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Matteo Dutto. *Legacies of Indigenous Resistance: Pemulwuy, Jandamarra and Yagan in Australian Indigenous Film, Theatre and Literature*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019. 244 p. ISBN (hb) 9 7817 88745 413. €71.30

- 1 Matteo Dutto's *Legacies of Indigenous Resistance*, which was recently shortlisted for the 2021 ASAL Alvie Egan Award, is a remarkable book. It is the first book that examines comparatively the legacies of three Indigenous Australian resistance leaders, Pemulwuy, Yagan, and Jandamarra, and provides close analysis of works by Indigenous Australian writers, filmmakers, performers, and communities, who have retold their stories. Pemulwuy, a Bidjigal/Eora man (from the area spreading west from what is now called Botany Bay to Salt Pan Creek) was born around 1750 and fought against the British between 1790 and 1802; a Bunuba (from the Kimberley region of Western Australia), Jandamarra was born around 1873 and killed in 1897; a Noongar (from the Perth area), Yagan was born around 1795 and killed in 1833. Interested in "the social power of storytelling" (3), Dutto, an Italian scholar, focuses on these historical figures because their stories "have produced since their death the largest corpus of incarnations across different media" (12), and "forc[e] us to acknowledge the unceded sovereignty of First Nations across Australia and to question the legitimacy of settler colonial authority" (11).

- 2 The book is made up of three parts, “STORY ONE Pemulwuy,” “STORY TWO Jandamarra,” “STORY THREE Yagan.” The titles emphasise these key figures’ importance and operate as reminders that academic writing is also a form of story-telling, one way of framing and circulating narratives. Tracing “a cultural history” (210) of stories of resistance, the book examines the contexts in which each work about the fighters emerged. It shows how their stories were erased from the colonial archive or misappropriated to build the colonisers’ myths of “frontier heroes” (93) and “noble savages” (96), and, conversely, have been used by Indigenous people in the ongoing struggles for the recognition of their rights (including land rights) and unceded sovereignty, and of the violence of colonial invasion. In this respect, Dutto’s book complements recent work by historians such as Lyndall Ryan *et al.* who have set up the “Colonial Frontier Massacres in Australia, 1788-1930” research project and its Colonial Frontier Massacres Map documenting sites of massacres of Aboriginal people (<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/map.php>).
- 3 Dutto highlights the political, legal, and cultural impact that these works have had as acts of cultural resistance, including the continued efforts for the recovery and repatriation of human remains, increased self-esteem and attendance in cultural ceremonies in Indigenous communities, and the recognition of the Bunuba people’s native title rights in the Fitzroy Valley. The reader is informed, or reminded, that Pemulwuy, Yagan, and Jandamarra, were beheaded and their heads were sent to England. As of today, only Yagan’s head was finally repatriated in 1997. Searches to locate Jandamarra’s remains and to find the skull of Pemulwuy are ongoing.
- 4 Original interviews with cultural producers as well as ethnographic, cinematographic, sound design, and close textual analysis all contribute to Dutto’s interdisciplinary project to “account for the mobility, continuity and heterogeneity of Indigenous multimodal approaches to history-making” (207-8). Dutto both performs and shows “the transformative potential of doing history through [Indigenous] eyes” (209) and decolonizing historical knowledge. Concepts such as knowledge (Syron, 7), resistance (Moreton-Robinson, 10), survivance (Vizenor, 10), sovereignty as a “multi-faceted concept” (Birch, 14), and “custodianship” vs authorship (Muecke, 103) are defined from Indigenous perspectives. One of the book’s greatest strengths lies in the ways it demonstrates that these multimodal retellings hold the potential of “generating new alternative historiographies” (213) and are necessary because looking solely at written archives would perpetuate the writing of history based on what has been excluded. Dutto underlines that Indigenous artists – as opposed to colonial voices – foreground the agency of Indigenous leaders and communities, a characteristic found in many other texts written by Aboriginal authors such as Tony Birch, Tara June Winch, and Alexis Wright.
- 5 Dutto’s argument is both compelling and complex, as he draws attention to both “national and localized ways of framing resistance” (211) and unravels the multiplicity of artistic, directorial, and linguistic choices made by Indigenous artists, such as the Bunuba community of Fitzroy Crossing, Kelrick Martin, Rachel Perkins, Sally Riley, Grant Leigh Saunders, Mitch Torres, and Eric Willmot. For example, Willmot’s portrayal of Pemulwuy as – what Dutto calls – “a pan-Aboriginal hero” (121) in his milestone historical novel *Pemulwuy* (1987) is studied alongside choices made by the Bunuba community of Fitzroy Crossing to perform *Jandamarra* in Bunuba, Kriol, Pidgin English, and English. Torres’s cinematographic strategies made to “recogniz[e Bunuba] country

as a complex and active site of knowledge where memories are inscribed upon the landscape” (130) in *Keepers of the Story: Jandamarra* (2010) are explored alongside choices made by Riley to foreground the links between the killing and beheading of Yagan in 1833, “contemporary acts of symbolic and embodied violence” (154), and state policies for the removal of Aboriginal children from their families (<https://aso.gov.au/titles/shorts/confessions-headhunter/clip2/>).

- 6 The book is meticulously researched and written with great clarity. It raises potent questions of interest beyond the field of Australian studies, such as: “How many times does a resistance story need to be told to find its way into popular history and imagination?” (74) How does a settler state commemorate the life of an Indigenous resistance leader who fought against settler colonialism? Additionally, Dutto provides an enlightening discussion on the use of re-enactment in filmmaking and its effectiveness in challenging “non-Indigenous understandings of the contested spaces where re-enacted stories unfold” (199), thus asking viewers, as Martin’s film *Yagan* does, “to consider on whose land stories are being retold and re-enacted” (205).
- 7 Two suggestions came to my mind as I read the book. Readers interested in the limitations imposed by Native Title legislation on Indigenous people would benefit from reading historian Patrick Wolfe’s 1994 article in which he pointed out that “[t]he fundamental political consequence of the specifications attaching to traditional connection, like its predecessor traditional ownership, is that they shift the burden of history from the fact of expropriation to the character of the expropriated” (122). The second suggestion is merely a wish – that Dutto’s original interviews, which were included as an appendix to the original doctoral thesis on which the book is based, will one day be made widely available to the research community. For now, my hope is that this book will travel widely. It is an outstanding contribution to the field of Australian, Indigenous, anthropological, historical, literary, cultural performance, film, and media studies.

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Estelle Castro-Koshy is a scholar of literary and cultural studies who has worked with Indigenous Australian writers, performers, and filmmakers, since 2003 (<https://www.austlit.edu.au/literaturehaspower>), and with Indigenous French Polynesian writers and artists since 2006. An Adjunct Principal Research Fellow at James Cook University, she is also an editor and translator.

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