

University of Otago, with a longstanding interest in the early history of infectious disease in the Pacific, John Miles directed a laboratory to study infectious disease epidemiology in Fiji from 1963 to 1972, after which he carried out further field work in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. His aim in the book is to identify which infectious agents were present in the Pacific prior to European contact.

He organizes his material by considering each group of diseases in turn. He makes use of the diaries of the early explorers to attempt a diagnosis and cites from those diaries to describe symptoms. He concludes that 'There is solid evidence of only a very limited range of infectious agents in the Pacific islands before the late eighteenth century' (p.98). He further points out that even where there was evidence of indigenous names, it was not always certain that the disease to which the early explorers and missionaries thought that the local people were referring was what was meant by that name nowadays. Moreover, it is clear that sometimes there were several indigenous names for one aetiological entity and that the same name could sometimes be used for more than one disease. Sometimes an indigenous name might be used for a new disease which had some clinical resemblance to a syndrome already familiar to the locals. Thus he identifies problems in nomenclature and in retrospective diagnosis, and admits that his conclusions are speculative.

Miles's writing style is scientific. He shows little interest in human agency; the focus is on the independent activity of microbes and parasites. He describes diseases but makes no attempt to assess their prevalence, mortality or social significance. At most this slim volume will be a footnote in the ongoing debate about the impact of European colonization on the health of the indigenous people of the Pacific.

LINDA BRYDER

*The University of Auckland*

*The Killing of History: How a discipline is being murdered by literary critics and social theorists.* By Keith Windschuttle. Macleay Press, Sydney, 1996. 298 pp. Australian price: \$24.95. ISBN 0-646-26506-7.

THIS IS a truly bizarre book. With cover recommendations from two emeritus professors and a reviewer for the *Australian Financial Review*, and decorated with pictures of Tudor monarchs and Abraham Lincoln (icons, presumably, of 'real' history), this is a 'revised and expanded international edition' of a book originally published in 1994. It is difficult to see why it would have any international appeal. I am not privy to the hidden agendas which lurk behind the making of the *Killing*, but Windschuttle, whom I had always assumed was a sociologist, clearly bears some grudge against the University of Sydney's History Department and has a dislike of the Australian historians Greg Denning and Paul Carter that borders on the pathological.

Of course there are important issues about objectivity and the status of truth in history, but the reader will not find them seriously addressed in the *Killing*. It is not an intellectual history of a profession like Peter Novick's brilliant *That Noble Dream*. Nor is it a Marxist critique of poststructuralism in the vein of Bryan Palmer's *Descent into Discourse*. Windschuttle seems unaware of either book. Rather, this muddled, ignorant, intemperate work consists of a series of chapters — the word essays would imply a coherence which does not exist — charting the baneful influences which Windschuttle detects in the current world of history writing. So we have chapters on cultural studies (he seems unable to get past the introduction to the important Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler collection),

Todorov, Dening (a short chapter), Carter, Foucault, Fukuyama, History as Social Science (Giddens), History as Literature (Schama and White), and a final added piece, primarily on Sahlins but with Peter Munz's recycled criticisms of New Zealand's Anne Salmond, which appeared originally in the pages of this journal.

Where others might see a discipline healthily fragmented into a whole range of self-reflexive and innovative sub-disciplines, Windschuttle smells death and decay. His enemies are vaguely defined poststructuralism, structuralism, cultural studies, literary criticism, feminism (strangely though mercifully ignored in his book), cultural relativism, ethnography (which he seems to confuse with poststructuralism), anything French ('Paris Labels and Designer Concepts') and of course Dening, Carter, and the History Department of the University of Sydney. He is not even consistent in his own analysis: Clendinnen's work is praised for its scholarship and used against Todorov, but she is then criticized for being 'heavily swayed by the culturalist agenda in history that prevails today'. Critics of Foucault are used to highlight his deficiencies without an awareness that it was the philosopher's insights that stimulated the research and the critique — hardly evidence of a killing! Postcolonial Obeyeskere is acceptable because he is critical of the work of Sahlins, but postcolonial Carter is not.

And what is the theoretical insight which he brings to this perceived killing of a discipline? What solution does he have, other than anti-intellectual tirades of the sort wearily familiar to readers of the review pages of certain weekend Australian newspapers? A return to the historical canon of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century history men, and Geoffrey Elton's 1960s *The Practice of History*: hardly a historiographical quantum leap.

What is so worrying about Windschuttle's ill-conceived book is its total lack of awareness of recent developments in historical practice. There is no discussion of the actual impact of poststructuralism on the writing of history: the influential work of Joan Scott on gender and history, for example; or the sophisticated histories of sexuality by Judith Walkowitz and George Chauncey, which build on and challenge Foucauldian notions; of the linguistic turn in the history of class; or of recent developments in the field of memory and oral history. Windschuttle seems oblivious to the fact that historians have not just blindly accepted social and linguistic theories, but have adapted, challenged, modified, and, if necessary, rejected them. We need to think of interaction and debate, not — as Windschuttle implies or fears — blind acceptance. Unless reading against the grain, one would not know from this gloomy book that it is actually a very good time to be a historian. *The Killing of History* is an appropriate title, but it is the author who is the murderer.

BARRY REAY

*The University of Auckland*