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## Book Review: The past is not dead: facts, fictions, and enduring racial stereotypes

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but, curiously, also the most personally revealing section of an otherwise somewhat distanced memoir.

The book is a pleasure to read, modest in expression and large in its scope. It reinforces the association of humanism with the search for universals in human experience, but the nuances of the narrative belie the cliché about geographical humanism as an uncomplicated nostalgia.

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J. NICHOLAS ENTRIKIN

**The past is not dead: facts, fictions, and enduring racial stereotypes.** By Allan Pred. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press. 2004. 280 pp. £49.50 cloth; £16.50 paper. ISBN 0 8166 4405 5 cloth; 0 8166 4406 3 paper.

*The past is not dead* continues Allan Pred's excoriating critique of Swedish racism, begun in his previous work, *Even in Sweden* (2000). His new book focuses on two interlocking montages: a study of an African-Caribbean slave, Badin, who was brought to the Swedish court from St Croix in 1758 and who died in Stockholm in 1822; and a (shorter) study of present-day racial stereotyping, illustrated by the public exhibition of Hartkopf's Wax Cabinet, originally displayed in Stockholm in the 1890s, at the National Historical Museum in December 1999. Pred uses the techniques of montage and juxtaposition throughout the book, with comments from contemporary refugees and immigrants set alongside fragments from Badin's nineteenth-century recollections and other historical extracts. The author has made great demands of his publisher through the use of different typefaces and font sizes, indented passages and italics – and they have responded with aplomb.

This is a scholarly work, with over 60 pages of notes, infused with a quiet rage as Pred relentlessly demonstrates the persistence of earlier styles of racist thinking in the present day. While Pred has scoured the archives to establish as much as can reasonably be deduced about his subject's biography, Badin remains a somewhat ghostly figure (also known as Adolph Ludvig Gustaf Albrecht Couschi, his birth date never accurately established). Badin featured in a play by Strindberg and in a number of popular novels. His portrait hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in Stockholm. He was a contemporary of Linnaeus and participated in contemporary debates about racial character and climatic determinism. But, with so little hard evidence to hand, much of the book relies on historical reconstruction and conjecture, signalled by the repeated use of interrogatives ('Was it not more than likely that...?', 'Is it not very possible...?'). Yet it is precisely such ambiguity that is central to Badin's place in the racist imaginary, where the combination of desire and dread, fear and fascination, play off these 'fictionalised facts and factualised fictions', reinforcing the power of collective memory and selective amnesia. The book closes with a discussion of the lack of public outcry over the 1999 exhibition which included the horrifying display of the skin of a black African 'native' and an encased 'Negro penis', evoking memories of the 'Hottentot

Venus' (Sarah Baartmann). Pred's work is a courageous assault on the 'unspeakable unspoken'. As a case study of historically and geographically specific racisms, the book demands to be read, its message taken to heart.

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PETER JACKSON

**Geographies of identity in nineteenth-century Japan.** By David L. Howell. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2005. 261 pp. \$55.00, £35.95 cloth. ISBN 0 520 24085 5.

This important book examines changes in conceptions of identity at the individual and countrywide level in the nineteenth century during Japan's transition from the early modern to the modern period. In the early modern period (1603-1868), an individual's identity was a function of occupation, which was determined largely by heredity, and served to demarcate one's place in the status system established by the Tokugawa military regime. The status system functioned to allow the small number of samurai to be sustained by the larger population of commoners, most of whom were tax-paying peasants. These status groups, though separated from each other by sumptuary laws, shared customs (*fūzoku*) such as hairstyle which collectively set them apart as 'civilized' in contrast to the 2-3 per cent of the population of 'outcasts', historically discriminated groups within Japan who engaged in polluting occupations, and 'barbarian' peoples on Japan's geographical periphery including the Ainu of Hokkaido and the Ryukyu Islanders.

Howell traces the effects of the dismantling of the status system in the Meiji period (1868-1912), shedding light on the popular violence perpetrated against the newly emancipated outcasts. The Meiji regime redefined civilized behaviour by rigorously enforcing new customs such as short hair, which it derived from its observation of Western society, in its attempts to create a modern, unified citizenry. Japan, which had once premised its relations with the Ainu and Ryukyu Islanders on cultural differences, now sought to expunge those differences as it claimed direct territorial control over Hokkaido and Okinawa. The actions of the Meiji government to try to erase Ainu culture in its efforts to equate Japanese ethnicity with a national identity has as its legacy the mindset of the contemporary state, which recognizes only Japanese ethnicity as having any political meaning, fostering the notion that Japan is a homogeneous country despite the existence of other ethnic groups within it (p. 203).

David Howell presents a compelling argument for the role of institutions in naturalizing customs that become integral to perceptions of one's place within society and the world. Howell introduces several fascinating characters from the Ainu and outcast communities to put his argument in human terms; his analysis is based on primary research and a comprehensive survey of secondary literature, especially on the topics of discriminated groups and the Ainu. This book is certain to be a reference for