In the second, Vieda Skultans examines menstrual symbolism in South Wales and finds two distinct sets of attitudes related to menstruation and menopause, which she correlates to feelings of satisfaction and success (or lack thereof) with the traditional female role. The third article, written by Emily Martin, is a fascinating discussion of PMS in late-industrial society. Relating studies of the discipline required by industrial work to women's premenstrual complaints, she suggests that rather than focusing on hormonal imbalances and treating PMS as a disease, we should look at the possibility that PMS represents a protest against this discipline, against women's dual responsibilities. She implicates medical science for treating only the physical causes of PMS and not recognizing the social ones.

The final section of the book is entitled "Exploratory Directions: Menses, Culture, and Time," and contains three articles dealing with the concept of menstrual synchrony and its possible relation to the lunar stages. These articles are for the most part historical in their focus. Thus, Buckley writes about menstrual practices among pre-contact Yurok women; Frederick Lamp, although writing about a current ritual calendar among the Temne of Sierra Leone, draws largely on historical evidence to make his case; and Chris Knight, discussing menstrual synchrony in Aboriginal Australia, draws on myth, song, cats' cradle string figures, and rock carvings to develop his argument.

Drawing on folk belief, myth, ritual, and song, and arguing against "a rigid dichotomization of 'folk' and 'scientific' theories of menstruation" (42), Blood Magic should be of interest to folklorists working in a wide variety of areas, including gender issues, folk medicine, folk belief, folklore of the body, and many others. This is a well-constructed and well-researched collection, grounded in received anthropological theory, yet looking far beyond it.


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Nearly thirty years ago John Greenway said in Folklore Research Around the World: A North American Point of View (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961) that Australians lagged half a century behind Americans in national maturity and self-confidence. Australians themselves talked about their "cultural cringe": a pervasive tendency to regard their own culture as second-rate and unworthy of attention. Accordingly, Greenway found very little to report on the study of folklore in Australia beyond a few amateur collections and some recordings of bush ballads. The establishment of a committee of inquiry into
Australia's folklife, and the substantial nature of their lavishly illustrated report, are two signs that the Australian cultural cringe is clearly on the wane.

Aimed at fellow Australians with little or no knowledge of folkloristics, the book presents a quick introduction to the definition, nature, and significance of folklife. It then reports on the existing arrangements for the "safeguarding of our heritage of folklife" and makes recommendations to the government for future strategies. Separate sections are devoted to the role of folklife in education, "the living folk arts" (especially the folk revival), and the question of ethical standards and copyright.

Because of its necessarily sketchy form, this survey will be most enlightening to Australians with no knowledge of folkloristics. Folklorists in other countries will be intrigued to hear about such Australian forms as recitations, the Wagga blanket, and bush carpentry, but will have to look elsewhere for detailed information. If the recommendations made by the committee are followed, we may expect to see such detailed studies in the future.

Anyone planning to do folkloristic research in Australia will benefit from the report's account of the publications and collections of the nation's folklife and of the individuals and organizations who have worked in the field. I was struck by the number of individuals and community groups who have collected, documented, and preserved folklore in Australia, working in isolation and at their own expense. These individual efforts suffer because of a lack of organization, national focus, or material support. It is still not possible to get professional training as a folklorist in Australia. Collections of materials and recordings are scattered throughout the country and often are poorly preserved.

To redress this situation, the committee urges the establishment of a national folklife center which will administer a national collection of Australian folklife and a grants scheme to support folklife collection and research. Secondly, they recommend the establishment of a folk arts committee and a folk arts grants program within the Australian National Trust to ensure funding for the folk arts. If implemented, these measures would harness the enthusiasm of all those individuals and groups who believe in the importance of Australia's folklife.

The authors have accomplished a Herculean task in amassing information and opinion from throughout Australia and synthesizing the results. They have taken pains to emphasize not only the heritage value of folklife but its significance in the contemporary world as well. The report respects the ethnic diversity of Australia and embraces equally amateurs, professionals, academics and folk revivalists, performers and collectors of folklife. Careful attention is paid to such issues as the significance of folklife in fostering national identity and a multicultural society. These and other issues raised in the report are of concern to all folklorists.