

Reviews



***Thin Black Line* (Podcast), Allan Clarke (Presenter) and
Rudi Bremer (Producer)**

*ABC Radio National,
Australian Broadcasting Corporation,
[https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/thin-
black-line/](https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/thin-black-line/)*

REVIEWED BY MAXWELL JOHN BRIERTY,
University of Queensland

The death of Daniel Yock, a young Aboriginal man, following his arrest by Queensland police in Brisbane in 1993 remains shrouded in infamy and tragedy. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation podcast, *Thin Black Line* traces the events surrounding his death, exposing the fine line between ‘tragic incident’ and unfinished business. Speaking with members of Yock’s family, his friends and senior figures of Brisbane’s Aboriginal community, Allan Clarke, a Muruwari man and award-winning investigative journalist, brings listeners on a journey in pursuit of answers. But what is uncovered is not black and white. The podcast paints a profoundly devastating image, with listeners being unable to avoid the shattering impact that Daniel Yock’s death had on those closest to him, and the far-reaching impacts that it had on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Queensland.

Thin Black Line is an assertive act of truth-telling, one that clearly articulates the unfinished business of the past. The podcast exemplifies a range of elements of Aboriginal storytelling that are profound and compelling, and the medium of podcasting allows this to be conveyed in a sophisticated way. Where traditional histories approach the past in abstract terms – holding the past at arm's length in the present – the Aboriginal oral histories in the podcast collapse time and summon time. Listeners are pulled into the past and made to bear witness to the evocative retelling of Daniel Yock's life and his tragic and avoidable death. The overarching narrative structure and non-linear progression of the podcast accentuate the storytelling of Aboriginal people, causing listeners to share in the anguish, devastation, and sense of profound injustice at the death of Daniel Yock. This is achieved by listeners gaining a sense of who Daniel Yock was. The oral histories presented in the podcast clearly demonstrate that his life endures in the memory of those who knew him, and that many people continue to mourn his loss today.

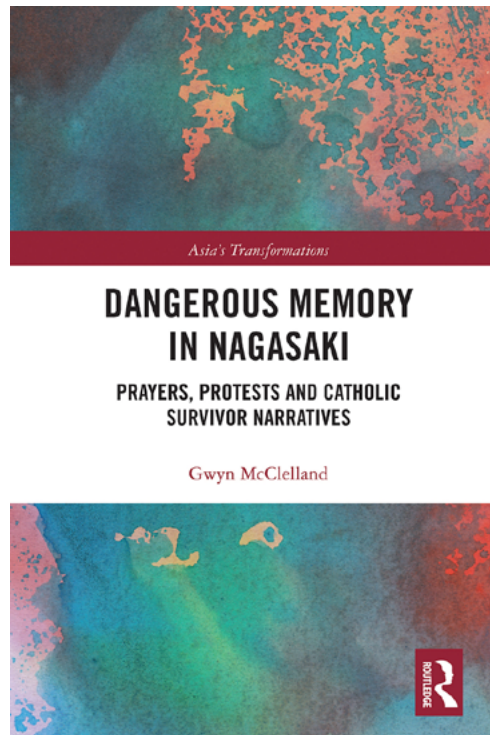
The unfinished business surrounding Daniel Yock's death may be particularly challenging for listeners. The narrative structure of the podcast gives listeners a sense that answers are needed, that justice must be done, but it concludes without a resolution. That justice has not been done is unmistakable, but the question remains how justice can be done going forth. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to identify truth-telling as a critical part of meaningful reconciliation, but *Thin Black Line* does not necessarily position listeners as potential changemakers nor equip them – particularly lay people – with the knowledge of how to learn from the past to reshape society.

The blame for Daniel Yock's death is framed around over-policing and the propensity that Queensland police have, at numerous times throughout their history, had for doing violence to Aboriginal people. This means that, at an elementary level, institutional racism and systemic failures are foregrounded in the podcast. This clearly builds from the dominant social and political discourse around Indigenous incarceration following the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Such discourse has tended to position Indigenous deaths in custody as a 'wicked' problem and something that can only be ameliorated through

progressive reform. However, this fails to fully account for the deeply embedded legacies and continuities of colonialism in Australia. After all, many Aboriginal people have a long historical memory and – as the Queensland Native Police reminds us – it was not that long ago that *it was the job* of certain members of the Queensland police to kill Aboriginal people.

Truth-telling is a critical and powerful part of *Thin Black Line*, but it may have been able to draw on the experiences and storytelling of Aboriginal people in such a way that problematised institutions in the present and reenvisioned a decolonial future. Without exploring the emancipatory potential of de-institutionalisation and decolonial efforts, the podcast reinforces – even naturalises – the position of police and the prison in society. At the same time, perhaps it is only first through processes of truth-telling – like that undertaken in the podcast – that meaningful societal change can come about.

It is difficult to engage with *Thin Black Line* without being made to confront the ongoing violence that sustains settler-colonial order in Australia. With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples now being among the most incarcerated groups in the world, and Indigenous deaths in custody continuing, podcasts such as this are more important than ever. It provides a window into a world that many non-Indigenous people would not be exposed to and, consequently, it is a valuable resource. That *Thin Black Line* does not arrive at a clear way forward is an important and compelling act of truth-telling in and of itself: truth-telling must take place before a resolution can be made. This podcast reinforces that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have unfinished business with colonialism. Such opportunities to voice experiences and injustices of the past and present are integral for creating a meaningful coexistence between First Nations people and settlers in Australia.



Dangerous Memory in Nagasaki: Prayers, Protests and Catholic Survivor Narratives, Gwyn McClelland

Routledge, London, 2020. 246 pages. \$77.99 (paperback). ISBN 9780367777234.

REVIEWED BY SHINNOSUKE TAKAHASHI,
Victoria University of Wellington

On a small island west of Kumamoto is a rustic fishing and farming village called Amakusa. On this island, there is a museum where visitors can see small bronze plates with prints of Christ crucified on the Cross, all of them well-worn. Next to the bronze plates are wooden sculptures, which look like Buddha, yet holding a small baby. It is at this museum that I saw for the first time the remnants of mass persecution of Christianity in this area, which took place most violently between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The image of Christ on the bronze plates

is hardly recognisable without prior knowledge, not just because the plates are aged, but because they were stepped on by thousands of local Christians as they renounced their religion. On the other hand, the Buddha-like sculptures of the Virgin Mary tell us how local villagers secretly retained Christianity despite the risk to their lives. It is still a painful memory for someone who grew up in a Catholic community, marginal today, once violently forbidden. Yet, what caused me more pain was the humble town of Amakusa, which still remains economically and socially disadvantaged in this region.

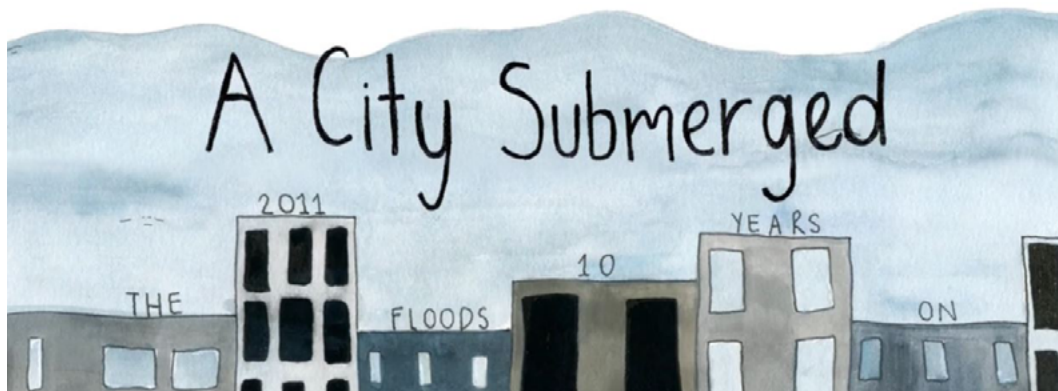
My review of Gwyn McClelland's *Dangerous Memory in Nagasaki* begins with a personal anecdote from my trip to Amakusa, which, as the author briefly mentions in an early part of the book, had cultural connections to the Christian community in Nagasaki over many years. This book, which is based upon the author's award-winning doctoral thesis, is perhaps one of the most remarkable works exploring the historical and contemporary experiences of the Christian community in Japan, sitting alongside Mark Mullins' monumental work, *Christianity Made in Japan*. Although the history of Christianity and Christians in Japan still occupies only a marginal area in the Western context, its significance has recently drawn more attention, visible in popular culture, including Martin Scorsese's film, *Silence* (2016), which was based upon the novel with the same title by Shūsaku Endō (1966), and more recently by Pope Francis's visit to Japan in 2019. In this context, Nagasaki, a prefecture in the west of Kyushu Island, is undoubtedly one of the crucial sites of enquiry, as the area was a part of the broader region in northern Kyushu where Christianity was protected by the local warlords prior to the great persecution around the turn of sixteenth century.

However, the history of Christianity does not represent the entirety of this book. In fact, what makes this book timely, relevant and, above all, essential is its detailed account of communal division, social exclusion and prejudice against the local Christian population, which has been deeply embedded in the local community for centuries. The history of the 'outcasts', also known as *eta* or *hinin* in pre-modern Japan, and its lasting social impact on modern life has been a major subject within Japanese studies, such as *Embodying Difference* by Tim Amos. Also, more recently,

Yoshikazu Shiobara, Kohei Kawabata and Joel Matthews published a co-edited volume on communal division built upon race, ethnicity and social stratification in contemporary Japan.¹ In this context, *Dangerous Memory* sits in a distinctive place by tying the issue of social exclusion with the history of Christianity, which was, at least to me, unheard of prior to reading this book. Although the author does not discuss it extensively, what fascinates me was the fact that Korean prisoners of war who were taken to Nagasaki in the wake of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea from 1592 to 1598 also became Christians. By delving into this local history of religious and social minorities, the author successfully reveals the presence of people and their long-neglected past, which have not previously been documented as a history.

The author's exploration of the impact that the atomic bomb dropped in Nagasaki on 9 August 1945 had on the Christian population led him to describe their oral histories, collective memory, individual testimony and social practice as 'dangerous' because they also unfold the stories of stigma and exclusion based on social class. For example, the book reveals that the area the bomb was dropped in, which suffered more damage than the more prosperous port area, yet was slower to be reconstructed, was populated by more socially vulnerable classes, including many Christians. His interviewees' historical narratives give us their active voices, which are otherwise dismissed or neglected by the majority of the local community in Nagasaki, because they are conceived as unsettling against the mainstream narrative and memory of the atrocity. In this sense, McClelland's work is indeed provocative, yet it also reveals a way in which this unprecedented event is endured and survived at the grassroots level, which is the mission of any historical study. This well-researched book is a must-read for those who are interested in the history of Japan, transnational history, and the memory of World War II beyond academia.

1 Yoshikazu Shiobara, Kohei Kawabata and Joel Matthews (eds), *Cultural and Social Division in Contemporary Japan* (London: Routledge, 2019).



A City Submerged: The 2011 Floods 10 Years On **(Exhibition)**

Museum of Brisbane, Brisbane,
<https://www.museumofbrisbane.com.au/a-city-submerged>

REVIEWED BY MARGARET COOK,
University of the Sunshine Coast

Photographs and film are the standard media used to visualise a flood, but the Museum of Brisbane's *A City Submerged* exhibition offers a unique interpretation of South East Queensland floods through artist Holly Neilson's ink pen and watercolours, animated by Sai Karlen. The accompanying text is spare – small vignettes provide context and stories that gently inform readers, adding depth to both text and illustrations. Diverse texts, informed by a range of participants, have been chosen: Michael Barnes (State Coroner), lyrics by The Strums (Brisbane band), Matthew Condon (journalist) and Thomas Shapcott (poet and novelist), as well as the oral accounts from Shannon Ruska (Yuggera/Toorabul elder), Jo Willans (Brisbane BreakFree Climate Action Group) and Brisbane residents Marjorie Cross, Cassie Woolley and Rachel Hoey. The writing styles vary and offer insights into how floods affect human lives, shaping emotion and memory.

This exhibition illustrates the richness of collaborative work when artists, writers and oral historians combine skills to convey our stories and record the past. The snippets of oral history shared in this exhibition humanise the flood to an individual's level, adding a poignancy to the exhibition. As many Brisbane residents will remember the 2011 floods, these accounts may resonate with viewers of the exhibition.

Stories of the 2011 flood often highlight the dominant narratives of communities pulling together, overcoming nature's attacks through a determined common purpose to quickly return life to normal. But rather than relying on these familiar tropes of resilience – of heroism and conquering nature – this exhibition offers a more nuanced narrative of the flood. Recent scholarship has challenged the popular perception of a flood's temporal scale – they are not a short, singular event but one with enduring and indefinable timetables.¹ For some, lives are permanently altered; the event is not over when the waters recede and the mud is hosed away. In the words of poet Thomas Shapcott, cited in the exhibition: 'Floods may go down, but the things they leave behind take much longer'. Marjorie Cross tells us of the slow process of recovery as she was unable to sleep whenever it rained for five years after the flood. Shannon Ruska reminds us that floods are part of Deep Time, recounting the Dreaming story of Moodagurra, the rainbow serpent, that brought big rains that, as the accompanying drawing shows (image seven), subsumed all below.

The opening image depicts a city submerged in 2011 through graphics of moving and rising waters, as the exhibition title text bobs up and down in the ebbing flood-waters. The image immediately hooks the audience, enticing them to continue through the exhibition, which loosely follows the chronology of the flood. The ominous grey clouds, falling rain and lightning strikes in image two and the single figure looking into the rising waters in image three creates a sense of foreboding, as do the quoted lyrics from The Strums: 'Oh, river don't you come up over me'. The

1 Scott McKinnon and Margaret Cook, 'Introduction', in Scott McKinnon and Margaret Cook (eds), *Disasters in Australia and New Zealand: Historical Approaches to Understanding Catastrophe* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 9.

muddy waters knocking on doors demanding entry (image four) reflects the agency of nature in floods. The family looking at their submerged house (image six) depicts the futility of human action, accompanied by the salient message from Marjorie Cross: possessions 'don't really matter'.

Mud is an enduring memory of floods and its ability to seep in everywhere is reflected in the image of the mud-filled toaster (image eight), and the teddies atop furniture surrounded by rising water (image nine) reminds us of the emotional impact of disasters. Brisbane resident Rachel Hoey describes the agonising decisions that were made over which precious belongings to save, while Cassie Woolley describes the 'tonnes of mud that had been dropped on this suburb', referring to her Brisbane home. Not surprisingly this segues into what may become the most indelible 2011 flood story – the thousands of people who volunteered to assist in the clean-up. The mud image (image 10) and Jo Willans's words encapsulate both the story and the mythology created: 'A city united, drawn together in solidarity to help out, clean up and rebuild. Out of the floodwaters rose the Mud Army'.

What is missing from the exhibition are the human contributions to the floods – humans are portrayed as the hapless victim. The challenge for future exhibitions, particularly in light of climate change and the accompanying risk of more frequent and intense floods, is to produce an exhibition that challenges human behaviour and discourages building on the floodplain. I suspect this was not the designer's brief. Perhaps this is where artists and writers can make their greatest contribution: in working with flood scholars to convey future scenarios that inform the public. Exhibitions like these have important roles, as disaster scholarship demonstrates that maintaining flood memory contributes to public education and helps reduce the hazard by raising community awareness. I commend the Museum of Brisbane on this attractive and engaging exhibition that also fulfils a valuable educative role.

PRIDE IN DEFENCE

THE AUSTRALIAN MILITARY &
LGBTI SERVICE SINCE 1945



NOAH RISEMAN & SHIRLEENE ROBINSON

***Pride in Defence: The Australian Military &
LGBTI Service since 1945, Noah Riseman
& Shirleene Robinson***

*Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2020. 272
pages. \$34.99 (paperback) ISBN 9780522876741*

REVIEWED BY JAMES BENNETT,
University of Newcastle

It is a curious fact that the lifting of the ban on LGBTI personnel serving openly in the Australian defence forces in 1992 is barely remembered and completely submerged by the dominant narrative of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ – the Clinton administration’s compromise solution a year after the Australian reform. In the years following the 1992 reform there was much unfinished business in changing attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ people serving in the military. By degrees, particularly through

the instrumental role of ADF leadership and LGBTI advocacy group DEFGLIS – Defence Gay & Lesbian Information Service – there has been a very significant shift in policy towards a more inclusive climate in the services.

That progress has been tempered in recent years of conservative government by a new culture war context, which has forced the progressive ADF leadership to temper its approach to inclusion strategies. The Murdoch press has characteristically led the charge in prosecuting the new culture wars. Costs borne by the ADF for gender affirmation surgery, HIV prevention drugs along with the ADF's official participation in the annual Mardi Gras parade since 2013 have all been flashpoints, held up by the media's chief prosecutors as evidence of 'radical social engineering'. The conservative challenge to diversity and inclusion policy was underlined even more starkly in May 2021 by the political master of defence chiefs – new Defence Minister, Peter Dutton. Following his appointment to the portfolio, Dutton moved quickly in ordering the Defence Force Chief and Secretary of Defence to cease morning teas in which staff wore rainbow clothes or ally pins in support of LGBTI servicemen and women, accusing the department of pursuing a "woke" agenda'.

Conservative critics have consistently and falsely conflated diversity and inclusion with identity politics and social engineering. Defence chiefs such as Chief of Army, David Morrison (2011–15), and Chief of Navy, Ray Griggs (2011–14) have argued conversely that the reforms are designed to build a better ADF, one that reflects the views and norms of modern Australian society. Noah Riseman and Shirleene Robinson's book is the first comprehensive account of the institution's key shifts, spanning an 80-year period from the days of hidden same-sex encounters in World War II to the diversity and inclusion programs pursued in the 2010s.

In so doing Riseman and Robinson build on the work of other LGBTI scholars, who have identified World War II as a site of particular interest for LGBTI history, and their own companion book, *Serving in Silence* (2018), which presented life stories of 14 LGBT service personnel after World War II. As part of their broader research goals, the team's findings were also disseminated in the form of a touring exhibition,

featuring objects, photographs, documents and life stories of participants from oral history interviews.

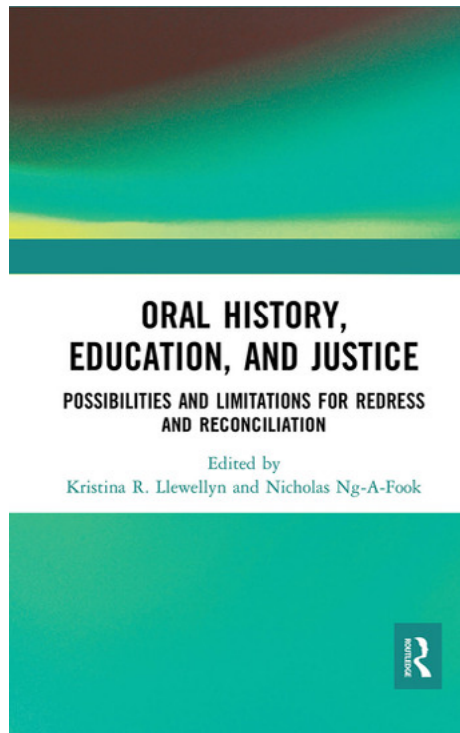
Pride in Defence is impressive in the scale and organisation of its undertaking. It draws on a wide array of archival and official sources – especially from defence forces and the National Archives of Australia: 140 oral history interviews, personal papers and media sources including LGBTI media are drawn upon. Oral history is popular among LGBTI scholars as there are so many silences in the archival record, while written records such as police files are limited in their capacity to yield an understanding of the personal. Put simply, oral history method provides us with a way to engage with the big picture of history through the micro-lens of the individual, significantly enriching our understanding of human experiences and impacts.

One of the book's significant findings to my mind relates to the 1950s and '60s – a time when same-sex encounters were not only illegal between men but were intensively policed, particularly in New South Wales, whereas there was a silence about lesbianism. And yet, the reverse applied in the military sphere where official anxieties were rampant regarding the effects of such a hegemonic masculine institution on socially accepted standards of femininity. The attraction of the forces to lesbians was perceived as threatening and became the basis for their targeting out of fear that a significant presence would rebound on the public image of the forces. This was the era of surveillance, investigations and witch-hunts, usually leading to dishonourable discharges, and became the template for what the authors refer to as the 'heightened ban years' from 1974 to 1992.

The book gives us a reasonably good sense of the relationship between the military sphere and the wider polity. The ban period, for example, witnessed progress in civil rights for LGBT people, responded to by service police with an even harder crackdown in an attempt to hold back the tide on changing gender and sexual norms. This dimension might have been developed further through a sharper focus on major shifts in the socio-political landscape in the first two decades of the twenty-first century via such landmark reforms as marriage equality. We do get a hint of this from one interviewee, a current member of the forces, who noted an upsurge in

homophobic comments during the marriage equality postal survey in 2017. This is an anecdote corroborated by emerging research on the impacts of corrosive public debates on marriage equality and related issues over the past decade.

Pride in Defence is an important achievement and will deservedly be foundational to our understanding of LGBTI people in the military for many years to come.



***Oral History, Education, and Justice: Possibilities and
Limitation for Redress and Reconciliation, Edited by
Kristina R. Llewellyn and Nicholas Ng-A-Fook***

*Routledge, New York, 2019. 218 pages. \$252.00
(hardcover). ISBN 9781138896154.*

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINE TRIMINGHAM JACK,
Charles Sturt University

The central tenet of this multifaceted and highly informative edited book is that when oral history is coupled with educational endeavours it has a crucial part to play ‘in global movements for redress and reconciliation of segregation, apartheid, forced migration, genocide, and other human rights abuses’ (p. 1). The focus is mainly

Canadian but as an Australian reader, I found much to learn that is applicable to the Australian context.

The book is divided into two overarching sections where the broad themes of trauma, reconciliation, oral history and education are unpacked and tied together. Section one addresses public pedagogies, memory and redress, while section two focuses on unsettling curriculum, pedagogies and reconciliation.

In section one, the notion of 'education' is nuanced: contributors problematise their engagement in the field of oral history as 'positioned' researchers with the learning that comes from such reflexivity. Timothy Stanley's chapter traces his journey into understanding oral history, providing an overview of the development of oral history methodology. Offering examples taken from First Nations people, Chinese-Canadian and Japanese-Canadian communities, he discusses how trauma engendered by racialisation and exclusion takes time to emerge. The intergenerational transmission of trauma, and the ways that some oral history formats may both reveal while, at the same time silence, those whose experiences we seek is unpacked, and considered in relation to the small proportion of people whose histories have been recorded, and the ongoing nature of *true* redress.

Aparna Mishra Tarc analyses changes regarding what is accepted as legal evidence from First Nations people. What is valuable in this chapter is the revelation that oral histories have the potential to 'revolutionize our habituated meanings of knowledge, truth and justice' (p. 66), and that studying events where this occurs may lead us to re-examine our own consciousness about what constitutes evidence. Pamela Sugiman's contribution details the intergenerational trauma in her Japanese-Canadian family, and her decision as a young academic to draw on oral history to confront the silences in both her family's and community's past. After working with *Nisei* narrators, she powerfully repositions herself to 'gain a nuanced understanding of what non-Japanese Canadians, for decades silent, remember about the internment and how they narrate their memories' (p. 78). Her challenge is to problematise and question 'silence', especially relating to the racialised past. Jennifer Tupper's chapter reflects on the formation of her own 'settler' consciousness, including childhood

family experiences which were made possible by ‘material and social privileges’ which she recognises ‘are directly connected to a deeply colonial past and present’ (p. 98). She challenges us to engage in the ‘difficult work’ (p. 102) of recognising how settler consciousness is shaped by colonialism and a willingness to enter into ‘complex conversations that seek to connect the colonial past to present colonial realities’ (p. 102), arguing that ‘settler life writing’ (p. 90) offers a way forward in this process.

In section two of the book, education takes centre stage. A key question for Kiera Brant-Birioukov, Nicholas Ng-A-Fook and Kristina R. Llewellyn is how ‘doing oral history education’ (p. 108) can become a ‘pedagogy’ of empathic and ethical listening, leading pre-service teachers to examine their positionality and relationship to the stories and history: a process of ‘learning’ and ‘unlearning’. They exemplify this through what is being done at the University of Ottawa to develop a ‘praxis of reconciliation’ (p. 107) at times comparing it with what is being done in Australia. Interestingly, the program includes viewing the film *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, ‘which juxtaposes the violent intergenerational impacts of settler colonial residential schools in Australia, with Indigenous ways of knowing, ingenuity, and youth resistance’ (p. 113). What they seek is an ‘emotional response’ that ‘can bring a learner from a space of *witnessing* to a space of *experiencing* past relations that have fallen apart’ (p. 119).

Lisa Taylor’s chapter reports on her longitudinal study of the use of Indian Residential School survivor testimony and testimonial literature, film and storytelling in a Bachelor of Education program. There is an immediacy given to the report through the inclusion of student’s responses as they question the ‘certainties’ of their lives through what is termed ‘remembrance pedagogies’ (p. 139). Taylor uses the work of Roger Simon in leading students to recognise that as ‘heirs of difficult histories’, they are ‘communities *in the making*’ (p. 144) and how oral histories are ‘a resource to rethink the terms of contemporary social and political life’ (p. 144). Lisa Farley and Tasha Henry explore how picture books can be used in primary education for the purposes of the ongoing, uncertain reconciliation, while recognising that these texts ‘come into the hands of teachers and students already steeped in the colonial context of their publication and circulation’ (p. 156). They argue that in a ‘time

of reconciliation' the role of the teacher must be rethought to consider not only students but a confrontation of one's own position, especially 'the fantasied notion of innocence' (p. 163) ascribed to children, exemplifying a pedagogy that addresses rather than avoids trauma.

Kristian Stewart's contribution reports on a South African teacher education curriculum based on a 'pedagogy of discomfort' (p. 170). In this, students who have never mixed outside of their own cultural or linguistic categories join a storytelling circle, leading to the production of a digital story based on their journey of becoming a teacher, with a recognition that their stories are shaped by the historical context in which they were formulated. The students share personal, often traumatic, experiences from that journey, many of which are embedded in 'the complex socio-economic and political realities that affect today's South African society' (p. 172). The approach is based on a hope that it will 'disrupt their preconceived notions of otherness, assist them in developing empathy, and help them to understand troubled knowledge' (p. 170); it is a powerful way of 'producing critically conscious' (p. 179) teachers. Finally, Dan Roronhiakewen Longboat, Andrejs Kulnieks and Kelly Young explore how 'oral history education needs to involve a focus on restoring our relationships between humans and humans and humans and the Earth' (p. 185). The methodology involves bringing Indigenous and Western scientific knowledge systems together in teaching history, social studies and environmental education. 'Oral Tradition' takes a central place in this endeavour as 'an enlivening connection to a repository of knowledge', allowing dialogue about 'deep relationships between humans and the Earth' (p. 193). Like the South Africa project, they urge educators to provide opportunities for students to develop their abilities to tell the stories that are 'historically referenced' (p. 194), and to share their own often traumatic stories, leading them to view historical events from different worldviews or perspectives.

Permeating this book is, as Lisa Farley and Tasha Henry state, a recognition that reconciliation is 'a reparative action that is without the certainty of knowing when it will end' (p. 153). There are powerful guides for ways in which educationalists and researchers can participate in this difficult, essential and ongoing process that does not shy away from the accompanying trauma. There is much for Australian readers to learn from it.