

Reviews and book notes

Review

Soledad Quartucci (ed.), *Family Portraits in Global Perspectives: An Oral History Collection, University Students Explore their Roots* (Self-published), ISBN-13: 978-1723188367.

This book contains a collection of the work of diverse students from many different cultural backgrounds including Mexican, Chinese, Japanese, Greek, Korean, Peruvian, Canadian, Philippino, Nepalese, Burmese and Malaysian who participated in the author and editor's Writing 101 course. It was not clear to me from the book's description or content where these students were based until I turned to the biographies provided in the last few pages and discovered that they were studying at Soka University of America. Google revealed that this is a private university, offering 4 year liberal arts degrees, in Orange County California and it has a fascinating history linked to Japan and a Buddhist educator. The University's website also told me that about 60% of the students come from the US while 40% hail from 45 other countries. The book itself revealed (without editorial commentary) that many of Quartucci's students seemed to be from migrant backgrounds and were often the first in their families to undertake tertiary study. As I have probably made clear already, the book would have benefitted from more editorial intervention throughout so that the reader could better understand its origins, process of production and value for oral historians as teachers and researchers.

Quartucci asked her students to undertake several oral history interviews with family members for their final assessment for the unit she taught on writing. She was impressed with the projects they produced and collated edited versions of their assignments to share with others. There is no doubt that this was/is a great learning and teaching project – we all have much to learn, as teachers and researchers, from educators in different national contexts teaching oral history theory and method to diverse students. More scholars around the world need to share their ideas like these and to measure the impact of oral history pedagogy on diverse communities. However, I wonder if a self-published

book is the best way to do this? It seems to me that a project like this is more suited to a digital or web-based format that would allow for a global discussion of important learning and teaching projects like these focussed on social inclusion.

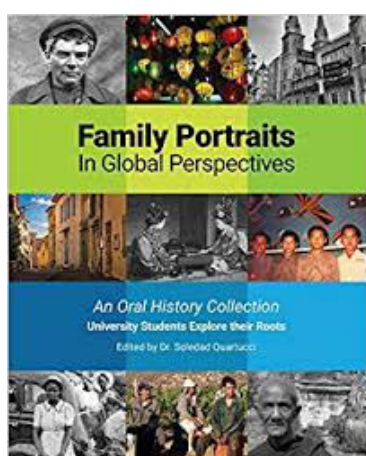
We are shown how students were provided with guides and models of oral history interviewing and writing and how one might approach writing one's own family history. The appendix lists possible questions that may or may not have used by the students in the course of conducting their interviews. While Quartucci aimed for her students to learn from their elderly relatives about their roles as historical actors – and to share those interesting historical stories with others around the world – we are not provided with a clear sense of the students' methods or how they interpreted their family's stories told through interviews. The book is divided into three parts: Survivor Narratives, The Wars and Phenomenal Women. The various life-stories gathered have been divided into these sections.

I would have preferred the stories collected in these interviews to be contextualised more extensively – if not by the students then certainly by the editor/author. We are presented with fascinating snapshots, social histories of intimate lives around the world, but I am not sure what we are supposed to do with them. I wonder also why the interviews and stories were not accompanied by images. This might have produced a more engaging book (but perhaps more expensive too). If students were encouraged to situate the stories of their families into knowledge gained from secondary historical research, they would have gained knowledge, lessons and experience (although, admittedly, this may not have been a priority for writing students). Can the author tell us what the students learned about the practice of oral history? If historical understanding was not key to their learning outcomes then it might have been helpful if students were encouraged to place the data they collected within a broader understanding of migration to the United States. Oral historians can search for what this book reveals about class, age, gender, sexuality, family hopes and dreams in contemporary America but these details are hard to find because the interviews are barely edited and analysed.

There are fascinating migrant stories presented in this book but they are unfortunately offered without analysis. Sadly, this is a missed opportunity.

Overall, the author needed to be more obviously reflective about their purpose in producing this book. Is this a work of research or an example of learning and teaching practice that they want to share and encourage others to do the same? Is it both? For this book to reach a broad audience of oral historians we needed to better understand the rationale behind its production and to appreciate how it might contribute to our knowledge of oral history theory, method, practice and outcome.

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Review

Tragedy and Triumph: Early Testimonies of Jewish Survivors of World War II. Edited and Translated by Freda Hodge. Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2018. 256pp. \$34.95 (paperback). ISBN 978-1-925523-67-6.

Until relatively recently it was a commonplace understanding in popular memory and in studies of Holocaust memory internationally that during the first decades following World War Two, memories of the Holocaust were widely suppressed and silenced. Even as this ‘myth of silence’ is being gradually dismantled by historians, Kirstin Gwyer has suggested that the current cultural emphasis on ‘postmemory’ in academic and artistic work, a concomitant of this myth, has been retained. There is a tendency within such work to imply that Holocaust survivors (the first generation) were not able, in the decades immediately following the Holocaust, to process, or express what had happened to them; or if they could, it was only through ‘raw’ accounts rather than conscious creative or political/historical work.¹ According to Gwyer, the second generation has thus been assigned a privileged

1 Kirstin Gwyer, *Encrypting the Past: The German-Jewish Holocaust Novel of the First Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 48–49.

position where the trauma of the Holocaust can only *now* begin to be properly processed, through memorialisation, healing and ultimately a successful working-through. Such a narrative occludes an account of the early efforts of Holocaust survivors and their first-generation contemporaries to express their experiences, and collectively interpret and memorialise the Holocaust.² *Tragedy and Triumph*, a compilation of thirty early testimonies by Holocaust survivors, compiled and translated into English from the Yiddish, by Freda Hodge, helps provide an important corrective.

These testimonies were originally published between 1946 and 1948, in *Fun Letzten Kurben* (From the Last Destruction), a publication of the Munich Historical Commission, one branch of dozens of Jewish Historical Commissions set up by Jewish survivors after the War to collect and record the history of the Jewish catastrophe under Nazism. As outlined by Konrad Kwiet, in *Tragedy and Triumph*'s preface, the testimonies published here represent just a ‘tiny fraction’ of the approximately ‘30,000 testimonies ... recorded in the immediate postwar period’ which sit in archives that are ‘huge, largely unexplored, dispersed and fragmented’ (xiv–xv). *Tragedy and Triumph* opens with an essay by M.Y. Feigenbaum, originally published in the first volume of *Fun Letzten Kurben*, that makes clear that the purpose of the Commissions was to construct what we could deem a counter-imperial social history of Jewish life during the Nazi regime.³ He suggested that instead of relying on the great powers to give a true account of the ‘Jewish tragedy’, Jews ‘must document this bloody epoch’ themselves, forming part of an ongoing political project to be used ‘as ammunition for the benefit of our interests’. To Feigenbaum, this was a collective project of ordinary people’s history: ‘every eyewitness account from a surviving Jew, every song from the Nazi period, every saying, every story and joke ... is important’ (17–18).

The testimonies selected by Hodge reflect this general approach which, considered collectively, read as a distinctive genre of social history with a wider objective. As Hodge highlights in the Introduction, the editor of *Fun Letzten Kurben*, Israel Kaplan, requested that there be as much detail as possible in these testimonies, with an emphasis on the names of both Jewish victims and perpetrators. These testimonies were envisioned as serving not just historical purposes but for some form of future justice, whether that be punishment of perpetrators or moral condemnation. Indeed, these accounts often approximate legal testimony, featuring names of perpetrators (including Jewish collaborators) as well as details of the mechanics of killing, including times and dates etc (e.g. 25–26).

2 Ibid., 45–50.

3 Leader of the Central Historical Commission.

In contrast to the now more familiar individualised life-history format of oral history interviews of Holocaust survivors, the testimonies included in *Tragedy and Triumph* are often depersonalised narratives of particular places or situations. Thus, we have accounts of places such as the town of Dubno or the Mielec labour camp, or the travails of particular partisan brigades. In contrast to life histories, there is no aspect of relief or relatability in these accounts; they often recount the most horrible and brutal parts of their experience and end not with a form of redemption or safe resettlement but as if there was much more trauma to tell. For example, Maurice Kraus ends his horrific account of the most awful suffering on the death march from Bolkenhain concentration camp with the words '[a]ll of this is not one hundredth of what my son and I went through' (43). These testimonies were not written to invoke a universal humanism, instead they were produced primarily as documentation and as a method of rebuilding connections and solidarity. The writers were working on a collective history project, filling in gaps where they could. For instance, Rabbi A. Burstin's account, first published in 1948, begins, '[t]he history of resistance in the Bialystok Ghetto has already been written about to a greater or lesser extent... I want to pass on only the information about the final heroic moments of the last 72 sacred martyrs which I personally witnessed. Until now I have not come across any description of those moments' (116).

The other aspect that differentiates the twenty-four adult testimonies published here from more recently recorded oral history interviews is that they were written by the survivors directly (though the six children's testimonies included are based on transcribed oral interviews). As noted by Philip Friedman, a leading Yiddish historian of the period, the vast numbers of survivor testimonials being published in this era were written by people 'who never in their lives dreamed of becoming writers'.⁴ Thus there is a lot of variation in the way these narratives are constructed. Some are miraculous chronicles of survival, others chart the fraught ins and outs of Jewish ghetto politics. Some are told like short stories, with interspersed dialogue, use of metaphor and evocative imagery. Others are flatly written lists of events; though of course this circumscription itself is a creative decision. The styling and circumstances of the writing in these testimonies is likely to be what interests contemporary scholars, as most of the events recounted are well known to historians, such as the transport of the children of Bialystok or the bravery of Mala Zimetbaum in Auschwitz. However, there are exceptions here, such as the rare account of Sobibor by Yekheskel (Chaskiel)

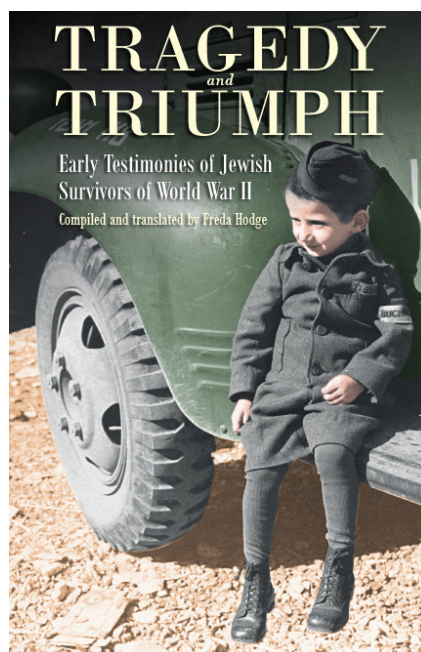
⁴ Phillip Friedman, 'Unzer Khurbn-Literatur,' *Yidisher Kemfer*, 31 March 1950, cited in Mark L. Smith, 'No Silence in Yiddish: Popular and Scholarly Writing About the Holocaust in the Early Postwar Years,' in *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, ed. David Cesarani and Eric J Sundquist (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 56.

Menche, as well as a remarkable account of surviving with two small children in Auschwitz by Esther Weiss.

While *Tragedy and Triumph* is generally very well put together and translated, Hodge's Introduction does leave some information wanting, most notably an explanation as to how and why these 30 testimonies were selected. Hodge suggests that they provide 'as broad a spectrum as possible', but some more information about the seventy testimonies not selected from *Fun Letzten Kurben* would have been helpful. There is a preponderance of accounts from Kovno/Kaunas but this is not explained. A number of the accounts concern parents and children, but this too is not explicitly addressed. A discussion of how *Fun Letzten Kurben* was edited and produced is also lacking. All of this would have served to better contextualise and situate this volume within a broader historical project of rediscovery and translation that is challenging 'the myth of silence'.

However, even without this contextualisation we can gather from this volume that not only were Holocaust survivors telling their stories for wide dissemination, they were themselves processing these events, contributing to a vast collective historical project and using creativity to craft narratives of their experiences. Hodge has rendered us an incredibly valuable service in translating and compiling these early testimonies. They deserve to be widely read by scholars and non-scholars. We can only hope that Hodge has initiated the first step in a long overdue project of translating and (re-)publishing the tens of thousands of early Holocaust testimonies.

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Review

Serving in Silence? Australian LGBT Servicemen and Women. Edited by Noah Riseman, Shirleene Robinson and Graham Willett. Sydney, NewSouth Publishing, 2018. 293 pages. \$39.99. ISBN: 9781742235851.

Since the end of the Second World War there has been a significant shift in attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) service personnel and their participation in the Australian Defence Force (ADF). Since 1945, Australia has seen the decriminalisation of homosexuality, the ban on homosexuality in the defence force lifted, and the implementation of anti-discrimination laws that aim to protect individuals regardless of their sexuality or gender, with more recent moves towards enshrining protection for transgender individuals. Alongside these legislative changes, overarching social attitudes have shown an increase in tolerance toward members of the LGBT community – but how was this reflected in a rigidly defined organisation like the ADF over the last 70 years?

Serving in Silence utilises the narratives of fourteen LGBT servicepeople to unpack and challenge Australian military stereotypes from the immediate postwar era to 2018, highlighting the diversity of experience during this period. Illustrating the intersection of identities for LGBT people who were part of the armed forces, this research provides a valuable contribution to both Australian military history and histories of sexuality. By disrupting ideas of the homogenous white male mythology inherent in studies of Anzac and subsequent military representations, *Serving in Silence* shows the complexity of reconciling two seemingly distinct identities. Through personal recollections it examines how individuals navigated notions of belonging and participation within two communities – the LGBT world and the ADF.

The book is divided into three sections that are arranged chronologically to address changing legislation and social attitudes, both within and outside the military sphere. The first section looks at the immediate postwar period and beyond (1944-1973), when homosexuality was still criminalised, lesbian experiences were silenced, and trans visibility was virtually non-existent. From Brian MacFarlane's history, we see the internalisation of entrenched heteronormative structures – Brian believed that gay men should be discreet about their sexuality and not agitate for approval or change, which reinforces the idea that this era of silence around LGB identities could be fundamentally disempowering. MacFarlane was the only participant who was not part of the LGBT community revealing a jarring disconnect between his military life and his sexuality. Carole Popham and Christina Dennis both served in the Women's Royal Australia Air Force (WRAAF) and

share a relationship together that has spanned decades. For Popham and Dennis, the lack of acknowledgement or legitimisation of lesbian experiences played a large part in the way their relationship developed. They were not allowed to talk about their relationship, and this both hindered and helped their lives: there was less of a spotlight on two 'single' women living together than two single men. Popham and Dennis voluntarily left the WRAAF before the intense period of 'witch hunts' that sought to quietly discharge lesbians in the defence forces. Julie Hendy, however, experienced the brunt of this while serving in the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) in 1968. When Hendy's sexuality was discovered she was abruptly discharged with 'Retention in the military forces not being in the interests of those Forces'. This was at a time where women were punished for fraternising with men, and punished even more so for fraternising with women; the defence forces wanted to maintain an asexual appearance. During this period, homosexuality was pathologised as a mental disorder and homosexuals were seen as 'degenerate', and men were also targeted. Wally Cowin was forcibly discharged from the Royal Australian Navy for engaging in homosexual activities in 1969. The persecution against gay men was heightened as homosexual relations between men were illegal, but there was no legal recourse against same-sex female relationships. While Cowin himself escaped court martial consequences, this difference between homosexual men and women as a persistent theme highlights the inherently gendered mores of the mid-twentieth century.

The second section examines the period of decriminalisation of homosexuality in Australia (1974-1992), and how legislative change was not organically reflected in ADF policies or culture. During the 1970s, gay rights movements were forming in Australia and internationally, and wider societal attitudes were becoming increasingly tolerant of the LGB community. This was not, however, replicated in the defence forces' agenda of identifying and exposing homosexual relationships. Susie Struth's WRAAC time came to an end in 1977 when she was interrogated by military police about her homosexuality. In addition, her interrogators attempted to coerce her into revealing other lesbians in the army. Although Struth refused, this was indicative of a culture of harassment both in and outside the ADF. Richard Gratton was subjected to such harassment in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) after leading a double life during the early 1980s. Gratton's use of the term 'double life' is important as it shows a conscious uncoupling between his sexual identity and his military life. Similar to Struth, Yvonne Sillett of the WRAAC was discharged after being 'outed' in the 1980s. Sillett questioned her expulsion through a redress of grievance but was referred to the uncompromising policy that homosexuality was not accepted within the military. Similarly, Mark (with no last name given)

was interrogated and forced to leave, opting for an honourable discharge. Mark's experience was one of trauma and desperation, counterbalanced by a personal rejection of any future association with the ADF. As these cases show, while the 1970s and 1980s were a period of empowerment and freedom for some in the larger LGB movement, this was not reflected in the ADF, where persecution and punishment continued.

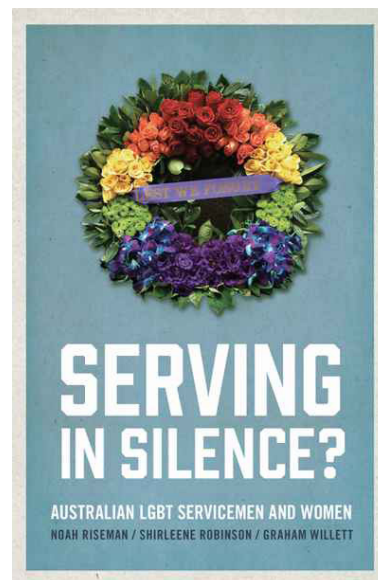
The third section of the book focusses on the period from 1992 to 2018, which saw the ban on homosexuality in the military lifted and the slow but reluctant progression toward LGBT tolerance in the ADF. The first interviewee in this section is David Mitchell, who served in the RAAF in the 1980s and 1990s and was able to make peace with and actively embrace two identities (namely his military life and his homosexuality). Prohibition against homosexuality in the military was officially lifted in 1992, however this did not stop the tirade of bullying and harassment that many faced. Mitchell, for example, experienced mistreatment, as did Matt Cone, who despite serving after 1992, was unable to come out owing to continued mistreatment and abuse. Cone was discharged for an activity that amounted to assault, but also found a way to connect with the military LGB community through establishing networks and formalised movements.

Bridget Clinch is the only openly transgender person whose story is told in *Serving in Silence*, and her activism was integral in overturning transphobic ADF rules. Clinch's experience speaks to the growing visibility of trans personnel in the armed forces and the previously unacknowledged role that transgender and gender-diverse people have made to the Australian military; her role in ending the ban on transgender people in the ADF in 2010 highlights how new generations in the ADF were pushing for acceptance. Vince Chong and Ellen Zyga have the last chapter in the book, their stories showing the engagement and resilience of this new guard of LGBT armed forces personnel, championing for gender and sexual diversity within the ADF.

Serving in Silence reads more like a series of biographical vignettes rather than a traditional 'history', but this is underpinned by a positive embrace of oral history. The editors privilege oral testimonies over corroborating evidence, and this is a strength. Influenced by social history, oral history as a methodology provides access to compelling narratives, both individual and collective, which demonstrate the complexity and nuance inherent in most historical subjects. More broadly, this impressive body of research has shown the significant role that LGBT service personnel have played in Australia's military history in the post-World War II era. These histories demonstrate the recurring challenges faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the military

world, and the skills, services, and abilities they learned despite these barriers. The chronology of the book sets up the reader to see the progress over time, and the gradual acceptance of LGBT folks into the ADF with the aid of both official policy and cultural attitudes changing with broader society.

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Review

Serving Our Country: Indigenous Australians, War, Defence and Citizenship. Edited by Joan Beaumont and Allison Cadzow. Sydney: NewSouth, 2018. 445pp. \$39.99 (paperback). ISBN 9781742235394.

Serving Our Country is the first book to chart the long history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service. The product of an Australian Research Council Linkage project between several academic institutions and partner organisations including the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Department of Defence, the National Archives of Australia, the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the Australian War Memorial, this rich new collection makes a significant contribution to our understanding of Indigenous experiences of war from colonial to contemporary conflicts.

Skilfully edited by Joan Beaumont and Allison Cadzow and generously illustrated with historic and contemporary photographs, the book features contributions from renowned Indigenous scholars, war historians and experts in Indigenous histories. Experiences of service across the twentieth century, the effects of war on communities at home, the connection between citizenship, exclusion and activism and the ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

peoples' contributions to war have been remembered and commemorated over time are all discussed. The result is a comprehensive history of Indigenous Australian participation in war that emphasises the connections between battlefield, home and aftermath, and challenges the traditional 'whiteness' of Anzac.

The book opens with an introduction by the editors that maps the existing literature on Aboriginal Australians at war and foregrounds the connection between military service and citizenship. Mick Dodson and Siobhan McDonnell then present a detailed overview of colonial (then state and federal) legislation pertaining to Indigenous peoples, including that of military service. Subsequent chapters unfold chronologically. Experiences of service in the Boer War and the First World War are outlined by John Maynard, as is the impact of the latter on Aboriginal communities at home by Sam Furphy. Maynard's fascinating discussion of the role of returned Indigenous soldiers in the nascent interwar Aboriginal political movement precedes several chapters focused on the Second World War, including Beaumont and Tristan Moss on the establishment of Indigenous military units, Geoffrey Gray on the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as auxiliary labour in the north, and Furphy on the ways in which the war resonated with Indigenous peoples at home. Moving into the more recent past, chapters by Noah Riseman address the changing policies regarding Indigenous personnel in the Australian armed forces, and how this shaped the experiences of those who served in the conflicts of the Cold War era.

Cadzow's chapter about Indigenous women's service across the world wars and in more recent conflicts provides a welcome addition to the mainly male-dominated narrative, and is followed by another contribution from Riseman about Aboriginal activism in the post-war period. This provides an interesting bridge to chapters focused on contemporary Indigenous military service, including the establishment and work of NORFORCE by Cadzow and Shannyn Palmer's analysis of how the Australian Defence Force has attempted to address structural racism and create a more inclusive military. The book concludes with a discussion of official and grassroots remembrance of Indigenous military service. Here Beaumont outlines the tension between incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples into 'traditional' modes of Anzac commemoration and ensuring the continued recognition of other Indigenous histories and experiences of violence, including frontier conflict.

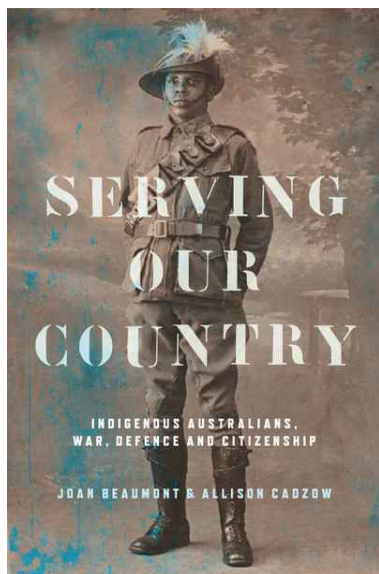
The impressive range of chapters covers a lot of ground. Some themes – such as a sense of equality on active service, repression and exclusion on return, and the connections between service and activism – cut across the chronology of the book and demonstrate how certain issues have continued to affect Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander servicemen and women over the years. Other issues, however, could have been explored further, such as the removal of Indigenous people from Country to provide land for (white) returned servicemen. Moreover, a chapter on frontier conflict and the ways in which Indigenous Australians fought against invasion and colonisation would have provided more context for the long history of Aboriginal defence of country and for the ways in which, as Beaumont and Cadzow note, remembrance of the frontier wars has become intertwined with Anzac commemoration.

A project of this scope and complexity was not without its methodological challenges. The 'bureaucratic invisibility' (12) of Indigenous peoples within the defence forces (historically ethnicity was not recorded upon enlistment), different definitions of Aboriginality at different times and in different places, and a lack of surviving written records such as memoirs, diaries and letters, has made compiling histories of Indigenous service notoriously difficult. Indeed, there is still no definitive list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who served in the First and Second World Wars. One of the key investigative methods of the book, then, was the gathering of personal testimony through oral histories. Over 180 interviews were conducted with former and current service personnel and their families or descendants in a format the research team termed 'Yarn Ups'. This conversational, more informal approach was designed to put interviewees at ease and allow them to tell their stories while "avoid[ing] any connotations of the perfunctory 'consultation' by government practice" (14). Naturally, the material gathered from the oral histories is concentrated in the post-Second World War chapters. The inclusion of the voices of those being discussed offers another, rather poignant, dimension to this latter part of the book. In a boon for teachers and other researchers, edited recordings of the 'Yarn Ups' are available on the project website.

Serving Our Country showcases the benefits of collaborative research across academic and cultural institutions as well as the ways in which oral testimony can offer evocative and unique insights into personal, community and national histories. This timely intervention into the way we think about our nation's war history, and the way historians approach Australia's military past, provides an important contribution to multiple historiographies. Readers keen to learn more about Indigenous history, Australian war history, and Australian history more broadly will find much of interest in this pioneering book.

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Review

Katie Holmes and Heather Goodall (eds.), *Telling Environmental Histories: Intersections of Memory, Narrative and Environment*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2017. 326 pages. ISBN 978-3-319-63771-6.

In *Telling Environmental Histories*, Katie Holmes and Heather Goodall have brought together a team of seasoned practitioners who draw on the methods of oral history to illuminate the ways in which people narrate themselves in places past, present, and future. Holmes and Goodall rightly question why the fields of oral history and environmental history have developed mostly in parallel, rarely engaging with the techniques and traditions of the other. As the contributors to this collection show, there are rich rewards awaiting those who listen – *really* listen – to peopled places as sites of ‘embodied and affective memories, reflecting years of knowledge and a strong sense of locale, emotion and identity’ (5).

This volume is the culmination of conversations arising from the European Society of Environmental History conference in 2015 that were developed further at a workshop in Australia later that year, as well as at subsequent conferences in India and the United States. The rewards for this collaborative effort are the thorough integration of the chapters, the constructive dialogue between them, and the thoughtful ways in which the contributors shed light on the different ways that doing oral history can draw out stories of place. Not only do they attend to the analytical insights and political potential of oral history, but also critique its practices and the ways in which the practitioner shapes and constructs their archive.

The collection’s organisation helps to facilitate this nuanced approach to storytelling places past. Structured in three parts, the volume groups the chapters around particular places and experiences in

Australia, North America, South Asia, and the United Kingdom. Focussing on rivers and their communities (human and more-than-human), de-industrialisation of cities and their surrounds, and environmental change in agrarian settings, this structure allows for productive comparison and contrast across cultures, methods, and purposes. Juxtaposing the case studies in this way not only reveals different ways of narrating places, but also the different ways in which the methods and practice of oral history and environmental history have developed in response to particular political contexts. The South Asian experience, for example, tends to have followed a more ethnographic approach to the collective experience of marginalised groups, in contrast to the focus on ‘individual processes of memory and retelling’ that predominates elsewhere (6).

Just as oral history has developed a diverse character in different contexts, so too has the field of environmental history. As Holmes and Goodall note, ‘If we are to explore what environments mean to people, as we need to do as historians of memory and orality, then we need to recognise the diverse types of “environments” and the differing forms of “environmental history” that have emerged’ (10). Together, these chapters show the import of projects that offer the means to listen widely in order to ascertain the complex ways that people relate to places past and present – whether to the Indigenous and non-Indigenous fishers of the Murray Darling Basin (Goodall and Frawley) or to the communities who express ambivalence about urban restoration projects of the River Tyne in the UK and the Mashapaug Pond in the United States (Skelton and Valk).

The political potential of oral history is especially evident in Rama Lakshmi and Shalini Sharma’s critical reflection on their curation of the Remember Bhopal Museum. This ‘house of memory’ (141) offers an important site for the ‘counter-memories of the oppressed’ (139), and shares the ‘difficult stories’ of survivors (135) that might be otherwise silenced in government narratives of India’s post-colonial triumph. Deb Anderson’s chapter, meanwhile, suggests how longitudinal oral history studies can shed light on the lived experience of slow disasters, particularly drought and anthropogenic climate change. Focussing on farming communities in eastern Australia, Anderson (like Frawley, Goodall, Oommen, Twigg and Holmes) finds that environmental change, identity, and practices in place are narrated across generations, with memories dynamic and ‘innately revisionist’ (269) as informants seek to find stability and identity in destabilising times.

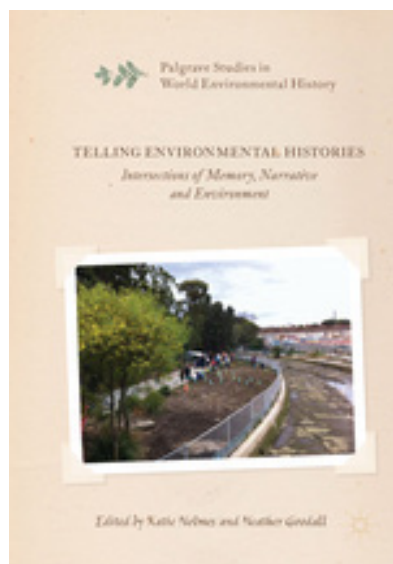
Attending to the agency of the more-than-human world has traditionally challenged historians, but Dudley and Oomen offer innovative ways to overcome tendencies to hold ‘nature at a distance’ (84). For Dudley, recording the ‘sonic impression of the bore’

itself is a means to listen to the many voices of the Severn. In her study of famine and migration in southwest India, Oomen finds productive opportunities in understanding place as a ‘mutual context’ (244) for animal and human interactions. Here, relationships to each other and to place are central: ‘Forest dwellers, settlers, environmentalists, and several cultures of non-human agency all relate to this landscape based on their prior conditioning and experience’ (260). The testimonies of her human informants help Oomen to understand these interactions, and to speculate as to the ways in which animals of a ‘complex psychology and superior memory’ (259) such as elephants and pigs experienced and responded to anthropogenic activities.

This volume also demonstrates the analytical value of attending to the aurality of place. Contributors to this volume show that listening to place as a soundscape is a significant method to understand how informants situate themselves in particular places. For Dudley, the sounds of the Severn Bore are an important means to register and gauge environmental change, while for Piyusha Chatterjee and Steven High, the soundscape of Pointre-Saint-Charles is constitutive of the ‘vernacular geography of place’ (197). Attending to the sound politics of a place, as these authors show, reveal how particular auditory environments are experienced and how these experiences change over time. Twigg too is cognisant of the affective implications of place on her informants as she takes to the paddock to excavate the ‘internal landscapes’ of farmers in the Mallee, which she finds to be ‘redolent with family stories that speak of resilience, teamwork and survival’ (225).

This exciting collection has much to offer both oral historians and environmental historians who seek bold and innovative ways to listen to people in place, and to places over time. If place knowledge, as Dudley suggests, is ‘physical as well as temporal’ (92), then the immersive and embodied techniques that the contributors demonstrate are productive ways in which to advance the fields of oral history and environmental history, while attending to the demands for environmental justice and representation in a rapidly changing world.

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Review

Eve Puodžiūnaitė Wicks, *In Sunshine and Shadow: Reflections on Lithuanian Immigrant Life*, Brisbane, Eve Wicks, 2018. 351pp. \$60.00 (Hardback). ISBN 9780648120704. Lithuanian translation by Gintautas Kaminskas.

Eve Puodžiūnaitė Wicks' *In Sunshine and Shadow: Reflections on Lithuanian Immigrant Life*, follows the story of the Lithuanian community in Australia – how they came to be here, what they did when they came here, how they adapted to life so far from their homeland, how they supported their ‘captive nation’, and finally, what they discovered when they visited Lithuania after it attained independence.

Wicks was born in Brisbane in 1944 of Lithuanian parents who fled Lithuania in 1940. Wicks has a tremendous sense of her cultural heritage which she learned about as a young child – her earliest memories are of singing Lithuanian folk songs with her family. However, as she grew up she lost her Lithuanian language, living isolated in an overwhelmingly ‘Anglo-Australian’ community during assimilationist years, and an internalised need to ‘fit in’. She writes of feeling ‘relieved’ to lose her ‘unpronounceable surname’ when she married. Many years later in 1996, Wicks began to research her cultural identity through her mother’s photograph album, and when her father died in 1998, she realised that she urgently needed to tell the Lithuanian people’s story.

In 2001 Wicks began with a social documentary study with three immigrants, drawing heavily on oral history and photography. The result was a four-month exhibition at the Queensland Museum, South Bank in 2005. Visually impressive, *In Sunshine and Shadow*, created as part of her doctoral study, is a culmination of the research undertaken for the project. The book is well-organised, each of the nine chapters focussing on a different theme relevant to the migrant experience.

Each begins with the chapter name in Lithuanian and English on a background image of embroidered linen, followed by a themed poem or song with the Lithuanian words on the left page and the English words on the right page. The narrative then unfolds in the same way: Lithuanian on the left pages and English on the right. Then there are photographs relevant to the chapter theme: a collection of sepia-toned historical photographs from family archives, and beautiful photographs in colour taken by the author. The book's silk-finish fine art paper supports the printing of the high-quality photographs.

The story of Lithuania is told in the chapter 'Motherland' where we learn about the country's origins. Independence was declared on 16 February 1918, but the events of the next 70 years would change Lithuania forever. Excerpts from oral histories form part of the narrative telling the story of World War II and the first invasion by Soviet Russia in 1940, and the oppression endured as many people were sent to Siberia. Wicks's parents were amongst Lithuanians and other peoples, British nationals, who travelled by train from the Baltic States, across Russia to Vladivostok and then by sea to Brisbane, in an evacuation by the British government. Initially, the Lithuanians were able to express their culture through their singing and dancing, but this did not last for long. Gathering together and speaking in a foreign tongue were forbidden during the war and the Lithuanians were investigated as suspect subversives and communists.

A subsequent chapter tells of the hardship and tragedy of World War II with Lithuania being torn apart when 'one evil oppressor was replaced by another.' They faced both the Russian mass deportations and German invasion in June 1941, followed by the Russian re-invasion in 1944 when many Lithuanians fled. We hear the voices of the young who experienced these events: Irena, aged 10 at the time, tells of losing her grandmother when she left a wagon in bitter cold and wandered off, 'I think she must have frozen.'

When Lithuanian refugees arrived in Australia in the 1940s and 1950s, they found a climate and lifestyle very different to their homeland. Through post-war migration schemes they were contracted for two years to work as 'labourers' and 'domestics' for the Australian government. Many worked in the cane fields of north Queensland, living in barracks or huts, including women who cooked for the men. Initially unaccustomed to such an environment, they eventually 'became toughened and acclimatised.' Many were white-collar professionals who had not previously performed manual labour, including doctors whose qualifications were not recognised by the Australian government. Some 'New Australians' experienced discrimination from English-speaking Australians demanding they 'speak English!' and claiming they

were 'taking our jobs.' When the two-year contract period had expired the Lithuanian migrants were free to find their own work, which was not always easy. Married couples had to work to save for a home and family. If they had the financial means to do so, some professionals and tradesmen were able to have their qualifications recognised after they had done extra study. Eventually, the Lithuanians made a new life for themselves but still maintained their connection to their homeland and culture, supported their relatives in need and engaged in political measures to free Lithuania.

On 11 March 1990 Lithuania declared its independence from the Soviet Union. The Brisbane Lithuanians were 'ecstatic'. There was both joy and sadness, as not all had lived to see this day. Those who were left 'felt free at last to go home', and many returned to their homeland looking to connect with relatives, to find those lost (or their graves), and to see the places which were seared in their memories. For some there were significant encounters and changes which made it 'very painful to go back.' Many found that their old home was no longer there, the forest had gone, or the lakes and rivers were polluted. Some did find their home, now occupied by strangers, and others found that meeting very old family and visiting graves was 'very emotional.' The joy of celebrating their country's freedom was countered by a disappointment when reality did not match their expectations; they bemoaned the loss of the pine trees and the way homes had been replaced by concrete high-rise apartment blocks typical of the Soviet Union.

This visually impressive and beautifully researched book tells the story of Lithuania in English and Lithuanian, giving a voice to Lithuanian migrants. Importantly, it makes their story accessible for future generations in both Australia and Lithuania. Throughout the book the continuous theme is the contrast of 'sunshine' and 'shadow'. There is joy and sorrow, peace and war, freedom and occupation. This may be read as a human story of one people who had faith that their country would one day be whole again. It may also be read as a fine example of a powerful project based upon oral history.

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Review

Patrick Nunn, *The Edge of Memory: Ancient Stories, Oral Traditions and the Post-Glacial World*, London: Bloomsbury Sigma, 2018. 288pp. \$29.99 (paperback). ISBN 9781472943262.

In 2015, *Australian Geographer* published an article by geographer Patrick Nunn and linguist Nick Reid, 'Memories of Inundation.' The authors trawled through Aboriginal stories about floods, giant waves and coastal drowning from 21 sites across Australia and raised the astonishing possibility that these memories were in fact recollections of a single historical event: the rising seas at the end of the last ice age, some 7,000 years ago. As I write this, the article has been viewed 25,000 times. This is a story people want to know.

In *The Edge of Memory: Ancient Stories, Oral Tradition and the Post-Glacial World*, Nunn elaborates on the original ground-breaking article. The 21 sites and their associated stories form the core of the book, but Nunn also considers fascinating ancient memories from other societies, including those of Europeans. Nunn elaborates on the complex geography - the science of how and why of fluctuating seas - helping us to imagine the lived experience of rapid coastal change. At one time, 14 metres of Australian coastline was lost every day, probably causing political and economic chaos for Aboriginal societies (66). Ultimately, however, the book is an argument for the value of oral memory, its longevity and its usefulness for understanding the past, even for scientists.

In each of the 21 locations, Nunn turns to written accounts of oral traditions. These are normally the earliest instance in which the story was put into writing by 'curious' Europeans. He seeks to work from the 'original content' of Aboriginal cultures, presumed to be 'massively altered' by colonisation (64-64). I was familiar with some of these stories from my own work with Aboriginal communities. The

Anindilyakwa people of Groote Eylandt know about Bralgu or 'North East Island'. Anthropologist David Turner called it a 'land of the dead'. It is where spirits of the deceased travel and is 'somewhere' in the Gulf of Carpentaria (the island has not been identified). During the mission years it became associated with the Christian hell. For Nunn, North-East Arnhemlanders' knowledge of Bralgu are memories of an island that existed before the sea rose (87). Tiwi people likewise talked with me about Murtankala. This old woman formed their islands as she crawled on the ground in darkness with her children on her back, long ago. Her son, Tjapara, became the moon. For Nunn, the Murtankala narrative is, possibly, an encoded memory of the Tiwi migration from the mainland as the sea encroached. Her blindness perhaps represents the uncertainty of the destination. Her crawling, the difficulty of crossing a partly-submerged land bridge (93).

Nunn interprets stories these ways by understanding their function as essentially evolutionary mechanisms designed to ensure the survival of the next generation. Our ancestors were 'never arbitrarily creative' he writes. Their art, music, stories and songs were directed at passing on knowledge that would ensure the survival of the next generation (26). When faced with dramatic natural events – such as a tsunami or volcano – human societies will 'use imagination to supply explanation where none is readily forthcoming' (23). In Aboriginal cultures, he implies, this has meant the invention of Creative Beings or Dreamings and their activities. The more dramatic or fantastic their exploits the better because, for Nunn, vital knowledge – such as how to survive invading seas – must be 'embellished' or 'dressed up in arresting clothing' to make the next generation take heed (25). The more striking a story, the more important it must have been and so the older it may be. These assumptions allow him to sift through the apparently supernatural details of Aboriginal stories to get at, what he considers, the historical core. I wondered what the Indigenous communities concerned might make of their knowledge being interpreted in this way.

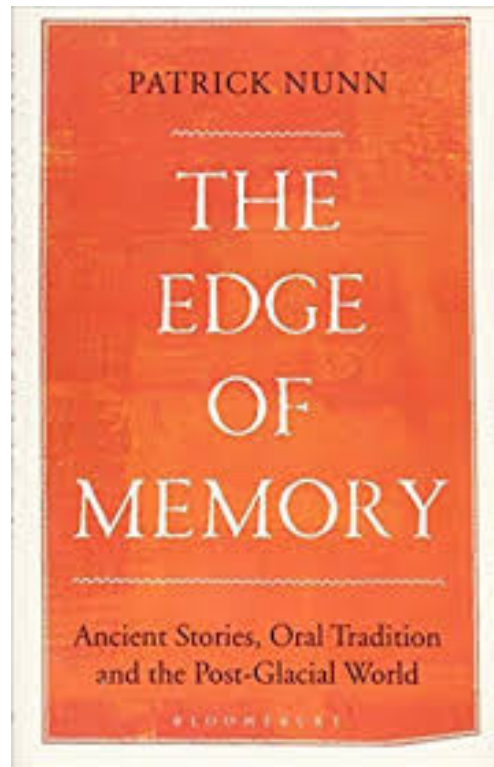
Nunn is not the first to theorise that Aboriginal songs and stories encode memories of ancient events (though these claims are also subject to substantial critique) but, in a radical new approach, he goes beyond the local community and its oral tradition about place; Nunn is the first to systematise stories from across the continent, placing them in relation to a single universal event. In 1938, for instance, Norman Tindale raised the possibility that a Tanganekald story about a woman kicking a fire, making a hole in the ground, encoded an ancient memory of a meteorite impact. Subsequently, linguist Robert Dixon and archaeologist Josephine Flood speculated on similar themes. Dixon focused on Ngadayan stories of thunders and clouds as memories

of volcanic eruptions on the Atherton Tablelands some 10,000 years ago. Flood wrote of possible memories of megafauna and, incredibly, recollections even of people's first migration to Australia tens of thousands of years ago.

But historians, and oral historians in particular, have been notably absent in this emerging field. Surprising, perhaps. One might expect that moves to read Aboriginal narratives as historical sources would appeal to historians. I suggest that historians could bring to this emerging field a sensitivity to the diverse natures of historical sources; close appreciation for the contexts in which sources emerge, including the dynamics of the colonial encounter in which these texts were produced (and the ongoing colonisation of Aboriginal knowledge in our settler-context); and an attentiveness to how interpretation of these texts has changed over time. Historians' approaches to cross-culturalising history, such as that of Minoru Hokari, could reveal how various historicities or historical traditions produce diverse knowledges of the past. Oral historians would be especially concerned with the ways memories function for communities today; the embodied, emplaced encounters in which stories are made present; and would bring a familiarity with plurality in memory and meaning.

Most exciting, perhaps, for oral historians is Nunn's affirmation of the spoken word and his challenge to the dominance of the written. Ignorance of the depth and scale of human memory is a function of blind adherence to written texts alone, he argues. If we acknowledged the oral, humanity's self-understanding and understanding of our planet would be all the richer. Aboriginal oral knowledge, he describes as like a 'library' with 'books' that could be 'read only by those who had been taught to "read"' them (51). Following Walter Ong, Nunn presumes that Aboriginal knowledge transmission has been fundamentally altered by the advent of written literacies. This leads to a paradox. Nunn's approach, perhaps inadvertently, privileges written accounts of Aboriginal memory as recorded by Europeans over the orally transmitted knowledge of Aboriginal people today. In a sense, he expects orality to behave like literacy; static through time (hence the 'book' metaphor), rather than alive in tradition. Nevertheless, that a geographer exhorts us to pay attention to oral memory suggests a new appreciation for oral knowledge is seizing the collective imagination. That is reason to celebrate.

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Review

James Hammerton, *Migrants of the British Diaspora since the 1960s: Stories from Modern Nomads*, Manchester University Press, 2017. 265pp. £80.00. ISBN (hbk) 9781526116574.

Full disclosure. Hammerton and Alistair Thomson's book *Ten Pound Poms: Australia's Invisible Migrants* (Manchester University Press, 2005) is one of my favourite histories, blending sharp analysis with a fine narrative style. Upon hearing that Hammerton was embarking upon a large oral history project examining British migration from the 1960s, I suggested that he speak to my family. My parents, self-described 'refugees from Thatcher', arrived in Adelaide from north-west England in 1981 with three small children; their life story encompasses financial decline and entanglement with a fundamentalist religion, from both of which I still bear scars. I regretted opening up my personal history for another historian to pick over almost as soon as I had set up the meeting. I need not have worried, my family was in the safe hands of a skilled and empathetic oral historian.

Hammerton has here expanded upon the previous work by interviewing 135 individuals across seven countries. He notes that although British emigration peaked in the mid-twentieth century, large numbers of British migrants still emigrate and live abroad permanently. Focusing on the decades since the 1960s, a defining feature of this cohort is the 'casual attitude' of modern, often 'serial' migrants to global mobility.

While economic migration is still present (and was particularly so during the Thatcher era of the 1980s), motivations around lifestyle and adventure increasingly feature due to a rise in social mobility and, of course, access to mass travel. For some, cosmopolitan identities include serial migrations; others are forced to migrate on or return to Britain because of relationship dynamics. Hammerton describes the modern British diaspora as nomadic – ease of mobility, following the age of empire, is a key theme.

The book is divided into two parts. The first sets out a chronological history of British migrants from the ‘post-war pioneers’ of the 1940s to the 1960s, who migrated in the context of Britain’s imperial history, an ‘empire of the imagination’; this travel was subsidised and encouraged by, for example, Australia’s ‘Ten Pound Pom’ scheme and rights to permanent citizenship. The ‘decline of British privilege’ to the 1970s points to race relations within Britain acting as an impetus to emigration for some individuals. ‘Thatcher’s refugees and Thatcher’s beneficiaries’ in the 1980s tells a complex story of both working-class economic losers and middle-class economic winners under Thatcher: both types found reasons to emigrate. The section ends with an examination of ‘cosmopolitanism’ and ‘global citizenship’ from the 1990s. This is a very much a ‘social history of ordinary people’.

The second part is thematic. The first chapter in this section focuses on work and careers: not only economic (and aspirational) motivations for migration, but also the more traditionally mobile spheres such as academic employment. Family dynamics in ‘the push and pull of private life’ points to a key theme of the importance of relationships within migrant life stories. Lifestyle migration, treechangers and grey nomads are examined; and then the ‘changing faces’ of modern migration, including return and serial migration, and the British diaspora. Women’s stories and non-Anglo (British) stories are highlighted throughout. In many testimonies, self-improvement and adventure clash with what can be a ‘complicated tug of transnational emotional life and fractured identity’.

Hammerton’s contribution to oral history methodology is perhaps just as important as his contribution to British migration historiography. The book is a masterclass in how to use oral history interviews. The ‘illuminating range of revelations which can emerge from an accumulation of diverse individual stories’ are contextualised according to changing social, economic and political frameworks. This contextualisation is scholarly rigorous. For example, Hammerton does not back away from critiquing privileged late twentieth century British migration as born of affluence and preoccupied with ‘individual gratification and satisfaction’, even acting solely as an ‘expression of consumerism’. In making this point, though, he argues

for the importance of personal testimony in migration histories. As motivations for migration turn from the collective to the individual, so then must scholars look to individual life histories.

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