of ethnography or as an experiment in history, and such expectations are well rewarded by the book. But abstract theoretical considerations of experimental ethnography or radical historiography recede as the reader enters, via the first essay, the village world of rural Fiji in the 1950s and is introduced to interesting, colorful people like Aja (Grandfather). Aja is an elderly man described in terms of physical appearance, habits of daily

routine, and relationships with others in the community, including especially his favorite grandson, a bookish lad who reads constantly, even while tending the cattle. Head boy at the village school, this grandson is already highly motivated to uphold academically the honor of his community. In the next essay Aja is a pivot around whom time, place, and author's perspective revolve, as Lal tells the story of his grandfather's immigration, locating it in the historical contexts of both India and Fiji. The sharply drawn story of one man's experience of indenture and resettlement brings to life the larger story of the 60,000 indentured laborers (*girmitiyas*) who came to Fiji from India between 1879 and 1916. These stories are intertwined with a highly personal account of the author's dissertation research in India. Retracing his grandfather's path back to the remote village he started from, Lal discovers not only long-lost relatives but also the depth and contours of his own identity as an Indo-Fijian. The technique of reflectively layering narratives—the grandfather's story, that of the *girmitiyas* in general, and the author's own story—engages the reader and allows Lal to make observations about the ways history is embodied in social practice. The essay also makes a powerful statement about the influence of cultural and geographical setting on individual achievement.

That basic observation, drawn from a broad comparison of the lives of the rural poor who remained in India and those who emigrated, is a central theme of the book and is intimately explored in the essays that follow. Several chapters describe Lal's own

experiences—intellectual, cultural, and emotional—as he moved from the family farm to secondary school in Labasa, to the University of the South Pacific in Suva, and on to graduate studies in Canada and Australia, followed by academic career positions in Fiji, Hawai'i, and Australia. Written with hindsight, each of these essays touches on what are now seen as crucial issues, such as racial and cultural isolation in Fijian society, but they also convey with freshness and immediacy the trivia of the experience—that is to say, the most important parts of life as lived in the moment. Those readers whose own lives have intersected with some of the times, places, people, institutions, and practices that Lal describes will particularly enjoy (or not!) the specific references, but this is not only an insider's book. Human interest and engaging writing draw the reader easily into many situations that may be completely new to him or her, and Lal provides insightful explanation of local and regional contexts. The chapter on his undergraduate studies at the University of the South Pacific, for example, provides a concise and colorful history of the institution as well as an account of Lal's personal perspective as an unsophisticated student from a small, dusty provincial town thrust into a complex cosmopolitan environment.

The essays that make up *Mr. Tulsi's Store* display interesting variation from one to the next, as well as internally, along the genre-defining lines of factuality and subjectivity, concrete detail and generalization. For example, a concluding chapter is a short story that, although in the

form of purely artistic fiction, refers to cultural and psychological elements central to the Indo-Fijian experience and the Indian diaspora in general. And the last piece is a poem that makes allusions to explicitly autobiographical events and emotions from preceding chapters. The chapter that gives the book its name is an account of a village dispute and its resolution that has an intriguing ethnographic ring to it, although its relation to actual (or to constructed, composite) events, people, and cultural logic is not declared, except in the author's generally stated commitment to truth. Other chapters, detailing Lal's work as a commissioner charged with the revision of Fiji's constitution during a time of intense political, economic, and social crisis in the mid-1990s and his observations of the subsequent national elections, read like high-grade, almost ethnographic journalism. The chapters describing Lal's travels in the Caribbean, encountering overseas Indian communities there, and his vivid account of a return pilgrimage to India with his wife and children, many years after his initial visit, suggest the genre of travel writing.

A book like this, a rich and enjoyable collection of heterogeneous pieces all focused in one way or another on a single important policy issue—ethnic reconciliation in Fiji—presents the reader with layered genres, intricately combined but each making a distinct contribution to the whole. One can argue that genuine ethnic reconciliation in any society must take place along multiple fronts, from the legislative and legal to the arena of political struggle and, cru-

cially, to the private sphere of individual and family. Legal texts and constitutional provisions make practical sense to the people they govern—not just lawyers and political scientists—in terms of a shared vision of the social world, present and future, in which proposed laws and practices will ultimately have meaning in people's lives. In a setting of multicultural separatism, the shared social world, although integrated in the public areas of life, may be fragmented at the intimate level of private feeling and emotion. Cultural communities negotiating a satisfactory vision of a shared national life, however, require a common understanding of the intimate lifeworlds involved as well as of the political and economic realms. Fiction and poetry, as well as art, music, and film can play powerful roles in policy formation because they provide unique access to private feeling. Brij Lal's book, which brings together previously published as well as new works of mixed genre, is a window into the complex Indo-Fijian world that many outsiders, even fellow citizens of Fiji, may not have had access to, other than in fiction.

Mr. Tulsi's Store constitutes a valuable contribution to Indo-Fijian literature, which notably includes the works of Subramani, whose recent *Altering Imagination* (Suva: Fiji Writers' Association, 1995) explicitly addresses the political import of literary genre. From this perspective it makes perfect sense for a political historian passionately concerned with current issues of justice and ethnic reconciliation and intuitively aware of the power of the civic imaginary in policy formation to be drawn to the

hybrid genre of “faction” as an avenue of expression. Fortunately, Brij Lal has the literary talent to accomplish it brilliantly.

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Represented Communities: Fiji and World Decolonization, by John D Kelly and Martha Kaplan. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. ISBN 0-226-42990-3; xiv + 243 pages, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. US\$18.00.

Kelly and Kaplan’s book is a collection of essays written between 1991 and 2000 in which they examine the topics of decolonization and nation building. Fiji is their primary focus, but they frame their discussion in terms of the broader context of the world order that developed after World War II. For them, the most significant aspect of that order is the idea of a world community of nation-states characterized by “symmetry, horizontality, and quiescence” (12).

This “UN model” of the world community required a global decolonization process, but, of course, symmetry and horizontality among states, while important ideals, have not become a reality. Using almost any measure—economic, political, military, or symbolic—the relations among nation-states are markedly asymmetrical. The *local*, as it has developed in recently decolonized states, reflects this aspect of the *global*; inequality and lack of “horizontality” between classes, genders, and ethnic groups are the norm.

The authors remind us that it is no accident that deep, horizontal bonds of nationhood have failed to develop in much of the decolonized world. Colonizers defined and maintained differences between social categories. For a variety of reasons, specific to their local contexts, these divisions often continue into the present.

Fiji is an excellent example to illustrate this problem. Out of his need to make the new colony self-supporting and his desire to shield native Fijians, Fiji’s first governor promoted the growth of a sugar industry based on labor recruited in British India. The authors remind us that the thousands of Indians who came to Fiji differed in language, region of origin, religion, and caste and did not identify themselves in terms of the overarching category “Indian” prior to their arrival in the colony. Once in Fiji there was no escaping that identity, but Fijians also differed (and differ) among themselves. In the context of the colonial legal and political systems, however, both Indians and Fijians were treated as blocs and positioned below Europeans.

The relative positions of these two major ethnic blocs were not so much hierarchical in nature as they were laterally distanced. Indians were regarded as units of labor whose legal standing in the colony flowed from their labor contracts. They were forbidden by law to reside in Fijian villages, and there was (and is) very little intermarriage. Though there was interaction and cultural borrowing, a truly creole culture has never emerged.

As the authors point out, during the colonial period officials exhibited