and mythic masculinity’ (p. 37). Biber is excellent in her exposition of the operation of masculinity in cinema and also illustrates how imperative it is to investigate masculinity in contemporary society.

There are four substantive sections to the book. The first, ‘Freeze the Play There: Film’; examines masculinity in cinema. The second is ‘Fields of Place: History, Place, Space’ investigating masculinity historically and in literature. The third section, ‘Dangerous Tackles, Reckless Behaviour: Il/legalities’ approaches masculinity in the law; while the fourth, ‘The Work Rate’, looks at the work place.

A collection such as this presents the reviewer with a difficult task – its breadth of material and approach is huge and hence sketching out the discursive field is difficult. At a most basic level Playing the Man is informed by feminist theory which is ‘the most compelling frame through which to view men and power’ (p. 12). This emphasis on feminism is important in light of the recent spate of titles examining masculinity through a psycho-biological framework. The essays in Playing the Man all accept the constructed nature of masculinity and investigate the way masculinity is shaped through its various cultural expressions. Beyond this, there is little unifying force in the collection – its subject material and the quality of analysis varies wildly. This makes the collection sometimes exciting, sometimes disappointing. Several essays, Biber’s in particular, are excellent, whilst a few others fall foul of the trap of citing all the right theorists while saying little that is substantive.

Playing the Man represents the future of Australian academia, and this is the book’s greatest strength. Its breadth is the breadth of Australian postgraduate study; its strength is in its diversity and the new intersections this diversity creates. As such Playing the Man comes highly recommended.

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The task of constructing a biography of Roy Douglas (‘Pansy’) Wright could not have been a simple one. At one level, the narrative describes one success after another; one fight after another – but of the man behind the mask of wit and ebullient style, we see few glimpses. Born in farming country in northern Tasmania in 1907, the ninth of ten children, ‘Pansy’ Wright became an extraordinarily successful medical scientist. His life is noted for his contribution to institutions such as the Australian National University, the Peter MacCallum Cancer Clinic and the Howard Florey Institute. When he died in
1990, he had completed a decade as Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, his alma mater. He was either loved or hated for his brilliant, often ribald, wit; few who knew him felt ambivalent. His fierce loyalties and his sympathies were predominantly for the underdog. The vigour with which he adopted causes, however, lead this reader to conclude that Wright fought external causes rather than confront the internal demons that appear to have besieged him.

As McPhee rightly observes, Wright was a controversial figure, and there was nothing hollow in his belief in individual rights. These enduring and deeply held beliefs underpinned the engagement with issues of civil liberties and academic freedom for which he is remembered. ‘Pansy’ Wright’s advice to new students at an Orientation week dinner in 1957 sums up his public persona: ‘Whatever you do, whether you do it well or do it badly, do it brilliantly. Avoid mediocrity on all accounts’. The public man can be seen to have lived by this ideal. Though larger than life, he was, after all, only human. As McPhee states in relation to the nature of biography and going beyond the ‘public’ record to ask questions of the ‘private’ life, ‘Most of us would have great difficulty in explaining our own actions satisfactorily, let alone someone else’s’.

More than anything, Wright loved a cause. Whether it was a medical one or the fight for civil liberties, he fought it with gusto. The 1951 Communist Party Dissolution Referendum became one such cause and Wright’s contribution is well documented by McPhee. Many academics and others felt deep concern at that time about the impact on civil liberties of the referendum proposals. Concern about civil liberties – either as a total opposition to the banning of the Communist Party, or concern about particular provisions of the proposed constitutional amendment – was evident in his outrage. That Wright was one of only three academics to make a public stand on the matter is illustrative of his firmly held belief in the right of academic freedom. Though not a supporter of Communism, Wright believed the constitutional amendment would introduce political repression. Later in the campaign he joined a group of prominent figures including Maurice Ashkanasy, Max Crawford and Kathleen Fitzpatrick as well as several ministers of religion in attacking the vagueness of the terms of the referendum, especially the term ‘communist’. The referendum was lost by 52,000 votes, and as McPhee concludes, its narrow defeat was a decisive moment in the Cold War in Australia.

Approaching the many conflicting facets of the man and negotiating a path through them to produce a work such as this Life must at times have proved a daunting task indeed. The biography concentrates on the public life; the private man is hardly perceived, which reflects the style in which the man lived his life. Despite Peter McPhee’s skilful handling of the papers, interviews, memoirs by his friends and colleagues and other evidence available with which to write *Pansy*, the character remains enigmatic. Wright was a complex man, to such an extent that even at the time,
no-one fully understood him. It is therefore not surprising to read that McPhee spent years 'oscillating between unalloyed admiration for Wright's brilliance and dismay at his insensitivities'. McPhee succeeds, at least, in revealing the difficulty and reward inherent in any individual study, and not least of all in 'Pansy' Wright.

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The massive tome that is Australia THROUGH TIME had been providing a foil for snide postgraduate remarks about the merits of popular histories, particularly those of a pictorial nature, for almost a year prior to this review. This prevailing attitude is a shame, because Australia THROUGH TIME is the sort of publication which can attract broad interest in history. However the book is far from an unqualified success. Despite a number of problems, Australian THROUGH TIME actually achieves its objective of providing a general overview of Australian society since 1868. It begins with a publisher’s note about the importance of companies who have fed, clothed and transported Australians throughout the period in question. The publishers in turn decided to express their gratitude by featuring the corporate logos of various sponsors throughout the book. For the most part this subliminal advertising is interesting, in that it provides an indication of how Australian attitudes to consumption have developed. The book suffers, however, from the overzealous promotion of sponsor products. This is particularly the case for coverage of 1989, where one is left thinking that the most important thing about Australian society that year was the Uncle Toby’s real fruit roll-up.

Aside from the avuncular, beaming face of Ray Martin staring out at the potential reader, the layout of the book is quite good, if antiquated. It resembles an annual from the 1960s, though this retro look seems to be more by fault than design. The picture researchers have gone to considerable effort to source quality images, but in most cases the pictures are too small to be effectively interpreted. Despite this there are a number of interesting images of entertainers, the best ones including Yothu Yindi, Barry Humphries and Rolf Harris. My only other criticism of the illustrations is they very rarely correlate with the text.

The text is presented in newspaper format with a tabloid level of journalistic criticism. Each article was chosen to give a feel for the period. Entries are approximately one hundred and fifty words in length and are designed to give a brief