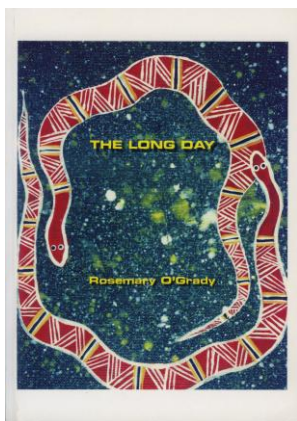


Kimberley Society

Book Note



The Long Day by Rosemary O'Grady. Private publication, Armadale (Vic), 2010, 161 pages, limited edition of 100 copies, ISBN 978-0-646-52820-5.

This gritty story, set in and around Derby in the 1980s, tells of events that led to the death of a young Aboriginal woman after a day of drinking. Polly, the mother of one-year-old Rocky and the de facto wife of Archie, stood little chance. It was not unusual for her to drink to excess or to suffer occasional injuries. In that regard the last day of her life was unremarkable. But who killed her? Archie was arrested, a charge of murder was reduced to manslaughter, and a sentence was handed down. Yet, while readily admitting that a violent argument took place between them, he denied killing Polly.

The strength of the story lies partly in its portrayal of life through the eyes of the drinkers and partly in the context in which it situates their activities. That context, with its references to departed missionaries, fractured lives, lost opportunities, underemployment, legal cases, police procedures, and legal representation (or the lack of it), provides a grim but convincing setting. The author offers no comment on the extent to which the work should be seen as fiction, leaving the reader to ponder that question and the many others that the book brings to mind.

The cover of *The Long Day* carries a painting by Ashley Oobagooma. Reference copies of the book can be seen in the collections of the National Library of Australia, the State Library of Western Australia, the Northern Territory Library, and the State Library of Victoria.

Cathie Clement

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