



Kimberley Society

Book Note

Other Country by Stephen Scourfield. Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest (NSW), 2007. Paperback, 279 pages, ISBN: 9781741751536, RRP \$29.95; ISBN 9781741754926 (B-Format) RRP \$22.95.

On looking over the lists of favourite Kimberley books which Jack Vercoe and I have written about in the *Boab Bulletin*, neither of us has included a novel. Indeed, there seem to be surprisingly few of them set in the Kimberley and even fewer of any great quality. However, had I read this one before compiling my list it would have certainly been included.

The background is of cattle stations over the past ten or fifteen years. The main protagonists are two brothers, youths who leave their abusive father to make their way through leases in the East Kimberley. Their characters are developed with thoughtfulness and no little psychological insight. Others drift in and out of the narrative, as people do in the Kimberley. Equally shown is a deep knowledge, attachment, love and respect for country. All this is clothed in prose which is as sharp as spinifex, as hard as the rock that barks your shin or as serene as a sunset at Derby wharf. Only the occasional geography or history lesson lies uneasily in the context.

I must have been away when this book was first published and reviewed in 2007 and similarly absent when it became a finalist in the Commonwealth Writers Prize last year. The accolades are well deserved for what is a first novel.

Stephen Scourfield has published travel books and a photographic journey in his *Western Australia : an untamed view* in addition to being the Travel Editor of *The West Australian*. He has agreed to be [the speaker at our July meeting](#).

Hamish McGlashan

Note: The Allen & Unwin edition of *Other Country* is out of print. A new edition is available from [UWA Publishing](#), released to accompany Stephen Scourfield's new outback novel *As the River Runs*.