

films but regrettably lacks a bibliography. It is well produced with a low level of typographical lapses and contains black and white promotional materials.

These shortcomings make this a difficult text to derive meaning from. And it is even more difficult to discern a consistent analytical approach. The book reads like the first major work of an undergraduate who is trying out his new academic vocabulary on his lecturer. So many sentences defy decoding. Passages such as the following obfuscate meaning:

Specificity did not seem profitable; the plot outline used for domestic sales similarly condenses both generic sampling and vague social groups to the point of childishness or, to be honest, illogicality and incomprehensibility. The confusion leads to stories of movement and social passage, underscored by placing them within the world of transportation. (128)

In summary, this is a potentially fascinating topic which has become a disappointing book. The breadth of material subjected to scrutiny is impressive but the weakness of the theoretical analysis and the stylistic idiosyncrasies detract considerably from its potential impact.

Lyndall Morgan
The University of Queensland

Alexander Massov, John McNair and Thomas Poole (eds.), *Encounters under the Southern Cross: Two Centuries of Russian–Australian Relations 1807–2007* (Adelaide: Crawford House Publishing, 2007), xiv + 419 pp.

Relations between Russia and Australia have never been precisely at the centre of the national consciousness of either country. They have considerable inherent interest, nevertheless, both historically in terms of concrete interrelations between people, and imaginatively as a site of encounter between culturally and at times ideologically different points of view. *Encounters under the Southern Cross* demonstrates the full range of potential which the topic of Russo-Australian relations has for the interested investigator, highlighting a considerable complexity of response in Russians and Australians alike and engaging with a surprisingly diverse range of material.

The book commemorates two centuries of contacts between Russian and Australia from the first Russian naval visit to Sydney in 1807, building on a body of literature that has been steadily growing over the last two decades in particular, most notably John McNair's and Thomas Poole's edited volume *Russia and the Fifth Continent* (Brisbane, 1992) and Elena Govor's *Australia in the Russian Mirror* (Melbourne, 1997). Much of the research in the volume is informed by historical and political archival material which has come to light in Russia in the period since the end of the Soviet Union in 1991. Overall, the editors take a laudably multidisciplinary approach to their topic: the book contains perspectives from maritime, political, diplomatic and economic history, and from cultural and social studies, seen in different aspects from both Russian and Australian points of view.

The fourteen substantive chapters are contributed by eleven different authors. The early history of naval contacts, with all the vicissitudes caused by the Crimean war and subsequent 'Russian scares', is covered in detail by Alexander Massov. Yuri Aksenov and Alexander Massov chronicle the early development of Russian diplomatic relations in Australia from the first (non-Russian) honorary consuls, to the appointment of professional diplomats in the 1890s and the cessation of representation in 1917. Massov also discusses the intriguing Australian career of the explorer and anthropologist Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay, who lived in Sydney for some years, achieving considerable prominence in scientific and government circles. Had he succeeded in his 1880s plan to create a Russian colony in northern New Guinea it is possible that relations between Russia and Australia might have developed in quite different directions.

Of the remaining chapters some focus on broad historical or political themes, while others take a more personalised approach to individual experience. To the first group belongs Kevin Windle's thorough survey of source materials in both Australia and Russia relating to Russian involvement in communist activism in Australia in the period 1917–1924. David Lovell considers the relationship between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Comintern and the Australian Communist Party through the 1920s and 1930s. Graeme Gill provides a chapter on international relations during the cold war, and Leonid Moiseev, a former Russian ambassador to Australia, discusses political and economic collaboration in the post-Soviet period.

Two chapters survey the Russian immigrant experience in Australia. Elena Govor looks at patterns up to 1920, noting a very wide range of personal stories and focussing particularly on migrant labourers, the political and social community organisations that sprang up in Brisbane especially, and the phenomenon of Russian enlistment in the AIF during the First World War. Galina Kanevskaya covers immigration after the Bolshevik revolution, stressing the diversity of the different groups that arrived as early Russian settlers were followed by ‘white’ refugees from Manchuria and China, post-World War Two ‘displaced persons’, cold-war refugees, and, more recently, professional economic migrants.

Australian responses to Russia are represented in Thomas Poole’s review of Australian support for the Soviet Union during the Second World War and in particular the campaigns organised by the social reformer Jessie Street and others to supply material assistance in the form of medical supplies and sheepskins. John McNair reviews the visits of Australian communists and fellow-travellers to the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s, interpreting their almost religious enthusiasm for what they saw as the result at least as much of dissatisfaction with contemporary Australia as admiration of Soviet ideals. More explicitly imaginative evocations of Russia in Australia and Australia in Russia are explored in Alla Petrikovskaya’s conspectus of cultural and literary links. Elena Govor reflects on the different ways in which each generation of Russians has created its own Australia of the imagination.

In focussing primarily on bilateral relations between Australia and Russia, whether in the political, historical or cultural arena, *Encounters under the Southern Cross* has laid the groundwork for further study which would set the Russian-Australian experience more clearly in the context of, for example, the Russian diaspora as a whole, or of theoretical arguments on the nature of ‘imagined communities’. In the meantime, the book does give very vivid expression to the reality of both Russians’ experience of Australia and Australians’ attitudes to Russia, which will be of interest to a wide range of readers in both countries.

David Wells
Curtin University of Technology