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White Australians once confidently—if regretfully—believed that the Aboriginals were doomed to extinction. Even in the 1950s, many Australian children were still being taught that the Australian Aboriginals were a dying race who would eventually disappear from the face of the earth.

In *Imagined Destinies*, Russell McGregor explores the origins and the gradual demise of the 'doomed race' theory, which was dominant in nineteenth-century European thinking and remained largely unquestioned until the 1930s. He shows that white perceptions of Australia's indigenous people and their future were shaped by Enlightenment ideas about progress, Darwin's new theories on the survival of the fittest, and other European philosophical concepts.

Imagined Destinies provides a challenging analysis and history of an idea that has exerted a powerful influence over white Australian attitudes to and policies for Aboriginal people. Indeed, is its long shadow still with us?

Russell McGregor is a lecturer in the Department of History and Politics at the James Cook University of North Queensland.

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