circumstances necessarily discriminate against men. In fact, Epstein maintains that anti-discrimination laws have probably produced more discrimination on balance than would have existed in a less fettered environment.

Even more perversely, anti-discrimination laws may actually work against the best interests of those they are designed to protect. Thus, for example, employment quotas for designated groups may undermine outsiders’ opinions of the achievements and capabilities of members of the group. The fact that a black holds a particular position, for instance, may come to indicate to others that the individual concerned secured their position to comply with quota requirements rather than because of merit, even though the latter may be true. The laws also imply an on-going dependence on the legal system by these ‘minority groups’.

These are telling points since the efficiency losses associated with employment discrimination laws can, in theory, be justified by reference to the gains in equity for the group previously discriminated against. But if these gains are not forthcoming, the very basis of the laws is called into question, leaving only ‘symbolic’ benefits for the society, but which not all members of society will value positively.

A similar point is made in relation to the role of exclusion – for instance, men’s only clubs – which, Epstein argues, can serve a useful role in integrating and maintaining the coherence of society. In Epstein’s words, ‘The key question worth asking about the right to exclude in private settings is whether we are better off with its generalization or its repudiation. I can see no strong case for the latter. The right to exclude, and the correlative rejection of the antidiscrimination principle, is not a license to kill or an invitation for abuse, insult, or defamation. It is part of the right to be left alone with the people of one’s choice’ (p.497).

The one reservation I have about Epstein’s broad conclusions is that they leave unanswered the issue of how a rethinking is initiated in society of the attitudes held towards women, minority groups, etc. Is there a case for ‘shock tactics’ of some description to jolt individuals to rethink their views on the role of blacks, women, etc. and assumptions held about their talents and rightful roles in society? The alternative might have been continuing acceptance of racial segregation and circumscribed roles for women, to give just two examples.

This is not to suggest that the vast and growing bank of anti-discrimination laws in the US can be justified simply on the grounds of shaking society into reconsidering its attitudes. In point of fact, these laws may have had the opposite effect in some cases, with the groups against whom there is now implicit discrimination feeling very bitter about the regulations. Moreover, the inexorable stepping up of the range of activities now covered by various types of anti-discrimination laws is alarming, to say the least. In parts of America, for instance, it is now illegal for employers to request potential employees take a reading and writing test, since this is deemed to be a violation of their ‘human rights’. Most would surely agree that what might have started off as a dream and good idea is now beyond the pale in some instances. The lessons for Australia are all too clear.

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Gregory Melleuish of the Department of Politics & History at the University of Wollongong, reviews Ron Brunton, Black Suffering, White Guilt? (Institute of Public Affairs, Melbourne, 1993)

One of the most striking features of government activity in Australia in recent years has been its excursions into the field of cultural engineering. First we had the ‘clev-er country’ and this was followed by the republic and the ‘Australians as Asians’ strategy. All of these initiatives were founded on the idea that the government had a role in determining what sort of people Australians should be. Individuals should be moulded by the government in the interests of government policy. Paul Keating’s occasional visions of what Australians should be invariably implies the conversion of Australians into almost anything except what they are most comfortable being – Australians.

There can be no doubt that cultural issues, and the particular question of cultural engineering, have assumed a significant place in the political agenda of the 1990s. Ron Brunton’s Black Suffering, White Guilt is a valuable contribution to the discussion of cultural engineering. It helps us to understand the terms in which much of the discussion of cultural issues now takes place. In particular Brunton emphasises two key elements which arise whenever cultural issues emerge into public discussion in Australia:

- Cultural engineering treats people not as individuals but as members of collectives.
- The extent to which key members of the educated classes harbour a rancour against the values and institutions which have developed in Australia over the last one hundred and fifty years.

In combination these two elements are explosive. The educated classes want to modify the behaviour of ordinary Australians by engineering changes in the nature of Australian culture. In part they are able to pursue such an agenda because the tradition of natural rights is not very strong in Australia. Rights in Australia are usually conceived of as social rights and hence subject to review in the light of social change.

While there is a great urge to engineer mainstream Australian culture, it is only expected of Aborigines that they should remain as
Aborigines. Unfortunately this also implies a collective image of the Aborigines, an image which Brunton says is that of the 'other' of mainstream Australia.

There is a great deal of truth in this view. In the 19th century Aboriginals were considered as the 'other' of progress — the 'savages' and 'primitives' left behind on the long march of civilisation. As 20th century Australia lost its faith in progress and discovered its flaws, Aboriginal society became that wonderful integrated whole which European society was not.

Until recently both European and Aboriginal Australia were conceived as closed cultural systems. Both were portrayed as the expression of certain essential characteristics which defined the nature of the individuals who comprised the culture. For example, European Australians were believed to have brought certain racial traits to the country which were then modified by the 'spirit of place'. This was how the 'Australian' was born.

The cultural engineers, however, have recognised that this position would prevent their engineering activities. They have fought hard to destroy the idea of essential Australian characteristics. At the same time, though, they have been quite happy to continue to treat Aboriginal culture in the older way as a closed system expressing certain essential qualities.

Thus all Aborigines possess a mystical tie with the land. They all have a holistic approach to the universe. It is somehow in their blood. When people cease to be considered as individuals and instead become racial types this is something akin to racism. Aboriginal Australians are still largely thought of in terms of the collective 'other'; the image may be positive but it is still defined in essential and collective terms.

Brunton points out that although the National Report into Deaths in Custody does recognise the diversity of Aboriginal life styles in Australia it tends to submerge this diversity under the blanket term Aboriginality. This invention of a single essential identity for a group of individuals makes cultural engineering a much easier task for the state. Multiculturalism achieves a similar goal when it places a single ethnic tag on a group which may or may not share a great deal in common. Ignore the diversity, ignore the individual; it is much easier to deal with a collective defined by a single term. Moreover in behaving in this way the state may bring into existence collectives which are artificial creations.

Individuals have the right to choose and to reject all or parts of the culture into which they were born. It happens all the time. Even Aborigines do it. Cultural engineers, however, have real problems with this idea. Brunton notices how difficult it is for some to understand that Aborigines may choose to become Christians and that such a choice may even have positive consequences.

In the final analysis what counts is respect for Aborigines as individuals rather than for some collective notion of Aboriginality. Such respect entails an end to this image of Aborigines as the 'other' of Australia. Cultural engineering, however, will not aid this process just as it cannot change the lifestyle and behaviour of other Australians. Brunton's work deserves to be widely read because it goes beyond stereotypes to a consideration of the importance of both individuality and diversity.

Of the Pacific island states, Fiji is undoubtedly the country that has been subjected to the closest scrutiny by historians. There is a plethora of well researched books and journal articles which consider and pronounce upon aspects of Fiji's journey through history. However, few authors have sought to review the broad sweep of history and the events which have led to the political, social and economic dilemmas facing Fiji today. For many years R.A. Derrick's *A History of Fiji* [1946 and numerous revisions] was the standard and indeed only complete history of the country. Deryck Scarr's *Fiji: a short history* [1984] offered an alternative view of events over the last century and examined in a historical context the events prior to and shortly after the end of British colonial rule in 1970. It was not until 1992 that Fiji produced an historian born of the soil and able to provide an analysis of the complexities of this multi-racial society based on personal experiences and emotions, as well as a scholarly review of the wealth of archival material available to the professional researcher.

Brij Lal's *Broken Waves* presents an historical view of the country, quite different in many respects from that as seen through the eyes of his predecessors, Derrick and Scarr. Here we have at last a view from a group in the community who have fought many obstacles to achieve a home in this distant land and who are even now still engaged in a struggle for real equality. Quite reasonably, Lal sets out to present a view which, even for a professional and highly regarded historian, is biased in favour of the Indian ethnic group which he represents. Sensibly, he makes this clear in his Preface by stating 'In this account I make no special effort to invoke an impartiality I do not feel' (p. xvi) and later 'Critical attachment rather than cool detachment has guided my scholarly effort' (p. xvii).

In his first two chapters, Lal considers a period in Fiji's history from 1900 to 1939 which, in retrospect, is both fascinating and