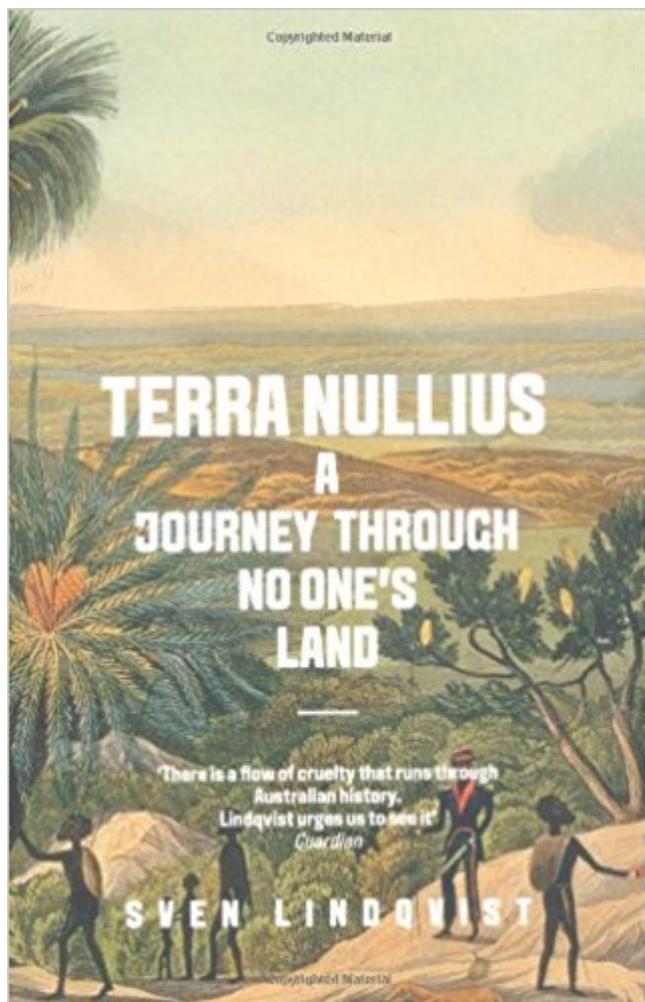


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# Terra Nullius: A Journey Through No One's Land



## Synopsis

In the critically acclaimed *Desert Divers* and *Exterminate All the Brutes*, Sven Lindqvist travelled through Africa's deserts and unearthed the cruelty of colonialism. Now he has done the same for Australia. Lindqvist travels through the south of the country, lyrically describing its landscape, flora and fauna and geology, while also telling the history of the country and revealing the shocking treatment of its Aboriginal peoples. He catalogues some truly shocking abuses, such as the rounding up of Aborigine women for transportation to the chillingly named 'Isle of the Dead' for inappropriate and often fatal syphilis treatment, and the extensive forced separation of 'half-blood' children from their families to squalid prison-like camps. Stretching from the formation of the Australian continent 600 million years ago to the 2002 hunger strikes in the Woomera detention camp, *Terra Nullius* leaves us with a strong sense of Australia as a piece of earth, steeped in geological and tragic human history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Swedish author Lindqvist ("Exterminate All the Brutes") has written a sobering chronicle of the attempted genocide of aborigines in 19th-century Australia. White settlers arrived and declared whole swaths of countryside terra nullius "no one's land" ignoring the people who had lived there for centuries. By the early 20th century, Lindqvist writes, white Australians recognized that the aborigines existed, but assumed they were inferior and would one day die out. Indeed, whites massacred the darker-skinned indigenous people, claiming they were only helping the inevitable Darwinian march of progress. Marrying social, political and intellectual history, Lindqvist goes far

beyond a predictable history of colonial destruction, violence and exploitation. He shows that many European theorists turned to aborigines as a case study of the question of when humans became human, and notes that Durkheim and Freud both made crucial assumptions about human development based on their readings of aboriginal cultures. Malinowski criticized Australian aborigines for raising their children liberally; he believed that discipline by beating was a necessary part of parenting. Lindqvist calls for those who have benefited from the oppression of aborigines to "do penance and mend our ways." Thus, "even the past can be changed." (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The Latin term *terra nullius*, or no one's land, indicated land not claimed by any European power; thus it was open to conquest and settlement without regard for the rights of the indigenous inhabitants. Veteran author Lindqvist asserts that the ideology behind that term was used to justify the near extermination of Australia's aborigines. The core of his book is a dreary, often horrifying, but necessary recounting of the displacement and even deliberate slaughter of various indigenous groups. But Lindqvist goes further, condemning Australians today for their refusal to acknowledge and make amends for past injustices. No doubt this will infuriate many Australians who, bearing no direct responsibility for the past, have supported efforts to advance the economic and social status of aborigines. Lindqvist is on less-controversial but equally interesting ground in describing aspects of his extensive travels across the continent and the connections between places he's visited and the past. Jay FreemanCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Sven Lindqvist has never written a bad word, and the abuse and destruction of Aboriginal and nomadic peoples is one of his pet subjects - see his work on the destruction of the Hetero peoples in "Exterminate All The Brutes". Now he turns to Australia and the dismal treatment of the Aboriginal population by both settlers, anthropologists, "protectors" (possibly one of the most grotesque misuses of a word in the history of the English language) and politicians. He travels through South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia documenting at each stop another example of a community torn apart by casual race hate, or near genocide, of Aboriginal communities desperately trying to protect cultural and family ties. None of this is new material, but rarely has it been described in such stark terms. Lindqvist argues, correctly, that whether the near genocide was intended or not (he thinks it was, or at least that the removal of Aboriginal communities was a

desired outcome) it very nearly succeeded, and that the extent to which Aboriginal culture has managed to survive is remarkable. He believes it a sign of a very strong culture rather than the weak, outmoded one it is often portrayed as. He also correctly argues that saying "Sorry" is meaningless without some attempt to change behaviour or make things right. As he points out to those who would argue "it's nothing to do with me, I haven't mistreated any Aborigines", maybe not, but if you've enjoyed the spoils of conquest, as all European settlers have, then you should pay part of the reparation costs. Couldn't agree more. Highly recommended

In the last few years Sven Lindqvist has become one of my favorite nonfiction authors. He probes some of the worst situations in human history, yet always ends up with giving us some hope for our future. In earlier books, such as *Exterminate All The Brutes* he chronicles the history of European genocides in Africa, and in *The Skull Measurers Mistake* he chronicles a history of men and women who spoke out against racism. In this volume, *Terra Nullius: A Journey Through No One's Land*, he chronicles the history of racism and systematic abuse against the Aboriginals from Australia, from the arrival of James Cook in 1770 to 1992 when the Mabo Decision in the Australian Supreme Court outlaws the concept of 'terra nullius'. Like many of his earlier books it is written as part history and part journal. He chronicles events from the past, key places in this history story, and side by side with that is his journey to and fro across the Australian countryside to personally experience the places discussed in the history. He writes in a very fluid, lucid style. At times it appears to be stream of conscious writing, yet as the reader goes further and further into the book, you realize that it was nothing so random. Every history event portrayed has a specific purpose; each personal recollection brings to light either the preceding or following events; each portrait of either a victim or someone who attempted to help the victims has specific meaning and purpose to the whole. What amazed me most about this book was that it was a story with which I was completely unfamiliar. I remember in school in the late 70's and early 80's that we often had lessons on apartheid and the situation in South Africa, and even Africa as a whole. Later in high school and into university I often encountered history around the Latin American situation and especially liberation theology, and again in film with such powerful movies as *The Mission*, *Cry Freedom*, *Amistad* and others. Yet never have I encountered these stories and events. Such as: 1911 In the Northern Territory, The Aboriginals Ordinance gives a protector appointed by the 'whites' authority to take any Aborigine of 'half-blood' into custody at any time. The ordinance remained in force until 1957. 1937 The Native Administration Act gives Chief Protector legal instruments with which to 'breed out' the Aborigines, the 'final solution' to the race problem in Western Australia. 1953 The Welfare Ordinance (NT)

substitutes the racially neutral word 'ward' for 'Aborigine'. More than 99 percent of the Aboriginal population is declared 'wards' of the state. 1962 Aboriginal people acquire the right to vote in state and commonwealth elections, even though they are still wards of the state. 1964 Aboriginal people are no longer wards of the state, but in name only. 1967 Aboriginal people are included in the national census. 1983 Sixteen Year old John Pat dies in police custody; 5 officers are charged but acquitted. 1991 The Year of Indigenous People. Lindqvist's book portrays brutal acts by individuals and by a people as a whole. It is not uplifting or enjoyable in the message it portrays. Yet it should be considered essential reading, for man's inhumanity to other humans must be remembered, and we need to remember those few who spoke out against it. Lindqvist's book is easy to read and flows well, but the subject matter and events depicted will be seared into your memory. (First Published in Imprint 2009-06-26.)

I love Australia. I have read a lot about it and spent a couple of weeks there but I had not heard much about the white people taking over the country. When I heard about this book I wanted to check it out. I got a used hardcover copy for one penny off of . This book is very well written and tells the story of the mistreatment of blacks and immigrants by the white government. Many of the stories still are not told in museums in Australia. I saw some of the bad feelings towards blacks when I was there in 1985. I was a bit surprised that those feelings are still intense more than twenty years later. If you are into world history this book will give you something to think about.

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