

Communities of Memory



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OHAA Journal

The OHAA Journal is published annually. Its content reflects the diversity and vitality of oral history practice in Australia, and includes contributions from overseas.

The Editor of the Journal welcomes offers of material for possible publication in the 2012 issue, No 34. The call for papers will be published on the OHAA website: www.ohaa.org.au. Suitable items include papers for peer review, unrefereed articles (such as project and conference reports) and book reviews. Please see the website for further information for contributors.

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Editor's notes

Having put up my hand at the eleventh hour to take over the Editorial role for this year's Journal, I found the process to involve a steep learning curve. However, it has been an enjoyable and rewarding one. This is largely due to the guidance and support of Jill Cassidy, to whom I am very grateful. It has also been a pleasure to work with the Editorial Board, comprising Chair Ariella van Luyn and members Janis Wilton and Beth Robertson.

What is surprising is that from a delayed start and few contributions despite extended deadlines, this edition has grown into a rich and eclectic one. We have an unprecedented four refereed papers – double that of past issues – and a variety of project and conference reports, as well as a number of book reviews. While the refereed papers have come at a time when the Australian Research Council's ERA journal rankings are being abolished, the papers all reinforce the fine quality and high standard of the Oral History Association of Australia Journal.

Philippa Martyr undertakes a history of Western Australia's mental health facility in her article 'A Hopeless Hill'. In this case there were few surviving archival materials, so the oral historical sources proved invaluable. Madeleine Regan's account of her project on Italian market gardeners in South Australia from the 1920s to the 1970s demonstrates the organic (pardon the pun) nature of oral history endeavours and how they can unfold to grow beyond the scope of any initial imagining – and with wonderfully positive outcomes all round.

Peter Kolomitsev and Silver Moon have teamed up to give us a reminder about the importance of quality recording techniques from the perspective of two self-confessed audio 'geeks'. I know this is something I can easily let slip when I am engrossed in the interview moment, so this is an important issue to revisit on a regular basis. Christeen Schoepf takes a glimpse at the voluntary immigration to Australia of Swedish woman, Karin Fredin-Bladh.

Judy Lovell's on-going project with Mrs Kathleen Kemarre Wallace, an Eastern Arrernte elder of considerable standing, is presented with a focus on Mrs Wallace's art. The article follows their jointly authored publication, *Listen deeply, let those stories in* (2009,

IAD Press, Alice Springs), and offers a fascinating and historically valuable account of Arrernte culture.

My own paper addresses some of the processual challenges encountered in cross-cultural collaborative ventures between Indigenous narrators and non-Indigenous researchers, including unexpected pitfalls and some highlights, and in doing so, illuminates an otherwise concealed level of power relations. It is based on my collaboration with Dr Doreen Kartinyeri to produce her life narrative, *Doreen Kartinyeri: My Ngarrindji Calling* (Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra 2008).

Miranda Francis takes a novel approach to data analysis, with some interesting results, to conclude that the quantitative methodology used still cannot match what is gained from the recordings themselves, which we all knew, of course!

Siobhan McHugh's work as a broadcaster who uses oral histories to craft radio interviews is extensively published. In this provocative article she discusses 'mixed' marriages between Catholics and Protestants in pre-multicultural Australia and the issues arising from her radio series, *Marrying Out* (2009).

Denise Phillips provides a comprehensive account of some of the sessions at the 2010 International Oral History Conference in Prague for those of us who were unable to attend. Janis Wilton has made quite some effort to condense a 13,000 word transcript into a succinct account of the 2009 conference panel on teaching oral history in universities, which offers valuable insight for those who are looking to enter this arena in the future. June Edwards reveals how forging partnerships can enrich the archive of material available for researchers, as a result of her approaching the National Library in relation to the 'Eminent Australians' project.

Boo reviews also address an interesting mix and President's and annual Branch Reports are included.

Happy reading!

Sue Anderson

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A hopeless hill: oral histories from Claremont, Swanbourne and Graylands Hospitals, 1935-1995

Philippa Martyr

Abstract:

Given the general restriction on access to written records, oral history can contribute enormously to the preservation of mental health history. For over seventy years, Claremont Hospital for the Insane (later Claremont Mental Hospital, today Graylands Hospital) was Western Australia's principal stand-alone psychiatric hospital. For many people living in Perth, 'being sent to Claremont' was half-joke, half-threat, but in reality very few people outside the mental health system really knew anything about this Hospital: who lived there; how it was run; what life was like there. Many of Claremont's paper records have disappeared or been destroyed, and the remainder are in the State Records Office, mostly under 100 year restriction. Yet the Hospital was, over its history, home to thousands of patients and staff, many of whom are still alive. A recent oral history project has collected a number of interviews which paint a fascinating and often challenging picture of this difficult and troubled institution.

Introduction and background to project

For over seventy years, Claremont Hospital for the Insane (from 1933 Claremont Mental Hospital) was Western Australia's principal stand-alone psychiatric hospital. For people living in Perth, 'being sent to Claremont' was half-joke, half-threat. In reality, very few people outside of the mental health system really knew anything about this hospital: who lived there, how it was run, what life was like there on a day to day basis.

Work on the new Claremont Hospital for the Insane began in 1903, and the main buildings were completed by 1912. Built to replace the overcrowded Fremantle Lunatic Asylum (opened in 1865), Claremont Hospital for the Insane was intended to be just that: a hospital where mental illnesses could be treated and hopefully cured; not an asylum for long-term custodial care. Located on a 400-acre site to the west of Perth, it was built on a prominent scarp with access to both sea

breezes and views of the city. It was surrounded by dense bushland and sand hills, and about a mile from the nearest railway station.

The last patients were transferred from Fremantle Lunatic Asylum in 1909, but within a few years Claremont Hospital was already overcrowded. To ease the intake of less seriously unwell admissions, Sydney Montgomery (Inspector General of the Insane 1903-1916 and Claremont Hospital's first medical superintendent) demanded and obtained mental observation wards at two major public hospitals - Perth and Kalgoorlie - which treated and rapidly discharged the majority of their admissions. This meant that only intractable and long-term admissions were transferred to Claremont, which slowly turned it from a hospital back into an asylum. At its peak in the late 1960s, Claremont Mental Hospital was home to over 1700 patients and employed over 600 staff in a range of capacities: nurses, wardsmen, ward attendants, gardeners, industrial rehabilitation workers, social workers, occupational therapists and catering staff.

The impact of new antipsychotic medications meant that patients could be discharged back to community living. By the late 1960s, over 1000 patients had been discharged, and in 1972 the Hospital was closed. It reopened as two separate hospitals: Swanbourne Hospital, which comprised the oldest part of the site and housed psychogeriatric and long-term patients with developmental disabilities, and Graylands Hospital, for acutely unwell admissions. Swanbourne closed in 1987, and today Graylands Hospital is Western Australia's largest stand-alone psychiatric hospital.

Project description

In late 2008 North Metropolitan Area Mental Health Service endorsed the 'Graylands History Project', to document the history of what is now Graylands Hospital from 1903. Many of Claremont Hospital's paper records have disappeared or been destroyed, and the remainder are in the State Records Office but are restricted. As an employee of the WA Department of Health (North Metropolitan Area Health Service-Mental Health) and a bona fide researcher, I have been



Administration Block, Claremont Mental Hospital (Photo courtesy Marc Russo)

given unprecedented access to the surviving restricted print records of the Hospital. While scoping the study, however, I found that there was comparatively little recorded oral history concerning the Hospital. There are a handful of interviews in the Battye Library which touch on the Hospital. The most comprehensive are those with Dr Guy Hamilton¹ and former nurse Joan Winch.² In the late 1990s Libby Wallenborn carried out a series of 11 interviews with staff and carers who were associated with the campus from the early 1970s onwards.³ Phillip Maude recorded 12 interviews with former nursing staff for his PhD thesis, but these interviews are used as extracts only in the thesis.⁴ Given this, I felt that collecting oral histories relating to Claremont and Graylands would be a valuable project on its own, in addition to helping my research on the Hospital's history.

I obtained ethics approval for the project through the North Metropolitan Area Health Service-Mental Health Human Research Ethics Committee. This approval was reciprocally recognised by the University of Western Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. This process was welcome because of the potentially serious risks involved. These included:

- I was open to interviewing former patients, who are a vulnerable population;
- there has been considerable stigma attached to Claremont as the 'bin', both as a place of incarceration and as a place of employment; and
- a painful industrial dispute and nurses' strike in 1980 drastically polarised the mental health nursing staff, leaving scars which are still felt today.

Some staff who worked at the Hospital during the strike would not speak to me unless they knew that their identity would be protected. Other staff remained anonymous because they wished to disclose incidents which, while now beyond the statute of limitations, may still carry serious implications for the staff, management and patients involved.

Once I received ethics approval (April 2009), I began advertising for informants and collecting interviews. I had already met people who had expressed their willingness to be interviewed, and in April 2009 I sent out an email to all employees of mental health services in Western Australia. This received a generous response, and I also used word-of-mouth and personal referrals to build up a list of informants. Initially, I sought the following principal groups of informants:

- former members of staff at Claremont/Graylands Hospital – medical, nursing, ancillary, grounds staff, catering, pastoral support, clerical, tradesmen, from the 1950s onwards;
- current staff members who, ideally, have been involved with the Hospital for ten or more years;
- former patients whose last contact with the Hospital was five or more years ago;
- family members of any of the above;
- carers, support workers, and other people involved in the Claremont/ Graylands community; and
- people who have lived, or are still living, near the hospitals in the Graylands area from the 1950s onwards.

I later extended this to the 1930s onwards, which gave me a larger pool of potential informants.

In May 2010, the *West Australian* newspaper ran an advertisement for me in their 'Can You Help?' column, which deals mostly with family history and reunions. This produced a second wave of informants, mostly from an earlier era at the Hospital. Not all of these wished to be interviewed, but they did allow me to make notes from their telephone conversations, which I then sent to them for their correction and approval. These 'reminiscences' have been included in the final oral history project with the transcripts of the interviews.⁵ Each month I also sent a regular project update to all participants and other interested individuals, which brought more informants into the project.

The project has (at the time of writing) recorded 33 interviews with 29 informants. Their various starting dates at the Hospital range from 1940 to 1983, and some are still employed by local mental health services. The interviewees include:

- 17 former nursing staff (13 male, four female)
- two former medical staff (male)
- four support staff – chaplain, wardsmaid, nurse tutor, clerical
- two ex-nursing students (both female)
- two adult children of former staff
- two ex-patients (1 male, 1 female)

In addition to this I have reminiscences from:

- five former nursing staff (female)
- two children of former nursing staff (one male, one female)

Most of those who worked at the Hospital had done so only briefly, with one exception (13 years on and off). This extended the range of memories as far back as 1935. Two interviews with two other former nursing staff – a long-time male staff member and a female nursing student who only worked at the Hospital for three months - were also conducted exclusively by email, and have been presented at the informants' request as transcripts with all identifying information removed.

Very few former patients have come forward to talk about their time in the Hospital. A range of reasons have been privately expressed to me by those who were initially interested, but later withdrew. The reasons include the pain of the memories involved, the stigma that is still attached to being an ex-patient, and the belief that their contribution will not help to effect change at the Hospital.

All informants signed a consent and release form, which included options for where they wished the recording to be preserved, and which also transferred the interview's copyright to North Metropolitan Area Health Service-Mental Health (a requirement specified by my employer and the NMAHS-MH Human Research Ethics Committee). The recorded interviews were transcribed, and a copy of the recording and

transcript were then sent to the informant, with a copy of their signed release form and a blank release form so that they could make any changes they wished, or withdraw their consent. Once the corrected transcript was received, the informant was sent the final copy. Almost all the informants took the opportunity to correct their transcripts and also to phone me to discuss their contribution.

No interviewed participants withdrew from the project. One informant was more cognitively impaired than the others, but was capable of giving informed consent. However, when his daughter read the transcript of the interview, she was dismayed at how his cognition had deteriorated. As a result, she asked me not to use this interview in the project, and I complied with her request.

Information gained through the project

Themes emerging from the interviews are complex and fascinating. They are dominated by stories from male nursing staff, who formed the majority of staff at the Hospital throughout its history. As both male and female staff lived on site, informants were able to describe in detail the process of daily life at the Hospital, for themselves and for patients.

Most staff began with a description of their backgrounds, which were for the male staff mostly working class and physical labour-oriented. Male staff across the entire period (1940-1983) expressed similar concerns: a lack of regular employment in their chosen field; a history of casual work; being married and needing to support a young family. The advantages of working as an attendant were considerable: it was consistent, better paid, and could be a job for life with regular incremental pay increases.

Female staff, by contrast, were usually younger and were often from rural areas and looking for ongoing employment which could not be found in their home towns. Their reasons for leaving Claremont were diverse: some left because of violent incidents, some because they were able to find a place in a general nursing course. Some left when they married, only to return to the Hospital to work later as widows or divorcees.

The job interview process seems to have been casual at best. Most staff believed that they had been employed largely because the Hospital was desperate for both male and female staff. Before the 1980s, most staff began their training on the wards and, up to the 1960s, the nursing training program at Claremont was rudimentary.⁶ Informants indicated that they were the 'lucky' ones who were able to cope; there were many who did not, and informants recounted stories of those who could not cope with different aspects of the work – patient hygiene and toileting was most challenging



Two Claremont nurses, c. 1940s

for the males, while females found the violence more confronting.

In the late 1950s, changes were gradually introduced into the nursing training program at the Hospital. A nursing tutor, Ron Dee, a UK double-certificated graduate (trained in both mental and general nursing) was employed in 1958 and introduced a more comprehensive system of training. Interviews with staff who began training in the 1960s and early 1970s indicate the difficulties they faced encountering an entrenched ward culture led by long-time charge attendants and nurses, which did not correspond with what they were being taught at the Preparatory Training School, and which both openly opposed and subverted this training.

The two mental health nurses' strikes in Western Australia formed another theme in the interviews, with a particular emphasis on the 1980 strike which was motivated in part by the dismissal of a hospital employee for violence against a patient. Informants came from both sides of the issue: some had worked during the strike for a range of reasons, mostly to do with concerns about patient care. Those who did not work had done so because they felt it was the right thing to do. No informants admitted to having taken part in violent incidents at the picket line.

Older staff had a clearer recollection of the 1950 Royal Commission which followed the 1948 strike. This Royal Commission investigated allegations of brutality by male attendants towards patients, and also the general administration of the Hospital.⁷ It produced a damning report which nonetheless failed to bring

about immediate change, mostly because the report was rejected by mental health authorities in Western Australia. Some informants had been involved in the incidents leading up to the Royal Commission and then the Commission itself, and this insider's view is very valuable.

The complete segregation of the Hospital into 'male' and 'female' sides, which effectively made it two hospitals operating on the same site, was a strong theme. Male and female staff had completely separate recollections of the wards, as neither ever saw the 'other side' of the Hospital. However, many former staff could describe the ward routines decades later, and could also tell similar anecdotes about incidents that took place in the Hospital, which is testament to the Hospital's carefully preserved rituals and routines.

The stories about and from the patients are the most moving. All staff – especially the male staff, who were in charge of the ward because of the constant shortage of female staff – agree that the children's ward in J Block was the hardest place to work in the Hospital. Other staff recount stories of individual patients who had lived in the Hospital for years. It is clear that during the custodial era, many staff and patients formed strong and functional relationships, with staff understanding what would 'set a patient off' and how to avoid or de-escalate potentially dangerous situations on an individual basis. In later years, this seems to have been lost. Staff who worked at the Hospital after the mid-1970s tend to focus instead on incidents of bullying and harassment between nursing staff and conflicts with other practitioners. They rarely report close relationships with patients.

Stories from the two patients are from very different eras. One interviewee is a male who had been orphaned and institutionalized from an early age, and was sent to Claremont in 1967 at the age of 16 because there was simply no other home for him. He was eventually discharged at the age of 32 and has lived successfully in the community ever since. The second informant is a female who had multiple admissions from her 30s onwards (around the 1980s), but has also now found equilibrium in community life. She has also reflected deeply on her experiences at Graylands Hospital. Both found their lived experiences at the Hospital painful and humiliating, for a variety of reasons, and both had been 'difficult patients' at different times in an attempt to have their needs met.

The relationship between nursing staff and medical staff followed traditional lines until the late 1960s. Nursing staff did not speak until they were spoken to; all communication with medical staff took place via the charge attendant or nurse, or the matron or head attendant. Memories from this era, however, indicate that the nursing staff had generally a low opinion of the Hospital's few doctors – that the medical staff were never there, or that they did 'long-range diagnosing through the window'.⁸

As this traditional hierarchical system began to break down, stories emerged about the positive and negative sides of the doctor-nurse relationship, among both sexes. On the one hand, doctors often feature in these stories as pompous know-alls, whose pride was very quickly punctured by bad ward experiences, and who came to realize they needed the nursing staff more than they had previously realized. On the other, former medical staff express gratitude for the work carried out by the nursing staff, and also frustration with the lack of modern amenities and equipment on the site. Medical staff also occasionally criticize other medical staff for their poor attitude towards patients and other staff.

The intra-professional relationships within mental health nursing described in these interviews are fascinating. The strong code of seniority upheld by the active union movement on site dominated the nursing culture, especially on the male side, where careers were often decades-long. Each ward was run according to the preferences of the charge attendant or nurse, whose careers could also span decades. Promotion could only be achieved through the death or resignation of senior staff, which many younger male staff found profoundly frustrating. On the female side, there were stories of dragonish matrons and of regular rule-breaking in order to have a social life outside the nurses' quarters. All staff agree that the charge nurses and attendants largely ran the Hospital, and that other staff had to learn their way around these senior staff's personal idiosyncrasies and quirks.

A number of the informants have an opinion on the many changes that had taken place at the Hospital over time. Staff are slightly more optimistic than patients about the possibilities of change taking place in mental health care which would improve outcomes. Nonetheless, many still believe that the Hospital represented an 'old way' of doing things, and had too many entrenched ideas and long-time staff. They believe that bringing about real change in the system would always be very challenging.

All staff have accounts of violent incidents with patients in which they had been personally involved. In the case of some female staff, this confirmed their decision to leave the Hospital's employment. Stories of deaths, particularly of child patients or suicides, often mark the same decision for male nursing staff. On the whole, staff are compassionate and fair-minded about these incidents, noting that in many cases the patients involved had later apologized to them, or that the neglect or mistreatment by other members of staff had prompted the incident in the first place. There also seems to have been a strong oral history culture within the Hospital itself: some male staff recollected incidents such as escapes, but the same incidents were also described by other male staff at second-hand, sometimes years later.



A 'trusty' patient working on the Claremont farm 1940s

I discovered at least one urban legend which had been perpetuated on the female nursing side for some decades – a story about a nurse who had been pushed down a flight of stairs or in some other way murdered by her former boyfriend, who had broken into the Hospital. In one case the incident was located in a ward built in 1954 known as Manning House, and in another case it was located in the female refractory ward (Ward F2). This story is certainly believed by those who told it to me, and who had it from a 'good authority' (longtime staff). There is, however, no documentary evidence of any kind to support this incident, even though other incidents at the Hospital such as escapes, suicides and attacks on staff were regularly reported in the local newspapers in Perth from as early as 1907.

I was also told one ghost story involving events which took place in Manning House, one of the wards, in the late 1970s. The incident is described faithfully by one of the witnesses, and there appears to be no rational explanation for the events, even though the ward was home to many practical jokes played by male staff on female staff, especially on night duty. A much older female staff member read this story and said that she and other nurses she worked with had had similar experiences on the same ward years earlier, but they thought it was the male staff and ignored it.

Principal outcomes

The edited transcripts, reminiscences and email interviews, together with the original recordings (35 individual CDs) have been deposited in the J S Battye Library, Perth, Western Australia. The transcripts have formed four volumes, organized by the informant's first contact with the Hospital. Volume 1 covers the 1930s and 1940s (13 informants); volume 2, the 1950s (5

informants); volume 3, the 1960s (10 informants); and volume 4 the 1970s and beyond (10 informants). As I am still open to collecting some further interviews, I have recently begun a fifth volume.

I have yet to publish from the collection, but I hope this year to do so, focusing in particular on oral accounts of the 1980 mental health nurses' strike in Western Australia. This has been a critically polarizing issue, and one which needs closer historical examination from the distance of some 30 years. I will also be incorporating material into my project on the history of Claremont, Swanbourne and Graylands Hospitals. I also have sufficient data for an oral history of mental health nursing in Western Australia, for which I am currently seeking funding and expressions of interest.

Practice issues identified in the process

This project brings home the importance of **confidentiality and privacy** in oral history collection. It is critical that informants are given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym after they have been recorded. eleven of my 29 informants chose to be pseudonymous, including both the ex-patients. Many of my informants had no concept of their own frankness until they heard their interviews and read their transcripts. In some cases, I also had to intervene in the transcript process and remove contentious or libelous material. This is clearly indicated in all transcripts.

The use of **edited transcripts** is an important part of this project. Because of the high degree of sensitivity of the project, most of the recordings are under 50 year restriction and will not be accessible until 2060. Only four of the recordings are on open access. This is to protect the privacy of the informants. As well, in some cases, named informants have used patients' first names and surnames and their identities need to be protected. Because of the restrictions on the recordings, the judicious use of edited transcripts means that the bulk of the material can be made available to researchers while protecting privacy and confidentiality. Potentially contentious or libelous material can also be removed from the edited transcript, as long as this is clearly indicated.

Conclusion

This project has helped to capture a 'community of memory' in Western Australia. The impact that the Hospital has had on the lives of those who lived and worked there has not yet been recorded to this extent, so I hope that this will be the beginning of a renewed interest in the history of mental health care in Western Australia. This highly stigmatized and secret history can now begin to be made more public, and will ideally help to demystify both mental illness and the process of deinstitutionalization.

(Endnotes)

- 1 Guy Hamilton, interviewed by John Bannister, 2002, J S Battye Library, State Library of Western Australia (OH3291).
- 2 Joan Winch, interviewed by Stuart Reid, 1994, J S Battye Library, State Library of Western Australia (OH2715).
- 3 Libby Wallenborn (ed.), *The Spiders Won't Eat You: through darkness to the light : a social history of Graylands Hospital from the seventies to the end of the 20th century*, Office of Mental Health, East Perth (WA), c2002.
- 4 Phillip Maude, *From Lunatic to Client: a history/nursing oral history of the treatment of Western Australians who experienced a mental illness*, PhD, unpublished, University of Melbourne, 2001.
- 5 Jan Gothard has commented on this process in oral history, which does not use a person's own voice or words, but at the same time allows their story to be told, Jan Gothard, 'Oral history, ethics, intellectual disability and empowerment: an inside perspective', *Studies in Western Australian History*, vol 26 (Ethics and the Practice of History), 2010, pp. 151-162.
- 6 Philippa Martyr, 'A lesson in vigilance? Mental health nursing training in Western Australia, 1903-1958', *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, vol. 31, 2010, pp. 723-730.
- 7 Western Australia, *Report of the Royal Commission to inquire into alleged cases of brutality at the Claremont Mental Hospital*, unpublished typescript, file 237 of 1950, Psychiatric Services Library Archive, Graylands Hospital (restricted).
- 8 Stanley Dixon, interviewed by Philippa Martyr, 2010, *Graylands History Project Oral History*, vol. 1: *We Did As We Were Told*, J S Battye Library, State Library of Western Australia (in process), p. 111.

Snapshots in the progress of an oral history project 2007 – 2011

Madeleine Regan

Abstract

In this paper I outline the steps of developing the oral history project, *From the Veneto to Frogmore and Findon Roads: Stories of Italian market gardeners 1920s – 1970s*. I will present snapshots of the stages in the collection of oral history interviews and the progress of the project. The venture has grown from a single interview to the development of an exhibition held in early August 2011 which features themes that emerged from over 25 hours of interviews and research. The paper also highlights an approach to developing an oral history project in which interviewees have taken on significant roles. Through the continuing participation of a small number of interviewees, the Veneto Community Research Group has been formed, and will continue to develop the project beyond the exhibition. This endeavour acknowledges the story of a small group of men from the Veneto region who arrived as single men in 1927. They established market gardens with their wives who were brought to Australia in different contexts usually within ten years. It provides an account of their settlement, family life, and contribution to the production of food, a previously undocumented story of migration and settlement of the Veneto community in Adelaide.

Background

In 2007 I became aware of a group of Italian men who had arrived from the Veneto region in 1927, and established an extensive area of market gardens in a particular area of the western suburbs in Adelaide. I began with one faltering interview. Five years ago I had no notion that I might develop an oral history project which would lead me to organise an exhibition in 2011 that narrates the story of the migration and settlement of the Veneti market gardeners.

The project also now involves a group with close connections to the men who arrived in Adelaide in 1927 and who were among the first interviewees. Three sons of the pioneer market gardeners, together with two of their wives, and I have formed a group,

and we have met regularly since early 2010. I have invited the group to take on significant roles in the development of the project.

Snapshot one: the value of oral history

In 2007, I used an old cassette recorder to interview two Italo-Australian men connected to market gardens in Adelaide. One had been born here, the son of one of the early market gardeners, and the other had arrived after World War II. I learned from the first man that at least eight families who originated from the Veneto region established market gardens in an area that was widely known as 'Frogmore Road'. The men leased land from the late 1920s alongside each other, took the option to buy when it was offered around 1950, and some carried on working the gardens to the 1970s when the land was subjected to intensive sub-division. In the early days of the gardens the men, who were then mostly single, had ten-acre lots carved out of two large parcels of land. It seems that within ten years, the men established family life in different circumstances. For example, one man earned enough money to bring his wife and five children to Adelaide in 1935. Two men married by proxy within ten years of arrival, and three men in one family returned to Italy in 1934, married and recommenced life in Adelaide with their respective wives. I have discovered that around this time a small number of men in the wider Veneto community arrived with their wives, and at least one man married an Anglo-Australian woman. The land comprising Frogmore and Findon Roads is now two densely populated adjoining suburbs about seven kilometres north-west of the City of Adelaide.

At this stage, I was not sure of my purpose, and ideas about next steps simmered rather than developed. Or to use the image of farming, I was not ready to cultivate!

A turning point was meeting the Archival Field Officer in the State Library of South Australia in mid-2008. I talked with June Edwards about my discovery of a group of men and women in their seventies and

eighties and the possibility of interviewing them about their memories of their parents and life on the family market gardens. I took up the suggestion of attending a 'How to do oral history' workshop run by the OHAA (SA Branch). The workshop enabled me to understand the importance of capturing the voices of people whose experience had not been documented in official local histories of suburbia.

Once I knew that there was a defined group of *Veneti* who settled in a particular location in the western suburbs and became a market gardening community, I was interested in recording the memories of the second generation of men and women in their seventies and eighties. I thought it was important to document their accounts of growing up in market gardening families during World War II and the 1940s generally. In late 2007 I met a small group of relatives and friends of Johnny Marchioro, the first interviewee, learned more about the *Veneti* market gardeners and realised the potential of collecting stories that might form a body of information about a particular community and time. It was also an opportunity for me to pursue a strong interest in the history of Italian migration. In particular, it provided an opportunity to record memories of family settlement and the contribution of a group of Italian migrants to the production of food in South Australia.

I was aware that these were stories of a community who is not represented in the mainstream accounts. I was interested in the idea of the interview as a means of documentation and using the kind of approach that Portelli outlines:

Interviews often reveal unknown events or unknown aspects of known events; they always cast new light on unexplored areas of the daily life of the non-hegemonic classes.¹

First interviews

I undertook my first formal interview using the Fostex equipment belonging to the State Library of South Australia in July 2008. My interview was with Johnny Marchioro, the same man I had interviewed the previous year. I gained a strong image when he drew a mud map to identify the locations of the different families on the large tract of land along Frogmore Road quite close to the River Torrens. I drew up questions to gather a picture of what life must have been like in the first years for the pioneer men who developed their gardens during the Depression. In the first interview, Johnny Marchioro explained:

...most of them had about ten-acre blocks...I remember ... about seven or eight families in that area ... Piovesan and Tonellatos and Zalunardo, Ballestrin, they all come from the North of Italy...²



Johnny and Romano Marchioro, in front of their parents' new Chevrolet, 1947, (Photo courtesy of Johnny Marchioro)

I conducted three hours of interviews with Johnny and learned that he was still close friends with sons of those other market gardeners with whom he grew up on Frogmore and Findon Roads. He put me in touch with a number of people who agreed to be interviewed about their parents, and their own experience of growing up in the market gardens in the local *Veneto* community.

Beginning a collection of interviews

Through recording interviews with five people whose fathers had arrived in 1927, my understanding was growing about what it must have been like for those young men (the youngest was seventeen years old) who left their homes and families in the Veneto because of the extreme poverty, and absence of employment in the region. The effects of Mussolini's policies were harmful for some families. Other themes that emerged from the interviews included the challenges of arriving in a country without language, work and security; establishing the business of market gardens; the energy required to work the land; buying second hand glasshouses; arrival of wives, (proxy wives in two cases); experience of World War II; family life, social occasions and community involvement on Frogmore and Findon Roads.

Interviewees told me about the early years of their parents' married lives. Johnny's father was 21 years old when he arrived in Adelaide in 1927, and he

married ten years later. He tells the story of his parents' marriage:

... Dad wanted to get married and probably letters were only written once a year (laughs) and he wrote to his sister in Italy and said that he wanted to get married and my auntie in Italy mentioned that this young girl that was working with her, she wanted to go to Australia... She got married ... by proxy, but without seeing my father and they lived together (laughs) for the next sixty years.³

People told me about their memories of the land and their parents' arrangements to lease allotments. Some recalled their role as children taking the rent to the landlord, or in one case, to the two elderly Anglo-Australian sisters who owned a large landholding, previously a large mixed farm, and then divided into ten or fifteen acre allotments used as market and flower gardens. It was becoming clearer that the interviews could form a body of knowledge about the experiences of people who grew up on the market gardens.

Interviews and context

Another snapshot: I begin to research. I was curious to draw on and analyse the themes, and I undertook some research to provide a context for memories and events that interviewees described in interviews. This directed me to read about Italian migration in the 1920s, and learn about the socio-economic context of that time. I also researched the history of Italians in South Australia and read newspaper stories about Italians. The prevailing view about 'southern Europeans' in the 1920s and 1930s was negative because of the Depression and widespread unemployment in Australia.

Frank Ballestrin recounted the experience of his father, a twenty-three year old newly arrived migrant, in 1927:

...My father Isidoro, went up north, up at Finke, up that area, sinking wells and building fences for the farmers, and actually the chappie that he went with – I don't know who he was - but he hung himself. And Dad panicked and he got lost, no water and the blackfellas found him, the Aborigines ... at that time they used to call them 'blackfellas' – and they gradually got him back to life again because he was almost gone. And then he come down here and I don't know what he did after that.... But I know that he kept saying about that, it was really horrendous, you know.⁴

Another area I researched was land ownership, and I tracked down records in the South Australian Government Lands Titles Office. So far, the earliest records I have obtained are from 1894 when one

man owned the land of Frogmore Road on which the market gardens were established in the late 1920s. Interestingly, some of the older interviewees, now in their eighties, remembered the landowner and his family and their influence in the area, which was reflected in the naming of the Keele bridge built over the River Torrens in 1937, a significant event for the local community.

In the interviews I heard accounts of unusual events that still figured prominently in the memory of interviewees. For example, an event on a hot summer's day imprinted itself on the mind of the nine-year-old son of one of the market gardeners:

...this was about one o'clock in the afternoon... summer, the elder people ... went to have a rest... and we kids, we were playing around outside. I remember this woman, she stood on top of this – it was a timber-type fence... I remember her standing on top of that and then she just threw herself on a glasshouse. Of course, we got scared... and the next thing I heard people screaming around the place ... and I remember the ambulance picking her up and taking her away. But she died ... she was cut everywhere... I was only about eleven or twelve ... but I vividly remember that. You don't forget that.⁵

Recently, in preparing for the exhibition, I came across a report of this event in *The Advertiser* on 11th February 1946. I realised again what a shocking incident for a group of young children to have witnessed in the market gardens which was not a place for such tragedies. Similarly, in one of the first interviews, Johnny Marchioro recalled the theft of £250 from his parents' house on Frogmore Road. A search of *The Advertiser* identified that this event had occurred in April 1946.

Wider connections in 2009

In this snapshot I recall that by January 2009, I had conducted eight hours of interviews. At the time I realised I was collecting stories and building a picture of the history of the market gardens in Frogmore and Findon Roads and the community of *Veneti*, who were a significant presence in the area. I thought that the collection was interesting enough to discuss with the Cultural Heritage Officer in the City of Charles Sturt, the local council area in which the land on which the market gardens were developed. I met with Linda Lacey who responded very positively to the account of the project and acknowledged the focus on oral history as a significant means of documenting local history. The council provided in-kind support with research material and documents such as maps and texts including a major history of the area published in 1977.

During this time I undertook more research and continued conducting a small number of interviews. I maintained contact with John and Eleonora Marchioro and suggested that Eleonora would be a good interviewer because she was interested in the stories of the market gardeners. Eleonora, herself a market gardener, thought that it was important to record the memories of the first groups of men and women who migrated to Australia and worked the gardens on Frogmore and Findon Road. While I felt that she would be a good interviewer, it was not the right timing for her to take on such a role.

Connecting interviews with historical events

In this snapshot I see myself enjoying the opportunity to make links between the memories of the interviewees and historical events. For example, I became aware of the impact of the war on the group of *Veneti* market gardeners. Nearly everyone I interviewed had a story about the war, including relatives who had been interned; some were asked to grow vegetables to feed the army and others were 'called up' to serve with the Allied Works Council. One interviewee recalled his father being sent away to the Northern Territory probably to work for the Allied Works Council. His mother, one of the proxy wives, managed the market gardens by herself, as well as the care of two pre-school aged boys.

One of the women whose family lived on Frogmore Road in the 1930s visited her uncle at Loveday internment camp near Barmera, South Australia. She recalled seeing Italians, Germans and Japanese soldiers, and this led to a new interview that focused almost exclusively on her memories of the war years, as she was 12 years old in 1939. Through research in the National Archives of Australia I learned that the South Australian Security Service investigated her parents in 1941 because they owned a wireless and there was concern that the family may have been communicating with Italy, the enemy at the time.

2010 – a year of developments

I was invited to give a presentation about the *Italian market gardeners oral history project* for South Australian History Week in May 2010. The Cultural Heritage Officer at the Charles Sturt Council was interested in the concept of the project as an example of local history generating from within the community. At the time I had a strong sense that while I was passionate about the project and was keen to present a progress report, I thought this was an opportunity to involve interviewees in a public presentation. I hoped that they might be interested to represent themselves rather than have me interpret their stories in a presentation. I wanted the voices of

the second generation of *Veneti* to draw the memories of their parents' lives into the present. Fortunately they agreed!

Public presentations

None of the three men I asked to present with me had been involved in public speaking previously. One man was going to Italy during SA History Week in May so my interview with him was videoed and we used a clip for the presentation. The two men who presented with me spoke about two aspects that they had recorded in their oral history interviews: the reasons their fathers had come to Australia and the accounts of their first years, and their own experience of growing up and working on the market gardens on Frogmore and Findon Roads. In between the two parts of their presentation, I provided some historical context of the 1920s and in particular, of the local area. I used photos lent by one of the men, land titles and maps in a PowerPoint presentation.

We had expected fifty people but over ninety attended the event at the local library, located very close to the site of the *Veneti* market gardens. The feedback on the presentation was very positive and it created strong interest from the *Veneto* community, many of whom have continued to live in the area. The senior curator at the Migration Museum in Adelaide expressed interest in the project and the possibility of a future exhibition in the Forum, Community Access Gallery.

In August I was asked to give a presentation about the project at the annual general meeting of the Oral History Association (SA/NT Branch). With assistance from Frank Ballestrin, Johnny Marchioro and Bruno Piovesan, we used the same format as before, and each of the men had written out their notes for their parts of the presentation. While they were nervous, they had a sense of the significance of communicating their family history in Australia and the role of their parents in establishing a life and livelihood in the market gardens in a small community of *Veneti*.

Formalising the role of volunteers

During 2010, the focus on the project increased with an offer from Charles Sturt Council to provide formal support. This included the training of volunteers to assist with the collection of oral history interviews, promotion of the project via Council publications and website, and the offer to auspice applications for grant funding. The offer enabled Frank Ballestrin, Johnny and Eleonora Marchioro and Bruno and Graziella Piovesan to become volunteers for the duration of the project. In November, as part of their volunteer role, the group attended the 'How to do oral history' workshop conducted by the Oral History Association



Johnny and Romano Marchioro, glasshouses and family cow in the background, Frogmore Road, c 1946. (Photo courtesy of Johnny Marchioro)

(SA/NT), and this encouraged Eleonora to reconsider interviewing some elderly Italians for the project in Italian.

I was very pleased that Eleonora would share some of the interviews, as the list of potential interviewees seemed to be growing. Her presence as interviewer has been a significant development in the project particularly for the elderly community members who are more comfortable being interviewed in Italian. We have worked together to develop questions, to discuss technical aspects of interviews and place interviews in the broader context of the story of the pioneer market gardeners. Eleonora has now conducted six interviews, including two in Italian.

Other snapshots in the progress of the project from 2010 include the publication of a small news article about the project in *Oral History – Journal of The Oral History Society of UK* (Vol 38 No. 1) Spring 2010. A second brief snapshot was the publication of a digital story – an interview with Johnny Marchioro on the website of the City of Charles Sturt.

Cultivating the project

December 2010 marked another significant snapshot in the progress of the project. I was awarded a small grant from Multicultural SA, to hold an exhibition about the project. The proposal to present a paper for the *Communities of Memory* Conference of the Oral History Association of Australia in October 2011 was accepted. I asked Linda Lacey to co-present on the oral history project as a way for a local council to support the interpretation of accounts of Italian market gardening families, memories of community and place. I am delighted that we will co-present with Johnny and Eleonora Marchioro. Johnny will contribute by telling the story of the project and reflect on the rationale for collecting interviews while Eleonora will speak about her role as interviewer.

Expanding the focus of the project – 2011

Our group of five has met regularly since early 2010. We have laughed about becoming professional presenters because we have now given presentations about the project to four community groups. We have recently been asked if we will be available to provide a presentation to a local group in April 2012.

An interesting development in the maturity of our project occurred earlier this year. We had given a presentation to a local history group in February and another was scheduled for March. When we met to prepare for the second presentation, one of the men asked if we could change the format to more of a discussion. So we had a 'Q & A' session on the construction of, and work in glasshouses, use of water, and the role of children in the market gardens. This was innovative and a great initiative from the men who have become more confident as presenters even though they all tell me they did not go to school after Year 9 or 10. Eleonora also took a role in the presentation, describing her experience of being an oral history interviewer for the project. After the presentation, a woman in the audience of twenty or so members of a local history group approached Eleonora and asked her how long it takes to become an oral history interviewer. It was a lovely moment of acknowledging Eleonora's competence in the role.

Announcing our name

A proud snapshot for the project was the announcement of the name of our group! We recently began to call ourselves the 'Veneto Community Research Group' as we believed that we had achieved public recognition through giving four presentations about the project to community groups, and holding an exhibition. I thought it was time to formalise our role in developing the project. We have worked together to develop the project with the collection of interviews, photos and documents, and preparations for the launch of the exhibition. This included making a prototype of a glasshouse and providing fresh winter produce for a display and catering.

Final snapshot – an exhibition August 2011

The exhibition, *From the Veneto to Frogmore and Findon Roads: Stories of Italian market gardeners, 1920s – 1970s*, will present the progress of the project with over 25 hours of oral history interviews. Six themes tell the stories of the men who arrived in 1927 and established market gardens on Frogmore and Findon Roads with their wives and children. It combines excerpts from 15 interviews, a collection of family photos from the 1940s, photos from the State

Library of South Australia collection, copies of official documents such as 'alien registration' papers from 1927 and a work permit from 1928, as well as relevant newspaper articles. The exhibition will also include photographs, a soundscape and videos of interviews to provide a rich insight into the hidden history of a migrant community. It will acknowledge the contribution that Italian migrants and the generations of families have made to the development of the local area, and the long existence of market gardens and fresh produce.

A last note

The project will continue beyond the life of the exhibition, which will travel to libraries and an Italian aged care residence in the next six months. There are still more interviews to be recorded, more questions to be asked, and certainly more research that will provide a deeper context for the interviews. I hope that a next stage may include a publication.

(Endnotes)

- 1 A. Portelli, 'What makes oral history different', in R. Perks, & A. Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge, Second edition, 2006, p 36.
- 2 Giancarlo Marchioro, interviewed by Madeleine Regan, July 2008, tape and transcript held by JD Somerville Oral History Collection, State Library of South Australia OH872/1
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 Francesco Ballestrin, interviewed by Madeleine Regan, December 2008, tape and transcript held by – JD Somerville Oral History Collection, State Library of South Australia OH872/7
- 5 Bruno Piovesan, interviewed by Madeleine Regan, October 2008, tape and transcript held by JD Somerville Oral History Collection, State Library of South Australia OH872/5

Finding your inner audio geek

Peter Kolomitsev and Silver Moon

Abstract

This paper presents a case for good sound recordings, and provides simplified explanations, of factors that interviewers should seek to control if this is to be achieved. Examples explained include redundant interviewer vocalisations, as well as descriptions of many common sources of unwanted noise that can mask or obscure the information we seek to capture, such as ambient and environmental noise, as well as equipment noise and multifunctions, with suggestions of how to be aware of and deal with them. This leads to a discussion of the relevance of recording levels, how distortion can be avoided, and finally a basic explanation of how compressed formats like MP3

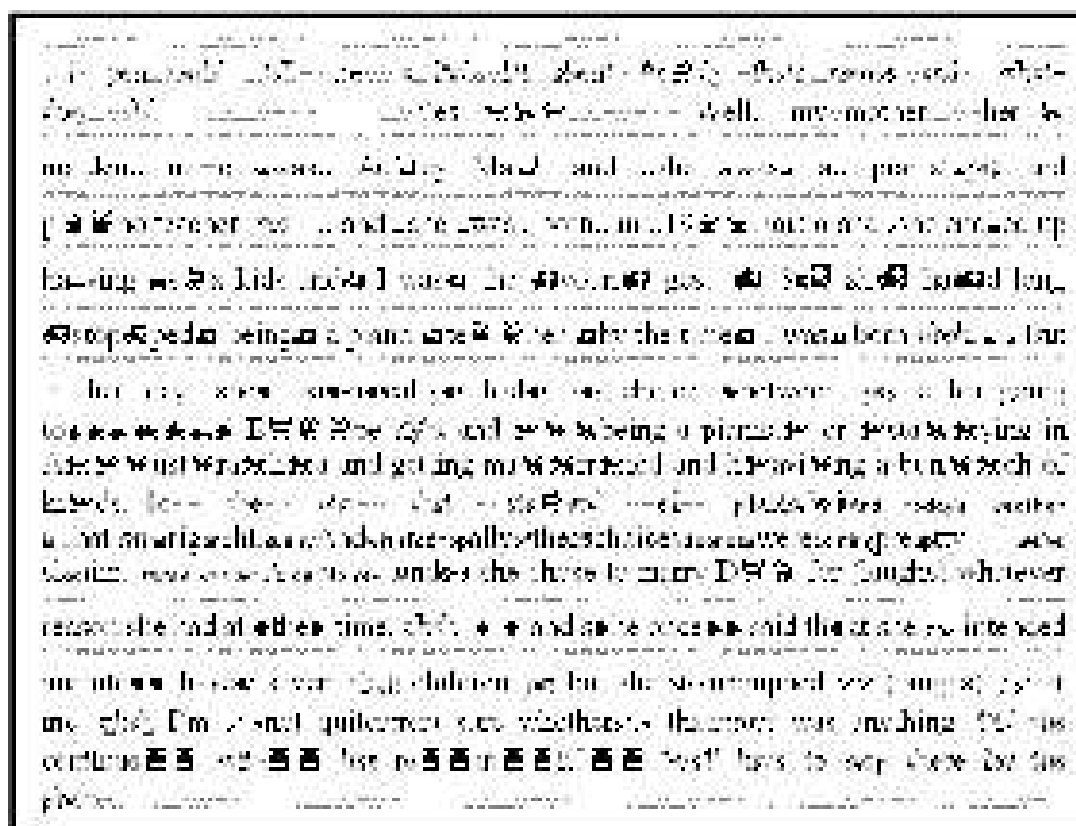
work in digital recordings, together with some of the disadvantages in using them.

We sound engineers may seem like a fussy bunch, always striving for the perfect recording. We are always pushing for oral history recordings to be distortion free, noise free, background ambience free, glitch free, interruption free and of the highest possible resolution in high fidelity purity! However, often we hear the argument that oral history is just about getting the information. The information is all that is important and all this Hi-Fi nonsense is just for audio geeks and music recordings. But does this argument hold water?

Let's look at the following transcript of an oral history interview. It's a faithful transcript of everything

To make it easier, here are a few clues on how to decipher the following example;

Interviewee, Interviewer, ~~~~~ back ground noise, [X] distortion, [Y] various other extraneous noises.



that is on the recording, as a good transcription should. However the format is a little different from the standard transcription, because this 'graphic transcription' really does contain EVERYTHING as it happened along the linear timeline of the interview, represented by different fonts and symbols. See if you can decode it.

This transcript is incredibly hard to read and the information captured in the interview is difficult to decipher. With patience and a word processor you should be able to edit the transcript to a readable form and get most of the information. But now imagine a world where this transcript of the recording can only be used in this form. How useful is the information now? Can you use this transcript for research? Would you be able to publish quotes in this form in a book? Can you sit down and read the stories of a departed loved one? Would you bother preserving it for future generations?

This analogy may seem a little far fetched but it is exactly like this in the world of audio. It is extremely difficult, time consuming and often impossible to remove noise, distortion, extraneous noises and interruptions, even using the latest professional

audio software. The example provided here is a little exaggerated with the various problems condensed into a short excerpt to highlight the point. But they are all issues that we encounter everyday with oral histories both old and new.

Ask yourself these questions. Do low quality recordings with distortion, equipment noise, background noise, interrupting interviewers and MP3 compression really capture the information you want if the recording is impossible to listen too? How useful is the recording for other purposes? You may be able to edit a clean quote from the transcript to publish in a book but if you can't extract a clean audio excerpt does the usefulness of the recording stop there? Does the recording meet preservation standards? Does it warrant preservation if the quality is poor even if the information is good?

With the high quality and relatively inexpensive digital recorders available today, there should be no excuses for low quality recordings. In this article we'll examine the issues that we encounter regularly, what causes them and how to resolve them.

Mmmm, yes, uhuh, really

Why do you want clean, clear, uninterrupted audio from your interviewee? Partly it's so that listeners will find it easy to understand and it also makes it much easier for transcription. However in order to extract clean clear sections for use as audiovisual content on the web or in exhibitions it is best if the audio just contains the voice of the interviewee. This way listeners feel that they are being spoken to directly. If an edit contains the voices of both interviewee and interviewer, the listener feels

that they are hearing two people having a conversation, which is a more distant, less direct experience. To get a clean, clear section of audio can be difficult when the interviewer contributes too much verbally to the conversation. While it is important to encourage the interviewee, this does not have to be verbal.

Listen back to your recordings to see if you are saying 'Mmmm, yes, uhuh, really' rather than nodding, perhaps smiling, and looking interested while being silent. Sometimes you will need to speak, but try to leave that for your questions. You can practice nodding rather than speaking in any of your usual conversations at work or home. Perhaps you will get a reputation for being wise!

Stop that infernal noise!

What causes noise? Noise is any sound that is unwanted. In oral history recordings this can be caused by the recording equipment or it can be ambient or environmental noise. It is difficult to make sense of a recording with a lots of background noise and listeners are likely to become irritable and tire easily because of the extra concentration required to understand the interview. Unwanted noise can be expensive too, if the recordings are being used as audiovisual content. It is often necessary to remove or reduce any extraneous noise and this is extremely difficult, time consuming and requires specialist equipment and expertise. Neither comes cheap!

Ambient noise

This is the background noise that is present all around us. Listen to the sounds in the place where you are. You might be hearing air conditioning noise, the fan in the computer, the fridge, the sounds of traffic, people talking, high heeled shoes on the floor, maybe birds calling, dogs barking, aircraft, televisions, radios, doors closing, the creaking and cracking of the building, the hum of the city. We humans become accustomed to these sounds and our brains filter them out, so we can simply concentrate on the sounds that we want to hear. But sound recorders don't do this; they record all the sounds they 'hear' but ideally we just want to hear the voices of the interviewee and interviewer. Often some intervention is required to remove or reduce background noise before you begin recording.

Dealing with background noise

When you begin to plan your interview also plan to deal with the background noise, as far as you are able. At your pre-interview visit, take some time to just listen for the sounds around you. Is this the best venue to use? Or the best room in the house? Can you turn off the air conditioning or the fridge or other devices if they are

a problem? Are you by a railway line or main road? Closing windows and doors and curtains or blinds may help. What will the family dog be doing when you are conducting the interview? Is that a cuckoo clock up on the wall? Does your interviewee wear loud clothes? No it's not the 1970's purple paisley we are worried about - its clothing and jewellery that rustles, rattles or even squeaks.

Listen back to your recordings and think about how you are can decrease unwanted noise next time.

Equipment noise

The electronic parts in all audio recorders and microphones introduce unwanted noise. Unfortunately this is unavoidable, but in general the better quality the recorder and microphones, the less noise they will generate. Of course it would be nice if everyone could afford the best recording setup, but many of us don't have the budget, and need to make do with cheaper and possibly noisier equipment. Regardless of the price tag on the equipment, everyone has to live with inherent equipment noise.

While recording, noise generated by the equipment is also recorded along with the audio of the interviewer and interviewee. However, if you record the voices at a loud enough level, any equipment generated noise is of little consequence. Although you can't stop the equipment noise you can reduce the effects by making sure that the recording levels are the best they can be.

Recording levels

Setting the correct recording levels is an art and a science. You need to anticipate how loud the interviewee and interviewer may get and make a judicious decision so that the level on the recording is as loud as possible but never gets so loud that the recorder overloads and the recording is distorted. You also need to be constantly vigilant during the interview and adjust the level if necessary.

Some people pay attention to getting the level right for the interviewee but forget that the questions are just as important to hear. Ideally the interviewer and the interviewee should be equally loud. Make sure that your recorder is positioned so that during the interview you can clearly see the readings on the level meter and adjust the record level if necessary. Levels will vary quite a lot as people speak. When someone is excited or angry they will be louder and as they relax they may become quieter.

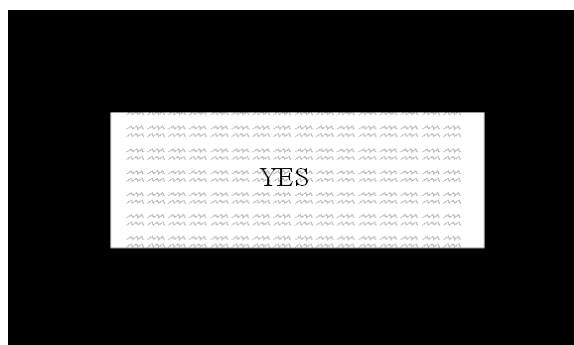
It's got to be perfect

But what is the optimum level and why? This will vary from recorder to recorder but two basic rules apply to all. Not too quiet and not too loud. The perfect level is finding the optimum space between making the voice high enough above the noise floor while not exceeding the maximum recording level that will cause distortion.

If a recording is made too quietly, when the volume is increased, the volume of the background noise increases to the same degree. This reduces clarity and intelligibility, plus there will be an annoying hiss throughout the recording. But don't think you don't need to worry if you are using professional equipment, this even happens with the best quality digital recorders!

The window

In the following examples imagine that the YES represents our sound recording, the squiggly lines represent the inherent electronic noise and the frame is our recording window.



With a low level recording the word YES appears relatively insignificant amongst the equipment noise.



If the volume is increased on playback or in post production, both the background noise and the recorded voice increase. Much the same way that increasing the size of the YES has also increased the squiggly lines.



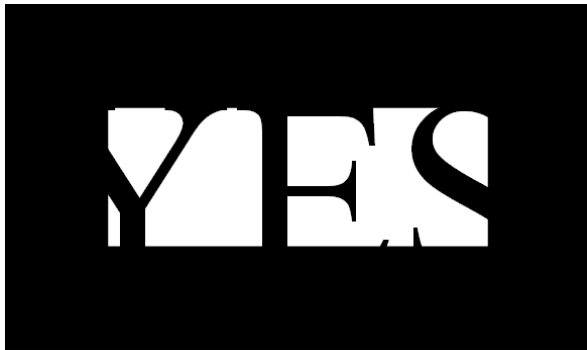
With correct recording levels the volume doesn't need to be turned up and the noise level remains insignificant compared to the voice.

Distortion

Distortion occurs when there is too much sound level somewhere in the recording chain. Digital distortion is a nasty and aggravating noise and needs to be consciously avoided. What's more it cannot be repaired in post production. The loss of intelligibility that goes with distortion can make a significant difference to an otherwise good recording. Once again using our recording window frame let's see what happens when the levels are set too high.



At the correct 'recording level' the word YES fits nicely in the frame. The recording will be undistorted and can be heard clearly.



But if the size of the YES is increased it can no longer fit into the frame and it is distorted by clipping the edges off the word. In fact, in the audio world, distortion caused by excessive level is called clipping, because that is exactly what happens to the audio signal. Just like the word in our frame, distorted or clipped audio is much harder to understand and is very unpleasant to listen to.



Unfortunately once the sound is distorted it is impossible to fix. Even reducing the volume in post production

still leaves the sound with the same distortion; it is just at a lower volume. This can be clearly seen here when the clipped YES is reduced in size but still remains clipped.

Distortion can be created at multiple points along the audio pathway. If you can hear distortion in the headphones you can find out where the problem is. The speakers in the headphones have a limit to what level they can handle and can distort what you are hearing. Although it may not affect the recording it will mask any distortion that does. Lower the headphone volume and if this doesn't help, the distortion is probably caused elsewhere and affecting the recording.

Start by checking the input and recording levels. Most recorders have a peak LED light or an overload light or indicator if your levels are too high. If after adjusting your level the sound is still distorted, check the microphone. Every microphone has a limit to how much sound pressure level it can handle. Perhaps your microphone is too close to the interviewee's mouth or is being affected by wind or air flow from a fan or airconditioning. Change the microphone position and see what difference it makes. Check the batteries in the microphones if it requires them, as flat batteries can cause distortion.

Crackles, graunches, clicks and whimpers

Where do crackles, graunches and clicks come from? It's not the fairies. Each item in the recording chain has a potential to fail or partly fail or even worse fail intermittently or whimper away. Bad connections and faulty equipment can create all sorts of unwanted noises. However that can be avoided with proper care and maintenance. With a good quality digital recorder the audio should not be distorted or have hums, crackles or excessive noise. If this occurs there is a fault somewhere and you should get your equipment serviced.

Before you start any recording, listen through your headphones for strange sounds. Odd noises can be caused by many things. The power supply to your microphones may be faulty and causing noise, so change the battery or check phantom power. Spikes in the mains power supply can create noise or hums; see if the noise goes away if you run on battery power. You may need to change the power outlet or use a filtered and spike protected power board. Bad connections can cause all sorts of gremlins so check that all plugs and sockets are making good connections or are not broken. Microphones are very sensitive to high sound pressure levels and can distort or fail. Never let anyone shout into a microphone or hit it to see if it is working.

Setting the Standard

So far what we've discussed can apply to any audio recorder, be it analogue or digital.

But we are now firmly in the digital age, thus most recording equipment will be digital and any new recorder purchased will certainly be digital. It's important to correctly set up the recorder before you begin your oral history recording. One of the most confusing and critical settings is the file type. Most recorders provide several file types ranging from uncompressed WAV files through to compressed formats like MP3.

What do you choose? The International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA) has published Guidelines on the Production and Preservation of Digital Audio Objects, which is freely available from their website as a PDF. The guidelines recommend using uncompressed WAV files set to 24 bit 48kHz as the minimum for spoken word recordings.¹

This resolution has been adopted by the vast majority of cultural institutions world wide as the minimum standard for audio preservation. This is due to its long term stability as a format, its lack of data compression and high quality of audio. By following these guidelines you give your audio the best chance for long term preservation.

Why not MP3?

These days many recorders include a data reduced or compressed file format, such as MP3, as part of the recording options. They are included to allow increased recording times without increasing the amount or size of data storage. Often MP3 is used if the file is to be directly uploaded as a podcast and the ability to record in this format is convenient in such circumstances. However this is never recommended for original oral history recordings.

But what exactly is MP3 or any of the many other similar formats? The clue is in the description, 'data reduced or compressed file format'. An MP3 is an audio file that has had some form of 'perceptual encoding' applied to it to reduce the amount of data required to store it. The way the encoders in the recorders do this is by working out what we as humans don't hear very well and then throwing that information away.

This reduces the amount of storage space needed to store your information. This may seem ideal; less data space equals smaller digital recorders with longer recording times, and we don't really hear it, right? But there is no such thing as a free lunch because these types of encoders are what are known as 'lossy' encoders. The data that is lost can never be retrieved. Using a small amount of data compression, the effects can be fairly

Let's imagine we needed to reduce the amount of space our transcript takes up.

Yes. Well, my mother, her maiden name was Audrey Mau, and she was a pianist and piano teacher, and she was born in 1914 and she ended up having six kids and I was the youngest.

First of all we'll take away some of the less important characters, like punctuation, and see what happens.

yes well my mother her maiden name was audrey mau and she was a pianist and piano teacher and she was born in 1914 and she ended up having six kids and i was the youngest

It uses a little less space and is still readable. It is probably still usable in a printed context too.

Let's go a little further and take away the spaces between the words.

*yeswellmymotherhermaidenamewasaudreymauandshewasapianistandpianoteachera
ndshewasbornin1914andsheendeduphavingsixkidsandi wastheyoungest*

We've certainly reduced the space it takes up but it is getting quite difficult to read.

Now we'll reduce the data a little more, this time by removing statistically insignificant letters. We'll set the threshold at letters that occur with a less than 2% frequency (b j k p q v x y z).²

*eswellmotherhermaidennamewasaudremauandshewasaianistandianoteacherandshe
wasornin1914andsheendeduhaingsiidsandi wastheoungest*

Once again the space has been reduced but so too has the intelligibility.

If we compress it even harder with a higher threshold of 2.5% (omitting b f g j k m p q w v x y) we get complete gobbledygook.

*esellotheheraidennaesa audrea uand she asaianistandianoteacherandsheasornin1914an
dsheendeduhainsiidsandias theou nest*

difficult to hear and are mostly perceived as a loss of space or depth. At higher data compression rates, it becomes much more obvious leaving the recording sounding harsh with metallic and hollow ringing. If the interview is to be used as audiovisual content, audio processing such as level and tone balancing is often needed. These processes will exacerbate the distortion and audio artefacts produced by any data compression.

How does it work?

To get a better idea of what happens in the MP3 encoders look at the follow analogy. Although this is not exactly how MP3 works, it clearly demonstrates the effects when a lossy form of compression is used. In the real world text documents aren't compressed like this, but imagine if they were and the compression was irreversible. The information would be rendered completely useless. That is exactly what happens in the audio world when lossy compression is used, particularly at high rates; the recording can be of very little use beyond the written transcript. Even transcriptionists find it hard to work with highly data compressed files.

Geek yet?

We hope that with a bit more understanding of the digital recording medium and the downstream effects of the problems we've discussed, you too will share our passion, strive for high quality recordings and find your inner audio geek. But at the end of the day why are we so passionate about getting great oral history recordings? Think back to one of the questions we posed earlier; if you can't extract a clean audio excerpt does a recording's usefulness stop at a quote in a book? An excellent oral history interview recorded with quality recording equipment that is free from distortion, data compression artefacts, background noise, clicks, glitches, graunches and interviewer

interruptions becomes an infinitely useful resource beyond the written word.

A quality recording makes transcription and research much easier but it also makes a pleasant listening experience. People increasingly look for history in a diverse range of places and media and often have an expectation for audiovisual content. Oral histories can find their way into museum exhibitions, radio or television documentaries, audio CDs accompanying historical books, photo stories and mashups. When you have recorded an interview that has high quality audio and has easy to edit undistorted excerpts, it provides a professional air to the production. More importantly it creates a product that is engaging to the listener. If the audio is clean and interruption free, the listener gets the impression of being spoken to by someone sharing their information and stories, rather than being an eavesdropper on a conversation between the interviewer and interviewee.

Finally, recording your interviews using uncompressed WAV format following IASA recommendations and using good quality recording equipment, you create an audio file that stands the best chance of being preserved for future generations to listen to, research, and be used in ways that have yet to be imagined.

(Endnotes)

1 <http://www.iasa-web.org/>

2 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letter_frequency

The Navy, the world and Australia one Swedish woman's contribution to Australia's immigration experience

Christeen Schoepf

Abstract

The 175th 'birthday' of South Australia during 2011 had been the impetus for the OHAA (SA) to create a web gateway containing the oral histories of a diverse group of twenty South Australians and Northern Territorians. The website is a first for the Oral History Associations within Australia. It will showcase the significance of oral histories and their contributions to the historical record. A call for participants for the project led me to revisit, and ultimately to contribute my very first oral history to the website. During 2006, I recorded the recollections and migration experiences of Swedish woman, Anna-Karin Fredin-Bladh (Karin), who had made the journey to Australia, not because of political or economic circumstance, but because of love and adventure. The purpose of my interview was to obtain an appreciation of the differences and the similarities in what is essentially the same process – leaving one's homeland, family and familiarity and starting life over again in a new country. The completed project however, revealed silences in the literature regarding the lot of those whose migrations were not intended. Karin's journey was never actually intended to be a migration; her stay in Australia was meant to be short term. Circumstances changed, and her life changed, and she accepted these changes without question. The addition of Karin's personal story to the OHAA (SA) web site has ultimately provided an additional, significant layer to the vibrant mosaic of history, events and people that comprise the history of South Australia.

The OHAA (SA) 175th Anniversary of South Australia Oral History Project

During 2010, the OHAA (SA) announced that it was to seek funding to create a web gateway that would enable the group to bring to public attention extant oral histories from within South Australia and the Northern Territory. Awarded monies from the History SA, 'SA175' grant fund, and with assistance from the State Library of South Australia, (SLSA), a dedicated team who designed, created and animated the web site made

this inaugural project possible. The project aimed to reveal the diversity of work undertaken by members of the South Australian branch in past decades, and to draw attention to oral history as a unique and important historical resource. Following a revamp of the existing OHAA (SA) website, the new gateway was launched in July 2011 and utilises recorded interviews that have been digitized from their original formats by the SLSA technicians. Timed summaries, interview transcripts and photographs give further life to the interviews. Consisting in the first instance of twenty, one-hour interviews, each 'highlights a specific aspect of South Australian or Northern Territory history' with interviewees emanating from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Such lives include an Italian market gardener, a female Swedish migrant who worked in the Merchant Navy, a cook and pianist on board the *Old Ghan* train and a children's author; refugees from Sudan and Vietnam; a Ngarrindjeri woman; and those who experienced war and the Depression. These interviews thus provide valuable insights into differing periods of the state's history. Each interviewee has a personal yet significant story to tell and oral history has given each one a voice within the historical record. This project is also the perfect vehicle for those who are new to the use of oral history as a historical resource, to be introduced to best practice methodologies and further, to the way in which oral history and documentary sources complement each other.¹

My own contribution to this project originated as a ninety-minute interview exploring the life of Karin from her childhood in Sweden to her eventual permanent residency in Australia. She is a woman who would have faced relatively few problems fitting into Australian society as by my own definition she is 'white, happy and wholesome', and has always spoken English. In addition, her arrival in Australia was not one of asylum or need and followed an upbringing and lifestyle of high culture and social justice. The interview explores not only Karin's early life, including the social and political pathways she had travelled preceding her decision to migrate, but also discovers how well her ideologies and self-concept allowed her to fit into the Australian culture and way of life. Due

to a one hour per interview time restriction required by the web designers, Karin's interview as it appears within the OHAA (SA) web site is now approximately 55 minutes in length. The portion removed related to her school years and time living in a kibbutz in Israel and how she came to be there. Karin's career in the Swedish Merchant Navy, her migration and resettlement experiences remain intact. Although she maintains quite a heavy European accent, Karin relates her story well and with the exception of the Swedish words which were sometimes hard to comprehend, she was easy to follow. The transcript as it appears here, and within the web site, is copied almost verbatim in order to show her speaking manner. There was essentially nothing she would not discuss. She speaks confidently about all subject matters including smoking dope and working on ships that exposed her to male nakedness, drunkenness and violence. She does, however, hesitate slightly when we first speak of her husband Sigge. Karin's memory of details and events appeared extremely good. However, the dates or times when certain things happened were a little hazy, especially those surrounding her travel arrangements to Australia.

Migration Experiences and Oral History

How then, can an oral history interview such as this project with Karin provide a greater understanding of migration history and contribute to a project such as the web gateway? Historians such as Dale Sinclair and John McQuilton have argued that the individual experience or case study at a 'micro' level can be a useful analytical and interpretative device for studying the past. This can then present the opportunity for a broader scope of questions to be asked of the sources and to reveal new information.² The personal accounts and memories of migrants have thus individually contributed to an increased knowledge and a deeper understanding of the past. Such unique contributions have also posed new themes for investigation and ultimately, more informed questioning of the sources. From domestic, community and cultural situations, to the hardships of leaving family and friends, of starting new lives amidst racial tensions and strangeness, and the yearning to return home when it all became too hard - each individual story offers new insights into what it really meant to be a migrant in Australia. Oral history is consequently an invaluable resource into the study of migration history.

Oral histories also offer the opportunity for the narrator to tell their story in their own words, exhibit their fears and elation, sorrow and joy at the complete migration process and how it affected them personally and from their own point of view.³ Some versions will have ended badly. Others, like Karin's, have ended differently than originally intended and it is these variations of the same process that provide a better understanding of

how events have affected lives on an individual and sometimes collective basis.⁴ What then of those who migrated to Australia of their own volition, because they wanted to? Much of the available literature regarding migrants and migration history is predominantly in relation to those who came to a post-war Australia for need and not want.⁵ The migration experience has differed for those of cultures or societies not affected by war, economic repression or political persecution, and historiography has often neglected, or forgotten, those who came and contributed to the social capital of Australia of their own choice rather than necessity. Their voices are rarely heard and their lives are often unrepresented in the historical record.⁶

Karin's narrative of her life's experiences and migration process offer the audience an alternative view on the historiography of the migration experience. Her journey was never actually intended to be a migration, and her stay in Australia was meant to be short term. Changes in circumstance can also present both positive and negative aspects in an individual's future life experiences. These changes are reflected within her narrative as old memories were re-ignited. The final recollections in Karin's narrative are a poignant statement of her own thoughts on her migration experience. Her interview presented in part here, reveals how her early life indeed melded her into the person who was then able to willingly undertake the migration process and then stay when her life was changed forever following the end of her marriage. Karin is personable and gregarious, enigmatic and yet forward in her manner. As a 'product' of the sixties, her sense of social justice is forthcoming, opposition to war forthright and traits of feminism apparent. Even her name has not escaped these attributes. She was so reluctant to renounce her maiden name when marrying, that following a rather heated argument with her future husband Sigge, she agreed to see which surname most appeared in the local telephone book. Karin lost the argument, but still only agreed to a hyphenated surname, hence her surname Fredin-Bladh. It is instances such as this that have dominated much of Karin's life, from her education and career options to her great adventure to Australia.⁷

Some of Karin's Story

Karin Fredin was born on 11 June 1952 in Hällefors, Sweden, to Erik Ivar Fredin and Anna-Greta nee Bernhardsson. One of three daughters, Karin and her two sisters were named Anna after the midwife who delivered them. The same midwife had also delivered their mother. Her childhood was spent in Hällefors, a small town where the major employer was the steel company SKF, a ball-bearing manufacturer. This was where many of Karin's extended family worked. Her mother was a Dental Technician and Karin has fond memories of the products her mother brought home for the children to use in the name of healthy teeth.



She believes that her educational experience was far superior in Sweden than is now available for her own children and grandchildren in Australia. Karin is multi-lingual having learned English from Year Four at school, and later learning French and German. Karin's teenage years involved her in the local Socialist Club:

We went to a very left wing school - [Socialist Club] was like a book club and we used to read and meet and discuss the world's problems - this is serious stuff when you are sixteen! - We were very aware!⁸

She was later invited to spend a summer in a Kibbutz in Israel and enjoyed the life so much she tried to catch cholera from the streets so that she did not have to return home. After a short time in Sweden, she soon returned to Israel and the kibbutz, working eventually as a tractor driver after harassing the employer on a daily basis:

You have no idea how prickly orange trees are! They have long thorns - it was the shittiest job of the lot - - - We had a good social life in the kibbutz - there was a lot of dope around. We used to be heavy dope smokers - So when I returned, I nagged my boss into driving a tractor and that was classified as a man's job in Israel. They had girls in the army but women just don't do certain things.⁹

She eventually returned to Sweden and, unable to find work, joined the Merchant Navy.

I didn't really know what I was going to do. And then one of my friends said, "You know you can go to sea". And I said, 'Can you?' She didn't actually go to sea - I went to sea but she

didn't! And I'd seen the movie Casablanca so I thought that would be nice. And to get a job at sea you have to go to a special job agency who dealt with jobs at sea. And it's called Sjömans Förmödlingen - I hoofed it down there and saw the man, and he must have seen this sucker coming. And he's going "Blah, blah, blah" and I said, 'Yes I would love to go to sea but I want to make sure I don't get seasick though'. And he said "We have this ship going to Casablanca" and I'm going 'Oooh!' Of course I took it straight away, not realizing that the coastal traders are ways full of drunks and no-hopers and that's why no one wants to work on them!

So did you actually get to go to Casablanca?

Yes we did! I went to the Kasbah, but that wasn't much chop I didn't think. I bought heaps of big plates and trays and brass and stuff like that in Morocco. One of my crew members had his throat cut on the gang plank in Morocco. That was thrilling! We followed the blood steps - the blood splattered steps as we came aboard ship. He wouldn't go ashore to go to the doctor because he was Moroccan and he didn't want to have to stay there, so he wouldn't go ashore. He was really bleeding from the neck, but it couldn't have been too deep.

Casablanca did not live up to her expectations though:

I tried to get a job on the crew as a deck boy or cadet but it was really hard as I was a girl and I was knocked back by all the shipping companies - - - Trans-Atlantic which had wooden curtains on the ships, told me there was no way I could go



on the crew because of all those naked sailors - communal showers, naked sailors running up and down the hall, I never ever saw one! They didn't even have real curtains, they had wooden cut outs in the portholes, and I thought that they were a cheapskate company.

She then did a 'Basic Seamanship' course and was guaranteed a crew job after topping her class. Karin obtained employment on the Lake Eyre.

It was a freezer ship and took meat to America, for McDonalds, all destined to be minced - we had a bit of tuna and general cargo - it was a good ship, hard work and good people.¹⁰

Karin's years in the Merchant Navy saw her become the first woman deck hand to arrive in Japan on board a ship, an achievement that was widely publicized at the time.

When I came to Japan I was with Hokkaido, I was the first female that had ever hit the coast of Japan working on deck. They actually had a big interview with me in one of the big, big, big, big papers - - - in the 'Sunday Supplement'. Lots and lots of photographs! And the shipping company was really quite pleased with it - I wasn't going to do it, but they'd sent the two journalists out and they said "We want you to do it", so I said 'Yeah all right then I'll do it'. It was photographs of me, and photographs of me on watch with the Officers - I was only a Cadet then - - - And when the article came out, we had long since left Japan but they sent several copies to the company's office and they sent several copies to the company's headquarters. We were working for Scan Dutch then. They sent copies to Scan Dutch which was in Holland, the head office. And they sent some out to the ships. It took a while before I got a copy so I could see myself. And I was like no kidding and laughing. Oh, the things I was quoted, honestly, I came across as a total sap (laughs).

And what did you want to come across as?

Well I didn't want to come across with quotes like, 'I only went to sea to see beautiful sunsets'. I've never forgotten it. Oh, god it was ghastly!

Karin met her husband Sigge Bladh, in the merchant navy but they were always on different vessels which made hard work of the marriage. Their marriage ceremony she revealed was extremely short and in fact shorter than even she had envisaged.

I wore a suit and we married at the registry office. We had the short service, so when we got up he said, 'Blah, blah and you are married' - We had two friends as witnesses and two drunks congratulated us - no wonder that marriage failed!¹¹



And her migration was just another adventure in her life:

The reason we came to Australia was that when I was at Navigational College, and had only finished one of my three years, Sigge my husband came home and informed me that the shipping company had offered him a transfer to Australia on the container vessel that he was working on as a Chief Officer. He said 'no', because I was at Navigational College and had another two years to do. I said, 'Oh don't be stupid, it would be great to go. It is only for two years'. - And so I talked him into it, and off we went, and here we are.¹²

Karin's arrival in Australia was supposed to be temporary as she and Sigge were still both employed by the shipping company. Her husband, however, was only in Australia for a while before heading back out to sea and they subsequently separated. Having only Swedish friends, Karin decided to embark on a quest to make some Australian friends but this did not go to plan.

We got a lot of literature on Australia from the embassy in Stockholm, like Australia Today, and What to do in Adelaide and information on the Good Neighbour Council. I wanted to get to know some Australians as there is no point sitting in Australia and hanging out with a bunch of Swedes. So I went into Adelaide, I can't remember which street, and they had this "Good Neighbour" thing happening there. I knocked on the door and they didn't want to



know me. They weren't interested in someone like me who could speak English and could obviously travel by bus by myself - I mean I had Swedish friends and I think that if I hadn't been the person that I am and [being] quite happy to go out of my way to meet people - but if you are a bit timid and you go and approach an organisation like that and - don't speak English, how can you go?¹³

Aside from this small hiccup, Karin had little problem fitting into the Australian way of life. She did, however, have some trouble understanding some aspects of Australian thinking. Her first introduction to Sir Les Patterson was whilst watching the 'Mike Willisee Show' one evening:

I watched a lot of TV when I came out. I watched Mike Willisee and that's when [he] interviewed that politician that I just thought was SO disgusting and I couldn't work out how any one in Australia could vote for such a terrible person. I watched in AMAZEMENT at that fat slob, sat there with egg on his tie and he was DISGUSTING and I thought that this is just terrible, how can anyone vote for someone as disgusting as that. It wasn't until over twelve months later that I realised that this was Sir Les Patterson. He wasn't even a real politician!¹⁴

Following the breakdown of her marriage, Karin decided to stay in Adelaide:

I could have gone home but I decided to stay. It's funny that, how he [Sigge] always wanted to stay because he liked to play golf and he

was the one who was so keen on Australia and I was the one that wasn't - I was the one who stayed. Funny isn't it? - When you've been gone long enough, things change. I think when I went home before with Sarah, when she was little, three months old, I used to quite loathe Australia, especially Australians who were uncouth and didn't shake hands and had no style - we used sit around and talk about Australians [and] how Australia would be great without the Australians, oh God, we used to really pick on Australians. I think all the Swedes, apart from Sigge, who has gone home, all my friends have stayed here. You make a new life for yourself and I think Swedes, once they make their bed they kind of stay in it, if you know what I mean, they don't chop and change, and because I've heard about so many Poms, they go back and forth all the time. You know you can't go back, because whatever you go back to, it's not - what you come home to, is not what you left. So you just, get on with it I think.¹⁵

Her two year adventure to Australia is now a permanent residency and a decision that she has never looked back from. Her daughter Kristina and grandsons Lachlan and Liam are now her firm focus in life.

Conclusion

What then, has this oral history interview contributed to the literature and understanding of the migration history of Australia? Firstly, as oral history is one person's version of their memories, reminiscences and experiences, when put together and compared with other migrants' experiences, it can provide patterns or inconsistencies in already documented histories that can then be re-examined and analysed. Secondly, as a migrant from Europe, Karin's experiences add a new and differing dimension to the history of European migration to Australia as they are more consistent with that of British migration, regardless that she is Swedish.¹⁶ Karin's experiences, whilst not the same as those of asylum seekers or refugees were nonetheless migration experiences and not all of them with a good outcome. Her Australian adventure was not supposed to be permanent and when she felt she needed help, it was not forthcoming. Karin's interview also reveals her resilience, her sassy personality and even elements of racism towards Australians, all factors that possibly assisted her in making the decision to settle in South Australia instead of returning home. Finally, as an addition to the OHAA (SA) web gateway, this individual interview, along with those of the other nineteen participants presents a 'micro' glimpse of the life experiences of a diverse group of South Australians whose narratives are an important contribution to the montage of South Australia's social history.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Karin who has shared her memories and elements of her life with not only myself, but the wider world via this paper and her inclusion on the OHAA (SA) web gateway.

My sincere thanks are also extended to Madeleine Regan of the OHAA(SA) , and Dr Nathan Wise and Denise Phillips of the University of New England for their helpful comments and encouragement.

(Endnotes)

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- 5 A. Thomson, 'Moving stories: oral history and migration studies', in *Oral History Journal of the Oral History Society*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1999, p.32.
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- 7 Preliminary interview with Karin Fredin-Bladh & personal observation of Christeen Schoepf, May 2006.
- 8 Anna-Karin Fredin-Bladh, interviewed by Christeen Ogilvie (now Schoepf) May 2006, tape held by author, OHAA(SA/NT) and State Library of South Australia (OH967).
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
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Mrs Wallace's painting and storytelling in the context of contemporary Eastern Arrernte culture

Judy Lovell

Abstract

The premise of Mrs. Wallace's productivity has always been maintenance and transmission of her Eastern Arrernte culture. From the inception of the art centre in 1989, that has occurred in the contemporary context of Keringke Arts, an Aboriginal art centre at Ltyentye Apurte community, Santa Teresa, NT. This paper addresses some of the data collected from 2003 when Lovell and Wallace met and first worked together, at Keringke Arts. This paper describes how analysis and interpretation of Mrs. Wallace's storytelling and painting reveals her innate knowledge of tangible and intangible Eastern Arrernte culture, and her skill in the use of contemporary painting techniques for transmission of that to others. Oral recording allows the tonal qualities of Mrs. Wallace's voice to remain apparent, and through the interactive process of audiencing, her knowledge and methods of transmission emerge. Audiencing balances the power-structure of the social research relationship, and Mrs Wallace actively maintains the role of co-researcher of her own work. A derivation of photo-elicitation provides audiencing of her paintings to open the layers within the canvases in the viewer. Mrs Wallace's paintings are renowned; she is an artist with work in many international collections.

Introduction

Through analysis and interpretation of the role of Mrs. Wallace's painting and story-telling this paper gives insight into the authority of an Eastern Arrernte woman and elder in the maintenance and transmission of her contemporary culture.

There is a significant gap in literature about Eastern Arrernte women and culture. While the material she shares in this research is all in the public domain, there is much of significance to learn from it and much merit in preserving Mrs. Wallace's voice as a contemporary Eastern Arrernte custodian.

In this paper, research methods combine to elicit an interpretation of her work that retains Mrs. Wallace's authority and keeps the context of our partnership transparent. I include many quotes direct from the

transcripts of conversations and story-telling events that we've collected; rather than honing into one facet of this rich and complex data set, I have tried to indicate its breadth and complexity. I have also included images of some paintings, to indicate the diversity and variety of Mrs. Wallace's expressive palette.

The initial opportunity for my immersion in contemporary Eastern Arrernte culture occurred through working with Mrs. Wallace at Keringke, an Eastern Arrernte Aboriginal Arts Centre in Central Australia. Through Keringke her art has reached a wide audience, but the focus of maintenance and transmission in the paintings and stories was not reaching her local community adequately. Having identified this gap, we developed and applied a reciprocal process that included maintenance and transmission, and research.

The period of our collaboration in collecting data work spans 2003 – 2011, and is represented by the following developments:

- From 2003 we recorded stories and archived images of Mrs. Wallace's paintings as we worked at Keringke, an Eastern Arrernte Aboriginal Arts Centre in the Northern Territory.
- From 2006 we travelled to places significant to the maintenance and transmission of Mrs. Wallace's culture to make site-specific oral research recordings and documentation.
- In 2008 we produced a large cultural exchange project, developing workshops which facilitated maintenance and transmission of Eastern Arrernte knowledge among several generations, and offered an experience of the living connectedness of the culture to visitors from elsewhere.
- In 2009 we co-authored a bi-lingual publication using as a basis the recordings of biography, cultural events, paintings and storytelling.
- I am now using the information gleaned from the work conducted in 2003-11 for research examining the role of Mrs. Wallace's painting and storytelling in the context of her Eastern Arrernte culture.

Method

This paper is not a discussion on the premises for undertaking oral history and visual research with Mrs. Wallace; it is not a literature review of methods used to research Aboriginal knowledges in Australia, or how the research is framed in light of other social science theories and practices; rather it is an opportunity to bring Mrs. Wallace's knowledge to the centre of the discussion and to recognize the merit of public Eastern Arrernte women's knowledge as authoritative. For this reason it is not considered necessary to engage here with the anthropological discourse, but to present Mrs Wallace's own pedagogy, which is highly esteemed in both inner Indigenous and non-Indigenous circles and thus warrants wider dissemination.

In this paper Eastern Arrernte words are most often written to conform to the orthography of the *Eastern and Central Arrernte to English Dictionary*¹, but some words and some dialectic inflections Mrs. Wallace uses are not recorded there. In writing Eastern Arrernte we use an orthography that best represents Mrs. Wallace's tone and specific dialect. It is important to understand that the way Mrs. Wallace speaks reflects her identity. Her wider family, or dialect group, were known as *Ingwarenye*. The closest English translation of *Ingwarenye*² is 'midnight-belonging'. The meaning-association is that they were known to others as people who kept to themselves.

Ingwarenye - it's like 'midnight language' when you translate it. It's also called that because our old people kept to themselves, they were not well known to other language groups, so they were *Ingwarenye* – separate, unknown, from the darkness.

Throughout this paper some specific Eastern Arrernte terms are used and wherever possible they are explained where introduced in the text. One concept with meaning rooted in Eastern Arrernte culture that cannot be translated so easily is *Altyerrengge* which relates to the time of first consciousness, when ancestor beings shaped the world as it is today, and brought Arrernte life world into being. *Altyerre* beings became active in this time and still reside at important sites in the landscape as the incarnate energy that is part of the Eastern Arrernte life-world. A full disclosure about his concept is outside the realm of this paper and outside the authority of my research. *Altyerrengge* denotes the spatial and temporal realm these ancestors roam, *Altyerre* denotes the beings themselves.

In order to understand something of the interconnection of Eastern Arrernte to country and to relationship it is essential to understand the term *anpernirrentye*³ which translates roughly as kin and skin, or relationships system. In her language class curriculum Dobson⁴ teaches:

Relationships govern everything. In the past, each of the *anpernirrentye*, skin groups, were associated with particular places. How you interacted with others was governed by your skin group. It is not like this anymore, but people still have skin names and understand how this links them to country as *Apmereke-artweye*, traditional owner, or *Kwertengwerle*, manager.

Dobson goes on to describe how, for Eastern and Central Arrernte, pairs of skin groups were predominantly responsible for specific areas of land:

Kemarre - *Perrurle* were identified with the Ltyentye Apurte or Santa Teresa area

Penangke - *Pengarte* were identified with Anthurrke or Emily Gap area

Kngwarreye - *Peltharre* were identified with Unemarre or the Gem Tree area

Ampetyane - *Angale* were identified with Artepe Ulpaye or the Alice Springs area.

It has been through these comprehensive skin and kin relationships with one another, the land and culture that Eastern Arrernte understood their responsibilities and identities; responsibilities and identities reflective of inalienable and intangible spirituality, tangible cultural practices, languages, laws and families.

Mrs. Wallace holds the skin name *Kemarre*, and so in one way, everyone of that skin name is a brother or sister to her. Her husband held the skin name *Peltharre*, and so their elders considered their match favorably, as they were correctly related through *anpernirrentye*.

The marriage between Mrs. Wallace *Kemarre* and Mr. Wallace *Peltharre* follows correct rules of *anpernirrentye*. Their biological children would be *Kngwarreye*. The children of her sisters are always considered her sons and daughters and all of them are *Kngwarreye* too. The children of her brothers are her nieces and nephews. They are *Perrurle*. The children of her brothers-in-law are also her sons and daughters, and they are also *Kngwarreye*. The children of her sisters-in-law are her nieces and nephews and they are also *Perrurle*. Following the *anpernirrentye* system, the cousins, *Perrurle* and *Kngwarreye* would be the furthest apart as acceptable marriage partners.

The paper shows evidence of the application of several research methods, and these are described here in some detail, so as not to detract from the impact of the knowledge elicited from Mrs. Wallace's work in the central part of the paper. The research makes use of oral recording to elicit biography, stories, and anecdotes; many accompany Mrs. Wallace's paintings, which creates a rich body of work that is both contemporary in its forms and ancient in its origins.

A significant inter-cultural understanding of Mrs. Wallace's role as an authoritative expert is elicited through the analysis and interpretation of her paintings and story-telling using oral history, photo-elicitation and audiencing methods.

Oral history provides a method for recording the stories in Mrs. Wallace's voice, and for listening to and learning from her. Her voice has particular resonance, timbre, tone and expression in story-telling. This paper focuses on English language recorded material, but part of the legacy of the wider data set is preservation of more of the diversity of dialects and phrases making up the Eastern Arrernte language.

The application of photo-elicitation and audiencing draws from the work of social scientists such as Kolb⁵, Lorenz and Kolb⁶, Yardley⁷, and Rose⁸. Their use of these methods infers credibility for the process of integrating visual data with oral and text based data, particularly in inter-cultural research contexts.

I accept the premise that visual data elicits information about the author, the subject and the audience⁹ and this fits with the authority ascribed to visual and oral story-telling as performed by Eastern Arrernte women. Photo-elicitation provides a close visual analysis that reveals the surface and marks of the paintings. The selection of work for close analysis is made with Mrs. Wallace, from a thematic sorting of the larger database that collates story-fragments, biography, images and bi-lingual recordings.

Interpreting the role of painting and storytelling in Mrs. Wallace's work requires responsive, interactive 'audiencing' to elicit her specialist knowledge of Eastern Arrernte culture, and her contemporary expression of it.

Audiencing is critical to engaging with Mrs. Wallace's oration. It involves the researcher with the tonal qualities of oration, which in this case include biography, cultural story, anecdote, and historical recount produced in either English or Eastern Arrernte, with or without translation, with or without accompanying painting. It places some onus of responsibility with the researcher to share their perception of what's happening in the spatial and temporal frame of the oration. The *act* of audiencing diminishes the balance of power and authority being held by the researcher, and defends the authority of Mrs. Wallace as co-researcher of her own work.

While audiencing reveals the tonal qualities of the oration, analyzing and interpreting the data generated between 2003 and 2011 reveals thematic content in the breadth of Mrs. Wallace's work. These themes resonate with Mrs. Wallace, who has described the state of Eastern Arrernte knowledge as 'fragmented'. I learnt that she uses different 'voices' to place herself

in a variety of relationships to the material she orates depending on her temporal and spatial experience of the events being orated. The themes are:

- anecdote and history
- layers of perception embodied in the Eastern Arrernte spirit world
- intimate knowledge of the landscape as it is now, and since its creation
- dependence on knowledge of family history and the anpernirrentye system of skin and kin relationships
- the importance of education for survival.

Biographic background

Before considering the role of Mrs. Wallace's storytelling and painting in maintenance and transmission of culture in a contemporary Eastern Arrernte context, it is important to preface the significant impacts of uncontrollable changes which have affected her, and her environment to date.

By the end of the 1950s the impacts of a severe drought, control of the movement of the local Aboriginal population and restriction of access and land use on homelands brought an end to the lifestyle of Mrs. Wallace's early years. Growing up in the bush with grandparents during the 1940s to 1950s, Mrs. Wallace's family spoke a dialect of Eastern Arrernte, and associated with a homelands range encompassing Uyetye, Atnetarrkwe, Keringke, Therirrerte, Werirrte and Inte-Arkwe.

Through circumstances beyond her family's control she was driven to live in one place, at Santa Teresa mission. Mrs. Wallace's family was wary of the mission. As Mrs. Wallace recalls¹⁰:

That was the really wrong place, they built the mission. They built mission on sacred site – they should have talked to the old people here. My grandfathers' fathers were alive that time ... we didn't even know when they moved into Santa Teresa ... Even my grandfather, he didn't know. They all kept out of the way.

As a child, she had been named by local pastoralists, and was first recorded by nuns as Catherine Doolan and later changed to Kathleen Doolan. She began a Catholic mission education, living in the girls' dormitory, learning domestic work from the age of 12.

In the 1960s at 18, she married Douglas Wallace. The 1970s brought the era of self-determination, slowly establishing the Eastern Arrernte community of Ltyentye Apurte alongside a continuing church presence at Santa Teresa. In the 1980s Keringke Arts was established at Ltyentye Apurte, and Mrs. Wallace painted there until the present. Her paintings are housed in many significant national and international public and private collections.

Old knowledge, new ways

Mrs. Wallace has brought the influence of two strongly distinct cultures into culmination in her painting and storytelling. The goal of her work is to maintain and transmit knowledge from the past to those in the present¹¹.

JL: Can we talk about why you wanted to do the research?

KW: I just wanted to keep the story going ... because I knew some people lost theirs and I didn't want to lose what I wanted to tell. I had little grannies ... families to tell them stories, but in a different way. So that thing can keep going ... after, when I'm gone.

JL: Is it research? Different from teaching? Apart from saying its maintenance and transmission ... There were some things we did when we worked together ... we moved from one point to another point ... and then maybe to another point ... Do you remember how you made a decision about where we would go?

KW: It is like teaching too ... survival and things like that, through stories. We were taught survival, names of trees, birds.

She recalls the influences coalescing through the medium of paint¹²:

JL: Can you remember what it was like, changing from earth material and suddenly being given things that were completely different - the water, the colour, the mixing, onto paper, the brushes. They are really different materials than how you were used to using ochre. Did it feel exciting?

KW: It was exciting for me, because every time when there was ceremony on it was time to mix up paints ... with fat that was a way they used to do colours, with fat. Especially the red ochre, and then the white they used to mix with water, and yellow. And for brushes they used to use sticks. They make it straight, make it special way, and that gives them really good lines. Painting time for me was really good because I used to learn ... and now I can do it. Painting bodies.

JL: So when someone gave you a paintbrush with hair on the end of it, and some colours and some water and said, 'Look, you can paint with these', what did that feel like?

KW: Yeya. It was different. Because we started off doing oil painting ... and that was a bit messy (laughs). I didn't know what to - which colours to use or to mix. Every time I put it on the canvas, it went really smudgy and didn't look right. Then I had to get the hang of it, doing trees ...

Now, many of Mrs. Wallace's paintings are drawn from a particular story, and the stories, like the paintings, are full of detail. They combine tangible, everyday information with an awareness of the beginning of consciousness,

the sometimes intangible *altyerrenge*, when associated ancestral activities formed the landscape and people we know. The consequence of her worldview is that through her paintings and storytelling contemporary forms of transmission and maintenance coexist with her knowledge of the ancestral past¹³.

JL: If that's a method, the way we did the research, the journeys, and it's like how you did it when you were little ... going to a place and learning and talking and listening ... and coming to another place ... then what about the paintings? Because at the places we visited we made lots of photos, took pictures, recorded conversations, and we recorded the stories ... What about the paintings? You did them after. Where do they fit into all of this?

KW: I used to see my grandfather doing it. Even my grandmother, she used to ... do painting on her bodies and sing along ... but some of the songs I didn't catch, but I used to see all the paintings, and stories ... I could catch that from them ... Singing was a bit hard for me to learn ... I used to dance ... I had my own tapping sticks ... and dancing stick with those feathers ... I used to make it myself.

Figures, landscape and ceremonial features inhabit her work, visually in vertical and aerial focal plains, and aurally as characters with diverse presence and powers. These are often displayed among other motifs which add depth and detail such as dancing sticks, music sticks, coolamon, or digging sticks.

Clearly marked bird tracks, nests with eggs, kangaroo tracks and other animal tracks traverse their particular plane within the painting; metaphoric and representative of ancestor forms, informing about and linking one site to another, or denoting the identity of that site as Mrs. Wallace relates to it.

In this way close analysis of the canvases indicates that certain of the paintings present in layers which capture the detailed cultural information of what's to be done / has been done, where, by whom, for whom and in which order. The layers provide a novice student with a great deal of information and knowledge specific to Eastern Arrernte culture of the past and relevant today.

Theme: Anecdote and History

Through oral recounting and visual perception Mrs. Wallace's life-world and the knowledge expressed within painting and story-telling become tangible to others. Using anecdotal recounting she describes aspects of life from her early experiences and the teaching of her elders.

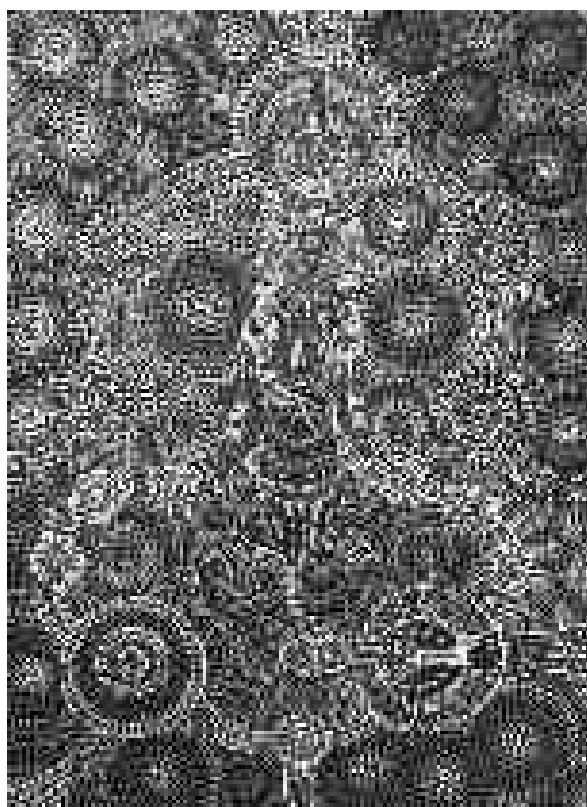
The following short story was recorded at Keringke Arts to accompany a painting commissioned for an exhibition showcase for a midwifery Conference. It is a clear example of Mrs. Wallace's interest in engaging in debates that extend beyond the local sphere and inform a broader audience about the knowledge of Eastern Arrernte women¹⁴:

When a woman was ready to give birth she was assisted by her grandmothers, either *aperle* or *ipmenhe*, and the daughters of her uncles - her cousins, *antyelekwe*.

The woman is held as the baby lies on soft warm sand so that the cord can be cut. These women are inside a wurly shelter, and have a large windbreak, *akwintye*, so that they are private.

A fire is on the left providing heat and warm sand for the baby, as well as ash which helps heal the tied chord and stem bleeding. A grandmother will use the warm sand to clean and dry the baby off after the birth.

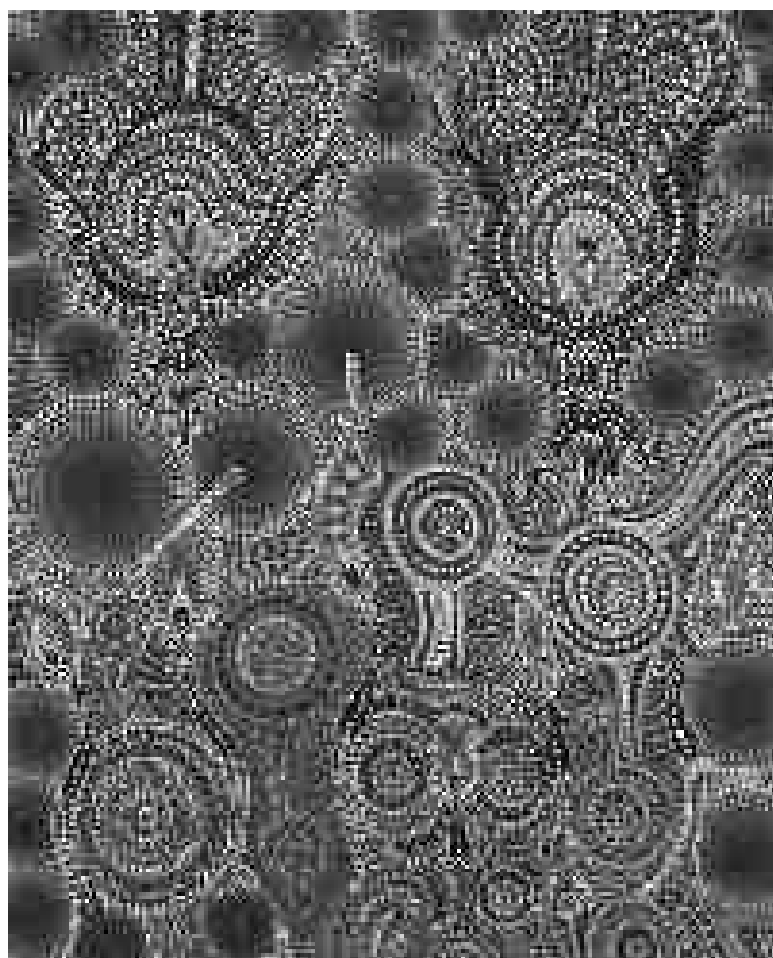
Mother and baby will stay in the wurly and nearby until it's time for the father to meet the baby in a ceremony. This would be a few weeks after the birth, when mother and baby are strong. Until this time her grandmothers and her cousins look after the mother's needs. They bring food, rub her with medicinal plants and nurture both she and her new baby. The chord is kept and either tied around the baby's neck or forehead. This will help the babe to grow up strong and without a feeling of loss, a feeling that something is missing.



Birthing Site, Kathleen Wallace, 2010. 30 x 46 cm, acrylic on canvas.

Theme: Perception and Embodiment

Mrs. Wallace's paintings open the viewer to the possibility that the corporeal space they enter when viewing the work might reflect one, some or all of internal, embodied or external, spatial planes. Within the layers some disappear into the canvas, others project



Evil Spirit Eagles, Kathleen Wallace, 2009. 44 x 48 cm, acrylic on canvas.

outwards. Some pulsate, others glow. The visual planes are complex and loaded until no mark on the canvas can be ignored, as all reveal intrinsic knowledge.

Mrs. Wallace's stories open the audience to the possibility that the events taking place both in the past and the present draw one into a world of important and cyclic incarnation, where totemic and ancestral energies reside to this day, in the land and its people. Accepting this sense of *altyerrenge* takes the audience into spatial and temporal perspectives unfamiliar to those outside Eastern Arrernte culture, as the land and its people stretch forwards and backwards. Uncontrollably wild and intimately nourishing, a conjoined entity of greater magnitude than those of us passing through might imagine.

The following two stories expose the audience to powerful forces of the spirit realm who presented themselves in everyday situations, and through chaos and grief, brought rituals that continue on in the present day. *Eagle Boys*¹⁵ examines the vulnerability of young male initiates. They are at risk without the protective strength of the women – mothers, sisters, wives - who must withdraw from the boys until they return as men, and without the spiritual intervention of the powerful traditional healers, *Ngangkere*, who convene with the spirit realm.

Arrentye - Eagle Boys

In the *altyerreng* there were two big eagles. They used to hunt for meat. One day they couldn't find any and at that time there was a ceremony going on to make young men. They saw the young men by themselves. It was in the evening. They couldn't find any kangaroos so they came down and took two young men and ate their hearts out.

The men came back from hunting but there were no young men there. They looked and they saw tracks of birds, big birds so they talked: 'What sort of bird is this'. The birds had only eaten the young man's hearts and not their bodies. The men wanted to find out what the big birds were and where they were living, so they looked everywhere but couldn't find them. The birds were up in the sky.

There was one *Ngangkere*, he saw them coming back down in the evening. 'They are looking for more young men' he said. The men speared the eagles but couldn't kill them. Then the women rushed up. They had fire sticks and they were making a lot of noise which made the birds go away and back up into the sky.

They are still up there, two white clouds, up in the sky. When there is ceremony going on, the birds' spirits come out, and even today the women rush up with fire-sticks and make the noise to make them go away. They are called *irretye*; they are eagle-hawks.

The next story of *Aleperentye* is widely known by most children, introduced at some point in their growing up. What is less openly discussed is the knowledge that the mythical woman is based on the real female assassins, who like their male counterparts, were trained and inducted in complex rituals in order to bring sickness or death to those perceived as deserving of it. There is enough mystery surrounding such memories to evoke a respectful uncertainty in many audiences, when introduced to the powers of *Aleperentye*.

Aleperentye:

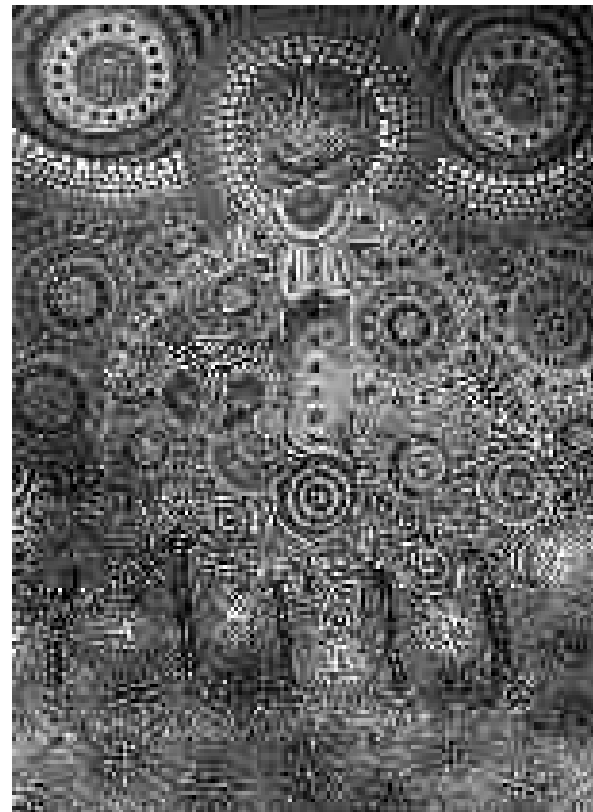
The Eastern and central Arrernte to English Dictionary defines *Aleperentye* is this way¹⁶: 'Dangerous spirit woman who travels about in the bush. They are said to be either white or invisible, carry a digging stick and can kill people. They are especially active when the north wind is blowing.'

This story was transcribed at Keringke Arts, to accompany the painting sale. Mrs Wallace¹⁷ told the story then agreed to corrections which make the spoken English language correct. This practice of 'cleaning up' is one artists often request, as the stigma of hearing their own English read out to them makes some people embarrassed; there is a feeling that because their English language may not be polished, people will assume the speaker is stupid.

Mrs Wallace gives a rendition of the story she depicted on canvas¹⁸:

In the painting the *Aleperentye* is following children who have gone to collect bush foods. When they have travelled far from home, she comes towards them wearing the disguise of a woman painted up for dancing. When she gets close enough the children recognise her as *Aleperentye*. They became really scared, shaking, not knowing what to do. She takes them and replaces them with her own magical children. The magical children become very ashamed when others look at them, so it is clear to people what has happened when such a changeover has been performed. If another person or child harms, hurts or hits the magical children, then the *Aleperentye* woman will come and seek vengeance, protecting her young ones. After some time the *Aleperentye* will swap the children back over, replacing her magical children with the original ones. You might hear her at night time, making a humming noise as she creeps around your house.

When we hear her we have to grab all the children and cuddle them tight, so she can't take them from us. We also use big fires to keep her away.



Aleperentye, Kathleen Wallace, 2009. 60x46cm, Acrylic on canvas]

Theme: Story and Place

The marks made in painting are imbued with Mrs. Wallace's tactile, affective and sensory expression of her Eastern Arrernte cultural world. The marks themselves are from antiquity; many are found in petroglyph and rock art in her homelands. But transposed onto canvas they are evidence of her life, her cultural inheritance and the contemporary meaning-making of her story telling and paintings.

Some motifs have a consistent meaning, identifiable because of the form, content and context that they come from and in which she uses them. To some extent the same occurs in story, although audiencing further denotes the aural quality, language and tone as her recounting takes place¹⁹.

JL: Have you painted her story [the woman from Therirrerte]

KW: I painted one about her ... I painted her differently, my style. You can see my style came from here [Therirrerte]. The circles sometimes are for water holes and rock holes. The other circles are the eggs, birds' eggs. You see birds' footprints and the eggs. Sometimes I don't put footprints there I just use the eggs. Some tiny little dots represent grass, and some represents trees. And some of them are like the marks here on these rocks that I have seen. Some from sand designs too.

JL: Maybe one time we will look at those sand ones you can do and then look at the paintings. Is this something other people could be learning and using?

KW: Everyone has their own, but some of them lost theirs. Some of the kids aren't learning them from family, but they are learning it from here. All the stories. I share my stories with other people too. Teaching the other young people and maybe when they grow up they will go and look for theirs because they all come from different country. They need to go back there and find those.

In this way the work Mrs. Wallace produces contains intricate and intimate details that describe aspects of her Arrernte knowledge which are perceptible and specific when visiting the places that she speaks for, draws her knowledge about and from. It is the stories told at some of the springs near Ltyentye Apurte which emphasise the connection of the past with the form of the land in the present, demonstrating to those without such stories the significance of intimacy and identity drawn from *apmere*, one's place, land²⁰.

Angkweye-angkweye at Irlkerteye:

The story for this place is about two women. They used to walk around here and around there, but they kept to the hills because that was

the safest place. They would go out to look for goannas and then they would come back and do cooking up in the hills, a safe place from danger.

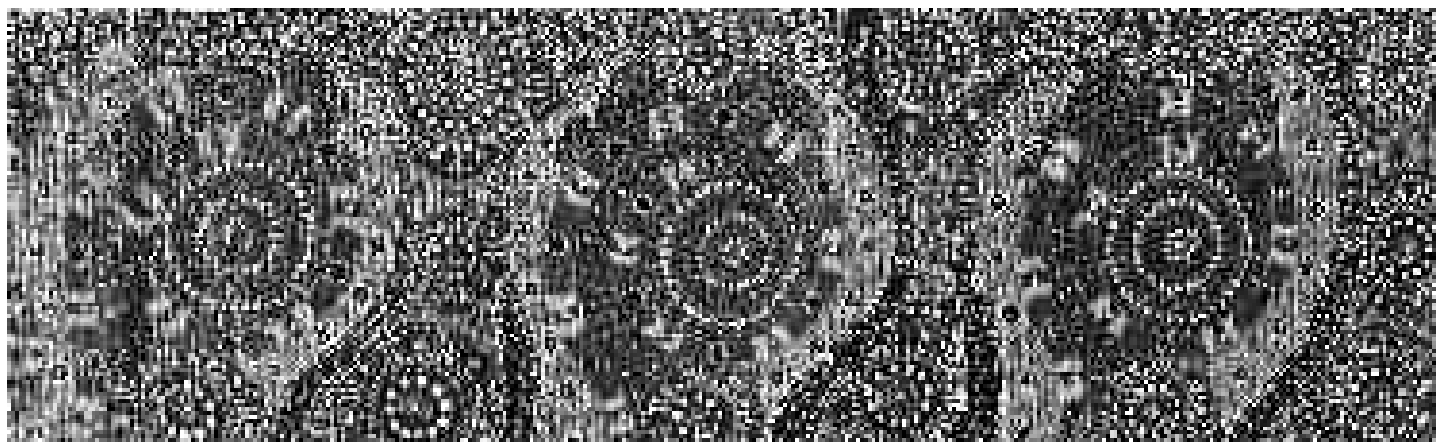
There were two of them; the bigger one used to keep a watchful eye on the younger one who used to walk away sometimes and look for big witchetty. That was their main food, witchetty, because you can find it easily down here [near the springs], and for yams they could look down there too. They used to dig up the yams but they're not here anymore ... [along the sides of the creek bed where the spring is].

All day they would go out hunting and even in the evening. Then they used to come back and cook up their gatherings, but sometimes big sister used to get really tired of doing everything. She used to send her sister down to get water from the springs. Every time she went, there used to be lots of rock pigeons drinking the water and when they heard her coming they used to fly away making noise with their wings, and she used to run back to her older sister telling her there was someone waiting down there and trying to kill her.

She thought that it was someone else frightening the pigeons away...so she'd run back and tell her sister, 'I am frightened. I can't go down there', and then her sister had to come down with her. They had to come down with their little bowl. They made their little bowl with bark from gum tree, where the lump is...on the gum tree they peel it and make it smooth, and they use it for months and months and months [burls from river and ghost gum trees].

All the time she used to do that, all the time! Then one day it really happened. Other way, down there behind us. She thought she would catch that man (she went down other way to get behind him), but instead that man was over there, and he drowned her.

Don't know why. Don't know who ... but she was always scared ... and then it really happened



Angkweye-angkweye sisters, Kathleen Wallace, 2010. 13 x 41 cm, acrylic on canvas

to her. But her spirit fell out of her body onto the ground and she became *angkweye-angkweye* (that little beetle who makes the sand trap) [Antlion Beetle].

Then the sister came. She'd been sitting down waiting for that water, and it became dark. 'What happened? Must be something happened to her! I better go down and see.'

She found her body floating on the water. There is a big deep pool of water down there, salty, that is where she got drowned and became *ankwe-ankwe*. Her sister went back up the hill and was really sad because she lost her. She was crying all night, didn't eat her food. Later she came down again and the body was gone... then she became spirit too and she is here today, both together, *angkweye-angkweye*.

When Mrs. Wallace is painting it's with intuitive, responsive actions which she doesn't consciously entertain; she describes it as 'not thinking'. Knowing her tools and her subject intimately, like other artists, she describes the activity of immersion as 'being' in the story / place. The stories denote and intone essential information about the past, but they also draw parallels to the present. Sometimes the stories pour out aloud to those present at home as she paints.

Theme: Education and Survival

The focus towards food and water for survival meant that everyone was encouraged to forage and contribute from an early age. The first essential rule of bush life is to engage with hunting. Mrs. Wallace makes many references to children hunting, learning to hunt and being rewarded for hunting in her storytelling and painting. During Mrs. Wallace's childhood it was critical for survival that each person contributes to the group's food sources²¹.

JL: Who gave you this name, Kathleen?

KW: It came from the mission when I was older – twelve, fourteen. I don't think I had a name before that, maybe something I don't know. Bush name, because when we were older we used to go out hunting all by ourselves, sometimes we went with them, with our parents, but we knew a lot too, by looking at them...

JL: So all the stories that your grandparents would have taught you about country?

KW: Those stories helped, because at night before we were told stories, we were told to get lizards, goanna or something, they were for the story, we had to give that, it was what we had to do. And I used to love all those stories.

Children learn practical skills for themselves and to share, as well as how complex social systems are navigated. Through activity, engagement, and participation children are involved at an early age in maintenance and transmission of their culture in

everyday life and learning. Stories provide some ground rules essential to survival of the group.

Integration of hunting into the mission lifestyle also took some learning. The mission was not able to provide for everyone, much as the stations only paid food for rations to the workers and not their families. So hunting remained vital for survival, despite the option of a mission store. Mrs. Wallace describes how her grandfather used to use spears to hunt in the 1960s²².

JL: What else would you like to tell us about?

KW: When mission was... everyone was at mission and everyone was living there, some old people used to still use spears, and my grandfather was one of them. Two of them, they used to go round here, that's why they showed me this place, and there was a little rockhole round here somewhere and that was the time they showed me that rockhole. They used to hunt around.

JL: What did they spear?

KW: They used to spear kangaroos, sometime emus when they see emus but they have to... when they creep up they have to be really quiet, and we used to follow them behind, real quiet too (laughs)... They used to spear him right through the body; that's to make them not run away, because the spear is on both sides, so that is how they used to catch kangaroo.

JL: How do you catch him now days?

KW: Rifle; but in those days it was very hard. Sometimes they never had luck.

Mrs. Wallace uses anecdote to describe some of the domestic routine associated with large family camps that moved from water source to water source when the homeland range was more accessible and the drought was not severe. This anecdote is from her elders, and has become her impression of life before her conscious memory²³:

In the old days, they used to just come... they used to just wander around ... come to places to see if there was water in the rockholes. In those days they used to just walk around ... place to place ... hunting.

But when it was getting dark they used to stay here, just down there where we are [the car is a 30 minute walk down the gully] ... and sometime they used to come up here and get water, and next day they would go to another place.

And the kids there, kids used to run around everywhere looking for lizards ... everything else ... birds' nests ... and old people used to walk along and get some ... look at *perentie*, goanna.

She recounts her childhood memory of being hungry and the expectation of finding foods²⁴:

Q: Do you remember being hungry?

KW: Yeah I remember being hungry, but us, some of us kids you know; we used to hunt for ourselves. We used to look for small things, lizards, goanna ... that would make us ... and when there was plenty yams ... that was hard to get yams too, only after the rains that's when yams come up, that's the only time get yams ... sometime we see dry yams ... dried up leaves ... we'd dig there ... find yam. We used digging stick.

Four Sisters represents one of a number of stories Mrs. Wallace paints and tells which address the lessons of survival.

Four Sisters:²⁵

This story is about four sisters. Two of them are young still. They look older than they are, but they still spend all their time playing around. Their older sisters used to try and make them look for food, but the girls were not interested. The two elder sisters used to go out by themselves hunting, but the younger ones never followed them to learn how to hunt, or where to look for food.

One day, the elder sisters stopped going out. They wanted to see what the younger ones would do. About two days went past; still they didn't go hunting. They said to each other, 'We will wait and see what they are going to do.' Now the young girls had started to feel really hungry and they went rushing around the camp looking for scraps everywhere, because they were truly hungry. They looked under the windbreak, looked everywhere for scraps. The ladies asked them, 'What are you doing?' The younger sisters replied 'We're hungry ... we are looking for scraps of food!' The elder sisters still didn't want to help them. So the younger ones picked up their big sisters' digging sticks and they walked away. They didn't know where to look. They walked all day and then they found a hole and dug at it. But a huge spider came out! That made them frightened and they went home. The ladies said 'Did you get anything?'

Because the younger sisters didn't even know where to dig for goanna, they dug the wrong hole. 'We just saw a spider, and we are not going back there anymore because there are lots of spiders!'

Finally the elder sisters felt sorry for them, and they told the younger girls to come and learn, so they went together and the younger ones finally began to learn how to hunt.

Mrs. Wallace describes the importance of water, and its associations to food and shelter²⁶:

KW: Water was a special, life-saving, it was the water that brings all of the people back here on this side [Uyetye side], and it was the lightening was part of the water, shows where the water is.

JL: It makes you think how much time people spent looking, and getting hungry and tired. But you had to keep looking.



Four Sisters, Kathleen Wallace, 2009. 29 x 64cm, acrylic on canvas

KW: The other thing was you had to bring the water, or follow the water, or move to the water... where we are now is a special homeland for everyone because there is water nearby, springs. That was the main places where they used to live ... Therirrerte is just a small rockhole; that was a place where they used to stay and when the water runs out they would go to here. Come back here. And there is another rockhole a really big one, and that is water all year round. It's not far from Therirrerte, Mernathenge. You have to climb right up ... maybe use a helicopter to go there ... it's really high up ... like Alterlke, that is high up ... But you can't climb up to Mernathenge, only look from a helicopter. They couldn't live there because too hot sand and hot wind blowing from the desert, they couldn't live there. They know there is water there, and half of the hill is covered with sand. So they would only go there for water or hunting ... use kangaroo skin to bring water back from there ... rain water from the big tank!

Sometimes it was hard, although always *yalke* and witchetty ... but not anymore, too many cattle and all the bush foods are gone ... some of the bush cucumbers, mushrooms, big melons, watermelons [are all gone].

Conclusion

This paper retains the qualities and tones of Mrs. Wallace's voice, the intricacy of the paintings and the knowledge she shares through them. The interpretation and analysis elicit knowledge that retains the integrity of the data, and acknowledges ontological and epistemological position of Aboriginal authority. Mrs. Wallace's painting and story-telling are powerful enablers of maintenance and transmission of contemporary Eastern Arrernte culture. The culture, her authority and knowledge have much to offer inter-cultural research partnerships and support complex research and contribute significantly to multi-disciplinary, multi-modal research methodology. From the emerging analysis and interpretation of the research data generated between 2003-11 it is clear that significant outcomes and theories will be drawn from a close study of Mrs. Wallace's paintings and storytelling, in the context of contemporary Eastern Arrernte culture and her contribution to:

- Cultural transmission and generational teaching and learning that engages people, even the very young, in developing essential life learning and practical skills;
- Maintenance of culture in ways that produce a sophisticated framework, in which knowledge custodians lead responsive cycles of learning appropriate for their audiences at a given time, place, or cultural setting;¹
- Keeping alive the complexity and breadth of Mrs. Wallace's dialect through recording and discussing stories, biography and accounts which preserve the identity of her ancestors, past, present and future.

Acknowledgement

This article is written thanks to Mrs. Kathleen Kemarre Wallace, contemporary Eastern Arrernte custodian, elder and colleague, who gave her permission to publish excerpts of transcripts and images of her paintings.

I wish to acknowledge the old people of Eastern and Central Arrernte, because through their combined custodial relationship to this *apmere* today's elders are still strong, and many of us continue together, to live and learn.

Copyright of all artwork resides with Kathleen Wallace. Copyright of all Eastern Arrernte cultural stories and language resides with the Eastern Arrernte people.

(Endnotes)

- 1 John Henderson & Veronica Perrurle Dobson, *Eastern and Central Arrernte to English Dictionary*, IAD Press, Alice Springs 1994.
- 2 Kathleen Kemarre Wallace & Judy Lovell, *Listen deeply, let these stories in*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 2009, p.xi.
- 3 Veronica Perrurle Dobson, 'Introduction' in Curriculum for Eastern Arrernte Language Course, copyright Veronica Dobson, Class notes, Alice Springs, 2008.
- 4 *ibid.*
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Putting black words on white paper: collaborative life writing – some processes

Sue Anderson

Abstract

In an era of post-apology politics in Australia and a changing cultural world order, it is timely to consider the true nature of cross-cultural collaborative Indigenous oral historical ventures. In this paper I offer a full and frank account of the processes involved in the collaboration between the late Dr Doreen Kartinyeri and myself in the recording of her life story. The workings of our relationship reveal the imbrications of the Indigenous/non-Indigenous collaborative process in recording oral history for one successful, although imperfect, auto/biographical¹ outcome and are not intended to represent the norm. Nevertheless, their exposure will hopefully inform future collaborations, in the spirit of reconciliation and equality of recognition.

I think a strong case can be made for the proposition that more may be learned from studying the process than from a focus on the position to which it has brought us².

Passing the Test

This project arose from an invitation for me to assist with the production of Doreen Kartinyeri's³ life story. This I saw as a great honour and a significant responsibility, as Doreen's story encompasses the very essence of contemporary Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations. As the main protagonist in the Kumarangk (Hindmarsh Island) Bridge affair, the 1990s saw the mother of nine, foster mother of 23, historian and the country's foremost Indigenous genealogist sky-rocketed onto the public stage in her drive to protect her cultural knowledge and assert land rights for her Ngarrindjeri⁴ people. This was a battle that was waged against the capitalist political forces of the hegemony in a true 'David and Goliath' biblical sense. This was, however, just one aspect of her extraordinary life, all of which I felt obligated to deliver to the public consciousness and to the historical record. Nevertheless, it was impossible for me to envisage the complexities of the process involved and their ramifications. This paper attempts to draw out some of these issues with the aim of shedding light on the true nature of cross-cultural collaborative ventures.

To date, many Indigenous people have required, usually for reasons of their own inadequate 'western' education, the assistance of non-Indigenous researchers, editors and/or co-authors in bringing their narratives into the public domain. However, this has given rise to a complex politics that has often sought to advance the position of the Indigenous author at the expense of the visibility of the non-Indigenous author, who remains behind the scenes⁵. An inherent essence of such politics requires the suppression of its own operational processes. This presents an imbalance of representation of the collaboration that takes place, because while the story belongs to the narrator, the construction of the story is jointly produced by the narrator and the inscriber, both of whom are vital to the production of a written work. In this way, cross-cultural collaborative life writing has been 'white-washed' as a means of redressing past injustices towards Indigenous Australians.

At the outset of our project in 2002, Doreen and I met and talked a number of times. She interviewed me as though I was applying for a job with her. I have had this experience working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people many times before and have alluded to it jokingly with many of them after I had 'passed the test'. As Ruby Langford Ginibi puts it, '(s)ome white people you couldn't knock, but you had to find out who and where they were'⁶. In the case of Jackie Huggins, the non-Indigenous collaborator not only had to work with Huggins' mother, Rita, who was the subject of the biography, but also with Huggins, as she was facilitating dialogue and acting as a sounding board for her mother. She wanted her mother to meet Alison Ravenscroft for the reason that, 'Indigenous people ... really need to have a personal relationship with whoever we'd be doing our work with ...'⁷. Indigenous oral historian John Maynard describes it in the following way:

Aboriginal people are very guarded and they don't open up to outsiders because they're very protective of their communities and certainly of things that happened in the past. Although ... a lot of people feel the need to tell their stories and let this be known, they ... want to understand where people are coming from before they will



'The People' by Sandra Saunders, oil on canvas, 2000, Private Collection. A mi:mini is gathering rushes for weaving. Her coat is woven from the rushes. The kornies are netting fish in Lake Alexandrina.

release any knowledge; otherwise, in a lot of instances, they'll just spin a lot of bullshit⁸.

I was given entrée into Doreen's family, in the way that other non-Indigenous collaborators have been with the families of their Indigenous narrators before me. Certainly this happened in the case of Alison Ravenscroft working with Rita and Jackie Huggins. Jackie Huggins says that:

Alison ... became part of our family, in the way Aboriginal people want to have a social and personal relationship. I think if editing is going to work, and I've spoken to a lot of indigenous writers about this, you have to form that personal working relationship. It'll work if you form that good relationship with your editor with honesty and respect on both sides⁹.

I would argue that this is only one aspect of a successful outcome. Huggins would appear to agree, as she also notes that she regretted not being more insistent about the inclusion of an extract that Ravenscroft persuaded her to omit¹⁰. With Doreen I was fortunate in this regard, because anything either of us felt strongly about, the other coincidentally did not, and therefore deferred willingly to the other. This meant we had no major disputes and I do not believe that Doreen had any regrets, because she never expressed any and was not one to hold her tongue. Doreen's major concern from the beginning was that her friend Sandra Saunders' painting of a Ngarrindjeri scene should become the

background image of the book's cover and I could not think of anything more appropriate.

Contract

I felt honoured to be entrusted with the job of piecing together Doreen's significant story, but I could not have known then just what it would entail. By now I had the utmost admiration for this intelligent, multi-talented, fortitudinous and feisty woman. For those who shared her tenets, Doreen was charismatic – '[her] words mirrored [her] fearless actions'¹¹. She was delighted she had someone she felt she could trust, who had appropriate skills, and who was prepared to do the work. We were both elated with anticipation. This is not uncommon at the start of a project. For example, Jaschok and Jingjun¹²:

... entered into the collaborative venture excited and reassured by our common research interest. We were, however, unprepared for the personal engagement this relationship entailed and for the extent to which our respective biographies would touch each other's lives and our research.

Before Doreen and I began, we drew up a contract to openly and respectfully express our aspirations from the project. This task was undertaken by me and was put together after referencing a number of different contracts I obtained from various sources. It was vetted before signature by Doreen's son, Klynton Wanganeen. The importance of the mutual respect we sought to

engender is reflected in the basis of the agreement, namely that:

- 1.3 This document is based on consultation and discussions we have had in which we have tried to identify potential problems, think through how we would handle them and make plain to each other what we think are our respective rights and obligations to each other. In particular we want to treat each other properly in this project and to manage material gathered and generated in it as well as possible. We have decided to set out our understandings in this document.
- 1.4 We have each agreed to discuss this agreement with our families and to do our best to make them understand what we intend by this document.
- 1.5 This agreement between Doreen Kartinyeri and Sue Anderson is based on mutual respect. We wish to continue to treat each other respectfully and we wish this document to reflect our respect for each other.

In addition, Clause 6.1 states that '[w]e note that we wish to make decisions together and on a respectful basis.' Nevertheless, at the end of the project I realized that, although composed with the best of intentions, the agreement was far too simplistic and generalized to cover all the eventualities that could have arisen in the course of the project. A more comprehensive document would have covered the finer points of law that may arise in such a project, and could only be compiled by a lawyer. A 'very tight and carefully-considered contract'¹³ is increasingly deemed an essential component of cross-cultural collaborative life writing. Nevertheless, in hindsight I do not believe it is possible to produce a legal document that can cover every unforeseen eventuality.

As Doreen's supporters came to endorse my involvement, the excitement built and the rollercoaster ride began. Doreen's enthusiasm manifested as an outpouring of ideas about other people to interview and research materials to collect, archives to visit and publications to peruse. Mine resulted in a frenzy of data collection and background research. Doreen's friends provided some very time-saving assistance in the form of advice, direction to research resources and access to their own materials, which was invaluable given that I copied over 1800 articles.

Authorship

This mutual respect is reflected in our joint decision on authorship, which we had agreed was to be equal. This was far more important to me than

royalties. Nevertheless, following Doreen's death I had to fight for this. When the book was close to publication the publishers, Aboriginal Studies Press (ASP, the publishing arm of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)), at first suggested that authorship be ascribed with the words 'Doreen Kartinyeri with Sue Anderson'.

I felt that this was inadequate to describe the extent of my role, especially given that over the five years we were working together, Doreen's health gradually declined. She kept losing weight and became physically depleted. As her condition worsened, I took responsibility for more and more of the workload, as well as taking up something of a nursing role in caring for her while she stayed with me. Eventually Doreen's weight loss began to affect her memory, such that in the months following our signing off on the draft manuscript, her normally razor-sharp mind began to wander. Nevertheless, she never lost the notion that she needed to press me to bring the manuscript to publication and it soon became clear that the real onus for finalization was on me. This expectation continued after her death, since the publishers not only bombarded me with editorial queries requiring time and effort to answer, but also expected me to undertake numerous interviews and arrange the book launch.

I fought against this, largely because I did not have the time, as I was working as a consultant to support myself and it was necessary that I devote myself to this. Fortunately, Doreen's daughter, Lydia Rankine, who has considerable organizational skills, was willing to take on the job. This included coordinating speakers, settling on a date convenient to all for the launch, booking the venue and arranging catering and gifts for presenters. It was not a simple exercise.

Given the physical, emotional and financial investment I had made towards the project, I felt the facile additive 'with' as a descriptive of my joint authorship effectively negated the value of my role and suggested that I acted only as a mere scribe to Doreen. I believe Doreen would have been appalled at this notion, because she expressed her indebtedness to me as a matter of obligation.

In fact this could not have been further from the truth, particularly in relation to my role in recording the Kumarangk (Hindmarsh Island) Bridge period of her life story. This story is the one that many recognize as the most important episode of her life, although I believe it was just one event in a long history of oppression for Doreen and her people and that her life had been remarkable in many other ways. Doreen clearly found this period too painful to revisit. No matter how hard I tried, I could never prompt her to talk in any depth about it; she would become so angry at the injustice she and others had suffered, it became too much for her to bear and she would digress to another topic without allowing me to bring her back to that theme.

It is not easy for most people to understand just how difficult it can be to work in the Indigenous arena. It is highly political in many complex ways. Indigenous people of Doreen's generation, because of their history of having their voices repressed by the policies of the dominant culture, rarely have the resources to support their own projects, either in financial or practical ways.

This was most certainly the case with Doreen, who had only been allowed by the authorities to complete Grade 3 in primary school. Doreen repeatedly thanked me for my contribution and iterated that she could not have had even a remote chance of producing a manuscript without my assistance. I took this as a significant compliment, coming from such a proud woman who had professed to have hated white people for much of her life, even though she was used to working with non-Indigenous academics and appreciated in both senses of the word how they could facilitate her achieving her own goals.

To provide a picture of the amount of work involved and the levels to which Doreen and I both contributed to the total of our project, it is necessary to illuminate some of the problematics and some high points that arose during the project.

Funding

I was working with Doreen whilst I was also a part-time PhD student, archaeological consultant and oral historian, with only the resources that I could muster myself. Funding is always an unknown but it seemed to me that in this instance funding was predicated on the political stance of the funding gatekeeper, the Kumarangk affair being something that drew fervour from the community and polarized viewpoints. This meant that certain individuals and institutions favoured assisting us and others did not. In the post-Bicentenary years, institutional funding supported a proliferation of Indigenous texts¹⁴. The Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council has fostered the production of a large number of Indigenous life narratives since that time¹⁵. Yet, although Doreen's story is of national (and indeed international) significance, for the application I took many hours to prepare on behalf of us both, not only was the full funding request denied, but not even a small percentage of it was forthcoming from the Aboriginal Arts Board.

In addition, because her previous publications¹⁶ were pleasurable for Doreen to produce and generally for members of the Aboriginal community and others to receive, Doreen was largely unaware of the difficulties we might encounter due to the highly political and public Kumarangk affair; indeed, as she felt she was nearing the end of her life, she did not care about anything other than her life story being made public.

Recording her life story however was a very different scenario because of her pain in relating certain parts

of it. Nor did I wish to increase her pain by pressing her. It became apparent that Doreen had learnt early in life, perhaps at age 10 when her mother died and her life changed irreparably, to successfully suppress her emotions as a means of defiance against the hegemonic system, as well as a survival mechanism. However, Doreen's reticence regarding personal issues and her emotional or affective responses caused genuine difficulty in terms of realizing a manuscript that contained the 'breath of life' and was not to be a chore to read because of its bland tenor. In this regard, her inability to express emotion was counter-productive and could have led to the book never being published, had I not sought the views of others close to her to reveal her feelings. This would have significantly added to Doreen's distress, as she set the greatest store on having her life story in the public arena. It could have resulted in failure for both parties and hence represented a complete waste of time.

Instead, a collection of some 38 hours of recordings with Doreen has been deposited in the JD Somerville Oral History Collection of the State Library of South Australia¹⁷. The original tapes will be lodged in AIATSIS's national archive, which will be a valuable resource for future researchers of a diverse range of topics and fields, and which has become even more important given Doreen's demise.

Doreen's amazing memory for Indigenous details came at the expense of her recall of the names of non-Indigenous people, as well as dates. This unusual and interesting forgetfulness may have developed from her inner anger at non-Indigenous people (born of past government oppression of Aboriginal people); it may have constituted a form of resistance; or it could have simply represented an expunction of extraneous information; or a combination of all three¹⁸. Nevertheless, it meant that I needed to invest considerable exertions on this kind of research and corroborating my findings with some of the people involved in the events.

Voice

I regarded the projection of Doreen's voice, both of the verbal and non-verbal form, to be pivotal to the success of our project, yet there were forces operating to stifle it despite the best of intentions. As with so many oral history projects, bringing out Doreen's voice in the written word presented a difficult task.

Body language is of course lost in both the oral recording and the written record, and while facial expressions represent the main silence for most people in this regard¹⁹, body language is a very important cultural feature for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. For example, Doreen would indicate secrecy with the flick of her head and a turned-up upper lip, a Ngarrindjeri gesture that cannot be recorded or transferred seamlessly into the text. Nevertheless,

while accent and inflexion can only be fully revealed by the actual recordings, they can be given significant nuance through grammatical expression, certain turns of phrase and manners of expression, as well as through Indigenous language words. There is free word order in Aboriginal languages; for example, Doreen told me that, 'not always was the Sister at the hospital'²⁰, as opposed to 'the Sister was not always at the hospital.' Retaining her grammatical expression gives colour and texture to the text and revives lived experience to those who knew her.

Nevertheless, I acknowledge that it was necessary for me to manipulate Doreen's text in order to present a readable account, and indeed, Doreen's predilection for the use of strong expletives would have rendered it completely unacceptable to any audience in the original form. Swearing is a social cohesive for Indigenous Australians. In this way (and in others) it is a common element of contemporary Indigenous communication where 'swearing is not illegitimate, but normal.'²¹ Nevertheless, this is not the case in the wider community, where it is considered insulting and profane.

Because of the importance of swearing for Indigenous people, I resisted advice I received from several sources to edit out all profanities. In addition, correcting all her grammar would have presented a completely unidentifiable voice. To protect that voice a line needs to be drawn somewhere, but exactly where to draw it is not easily determined. For Somerville²², '... it is the way the women talk, both the individual sound of their voice and its characteristic rhythms, that is so important to me.'

Whatever the level of manipulation of the text, to present a cultural texture that matches the voice of the narrator, political correctness must be eschewed and a courageous conviction to one's best judgment in such decisions needs to be maintained. This can be something of a dilemma, however, when there is a responsibility not to distort the narrator's voice.

The pressure on me in this regard was particularly emphasized in Doreen's case, as her voice was rarely truly presented in the Kumarangk (Hindmarsh Island) Bridge affair, particularly following the Hindmarsh Island Bridge Royal Commission, the most public time of her life. In fact, because the Kumarangk affair was so political, there were many expectations for her life narrative, all of which fell on me. All the large media, apart from the Australian Broadcasting Commission, were uncritical detractors of Doreen's role in the Hindmarsh Island affair and aggressively and relentlessly portrayed her as a fabricator who deserved to be demonized. On the other hand, she was well supported by many highly regarded leftist-oriented people and organisations from a diverse range of networks, including church groups, trade unions and environmentalists. Doreen was both vilified and exonerated by the judicial system, by the divisions

of white academia and by other Aboriginal people. However one stood on the issue, it seemed that everyone had a strong opinion of her, whether they knew her or not.

The Doreen I got to know so well was one of the most honest people I have ever met. Throughout our time working together she would always give my questions considered thought and if she did not know the answer to something, she would say so and usually reference it. For example, when I asked her about the funding for her genealogical work, she stated, 'I don't know anything about the administration; I never got involved, but the money came through almost immediately.'²³ While Doreen felt she had been generally portrayed in the media as a very badly behaved woman²⁴, as opposed to a woman angry at what she saw as heinous injustice to herself and her people, a pressure on me therefore was to de-emphasize her politicization.

I was required to achieve this while transferring the incomplete oral record that Doreen had provided into a complete text, with the goal of garnering maximum dissemination. I do not propose to engage here in an in-depth discussion of the issue of converting the oral to the written, as it diverts from my main topic of analysis and has been, and continues to be, widely represented in the discourse²⁵. However, a discussion of some of the practical difficulties that faced me in our particular instance is especially relevant. The tenor and cadence of Doreen's voice was focal to the delivery of her story; her soft side was eminently reflective and this needed to come through; her orientation to family was strong and previously under-represented; and her inherent belief in, and advocacy for, her culture was paramount. Representing all these priorities amounted to a significant challenge.

Legal Issues

Those in Doreen's inner circles who were lawyers warned me about some of the legal issues we might face. Indeed, this proved more problematic than I could have imagined. As a co-author of Doreen's story I am equally liable for any of its content. Doreen was not concerned about further legal action against her as she had few assets, whereas I stood to risk my house. At one point towards the end of my research, defamation concerns were so alarming and constant that I thought my own participation might be completely jeopardized without a guarantee of freedom from litigation. During the editorial stages, legal advice suggested that the draft text could be defamatory of numerous individuals. Thus I had to invest considerable further work in editing out any possible defamatory material, while at the same time attempting to ensure that no dilution of the plot line or colour of the manuscript occurred during this process.

These were however just two of a number of layers of the editorial process. As confirmation of the wider

perception of the difficulty of my situation, I could not find an insurer who was prepared to offer me defamation cover for a premium of less than \$6,000 per annum. My fiscal situation meant that I was only able to pay this in instalments, which incurred an additional \$600 penalty. These events occurred later in the process and came as something of a bitter shock despite some early concerns.

While Doreen and I received an initial grant from AIATSIS for \$10,000 and two subsequent grants from then South Australian Minister for Social Justice, Stephanie Keys, and from Arts SA for \$5,000 each, the three of which were split between us, this barely covered the basics of the five-year exercise, which proved to be a very costly one.

Publication

There was another setback relating to the amount of time that was necessary for me to dedicate to the delivery of the end product. At the start of the process Doreen, her supporters and I all had expectations that, given all the events of her life and their complexity, the resulting volume would be something of a tome. Indeed, when I initially sent the draft manuscript to the publisher, it comprised some 150,000 words. The effort of finally getting it there was extremely draining, so I was devastated at the editor's first direction that the wordage had to be reduced to 80,000 for the book to be marketable.

This seemed like a monumental task. I felt so pressured that I could not face the prospect immediately and took some time out to save my sanity. Slowly and repetitiously I went over the text time and again trying to work out which event/anecdote/extraneous verbiage to delete until I reached a word count of 86,000. This I considered the end of my limit and fortunately the final draft manuscript was accepted. However, this was not the limit of the editorial process as the manuscript was now sent to an external editor for close reading and fine tuning. This called for further research, data collection, cross-referencing, correction and annotation on my part. At the same time, I also had to deal with the ASP sub-editor responsible for the insertion of photographs and maps, another person who was dealing with formal paperwork, and a public relations company engaged by ASP to promote the book. I was left with very little time for my own work, let alone interests.

As her health deteriorated further and further, Doreen became very frail, at first only physically. Her weight dropped constantly until she eventually weighed 25 kilos and it was shocking to view her skeletal frame. Her bones became fragile and she broke her hand banging on the bar of the pub barracking for the horse she had backed in the Melbourne Cup. I felt the burden of responsibility for her care when she stayed with me, where she had to negotiate a long flight of steep steps to her bedroom. It made me quite fearful for her welfare as

well as for my own in the case of something untoward occurring while she was with me. Soon she needed a chair for the shower, then a walking frame and then it was necessary for me to physically support her.

As mentioned previously, following her physical decline, her previously highly acute thought processes also began to wax and wane. Mercifully this did not happen until after we had corroborated all of the events in the book and she had signed off on the draft manuscript. Even after she had done this (which I felt she needed to do in writing as well as in principle, to avoid any debate about whether she had done so in sound mind), she would tell people we were not very far along in the process. They would then phone me to pressure me to finish what I had already finished and put in the hands of the publisher, and this involved a repetitive process of explanation.

As if the stress of writing was not enough, for her sake I also felt under enormous strain to bring the manuscript to publication before Doreen's death. This pressure came from her, from others and from myself. Doreen signed my copy of her genealogy *Narungga Nation*²⁶ with the caption, 'To My Dear Friend Sue, thank you for the dedication with my life story. Please finish it while I'm alive.' A deconstruction of this caption effectively sums up the working relationship Doreen and I experienced. Doreen, who had no memory for dates or white people's names, had simply to recount her narrative, hosted mostly by me in my home (or if in her home, I fitted around her schedule and routine, as well as that of her family, which is only a matter of courtesy), with all other work to be covered by me. This description is not intended to express bitterness on my part, but rather an honest reflective process indicative of the truth of the situation prevailing. I had a love for Doreen; if I had not, I could not, and would not, have endured these circumstances.

In fact, the pressure on me was so great that it had a counter-effect for Doreen and a positive effect for me. I became so upset to be in this situation that it tipped me over the edge; I dug in my heels and refused to try any further to drive publication. I had delivered a manuscript to the publisher, which I considered was an enormous achievement under the circumstances, and I was completely enervated. As far as I was concerned, the outcome from there on was in the lap of the gods. Eventually Doreen also reached this point. She had faith that I would ensure it eventually reached publication and she was no longer in a position to attend a book launch or a press conference, so was resigned that the manuscript had been produced and would see publication at some point.

However the timing for this was out of my control, as ASP had a publication schedule that already extended beyond 18 months and for that time they held the manuscript without any further contact. ASP only contacted me again shortly before Doreen's death.

She passed away without our having settled on a title for her narrative, the one issue on which we never concurred. The publisher eventually decided on *Doreen Kartinyeri: My Ngarrindjeri calling*. Although to me this was not evocative of the Doreen I knew, and it still is not, I eventually agreed to this title, as I was worn down by the constant exchanges between Aboriginal Studies Press, who used me as a conduit, and Doreen's family, who also had to decide on this issue.

An additional responsibility lay with how to deal with the varying levels of restriction of materials. I know that Doreen had a lot of cultural knowledge because she told me much 'off the record'. She then left it to me to decide what was appropriate to lodge with the institutions and what was not. I appreciated her trust, but felt it was a significant responsibility. Yet it was not a feasible proposition that Doreen and I should sit down together and go through all the recordings we had made and decide which could be deposited. There simply was not the time or the resources, nor the physical or emotional capacity.

At one level there are materials specifically relevant to the publication. At another level are those provided to institutions like the State Library of South Australia and AIATSIS. Then there are those for Doreen's family alone, since they include issues that relate to family politics. Finally, there are those that remain in my own collection, because they relate to very personal matters between Doreen and me. All of these issues are still to be resolved.

The publication was launched in July 2008, giving the family and me very little time to grieve for Doreen, who passed away in December 2007, and for her eldest surviving son Ron, who passed away suddenly in May of that year.

Conclusion

In this paper I have drawn out as many cross-cultural collaborative processes as I could elicit in relation to my project with Doreen, to offer an honest and open account. I believe this is an important aspect of cross-cultural collaborative ventures that has previously been suppressed and that now warrants exposure and discussion. Had Doreen survived to read this article I feel sure she would have not only agreed with the sentiments behind it, but would have vocally railed against the system that led to its necessity.

What I have discussed here shows there were many difficulties associated with my collaboration with Doreen, but the relationship we developed over-rode and outshone anything that could come before us. Certainly, if I felt that martyrdom was necessary on my part, I would not have remained in the collaboration. Rather there was a joy in bearing witness and being party to the recording of history, and in particular, an important story of social justice that I felt was vital to

bring to light. For me, the rewards of the project far outweighed the disadvantages.

Nevertheless, it is important for collaborators in such ventures to be transparent about the processes involved if we are to reach a deeper cross-cultural understanding and move towards true equality of recognition.

(Endnotes)

- 1 Liz Stanley *The auto/biographical I: The theory and practice of feminist auto/biography*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1992. I use Stanley's term 'auto/biography' to represent cross-cultural collaborative Indigenous life writing, as this genre sits within her definition, namely:

... an epistemologically-oriented concern with the political ramifications of the shifting boundaries between self and other, past and present, writing and reading, fact and fiction, and with an analytical attention to these within the oral, visual, and written texts that are 'biographies and autobiographies' (Stanley 1992, p. 41).
- 2 Michael Frisch, *A shared authority: Essays on the craft and meaning of oral and public history*, State University of New York Press, Albany, New York 1990, p.xv.
- 3 I had already interviewed Doreen for another project (Ngadjuri History 2000, State Library of SA, OH482) and found her to be an excellent interviewee. I would add here that while the academic convention is to use surnames, in this instance I feel the relationship I shared with Doreen warrants a closer referent than 'Kartinyeri' and that 'Doreen' is a compromise between her surname and the diminutive 'Dodo' (derived from her brother's stutter) with which I addressed her in life.
- 4 The country of the Ngarrindjeri nation is located in the Murray River, southern lakes and Kurangk (Coorong) region of South Australia. The collaboration between Doreen and me resulted in the publication *Doreen Kartinyeri: My Ngarrindjeri Calling* 2008, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- 5 Penny Van Toorn, 'Indigenous texts and narratives', in Elizabeth Webby (ed) *The Cambridge companion to Australian literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000, p.37.
- 6 Ruby Langford, *Don't take your love to town*, Penguin, Ringwood, Vic.1988, p.268.
- 7 Chris Watson, 'To sit down and write that book', *Hecate*, vol.26, no.2, 2000, p.148.
- 8 John Maynard, interview with Sue Anderson 25 February 2001, Tape and transcript held by Sue Anderson.
- 9 Huggins, cited in Watson 2000, op.cit., p.149.
- 10 Watson 2000, op.cit., p.149.
- 11 Deborah Gershenowitz, A, 'Negotiating voices: Biography and the curious triangle between subject, author, and editor', *Oral History Review*, vol.32, no.2, 2005, p.73.
- 12 Maria Jaschok & Shui Jingjun, "'Outsider within": Speaking to excursions across cultures', *Feminist Theory*, vol.1, no.1, 2000, pp.33-58 (p.38).

- 13 Susan Hawthorne (Editor, Spinifex Press), pers.comm. with author 20 January 2009.
- 14 Adam Shoemaker, 'Does paper stay put? The politics of Indigenous literature in Canada and Australia', in P van Toorn & D English (eds), *Speaking positions: Aboriginality, gender and ethnicity in Australian cultural studies*, Department of Humanities, Victorian University of Technology, Melbourne, Vic. 1995, pp.73-75.
- 15 Including Patsy Cohen & Margaret Somerville, *Ingelba and the five black matriarchs*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, NSW 1990; Evelyn Crawford, *Over my tracks: A remarkable life (as told to Chris Walsh)*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Vic. 1993; Yami Lester, *Yami: The autobiography of Yami Lester*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, NT 1993; Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung people*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, Qld. 1994; Jessie Lennon, *And I always been moving!: The life of Jessie Lennon*, Jessie Lennon & Michele Madigan, Coober Pedy, SA 1996; Rosalie Fraser, *Shadow child: A memoir of the stolen generation*, Hale & Iremonger, Maryborough, Vic. 1998; Jackie Huggins, *Sister girl: The writings of Aboriginal activist and historian Jackie Huggins*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Qld 1998; Doris Kartinyeri, *Kick the tin*, Spinifex Press, Melbourne, Vic 2000; Wenten Rubuntja (with Jenny Green and with contributions from Tim Rowse), *The town grew up dancing: The life and art of Wenten Rubuntja*, Jukurrpa Books, Alice Springs, NT 2002; and Claire Henty-Gebert, *Paint me black: Memories of Croker Island and other journeys*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, ACT 2005, to name but just a few.
- 16 Doreen was Australia's foremost Indigenous genealogist and authored eight genealogical publications and a number of journal articles.
- 17 Doreen Kartinyeri: Life experiences August 2002-August 2004, State Library of SA (OH655/18, OH655/23, OH655/34).
- 18 This suggests one or two forms of forgetting identified by Connerton (Paul Connerton, 'Seven types of forgetting', *Memory Studies*, vol.1, no.1, 2008, pp.59-71). For Connerton (p. 65), Doreen's method of storing the names of white authorities on paper in a folder, or archiving them the way most of us would now on a computer, '... is tantamount to saying that, though it is in principle always retrievable, we can afford to forget it'. This aligns with his ideas about 'forgetting as annulment', which flows from a surfeit of information. Certainly, Doreen would have had to cull the information she could store in her own head; however I believe that the kind of forgetting to which hers was most closely associated is 'forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity' (Connerton, pp. 62-64).
- 19 Joseph Pugliese, "'Fighting with our tongues": The politics of genre in Aboriginal oral histories', *Oral History Review*, vol.28, no.2, 2001, p.89.
- 20 Doreen Kartinyeri: Life experiences 2003a, State Library of SA (OH655/18).
- 21 Cowlshaw, Gillian 2004, *Blackfellas whitefellas and the hidden injuries of race*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA, p.95.
- 22 Somerville Margaret, with Dundas, Marie, Mead, Mary, Robinson, Janet & Sulter, Maureen, *The sun dancin': People and place in Coonabarrabran*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, ACT, 1994, p.15.
- 23 Doreen Kartinyeri: Life experiences 2003b, State Library of SA (OH655/23).
- 24 See, for example, Colin James, 'Battle plan calls for blockade on bridge', *Advertiser*, 14 May 1997, p. 5.
- 25 See for example, Trevor Lummis, *Listening to history: The authenticity of oral evidence*, Hutchinson, London 1987; Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile bodies: toward a corporeal feminism*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, NSW 1994, Christine Nicholls, 'Literacy and gender', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol.48 1996, pp.59-72; Ann Curthoys, 'An historian's perspective' in *Land, rights, laws: Issues of native title*, Native Title Research Unit, AIATSIS, Canberra, ACT 1997; Peter Gray, 'Saying it like it is: Oral traditions, legal systems and records', *Journal of the Australian Society of Archivists*, vol.26, no.2, 1998, pp.248-269.
- 26 Doreen Kartinyeri, *Narungga Nation*, Dr Doreen Kartinyeri, Adelaide, SA 2002.

‘Somewhere between the toast and the marmalade’: analysing an intuitive approach to memory sources

Miranda Francis

Abstract

Historians are often reluctant to talk in detail about their methodological approach to their source material. This paper examines an attempt to apply interpretative methods to oral memory sources. It describes a small ‘experiment’ with quantitative analysis. The author applied a specific type of data analysis - word-frequency - to study interviews with four British women who migrated to Australia after the Second World War. This allowed her to explore one aspect of transforming a collection of individual interviews into a coherent historical account. While acknowledging that this sort of data analysis clearly has benefits when using a large body of material, she concludes that it can not replace close reading and listening to the original interviews.

It never helps historians to say too much about their working methods. For just as the conjuror’s magic disappears if the audience knows how the trick is done, so the credibility of scholars can be sharply diminished if readers learn everything about how exactly their books came to be written. Only too often, such revelations dispel the impression of fluent, confident omniscience; instead, they suggest that histories are concocted by error-prone human beings who patch together the results of incomplete research in order to construct an account whose rhetorical power will, they hope, compensate for gaps in the argument and deficiencies in the evidence. Perhaps that is why few historians tell us how they set about their task.

Keith Thomas¹

Introduction: the ‘conjuror’s magic’

The above quote comes from an article Keith Thomas recently wrote for the *London Review of Books* on historical research methods. He describes his rather

unusual research method which consists of first taking notes on sheets of paper. After transferring these notes into an alphabetised index book, he cuts up the sheets of paper which he periodically files according to topic in old envelopes. If the notes on a topic are ‘especially voluminous’ he puts them in a box file, container or a desk drawer. He writes: ‘This procedure is a great deal less meticulous than it sounds. Filing is a tedious activity and bundles of unsorted notes accumulate. Some of them get loose and blow around the house, turning up months later under a carpet or a cushion².’ William Lamont wrote a letter in response to this article saying he had seen Thomas’s method in action – and it worked. He described how, many years before, he asked Thomas over breakfast about the Muggletonians and Thomas left the room. He later returned with an envelope marked ‘Muggletonians and animals’ which he proceeded to scatter over the kitchen table. Lamont reported he found what he needed, ‘at a point somewhere between the toast and the marmalade³.’

Eccentric as it may be, this approach appeals to me. I like the idea of history being found ‘somewhere between the toast and the marmalade’. When analysing memory sources, I have tended to take what could be called a grounded history approach. Kathy Charmaz describes grounded theory methodology as being emergent and providing opportunities for analysis at various points in the research process – not just at the ‘analysis stage⁴’. My ‘method’ is probably more accurately described as listening carefully and scribbling down what seems important. So, when I was asked to apply an interpretative method to memory sources, I thought perhaps it was time for me to analyse what I was actually doing with this intuitive approach. Alan Bryman and Robert Burgess argue ‘much mystery surrounds the way in which researchers engage in data analysis⁵.’ This is typical of writing in the field. Historians who have used quantitative approaches have often been rather unforthcoming about how they actually set about their research. So, ignoring Thomas’s warning about the ‘magic’ disappearing, I decided to explore this mystery and to experiment with a specific type of data analysis – word-frequency. Admittedly

my explorations were rather ad hoc and not a rigorous experiment. Nevertheless, in this process I discovered word analysis can be a useful tool but that, for me at least, it does not replace close reading and listening to the original memory sources.

Rather than close analysis of an individual interview, I chose to examine a set of interviews. I planned to begin with a quantitative approach which I hoped would help elicit themes and patterns and lead me back to my more familiar qualitative analysis. As well looking for patterns and themes, I also wanted to explore how analysing these themes would help in the process of transforming a collection of individual interviews into a coherent historical account. As Trevor Lummis points out: 'if oral history is to move from a form of biography to an historical account, it must proceed from an individual to a social experience⁶.' Sherna Berger Gluck and Susan Armitage, in their email exchange about women's oral history, also grapple with this question of 'what are the legitimate ways to draw meaning and generalizations from interviews⁷.' Armitage feels there is a need to move beyond the individual voice of an interviewee to make connections which can tell us something about collective experience. The difficulty is finding how to do this. Gluck concludes, 'the construction of meaning is perhaps the most difficult challenge we face, and I guess we just all muddle along in our own way⁸.' Rather naïvely, I decided to muddle along myself and experiment with NVivo, the data analysis software. NVivo is a software package for qualitative data analysis designed to assist researchers sorting, analysing and organising non-numerical data. Obviously quantitative historians are the main users of this software and qualitative historians may not be familiar with it. It has certainly been used in the area of health in the Wellcome Trust-funded research project 'The Health of the Cecils' based at Royal Holloway, University of London⁹. Other projects, such as Decker's examination of people's experiences of health and well-being in Halton, England and Reid's oral history of radiography, mention using NVivo but give little detail on how or why it was used to analyse the data¹⁰. I downloaded a 30 day trial version of NVivo 8 and quickly discovered it is complicated software and to use it properly requires coding as well as considerable time and practice. I confined myself to using it to examine word frequency in order to tease out the main themes in my material. I will discuss the methodology below.

Migration interviews

My material was British migration accounts, some of which I already knew. For an earlier project, I had interviewed my aunt about her experiences as a child migrant but I had not compared this interview in detail with other migration accounts. My aunt and her family migrated to Australia in 1956 as part of the

Assisted Migration Scheme. This interview and my grandmother's subsequent death opened up this area for family discussion and it became clear that my mother's migration story was quite a different one to my aunt. I decided to revisit my aunt's interview for a 'second take', to borrow Joanna Bornat's term¹¹. I was hoping that revisiting her interview in the context of other contemporary migration accounts would help me to understand how I had previously analysed and made sense of my aunt's interview. I hoped this process would also assist me to understand how to begin to write history from memory sources.

Once again, I started with the word analysis approach. Because my object of comparison was a woman and I wanted to have more or less common gendered experiences, I chose three other accounts by women. And because I wanted to avoid being misled by my own preconceptions, I chose three accounts by women that I had not heard or read: Sandra O'Neill, Janet Francis, and Christina Daly.

I chose not to read these transcripts until after experimenting with data analysis. As far as was possible, I wanted to draw out the themes through word analysis, rather than identifying them myself through reading the transcript. Learning from my first attempt, I carefully copied the entire transcripts from PDF into separate Word documents making sure I removed any material not directly related to the interview: e.g. notes about transcription and the tape, interviewer and interviewee initials etc. This of course still left the questions posed by the interviewer but in most cases these were fairly brief and, at this stage, I made the decision to keep them in as I felt they might contain important key words. I created a new 'project' in NVivo and imported these documents as separate files (what NVivo calls 'internals'). This allowed me to run 'queries' against these files individually or as a group. Without complex coding, it is not possible to run sophisticated queries but simple ones are possible. I did not have the time to learn how to code the transcripts so had to work with the documents as they were.

I initially ran a 'Word Frequency Query' which searches across the entire document for common words. I ran this search for each of the four transcripts, looking for words with a minimum length of three letters and limiting it to the most common 1000 words. Then I ran a search on all the transcripts together and exported this into an Excel file. This left a large document listing each word and its frequency. As it was in Excel I could sort the data alphabetically as well as by word frequency. This allowed me to pick up similar words, such as homesick/homesickness. To reduce this list of 1000 words to a manageable number, I sorted the list by frequency of the word and began to delete the 'everyday words' or common words. Clearly it was unnecessary to count the definite and indefinite articles and auxiliary verbs

(to be), and it was quite a straightforward decision to delete some words: 'you', 'also', and numbers. But the process became more subjective beyond that as I had definite ideas about some of the possible migration themes. Some apparently commonplace words were problematic: 'anymore' (reflection on change?), 'before' (comparison of two lives?) and 'behind' (leaving family behind?). The word 'had' occurred 736 times, and was a candidate for exclusion, but 'back' had 393 counts and might well have been significant: it might simply have referred to the back of a house, but if it meant 'back to England' (i.e. return), it could have had a very important meaning. Depending on context, words like this could connect to a significant story or simply refer to an everyday event. I began to worry whether this process would give me any meaningful data at all.

I continued with trepidation and pruned the list down to roughly 200 words (Table 1) by choosing the words which struck me as having the most significance for my topic of migration. I then exported these words into a separate Excel file so I could look at them in a table and see what picture they might give me. From there I constructed 15 words or groups of words encompassing the same theme. Of course this carried with it great subjectivity. I was working on post-war migration so therefore I knew certain subjects such as money, family, conflict and war would be crucial. I added these to a Word table and plotted their frequency in each separate interview (Table 2). This was probably possible using NVivo but I could not work out how to do it, so I decided to use the 'Find' function in Word. This was a tedious and time consuming process, but useful as it allowed me to cross-check against the NVivo generated word counts.

Looking at this second table, I was immediately struck not by the appearance of those themes, which I had expected but by the unequal distribution of some of them with different interviewees. Some patterns began to emerge. It allowed me to quickly see similarities and differences and, more importantly, raised questions for me to have in mind when reading the interview transcripts. I looked through the table and highlighted what seemed to be patterns such as similarities or groupings for a particular interviewee, anomalies such as words/themes which seemed particularly important for one interviewee or silences when one theme did not seem to be mentioned for a particular interviewee. Obviously, this sort of process alone does not immediately identify silences which occur across all the interviews. But, with triangulation and sophisticated coding, I could imagine this data analysis might identify the sorts of silences Luisa Passerini observed in her research of the Italian working class where the two decades of the fascist period were often omitted from people's life narratives¹². Her interviews were closely analysed but she does not give details of

her methodology so it is impossible to say whether she used word analysis or not.

Even through this simple query, some patterns emerged. In some ways, my query was similar to running a grammar check on a document. It might give false positives but in some cases it draws attention to areas worth further investigation in a secondary analysis. It gave me word patterns to take back to the interviews to see their context and to try to understand the explanations behind the patterns. I drew up another table showing themes in blue which occurred with similar frequency in each interview (e.g. war, winter/cold, school/education). I also highlighted themes which stood out for specific interviewees as either being noticeably absent or in higher numbers and added these to the third table as questions to take back to the interviews.

Results

Winter/cold appeared with similar frequency in all four interviews. This was not a surprise as, in the migration accounts I had been listening to, the poor English weather was often remembered as a motivating factor in the decision to migrate. For many the feel of the cold and the rain was a metaphor capturing their emotions around emigration. James Hammerton and Alistair Thomson had discovered that for some emigrants the British weather was a primary motivation for emigration but for many it was: 'a thread that circles around other personal and political factors for emigration¹³.' Looking at the data, it was certainly a thread appearing in each of the four interviews. But, the question is whether I would have chosen the words 'winter/cold' from the list of 200 words, if I was not aware of this theme. The words were reasonably frequent (35) but not much more than, for example, 'God/Church' (35) or 'letter/s' (33). Both of these might also tell an interesting story but I had to make a selection and I selected based on my own preconceptions about assisted migration and especially my experiences interviewing my aunt.

Other words/themes occurred in each interview but with one interviewee standing out as either being silent or raising it more frequently than the other interviewees. School/education was talked about at least 30 times in each interview but almost double this in the interview with Janet Francis. Clearly school was important for my aunt who migrated in 1956 in the middle of her schooling at the age of 12, but also for Christina Daly and Sandra O'Neill who both had children to consider. For Janet Francis it seems to have been crucial. She migrated around the same time as my aunt (1955) but she was older. She was 17, which she describes as her favourite age when she 'had just started to live¹⁴.' After she returned to school to repeat her final school exams, she had been offered

TABLE 1: WORD COUNT ACROSS ALL INTERVIEWS

Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count
back	393	now	66	holiday	29	feelings	19	phone	12	fruit	10	immigration	8
people	258	nice	55	far	28	grandpa	18	pregnant	12	grandmother	10	migration	8
australia	247	car	54	husband	28	hot	18	prospect	12	grandparents	10	pictures	8
remember	200	great	53	loved	27	plane	18	shock	12	holidays	10	read	8
house	158	new	52	class	26	bad	17	sounds	12	hospital	10	selling	8
work	147	worked	51	love	24	food	17	town	12	memory	10	upset	8
mother	133	working	51	son	24	hostel	16	travelling	12	missed	10	weather	8
mum	131	beautiful	50	accent	23	changed	15	write	12	move	10	written	8
england	127	english	50	brother	23	fantastic	15	afford	11	pretty	10	poor	8
school	127	same	49	education	23	marriage	15	beach	11	adventure	9	belong	7
children	122	wonderful	48	happy	23	miles	15	breakdown	11	citizenship	9	choice	7
friends	122	bought	47	british	22	settled	15	difference	11	emotional	9	crying	7
good	102	feel	47	kids	22	wrote	15	expensive	11	homesickness	9	failed	7
family	100	ship	47	garden	22	daughter	14	families	11	horrible	9	forget	7
place	100	felt	45	god	22	died	14	hated	11	horrified	9	paying	7
money	99	life	45	houses	22	furniture	14	hear	11	lifestyle	9	aunt	7
war	96	sister	39	sisters	22	medical	14	kitchen	11	sold	9	reading	7
father	91	together	39	daddy	21	terrible	14	memories	11	build	8	recession	7
job	89	Christmas	38	feeling	21	behind	13	miss	11	conflict	8	summer	7
parents	86	child	34	homesick	21	church	13	opportunity	11	cost	8	frightened	6
dad	82	lovely	34	jobs	21	winter	13	awful	11	cousins	8	grandchildren	6
home	81	buy	33	letter	21	port	13	writing	11	exciting	8	heartbroken	6
different	79	night	32	cold	22	property	13	birth	10	failure	8	opportunities	6
married	77	australians	31	baby	20	dog	12	built	10	grandfather	8	parents	6
australian	75	hard	31	friend	20	leaving	12	couples	10	housing	8	pom	6
country	75	boat	29	private	20	letters	12	farm	10	property	8	aboriginal	5

TABLE 2: WORD COUNT FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

WORD/THEMES	ROBINA BAXTER	SANDRA O'NEILL	JANET FRANCIS	CHRISTINA DALY
Christmas	1	1	23	13
accent	3	1	17	2
class	0	3	3	20
homesick / homesickness	1	3	26	0
winter / cold	8	7	10	9
summer/s / hot	13	5	0	6
war	10	31	33	18
heartbroken	0	0	5	1
conflict	0	8	0	0
school / education	31	35	52	32
work/working/worked/job/jobs	6	75	72	142
afford/expensive/money/paying/poor	14 (2)	63 (5)	25 (1)	27 (0)
mother/mum	69	15	45	14
dad/father	5	26	68	1
parents/family/families	18	37	111	36
friend/s	31	17	39	55

a place at Coventry Training College to be a teacher when her parents suddenly announced their decision to migrate to Australia. This lost opportunity seems to have reinforced the importance of education for Janet Francis: 'I do believe that if you can afford it I think a good education for any child is first and foremost. I educated both my boys¹⁵.'

Other themes emerged from the data analysis as being possibly more important for Janet Francis than the other interviewees. 'Accent' was repeated 17 times and less than three times for the other interviewees. Likewise, 'homesick/homesickness' was raised 26 times and less than three times by the other interviewees. 'Christmas' was another frequent word count, as was her parents - especially her father. When I read the interview transcript this pattern began to make sense. Janet Francis was desperately unhappy with her parents' decision to migrate and repeated several times she 'hated Australia with a passion even before I left England¹⁶.' It was something she 'never ever got used to¹⁷.' She was clearly homesick and conflict between her parents and her mother's breakdown would not have helped. After she married an Australian she 'learnt to adapt' but she always felt she was an 'alien' and did not belong. After her adult sons moved to England, she and her husband followed them where she seems to have found some peace: 'I'm home now and this is where I belong¹⁸.'

Sandra O'Neill also had a negative migration experience and some of this is communicated through the data analysis. She mentioned 'conflict' eight times and it was only mentioned once by one other interviewee. She also talked about money more than 63 times which was more than double any of the other interviewees. Sandra's migration experience was not a happy one and, like Janet, migration was not her decision. She migrated at her husband's suggestion, in an attempt to save her marriage as it was to be 'a completely new start' for them.¹⁹ Money became important as there was a recession in Australia when they arrived and her husband could not find work. They returned to England after only six weeks in Australia, finding the 'whole damned experience cost us about £5,000²⁰.'

Christina Daly also returned to England but after many years in Australia. The data analysis did not seem to be negative and, reading her transcript it is clear her migration experience was positive. The main theme emerging from the data analysis of her interview was 'work' with 142 counts - double that of Janet Francis and Sandra O'Neill. This might be explained by the fact she migrated as a married woman for an adventure and an opportunity to travel '...for two years...this was going to be the beginning of our travels²¹.' She and her husband found good jobs in Australia, began to settle, and took out Australian citizenship. After the birth of her son, she found being out of the workforce

isolating and, wanting him to know his grandparents, they decided to move on from Australia: 'I only came here for two years. Do I want to retire here? Do I want to die here? No I don't²².' However, she is very positive about her time in Australia saying it was a 'very very good and worthwhile experience²³.'

In Christina Daly's interview transcript, the word 'class' appeared 20 times which was much more than the other interviews. This is more difficult to explain as the other interviewees were also clearly from working class backgrounds but did not use this specific word in their interviews. I wondered whether she may have been referring to school classes but when I read the transcript I saw she was actually talking about her working-class background. I also wondered whether I was counting the interviewer's use of the word 'class' which might have skewed the results. On checking I found the interviewer only used it to echo her use - although of course by asking a follow up question he encouraged her to use it again. It might seem that the solution to this would be to have deleted the interviewer's questions in Word before importing the text into NVivo. Nevertheless, I decided that it was just as important to know if the interviewer, by picking up on a theme, encouraged the informant to repeat it, in effect leading the informant.

Christina Daly is older than the other three interviewees. She was born in 1951, so growing up in the 1960s in London may explain this increased class consciousness. Class was becoming a political issue and her comments about being involved in demonstrations against the Vietnam War suggest she was already politicised. Certainly the data analysis raised this topic and it would be an interesting one to explore further. Some of the other themes would probably have emerged simply from close reading of the interview transcripts. But, I am not sure I would have picked up on the class element in Christina Daly's interview if it had not emerged from the data analysis. Word analysis can draw out areas that may be missed - even after careful reading of a transcript.

However, this type of data analysis can also produce misleading results. The interview with my aunt demonstrated one of the pitfalls of the data analysis method. Looking at the data, it shows my aunt mentioned her mother 68 times - which is many more times than any of the other interviewees. Her father is mentioned only five times which is low compared with the other interviewees. When I ran a word count on 'grandpa', it increased the count for her father to 22 times. And, running a count for 'Nanna' increased the count for her mother even further to 77 times. This is where the context of the interview becomes important - as it is in any interview of course, but in this one it is crucial. I interviewed my aunt at my grandmother's (my aunt's mother's) house. My grandmother was ill. At the time of the interview we did not realise how

ill she was, but we were both aware of being in her house, of her being 101 years old, unwell and of an era coming to a close. I am sure this awareness affected my aunt's focus. It would have been a very different interview if it had been conducted a week earlier (when my grandmother was well) or a week later (after my grandmother died). She began the interview with her mother and, when I ended by asking if there is anything else she would like to talk about, she chose to end with her mother. Obviously the transcript could not contain the context of the interview – which would affect any reading of it, not just a data analysis. This led me to reflect on using oral history sources recorded by others which might not include this contextual detail and the importance of an interview summary which provides essential contextual information.

Reflections

This experiment made me increasingly conscious of what Michael Frisch terms the 'shared authority' of an interview²⁴. Meaning was not only in the interviewee's answers but was part of the context of the interview. I had quite a lot of this context with my aunt's interview but not with the other interviews. This meant I could not 'listen in stereo' to these interviews as Kathryn Anderson and Dana Jack recommend²⁵. I was not able to explore the dynamic between the interviewer and the interviewee in the same way as I could with my aunt's interview. Anderson and Jack recommend 'listening in stereo' to the narrator and ourselves:

Realizing the possibilities of the oral history interview demands a shift in methodology from information gathering, where the focus is on the right questions, to interaction, where the focus is on process, on the dynamic unfolding of the subject's viewpoint²⁶.

I could do this with my aunt's interview but it was lost to me as the historian approaching the other interviews. I was not connected to these interviews and much of the context was not available. This highlighted to me some of the shortcomings inherent in any memory source – not just oral history interviews. As Paul Thompson points out: 'most of the essential skills in judging evidence, in choosing the telling extract, or in shaping an argument, are much the same as when writing history from paper documents²⁷.'

However, my main reservation about this method of analysis is that it was personally frustrating. NVivo responds to comprehensive rules and is even-handed in applying them. But, historical writing is not even-handed in that sense – it depends on nuances. I did not feel that word analysis allowed me the freedom to explore the areas which interested me. When reading the interview transcripts I was intrigued by several themes which seemed significant to me but were not highlighted with

a word frequency count. They were more diffuse. It is possible they would be picked up with sophisticated coding but they were not identified with the simple word queries I ran against the data. Even Lummis, a supporter of data analysis admits that in 'good open-ended interviews responses are discursive and coding them is a very subjective process²⁸.' As a librarian, I am aware similar considerations apply to original cataloguing and how the subjective judgement of the cataloguer affects classification. I am not convinced a life story can be reduced to codeable categories. As Catherine Kohler Reissman notes, 'narrators interpret the past in stories²⁹.' Breaking these stories into pieces of data fragments this story. However, I also appreciate this is an area for caution. Lummis points out, even when analysing a few interviews, 'the most striking interviews' take our attention and 'the feeling that one knows the material well enough to generalize without coding and structuring the data can be dangerously misleading³⁰.' Recognising this, there were at least three topics I would have liked to explore, which did not emerge from my data analysis.

The first was the impact the interviewees felt migration had had on them personally. This sparked my interest when I interviewed my aunt and I was surprised how enthusiastic she was about the experience of migration: 'Oh it did wonders for me. Absolutely fabulous. Yes, I would have been nowhere near as outgoing, nowhere near as assertive³¹.' Christina Daly was equally positive about her experiences in Australia: 'I grew up there and I learnt a lot about myself and I learnt how to be independent and I learnt how to be responsible, self-reliant³².' She also spoke of her frustration with what she saw as the insularity of her friends when she returned to England: 'I've gone and I've changed and I've come back and I'm a different person, they aren't³³.' For Janet Francis migration was 'something you never really get over³⁴' whereas for Sandra O'Neill migration was 'almost dream-like' and remembering it was, 'like regurgitating something that's been long gone, long dead³⁵.' Rich images such as these are lost with word counts.

Farewells were another topic which interested me. I would have liked to explore the way these liminal moments are described by the interviewees and whether the way they are remembered and retold has any connection with the interviewees' more general experience of migration. Sandra O'Neill explains her mother was so distraught about her leaving she could not come to the port to see her off. Instead she said goodbye at New Street train station and 'we sort of arrived there on our own, which was really kind of sad, because you know, well you realise then you are on your own³⁶.' Janet Francis also remembers leaving on her own: 'nobody came to wave us off. Nobody came to the station, so it was a, I think it was a, like a one man band I think³⁷.' For Janet Francis and Sandra

O'Neill this moment of farewell was a turning point highlighting their unhappiness about leaving. But for Christina Daly and my aunt, both of whom had positive migration stories, the moment of leaving England is barely mentioned in their interviews.

The final topic which was not clearly highlighted by my data analysis, but which stood out to me when reading the transcripts, was the impact migration has on subsequent generations. I expected migration would affect extended family members but not that it would still reverberate half a century later. A decision made in the 1950s still sends ripples out to grandchildren. Migration is clearly a complex process and I am not convinced data analysis alone does this complexity justice. But, as Kohler Riessman and other advocates of narrative analysis points out, 'any methodological standpoint is, by definition, partial, incomplete, and historically contingent. Diversity of representations is needed'³⁸. Perhaps, depending on the sources and the purpose of the study, a combination of analytical methods would be the best approach. For very large data-sets NVivo would be a valuable tool because it would be very hard for an individual researcher to master all of it. The word count did suggest some themes, and that is even more valuable in large scale analyses. It also heightened differences between similar accounts and so might be more valuable for many accounts taken together than one taken alone.

Conclusion: 'a lumper, not a splitter'

While I can see this sort of data analysis might be a useful way to begin approaching a large body of data, I cannot see how it could replace close reading and listening to the original interviews. In my small exercise, it raised potential themes and patterns. However, I could only make sense of these by returning to the memory sources themselves. This 'sense making' is often the first stage of writing history. The comparison with my aunt's interview demonstrated how much is lost when we do not know the context of a memory source. So much of this context is not included in a written transcript but clearly so much more comes through in the recording. Judith Oakley describes this when discussing the way a participant observer thinks through their material:

The fieldworker cannot separate the act of gathering material from that of its continuing interpretation. Ideas and hunches emerge during the encounter and are explored or eventually discarded as fieldwork progresses. Writing up involves a similar experience. The ensuing analysis is creative, demanding and all consuming. It cannot be fully comprehended at the early writing-up stages by someone other than the fieldworker.³⁹

I must admit, even after this dalliance with data analysis, I am still attracted to the 'toast and marmalade' approach and identify strongly with Thomas's sentiments:

I am a lumper, not a splitter. I admire those who write tightly focused micro-studies of episodes or individuals, and am impressed by the kind of quantitative history...which aspires to the purity of physics or mathematics. But I am content to be numbered among those many historians whose books remain literary constructions, shaped by their author's moral values and intellectual assumptions⁴⁰.

(Endnotes)

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Oral history goes to air: reflections on crafting oral history as radio narrative.

Siobhan McHugh

Abstract

Since orality is a key aspect of oral history, interviews benefit by being published in audio, not printed form – for instance, on radio. But radio journalism employs distinct interviewing and production techniques, which diverge somewhat from oral history conventions. By considering an oral history project that yielded an acclaimed radio series, this article discusses how oral history research may be fruitfully adapted for a crafted radio narrative.

Background

In 2006, I embarked on a doctoral thesis which would examine the synergistic possibilities of oral history and crafted radio narrative¹. The core oral history research at its heart was a collection of 50 oral history interviews, on the theme of ‘mixed marriage’: marriage between Catholics and Protestants in pre-multicultural Australia. Although the terms have little meaning today for any Australian under fifty, older generations are very aware of the complex political, social and cultural nuances embodied in the very label ‘Catholic’ or ‘Protestant’. Until 1949, 90% of Australians were of British or Irish origin² and religion was code for identity: Catholics were perceived as Irish³, a discriminated-against minority that throughout Australian history made up about a quarter of the population. Historians such as Edmund Campion, Michael Hogan, Jeff Kildea and Patrick O’Farrell have amply documented the struggle of Irish-Australian Catholics to gain acceptance and equality in a nation ruled by a Protestant Ascendancy linked to Ireland’s ancient colonial oppressor, England⁴. But what happened when individuals from these opposing camps met, and married? Did it create conflict among the families or effect reconciliation? Did prejudice abate or become entrenched? And what happened to the children of these hybrid couples⁵?

As an immigrant from Catholic Ireland, I set out to explore the legacy of sectarianism in Australia. Although I have written well received books of social history, I deliberately chose an audio feature as my preferred mode of publication, in order to harness

the affective power of sound in the telling of these very personal, and often painful, stories⁶. Bizarrely, many oral historians often ignore orality. Tapes are transcribed and the printed document used as the basis for research – a desecration oral history theorist Alessandro Portelli compares to using a translation to do literary criticism, or doing art criticism from reproductions. As he points out, ‘the tone and volume range and the rhythm of popular speech carry implicit meaning and social connotations which are not reproducible in writing⁷.’ I concur with Portelli’s pithy dictum, delivered at the International Oral History Conference in Sydney, that in oral history studies, ‘audio IS the text⁸.’ Using audio, though, raises other questions around authenticity. Radio producers can inflect a subject through the selection and sequencing of interview extracts, or their placement alongside music, or counterpointing speech. The art of interpretation of the spoken word interview using the aesthetics of the radio documentary/feature form is a fascinating topic, which requires a separate discussion⁹. Here I propose to focus mainly on how oral history theory and journalistic technique can usefully inform each other as a combined interview methodology, such as I employed in my 2 x 53-minute radio series, *Marrying Out* (ABC 2009)¹⁰.

Former American television reporter and now journalism academic Mark Feldstein captures very well the overlap and divergence between the ‘kissing cousins’, oral history and journalism: ‘Their reliance on interviews leads to similar if not identical techniques; their interactions with human subjects raise similar issues of empathy and ethics. Yet the two disciplines operate in different spheres of time and ultimately have different ends¹¹.’ Feldstein portrays the motivations of oral history (‘to try to recapture the past’) as somewhat loftier than the more pragmatic journalism, ‘ultimately a commercial vehicle for selling advertisements¹².’ While the latter is certainly true of corporate media, my radio series would air on a public broadcaster, governed by an editorial policy and ethical code of practice, but thankfully free of commercial manipulation.

Feldstein notes how deadlines strongly influence journalistic agendas, limiting opportunities for in-depth interviews. My schedule did not impose these restraints; I took about two years to find and interview people. From the outset, the interviews were geared towards journalistic AND traditional oral history ends: a crafted radio documentary, and a public archive (The National Library of Australia) where the unexpurgated oral history could be scrutinised and used by other researchers. Interviewees were made aware of these objectives in advance; due usually to family sensitivities, a few asked me to use a pseudonym for any radio use. But they did not mind having their full name cited on the archived interview, presumably because they felt that anyone who took the trouble to locate the original recording had an active or scholarly interest, unlike the casual listener who might accidentally happen on a radio documentary and find themselves publicly ambushed by their family history.

In conducting interviews with those affected by mixed marriages – mostly spouses and children of both religions – I was conscious of the weight of the baggage I brought. I abandoned any idea of objectivity, instead charting my own reactions to the people I interviewed, and divulging my background and views if asked. This methodology is accepted within oral history circles. In the influential anthology *Memory and History in twentieth-century Australia*, the editors note that ‘Most of the authors in this collection are an autobiographical presence in their work. Their subjectivity is recognised as central to historical research and writing, with individual memories shaping the questions and the individual chapters produced¹³.’ The interviewer as authorial presence is also a recognized device in radio narrative. North American radio producer Scott Carrier discovered early on in his radio career that ‘nobody was going to listen to the people I interviewed unless I put them in some sort of context, because without context there was no meaning... So I wrote a story to link the interviews together... Strangely, people liked my narration better than the tape¹⁴.’ Recent award-winning Australian documentary/features have included a strong authorial presence: Colm McNaughton discloses his own troubled family background as he explores sectarian violence in Northern Ireland (*Awakening from History*, ABC 2008) and Eurydice Aroney reflects candidly on the personal, political and ethical implications of her exploration of her grandmother’s death from a backyard abortion, *The Death of Edna Lavilla* (ABC 2007)¹⁵.

Given its ability to speak from the margins, I believe oral history offered an ideal methodology with which to explore Catholic/Protestant sectarianism and Irish/British tensions in Australia, a topic which is in danger of being forgotten or misrepresented. As Frisch observes:

What happens to experience on the way to becoming memory? What happens to experience on the way to becoming history? As an era of intense collective experience recedes into the past, what is the relationship of memory to historical generalisation. These... are the sort of questions that oral history is peculiarly, perhaps uniquely, able to penetrate¹⁶.

My approach was also informed by the radical British oral historian Paul Thompson, who notes that oral history ‘makes for contact – and thence understanding – between social classes, and between generations... History should not merely comfort; it should provide a challenge, and understanding which helps towards change¹⁷.’ I hoped that my research, which charted the struggle by now-mainstream Irish Catholics for acceptance, might provide insight to minorities such as Australian Muslims, currently being demonised as Irish Catholics once had been¹⁸.

Research

I solicited interviews through newspaper advertisements, letters to Catholic and Protestant religious and cultural groups, and word of mouth. Older respondents tended to write via ‘snail mail’, but I also received numerous emails, such as the one below:

Dear Siobhan, my wife and I were married in 1962 in a Catholic/Protestant conflict era. We are prepared to share our experience should you wish to contact us on ----- Regards, John Haynes.

This two-line message would yield one of the richest stories of *Marrying Out* – a man whose relationship with his father was irredeemably scarred by his mixed marriage. My methodology was to respond to every email, asking for a phone number, so as to ‘vet’ them as potential subjects: for radio purposes, ability to communicate is crucial. ‘Obviously, potential interviewees need to be able to talk in an engaging way’, notes Chapman¹⁹. BBC radio producer Matt Thompson puts it more brutally: ‘you can’t make a bore interesting²⁰.’ John Haynes, and his wife, Helen, turned out to be excellent interviewee material: firstly, they *were* a couple, (many respondents were widowed, while others were divorced); they represented the symbolic Irish Catholic/English Protestant motif (others had less clearly defined backgrounds); their story exemplified the bigotry of the sectarian divide and its impact on families (John, an Anglican, was cut out of no fewer than three wills for marrying Helen, a Catholic); they were articulate and had a pleasing dynamic; and finally, they were willing to reflect on and analyse their experiences.

My timing was fortuitous. John’s mother had died a couple of years before, and with both parents dead, he finally felt able to speak out about the issues that had



John and Helen Haynes on their wedding day, Dubbo, NSW, 1962

dogged him for 45 years. They were both happy to allow full public access to their interview and photographs – John especially felt a sort of public duty to place on record that this bigotry had occurred, with devastating personal effects. In person, he was a reserved type, not one to talk easily about his feelings. I generally prefer to interview each member of a couple alone, so as not to have one party, consciously or not, interfere with the other's story; but since this topic pertained to coupledness, I interviewed couples together. This created an interesting situation. John and Helen, prompted by my questions, influenced each other in how they reshaped their individual versions of events. John's father had worked for a NSW government body, the Egg Marketing Board. Here is an edited interview transcript, which shows how John responds to Helen's view that it was a stigma to have a Catholic in the family ²¹:

SMH: Do you think that the Egg Marketing Board was a Protestant enclave?

John Haynes: Yes I do. Snippets of conversation from time to time would lead you to believe that the senior positions there would almost invariably be filled with respective merit by Protestant people, not by Catholics. If you were a Catholic you could get up to a certain level but not beyond...

SMH: Could there have been an economic reason there that your father might have feared that his prospects at the Egg Marketing Board were compromised if his son married a Catholic?

John Haynes: I never felt that but I think you [to Helen] raised that issue the other day. [Helen raised it after my phone discussion pre-interview].

Helen Haynes: Yes, I was always under the impression that one of the big reasons is that he didn't want people at work to know that you were marrying a Catholic. He probably had risen as far as he could go then; it wouldn't necessarily be for promotion but I think it was probably the shame of it – it was a stigma at work to have a Catholic in the family.

John Haynes: That's putting it pretty strongly, but I guess this explains why I was so surprised. I could not think of any rationale. It wasn't as if my parents had ever gone to Church to the best of my knowledge except for weddings and funerals ...

Growing up in a culturally Protestant world in Randwick, Sydney, John was not inculcated with strongly religious views. But he was aware of a societal division. 'If it was known that somebody was Catholic then they were thought to be different ... not quite one of us.' He was astounded at the fierce reaction his marriage to Helen triggered. 'None of my family attended the wedding. Not my brothers, my sisters, my parents, uncles, aunts, grandfather ... They were very strong feelings swirling around, mostly unspoken in those times, and this is why it came as such a surprise to me that my father reacted in such a way.' Helen's father ceased being a practising Catholic after his divorce – a rare event at the time – and her mother grew up in a mixed marriage, so her parents had a more relaxed attitude. 'They just loved John; he could have been any religion, they wouldn't have cared.' But Helen's previous boyfriend, a Protestant whose father ran a government department, had alerted her to the inferior position of Catholics in such workplaces. During the interview, Helen notes that John's father was the main antagonist, who had put pressure on other family members to boycott the wedding, threatening to leave his wife and disinherit his daughter if they disobeyed. 'They were frightened of him', Helen says. John considers this carefully. 'I find these things plausible but I have no first-hand knowledge of a couple of things that Helen's just told me.' He surmises that maybe his family found it easier to raise such matters with Helen than with him.

Throughout the interview, husband and wife are re-evaluating as well as recounting their experiences. John eventually arrives at a rationale which goes beyond religious difference: 'I think it was more socio/economic than religious to be honest. I've tried to reflect on that a little bit... my father was very much an Empire man. I think in those days Robert Menzies was the epitome of an Empire man and everything that came out of Great Britain, including I presume the Church of England, was to be admired and followed and was to be preserved...' I ask Helen whether the perceived disloyalty or anti-Empire views of Irish-Australians might have been a factor. She

acknowledges ‘a vague feeling of ... the distrust that Protestants had for Irish... The English were never able to control Ireland.’ But she is unsure when she formed this analysis: ‘I don’t know whether I knew that when I was growing up or whether I’m aware of it from later on, from reading things.’ Such self-reflexivity, and the to-ing and fro-ing revealed in the interview transcript as we returned at different points to key themes, are valuable and illuminating insights for oral history studies. But radio narratives require a cohesive ‘through-line’, not the meanderings, doubling backs and blind alleys of a lengthy conversation. Besides editing speech for clarity and brevity, a 53-minute documentary also requires careful pacing and texturing: if the content is too dense, or aurally homogenous, it will pall. As American documentary-maker Charles Hardy 111 observes:

There is an art to authoring in sound, I would maintain, that requires the same sort of sensitivity and attention to the rhythm, cadence, and flow that is required of a musician or composer. To hold listener attention, authors working in sound media must pace the flow of information; at times, to pay as much attention to the space between the words as to the words themselves²².

For any author, whether of a book or radio feature, interpretation is implicit in the process of selection and

editing: which sources to include, which to discard, and how to frame them. Even nominating the factors that worked best on radio – engaging speakers, self-standing stories, personal experiences rather than factual analysis – it was clear that with some 35 hours of interview having to be contained within two broadcast hours, culling for *Marrying Out* would have to be ruthless. The ‘space between the words’ was vitally important to me, to create a sensory impact that went beyond cognition – a subjective artistic interpretation of the emotional truth behind the words themselves. The illustration below, showing the layered soundtracks and carefully placed excerpts of a section of *Marrying Out*, gives some sense of the complexity of what I label the COHRD form (Crafted Oral History Radio Documentary), compared to the linearity of an oral history interview.

How to combine editorial rigour and coherence within a multi-layered radio production aesthetic that includes music, dramatisations and other affective elements, is a topic addressed in detail in my exegesis¹, but beyond the scope of this article. But I will illustrate here how an interview may be treated to work as unfolding radio narrative. Editing may involve resequencing to heighten narrative effect and cutting away of extraneous material so as to observe time restrictions;



it also serves to distil and sharpen the point. In the example below, the text in bold was deleted, but the rest of the speech appears, in the original sequence, in the broadcast.¹⁷

SMH: Your father died suddenly. Were you actually really reconciled with him before he died?

John Haynes: No, **not to the extent that we felt comfortable with one another.** We'd never really had a satisfactory debate **about my attitude versus his attitude. I think we both felt that it was a pretty hopeless topic to get into, and in the absence of any resolution through that, we were never again comfortable with one another.**

SMH: Do you feel angry with him for what he did?

John Haynes: No. I think there's been times when I've been *supposed* to be angry, but I couldn't bring myself to be angry. I just thought – well he's got it wrong and his attitude is different to mine, **but offsetting that, and** in all other respects he was a good, caring, loving father. **I gave more weight to that than to this attitudinal difference that we had and the problems associated with it.** I had sadness because I felt that the family which had been previously a very strong unit had suffered a serious disruption **and that there were pleasures that we could have shared, particularly with our children that we never subsequently fully shared.** But what was done was done and I had no regrets and I never heard my father express regret either for his attitude, **even though I was told in later years he had mellowed to the extent that I said before - he wasn't prepared to battle the changing world to the extent he previously was.** No, we were never comfortable after I was married.

The final paragraph illustrates one of the dilemmas of editing. Often a speaker will add qualifiers to a statement, or vacillate. In this case, John notes that his father later mellowed somewhat. To the social scientist, this is interesting information. In radio, it is a side road down which the listener cannot go, or he will lose sight of the main highway. Is it misrepresenting the truth to cut out such information? Or does the filleting allow better access to the more significant truth, namely that John and his father never felt close again after he married Helen? I made the editorial and artistic choice to highlight what I saw as this core truth. I further underlined it by taking a segment of interview from earlier in the tape, and appending it after the above section. It amplifies the estrangement factor by noting that he was disinherited. It also provides narrative closure, resolving this statement by John in the opening section, some 44 minutes earlier:

07.25 Part 1 Marrying Out

SMH:

But how did your father make his views known to you personally?

John Haynes:

If I married Helen, I would be disinherited.

I had deliberately left that 'hanging', to maintain listener interest. In fact it becomes the climax of Part 1, that John's father goes to his grave unreconciled with his son. The pathos is tinged with humour by Helen's intervention, as she teases her husband about how 'hard done by' he is for having been cut out of no fewer than three wills. John picks up on the humour and wryly discloses how his uncle also disinherited him. The program ends with a poignant and reflective comment by John ('It was all for the same reason - this business of religious bigotry'), which though made about his own situation, serves as a general reflection on the overall theme, and gives a satisfying sense of conclusion: the story we've been listening to for almost an hour is ending. This building climax is enhanced by the emotive music composed by Thomas Fitzgerald.

51.23 Ending: Part 1 Marrying Out

SMH: And did he disinherit you?

John Haynes:

Yes.

Helen Haynes:

Both their wills were changed because I remember after your father died, one of the first things your mother said to you when she got over the shock and the grief was, 'I want to change my will.'

John Haynes:

She wanted to right what I think she felt privately for a long time was a wrong, and she didn't change her will. Funnily enough (*small laugh*) my uncle, when he died a few years later, he had one of these distorted wills as well and I was cut out of that.

Helen Haynes:

So John feels quite a bit of pride that he was cut out of three wills! He figures that not many people would have been cut out of three wills.

John Haynes:

It was all for the same reason - this business of religious bigotry.

Music: Piano: composed theme Marrying Out – to end.

Interviewing: Combining Oral History and Journalism

The radio documentary/feature maker and the oral historian have this in common: they want their subjects to reveal themselves, in all their human frailty, so that their experiences may illuminate the broader historical narrative. 'In the name of the public good we delve into people's lives, invade their privacy and expose their

souls', says Rosenthal of the documentary maker²⁵. *New Yorker* writer Janet Malcolm's withering commentary on the feature writer or investigative journalist who affects a cosy intimacy with their subject during the interview phase, but has no compunction about skewering them in the published story, highlights the imbalance of power inherent in the interview process.

Every journalist who is not too stupid or too full of himself to know what is going on knows that what he does is morally indefensible. He is a kind of confidence man, preying on people's vanity, ignorance or loneliness, gaining their trust and betraying them without remorse²⁶.

Portelli suggests that the interviewer abandon the fiction that he or she is a neutral cipher. Instead, he proposes that the parties acknowledge that what happens in an interview is 'an exchange of gazes'²⁷.

... fieldwork is by necessity an experiment in equality based on difference. There must always be a line of difference across which the exchange becomes meaningful, but there must also be at least a line along which we can communicate the desire for a common ground and language that makes the exchange possible – our deep-rooted common human nature²⁸.

For *Marrying Out*, I drew on both fields of practice. When interviewing two old Irish priests, contemporaries of the detested clerics of my Irish childhood, I practised Portelli's 'honest dissimulation'²⁹, allowing them to assume a cultural affinity, which promoted expansiveness – for instance I mentioned to one that I remembered eating fish on Friday, which signalled I was at least of Catholic origins. I did not reveal that I loathed what I saw as the misogyny and hypocrisy of the Catholic Church hierarchy. But these men were no fools; a lifetime of hearing Confessions had made them far more experienced than me in assessing truth and human behaviour. The Irish community in Australia was small and I had written a column for its newspaper for a time, in which I had made no secret of my personal views. Beneath the courteous questions and chatty answers, the 'exchange of gazes' was underway.

One priest, Fr William Crahan, had spent over fifty years ministering to mostly rural communities. We ranged over all kinds of stories: a shotgun-wielding father, starry-eyed couples unwilling to make choices about how to raise future children, noble Protestant husbands driving Catholic children to Mass, hostile couples who rejected any religion, the effect of Vatican II and ecumenism, the struggle of the Irish in Australia for religious freedom and social equality. He was 'history-telling'³⁰, and also, through the interview process, questioning his life, even at times challenging the dictates of his own church. 'It's very hard to be judgemental on people and say that they're in a state of mortal sin, as we used to say, and that they should

be excommunicated and all of that'³¹. At the end of the two-hour interview, I asked him bluntly: 'what made you so tolerant then?' He answered mildly: 'Some decisions I made turned out very well and decisions that I should have made, in spite of my attitude and that, they turned out very well. You don't know how God is working in the mind of anyone. It's very hard to judge'³².

Portelli refers to the quality of discovery as being vital – for both parties – to achieving an authentic or worthwhile interview. 'If you do an interview and you're not changed by it, you're wasting your time', he told a masterclass at the International Oral History Conference in Sydney in 2006³³. As interviewer, I had indeed had my perceptions altered: I had anticipated a more dogmatic and conservative character, and had been made instead to see the priest's humanity, humour and compassion. My incipient hostility dissolved, which allowed me to reclaim something of my culturally Catholic identity, as noted in my narration script: 'like it or loathe it, the Catholic Church provided what the Irish writer John McGahern calls the "sacred weather" of my childhood.' This two-way impact of the interview was noted by Portelli at a public lecture in Melbourne: 'The interview moves both subjects forward... telling the story of your life to a stranger, makes you more aware of yourself'³⁴. Portelli distinguishes between the repository that is 'memory' and the act of remembering, a more fluid and subjective concept: the speaker is endowing with meaning what they choose to select from their memory. In oral history terms, unlike say folklore, Portelli warns, 'people are not a jukebox – you put a coin in their mouth and out comes the story'³⁵. This was blatantly demonstrated in another of my *Marrying Out* interviews.

I was referred by word of mouth to the interviewee, Bruce, a Presbyterian. In a pre-interview phone call, he told me of a nine-year courtship with a Catholic woman, 'J' (full name withheld), finally aborted due to family hostilities and irreconcilable differences. She wanted to be married in a Catholic Church, but he wanted a Presbyterian wedding. Choosing one church meant alienating the other spouse's family, which neither wanted to do. They saw a pre-marriage counsellor, who suggested they elope. As the years went by, J worried that her advancing age might compromise her ability to have children. Eventually, Bruce told me, they broke up. J married someone else – a Catholic – and had several children; Bruce never married.

I was touched by this sad story. Bruce lived interstate, but I decided the trip was worth the expense. On tape, he was garrulous as we discussed his childhood, his family's enthusiastic embracing of the Protestant American evangelist Billy Graham, who toured Australia in 1958, meeting J and trying to resolve the marriage issue. 'When they said the word elope, to me, from a church background, I was still going

to church every Sunday – I didn't like that word elope³⁶.' But whereas I had passively listened on the phone, this time I probed. 'Did they mean by 'elope', run off to Sydney?' Bruce elaborated: 'The parents wouldn't be there. It's like an escape sort of thing... it felt underhand... I was quite happy with life as it was.' He went on, 'Maybe I was too happy and not being prepared to commit myself.' This was the first sign that he was reinterpreting his story. Reflecting on their personalities, he then recalled how J used to inflate her wage in a job interview, in order to secure a higher rate. This telling of white lies, he now told me, disturbed him. 'In a way I didn't trust her 100%, you know what I mean, about telling the truth – there was always that doubt in my mind about whether that was the right thing to do.' More than once, Bruce returned to the idea of his own commitment. He had no feelings either way about the break-up, he said.

I kept on going out to parties and meeting girls. If it got too long...then I'd break it off. ... I didn't obviously want a commitment. Probably if the truth be known even all those earlier years I never wanted a commitment ... I enjoy investing on the stock exchange, going to the races... I like taking risks. But I was never prepared to take a risk with females. Funny that³⁶.

That was 35 minutes into the interview. By the end (another 40 minutes or so), Bruce had rewritten the history of his tragic thwarted love affair, a story he had nurtured for almost 40 years. Now, he decided, J would have been eminently unsuitable and anyway, he enjoyed the bachelor life. He went away, a happy man, leaving me to contemplate an expensive insight into the malleability of memory.

Effect of Publication

Another key issue in interviewing (whether for journalism or oral history) is the effect of the process itself and the subsequent interpretation of what has been said. British author Jeanette Winterson grappled with that concept when *The Guardian* invited writers to ask themselves questions journalists never ask.

Q. How do you feel about being interviewed? A. I feel like a perfectly good potato put through a masher. Nothing comes out the way I expected, and my skin is off, and the solid, sane things get pulped and the whole thing is served up easy to swallow, but not for me. I am still somewhere at the bottom of the masher shouting 'I AM A POTATO GET ME OUT OF HERE³⁸.'

Even if interviewers do their best not to misrepresent their subject despite editing or other constraints, what if those who read or hear their words react with criticism or hostility? How will that affect the interviewee? Distilling the stories of lives still being lived is innately delicate. An eighteenth-century document is

immutable: it can be interpreted in different ways, but it cannot change its own content. But memories and evaluations of personal experience, as we have seen, are ever-evolving. Janet McCalman, a labour historian trained in nineteenth-century British history, found it challenging when she included oral history in her acclaimed history of an inner city Melbourne suburb, *Struggletown*. It was 'chastening to write about people who are alive and able to read the interpretations placed on their testimony³⁹.' From the journalist's perspective, Malcolm warns that an interviewee will rarely be happy with how they are 'profiled', as their perception of themselves and the 'best' quotes to select from an interview will inevitably depart from the journalist's.

Whether the interviewer is a journalist, a nonfiction novelist, or a biographer, his agenda is not the same as that of the person he is interviewing, and his selections reflect this disparity of interest⁴⁰.

Yet, contends Portelli, the interviewer must attempt, in good faith, to identify the key revelations in an interview and bring them into public view – a process which in turn leaves the interviewer open to scrutiny and challenge. 'Only by holding onto our responsibility to interpret, and to the risk of being interpreted, do we contribute to the endless spiral search for unattainable truth to which we are ultimately committed⁴¹.' Thus, some listeners to *Marrying Out* would contest my assertion (based on my oral history fieldwork and on documented archival sources) that 'at times the two communities [Protestants and Catholics] maintained a virtual social apartheid.' Some Protestant listeners expressed surprise at the sense of discrimination felt by Catholics. But as Protestants who were part of the Ascendancy, they could not have known how it felt to BE a discriminated-against Catholic, any more than I could know how it feels to be an Indigenous person in Australia today. After the broadcast, feedback on the ABC website was overwhelmingly reinforcing of the series content⁴². More importantly for me, the response of those featured was uniformly positive. Even those who had told particularly emotional stories, were comfortable with, indeed proud of, their portrayal. Susan Timmins, who broke down on tape when describing how her father had to put herself and her brother in an orphanage after her mother died because both sides of the family had cut the couple, wrote: 'I thought the whole production was wonderful...The music was so perfect also. I am most appreciative that you gave me the opportunity to pass on my memories to the rest of my family and help contribute to the overall picture of this time in our history.' (A forthright social justice advocate, Susan has no compunction whatsoever about her tearful story being broadcast and/or cited for research). John and Helen Haynes sent this email: 'We found the broadcasts both revealing and very moving and we loved the music. The feedback

we got from those who listened was very positive and none of us realised how widespread and intense this issue was at the time. You have done a wonderful job. Thank you for telling our story in such a sensitive and insightful way.'

In the program, Susan Timmins likened the treatment of the Irish Catholic underclass in her parents' day (1920s) to the demonisation of Lebanese Muslims in Australia during the Cronulla Beach riots of 2005. In the lead-up to Australia Day 2010, a day when jingoistic expressions of Anglo-Australian culture had run high since those riots, a racist group set up a Facebook site, 'Mate speak English, you're in Australia now.' An unexpected and gratifying outcome of the *Marrying Out* broadcast was its inclusion as recommended listening on a spoof-racist Facebook site set up as counter. The *Marrying Out* link had the ironic tag, 'back when we were all one happy race.' The spoof site urged members to listen to the series in order to understand that 'Australia was never an ethnically homogenous society.' For me, and for many of the informants in *Marrying Out*, this was welcome proof of how broadcast oral history could educate and enlighten across generations through the intimacy and artistry of radio.

(Endnotes)

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Report: making memories and meaning from the 16th IOHA Conference in Prague

Denise Phillips

Introduction

During a hot European summer, I was privileged to attend the 16th biennial International Oral History Conference in Prague in the Czech Republic from 7 to 11 July 2010. With the over-arching theme, *Between Past and Future: Oral History, Memory and Meaning*, the conference hosted several master classes and explored a rich diversity of individual themes in parallel sessions at the University of Economics. These included memories of violence, war, totalitarianism and politics, and memories of family, migration and work. The role of gender in making memories and sexual identities was examined, and aspects of health and healthcare, ecology and disasters, and oral traditions and religion discussed. Sessions on teaching and organising oral history were held, along with explorations of methodological, archival and technological issues. Other themes included oral history and the media, and oral history's role in subculture, folklore and the arts.

It is exciting to attend these conferences, but it also vital that we share our learning experiences and make them meaningful to our own projects when returning home. Given the breadth of themes, this report offers



Charles Bridge

an overview of the conference based on the sessions I attended and focuses on working with trauma, memory and the diverse ways oral history is being used around the world. New directions and current debates in oral history are also outlined.

There were 434 papers from over 50 countries presented, some with simultaneous English or Spanish translations. Nineteen papers were delivered by Australians and one by a New Zealander, showing the strength of oral history in our region. The least represented countries were Asia, Canada and Africa, highlighting a need to support oral history in those regions.¹

This was the first time the international conference had been hosted in Eastern Europe. Steeped in history and newly emerged from Soviet communism, the city of Prague with its magnificent medieval architecture made a vibrant backdrop for the conference. Prague was once the heart of the Holy Roman Empire in the 14th and 15th centuries, and the place where the Thirty



The Old Town, Prague



The opening ceremony at the Karolinum, Charles University

Years' War was sparked in 1618 when Calvinists tossed two Catholics out of the Palace window. It is also the home of the Velvet Revolution, a peaceful mass protest and general strike which brought down its communist government in 1989.

The opening ceremony of the conference was held on Thursday evening, 8 July, in the Karolinum, an historic hall at the 700-year-old Charles University, complete with a wall-sized, red and gold tapestry of Charles IV kneeling before King Wenceslas, the King of Bohemia. In an inspiring keynote speech, leading oral historian Alexander von Plato from Germany noted that, while much scholarship has been done on World War II and Nazism, oral histories of communism and the post-communist era have been slower to gain momentum in Central and Eastern Europe. Von Plato championed oral history's ability to capture people's responses to the great upheavals caused by the collapse of Soviet communism and urged us to remain part of the struggle to ensure that personal memories are not lost to grander histories.

Recording stories of trauma

Turning to the conference sessions, it was evident that oral historians continue to reflect deeply on their encounters with narrators who have had traumatic experiences. Across varied projects, numerous presenters shared their methodological approaches and challenges when recording stories of trauma. Selma Leydesdorff from the Netherlands gave a Master Class on interviewing survivors of the Holocaust and the Bosnian War (1992-1995), including the Srebrenica massacre. Having lost her own grandparents in the Holocaust, Leydesdorff's approach was heartfelt and frank. She said, 'Nobody will ever know what they experienced or felt as they undressed and were gassed to death', but to remember is to struggle against forgetting and silence. Highlighting that oral history calls for sensitive engagement, Leydesdorff recalled an

interview in which she regretted having tried to avert her narrator from crying. While we as interviewers must keep a certain distance to protect ourselves and to maintain objectivity, she learnt that we nevertheless need to become 'empathetically involved' in the story and stated that she wants her narrators to 'feel my nearness, my solidarity'. Leydesdorff reminded us that, 'It is a very special occasion in which someone tells us their story', and we cannot maintain an academic or formal persona when we enter a home. However, she cautioned against coercing a narrator to share more than is comfortable for them. In cases of rape for example, 'People don't know how much [of the horror] they have to tell you to get the story out'; it is therefore important to sensitively acknowledge deeply painful topics, but to refrain from transgressing emotional boundaries with intrusive questions. The class gave insight into skills of engagement which neither block nor coerce particular aspects of the narrator's memories. As interviewers, we must remain receptive to not only what a narrator wants to share, but also to how they wish to express those experiences.

In a parallel session, Viktoria Kudela-Świątek from Poland articulated similar views and debated the challenges of maintaining a responsibility to history while treating the living narrator ethically. When interviewing traumatised Poles deported from the Soviet Ukraine before World War II, Kudela-Świątek observed that narrators can re-experience suffering when recalling traumatic events. In putting the narrator before our research, she concluded that if we need to depart from our usual interviewing techniques in response to their distress, the interview can be edited afterwards to gain its essential elements.

Roxsana Sussewell from the United States (US) shared her ethical approaches when recording traumatic memories of South Africa's apartheid era (1948-1994). Her narrators were members or supporters of the African National Congress and they had suffered grievous losses in retaliatory assaults by the apartheid government. After her first few interviews, Sussewell was advised that she was too focused on simply getting specific information. By changing to a broader life story approach, she was rewarded with a deeper understanding of her narrators and demonstrated ethical behaviour in responding to their needs. As a clinical psychologist also, Sussewell emphasised the importance of communicating clearly with narrators, keeping checks in place throughout and following-up on their wellbeing after the interview. Ben Morris, who records Vietnam veterans' memories in Australia, commented from the audience during Leydesdorff's session that we are the 'benevolent witness' to somebody's suffering. This, along with the various sessions, sums up the sense of compassion inherent in oral history ethics and the need to be consciously present with the narrator.

Interpreting memories

In another Master Class, Alessandro Portelli from Italy shared his own scholarly experiences and outlined the renowned analytical methodologies which he helped pioneer to better interpret memory. Finding that stories of working class Italy in 1953 were not completely true, Portelli came to discern rich information within oral history's subjectivity by asking, 'What does this mean?' He posited that because remembering occurs in the present, we gain not only 'a narrative of the past' but also a 'document about the present.' As remembering is often a search for meaning, the narrative will change



The Master Class with Alessandro Portelli (Italy)

according to a narrator's present situation. While forgetting can be a survival mechanism, what people do not tell or mis-remember might indicate an experience which brings shame or means 'too much.' Portelli added that others use the past to criticise the present or become nostalgic, and cited lyrics from Dolly Parton's song, 'In the good old days (when times were bad)', as an example of abject poverty being fondly recalled later.² He also urged us to interview young people – not just the elderly – because they too help create a valuable, future record.

Using the century-old stories of persecution among Hazara refugees who have fled from Afghanistan to Australia, my own paper responded to philosopher Paul Ricoeur's interdisciplinary criticisms of using memory as an historical source. Ricoeur argues that a nation's founding violence creates *wounded memory*, in which past grievances dominate while other experiences are forgotten. Partly utilising and expanding on Ricoeur's theory, I argued that enduring tensions between remembering and forgetting within Hazaras' narratives reveal both the profound effects of trauma and their assertion of agency, and highlight the complex interplay between the past and the present.

Diverse ways oral history is being used around the world

The conference showcased diverse ways that oral history is being used throughout the world. In an inspiring example, Jamal Alkirmawi from Israel illustrated oral history's use as a peace-making tool in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Through storytelling, his project encourages mostly young members of disadvantaged Arab Bedouin and Jewish communities in the Negev to express their struggles as a way of recognising commonalities with the 'other side'. Alkirmawi showed the power of validating the experiences of those who are often unheard, by inviting the participants to 'Please tell me your story?' In an outstandingly lucid paper, Vannessa Hearman from Australia discussed stories of reprisal killings by Indonesia's military and paramilitary against supporters of the Indonesian Communist Party from 1965 to 1966 in Bangil, East Java. Hearman showed how officials used fear and propaganda to enlist members of Indonesia's largest Muslim organisation, the Nahdlatul Ulama, and others to kill, and interviewed survivors and perpetrators. Both these projects offer significant models to draw from when navigating competing perspectives of past events.

In collaboration with feminist scholars Sherna Berger Gluck and Rosemary Sayigh, Laila Farah from the US passionately described how Palestinian women in agrarian communities are utilising alternative forms of oral history. Silenced by the 1948 creation of the Israeli state, storytelling has been transferred to other mediums, namely embroidery, with social and cultural histories being wordlessly stitched into fabric. Sayigh argued that women's voices are often excluded from histories of struggle and denied a role in re-building. Deeply moving stories from Gaza and the West Bank can be viewed in Sayigh's online book, *Voices of Palestinian Women Narrate Displacement*.³

Tamara Kennelly showed how oral history is being used to memorialise after horrific tragedies in the US. In the aftermath of the shooting of 32 people by a lone gunman and his suicide at Virginia Tech on 16 April 2007, the University Library has set up a condolence project to archive stories, documents and images of the tragedy and tributes. As an archivist at the library, Kennelly delivered a raw insider's view, underscoring the importance of both honouring those lost by telling and by supporting our colleagues in emotionally harrowing projects.⁴ Kennelly's work also forms part of a new direction to record stories in crisis settings, such as Mark Cave's project to interview first responders in the wake of New Orleans' Hurricane Katrina in 2005, 'Through hell and high water.'⁵

Oral history's potential role in healing was raised in several sessions and Marietjie Oelofse, from South Africa, contested this idea. South Africa's Truth and



Attending the panel on 'Political prisoners in communist Czechoslovakia'. From left to right, Kristýna Bušková, Tomáš Bouška, Michal Louč, myself and Klará Pinerová.

Reconciliation Commission invited people to speak about their experiences under apartheid as a mechanism to heal a traumatised nation. Oelofse cautioned that although the public recognition of pain affirmed the speaker's humanity, storytelling can sometimes re-traumatise in spite of initial relief and can break down defence mechanisms. Additionally, healing can be impaired when compensation and changes to discriminatory socio-political infrastructures are delayed. Oelofse shared the saying that, 'The teeth smile, but the heart does not forget.' Sussewell similarly argued that there are 'limits to forgiveness' when a reconciliation process protects the perpetrators. Healing remains an intensely complex process, often far beyond the constraints of oral history.

The location of the conference allowed us close insights into both the ambivalence about recent histories of Eastern Europe and projects to ensure that experiences of Soviet communism are not forgotten. Tomáš Bouška from the Czech Republic chaired a panel 'Political prisoners in communist Czechoslovakia.' It featured oral history projects conducted by fellow members of his online initiative, *Politicalprisoners.eu*, to uncover memories of former dissidents, some of whom had been held at Pardubice Prison.⁶ Examining differing abilities to adapt to prison life between the sexes in the 1950s, Klará Pinerová argued that while men often retained self-esteem through work, women found their feminine identity attacked. Women were particularly stressed by the loss of family relationships and privacy, and changes in food, clothing, hygiene standards and

accommodation. Identifying a gap in psychological studies on the impact of political imprisonment on women in the 1950s, Kristýna Bušková showed how family support, religious faith, patriotism and education served as coping mechanisms. Interestingly, Bušková's narrators wanted their names to be published, highlighting that we should not overlook the agency of survivors.

New directions

The conference shed light on new directions in oral history. Paula Hamilton from Australia explored a growing interest in how the presence of the five senses - sight, sound, taste, smell and touch - within memory might enrich our understanding of human experiences. Anna Green from the United Kingdom discussed innovative research into the ways emotions help form memory and how we might uncover and interpret these original emotions when people are recalling the past. Reflecting on whether oral historians are too focused on the spoken word, Sean Field from South Africa shared how audio-visual technologies have enabled stories of complex racial divisions across three major roads in Cape Town to reach a massive television audience. Australia's Janis Wilton explored creative ways of making history and oral history more accessible to the public through the installation artwork of Fiona Davies, *Intangible Collections*, at the Maitland Regional Art Gallery in New South Wales. Overseeing an extensive archive on 'German Memory' affiliated with the Institute of Biography and History in Germany, Almut

Leh demonstrated ways to protect narrators when making oral history available on the Internet. For example, Leh helped establish a registration process for the online project, *Forced Labor, 1939-1949: Memory and History*, in which access is restricted to those with educational or research purposes and granted only after an applicant's details are favourably assessed.⁷

The debate: Has oral history lost its radical edge?

The conference ended by debating the question, 'Has oral history lost its radical edge?' This panel was stimulated by earlier discussions during Alessandro Portelli's 2008 presentation at the District Six Museum in Cape Town, South Africa. There, an audience member had sparked debate on whether oral history was now a mainstream 'trendy' practice, bereft of radical political agendas. Portelli later reflected that, although oral history is still 'subversive', it had become 'more respectable'⁸. As I was presenting at the same time in a parallel session, I am drawing on written debates which informed this panel. Tracing the history of oral history in South Africa, Sean Field notes that early oral historians keenly challenged the way knowledge is controlled by political, archival and academic institutions. While valuing the subsequent wider acceptance of oral history, Field nevertheless worries that complacency may make us 'less critical of past and present forms of discrimination and oppression.'⁹ Institutions may now use oral history to create master narratives that again create singular narratives with a specific message and he cautions against using oral history to simply memorialise aspects of the past. He urges us to uphold the democratic essence of oral history which allows multiple, including competing, versions of the past to be heard and equally valued, and to find creative ways to disseminate these stories.¹⁰

Field argues that oral historians should not only record personal experiences of the marginalised but also be active 'agents of social change ourselves.' Although shunning some of the earlier romanticism of radical oral history, he encourages us to engage in projects, for example, to help overcome poverty or challenge racism.¹¹ This raises questions about whether we can be 'dispassionate' if we also have an agenda for social or historical justice. Alexander Freund helps answer this latter question. He recounts Alistair Thomson's idea that 'oral history can be a form of advocacy.' When Thomson first began interviewing working class women in the mid-1980s, they thought they had nothing of value to share. After participating in numerous projects, they learnt that their stories matter and that they are indeed worthy historical subjects. In this way, oral history has advocated and recognised their worth, thereby bringing about positive change.¹²

Sherner Berger Gluck says that with the dissolution

of a unified feminist movement, the past radicalism of feminist oral historians could appear lost. However, assessing the evolution of contemporary feminist scholarship reveals an expansion rather than a diminution in radicalism in the US. While feminist oral historians in the 1970s focused specifically on women's agency and challenging patriarchy, broader challenges are now being made to gender constructs and oppression which results from the intersection of 'race/ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality.'¹³

In closing

In closing, the farewell dinner was held on Saturday evening at the deconsecrated church of St Anna, Prague Crossroads, where guests were entertained with cultural and historical dancing. At the General Meeting, Miroslav Vaněk from the Czech Republic was elected as the new IOHA president and Buenos Aires, Argentina, chosen to host the 2012 conference.



Auschwitz II-Birkenau

I congratulate the Prague organising committee for such a dynamic conference and their warm hospitality, and thank the NSW branch of the Oral History Association of Australia for their generous scholarship which assisted me to attend. The trip also gave me the opportunity to visit the sites of the former Auschwitz-Birkenau German Nazi concentration and extermination camps in Poland, a deeply moving journey which I will forever remember.

In writing this report, I have made sense of and drawn meaning from my experiences and memories of Prague. The conference refreshed and enriched my knowledge. It offered models of excellence in scholarship and practice to draw inspiration from, and stimulated with new possibilities from across the globe. Leh poignantly reminded us that some of our early pioneers are reaching retirement. This, along with Field's later online discussions, prompts us to learn all we can from our most experienced scholars, and to build networks across generations, disciplines



Inside the prisoners' barracks at Auschwitz II-Birkenau

and our international community.¹⁴ Moreover, the diversity of the IOHA conference showed that as oral history keeps evolving, it continues to capture stories from a myriad of perspectives, challenge dominant histories and break silences. This is indeed a testament to oral history's ability to sustain or reinvigorate a radical movement dedicated to vigorous critiques of the status quo and bringing about positive social and historical change.

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(Endnotes)

- 1 See Alexander Freund, 'Conference report: 16th International Oral History Conference', *Oral History Forum d'histoire orale*, vol. 30, 2010, http://www.coh.usd.cas.cz/download/a.feund-ioha_2010_review.pdf, accessed 2 November 2010, p. 5.
- 2 Dolly Parton, 'In the good old days (when times were bad)', 1969.
- 3 See Rosemary Sayigh, *Voices of Palestinian Women Narrate Displacement*, Al Mashriq, 2005, <http://almashriq.hiof.no/palestine/300/301/voices/westbank.html>, accessed 18 October 2010.
- 4 See 'Collecting and preserving the stories of the Virginia Tech tragedy', *April 16 Archive*, Center for Digital Discourse and Culture (CDDC) & Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2007-2008, www.april16archive.org, accessed 18 October 2010.
- 5 See Mark Cave, 'Through hell and high water: New Orleans, August 29-September 15, 2005', *Oral History Review*, vol. 35, no. 1, Winter/Spring, 2008, pp. 1-10.
- 6 See *politicalprisoners.eu*, <http://www.politicalprisoners.eu/about-project.html>, 2008-2010, accessed 19 October 2010.
- 7 See *Forced Labor, 1939-1949: Memory and History*, <http://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/en/index.html>, Freie Universität and the German Historical Museum, accessed 3 October 2010.
- 8 Sean Field, 'From stepchild to elder: Has oral history become 'respectable'?', *IOHA Debate*, International Oral History Association, <http://www.iohanet.org/debate/index.php>, 5 February 2009, accessed 13 October 2010, p. 1.
- 9 *ibid.*, p. 1-3; Sean Field, 'From stepchild to elder: Has oral history become 'respectable'? (abstract)', XVI International Oral History Association Conference: Between Past and Future: Oral History, Memory and Meaning, Prague, 7-11 July 2010, unpaginated.
- 10 Field, *February 2009*, *op.cit.*, *IOHA Debate*, pp. 1, 2; Field, 'From stepchild to elder (abstract)', unpaginated.
- 11 Field, *2010 ibid*; Field, *2009 op.cit.*, pp. 2, 3.
- 12 Alexander Freund, Discussion thread no. 2., 'Responses to "From stepchild to elder: Has oral history become 'respectable'?"', *IOHA Debate*, International Oral History Association, <http://www.iohanet.org/debate/?p=23>, 20 February 2009, accessed 24 October 2010.
- 13 Sherner Berger Gluck, 'Has feminist oral history lost its radical/subversive edge? (paper)', International Oral History Association Conference: Between Past and Future: Oral History, Memory and Meaning (CD), Prague, 7-11 July 2010, pp. 3, 10, 11; Sherner Berger Gluck, 'Has feminist oral history lost its radical/subversive edge? (abstract)', XVI International Oral History Association Conference: Between Past and Future: Oral History, Memory and Meaning, Prague, 7-11 July 2010, unpaginated.
- 14 See Sean Field, 'Oral history's "Alienation" – Silo phenomena', *H-Oral Hist Discussion*, 7 October 2010; Also, Alexander Freund in his 'Conference report', p. 7, noted that the IOHA founders have been interviewed by oral historians from Germany and Italy.

Teaching oral history in Australian universities

Panel at 2009 OHAA Conference, Launceston, Tasmania

Edited by Janis Wilton

*This is an edited and condensed version of the panel presentations.
The original verbatim transcript was over 13,000 words.*

Panellists: Joanne Scott (JS), Al Stein (AS), Alistair Thomson (AT)

Chair: Janis Wilton (JW)

JW: The purpose of this panel is to reflect on the place of oral history in Australian universities and to initiate a dialogue across the oral history world in terms of sharing resources, practices, ideas for teaching oral history and, indeed, enhancing the status of oral history within universities.

Our panellists are:

Joanne Scott is based in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of the Sunshine Coast in Queensland. Joanne began teaching an oral history unit called 'Talking History' in the late 1990s.¹

Al Stein is Associate Director for the Consortium of Oral History Educators in the United States, and is Chair of the American Oral History Association's Education committee.

Alistair Thomson, Chair of History and Director of the Institute of Public History at Monash University in Melbourne. The University has recently established a new Masters of Oral History and Historical Memory. Before returning to Australia, Al spent about twenty years teaching in adult education at the University of Sussex in England.

Janis Wilton is based in the School of Humanities at the University of New England in Armidale, and has taught oral history on campus and by distance education to undergraduate and postgraduate students for over thirty years.

The status of oral history in universities

JW: My starting point is a brief reflection on where we think oral history sits within university programs. My way to do this is to provide a brief history of oral history at my institution, the University of New England.

Oral history was already being taught at the Armidale College of Advanced Education (ACAE) when I joined that institution in the mid 1980s. One course was offered within a dedicated degree on local, family and applied history that was geared for classroom teachers and another was to be offered in the new Associate Diploma in Aboriginal Studies. So oral history was available to select groups of students within an education school. With amalgamation of ACAE and the University of New England in 1990² those of us teaching in the local, family and applied history area remained in the Faculty of Education for another five years. We waited while the historians in what was then a very traditional History Department tried to work out whether they really wanted our sort of history: it was seen to be that sort of soft stuff, that stuff on the outside, and not really academically serious. In the end, they did want us because we had something that they wanted - students! We moved into the History Department. For some time our units were taught primarily to the students that we brought with us; they were quarantined, on the margins. But now, fifteen years later, the oral history and other applied history units are offered in all relevant awards in the University.³ This is a bright picture. But, it's not all that bright, of course!

I still get the experience of a colleague ringing up and saying 'I've got this student who is about to do a thesis and they are going to do some oral history interviews, could they come and talk to you for half an hour?' I say, 'have they done any work? Any study of oral history?' 'Oh, no. No. They just want to do some interviews.' So there is still a mentality that you can just go out there and do it. And, if you do a quick survey of Australian universities, the units that are available specifically as oral history, tend to sit within history department s - with some exceptions.

There are not that many of them, and they are often either isolated somewhere or fairly lonely units.⁴

AT I know the British context better. A lot of the teaching of oral history and interview methods happens in other disciplines, in health studies and education and media. And it is done with overlapping and subtly different approaches so, when we did a survey of oral history teaching in British universities, we discovered that it happened in very few History Departments but that it happened in a lot of other places where you might not have expected and really good work was being done.⁵ We're an incredibly inter-disciplinary field and history has been one of our more contested sites.

AS Our oral history program which is just getting off the ground at Chicago State University is situated in the new Academic Library not in the History Department – where the first oral history program began in the 1960s. We're branching out now to include the History, Geography and the Fine Arts Departments.

Key issues in teaching oral history

JW In our pre-conference discussions, we identified a number of key issues, strategies and challenges in the teaching of oral history at universities. These included: creating reflective oral historians, combining theory and practice, ethical thinking and practice, interpreting oral histories, forms of engagement particularly engagement with surrounding communities, forms of assessment, resources for teaching and learning, different teaching environments, and reflective teaching practices. We can only raise some of these here.

Creating reflective oral historians, and combining theory and practice

AT One thing that has underpinned all the oral history teaching I've done is that to be an oral history practitioner, you'll be a much better one if you draw on the extraordinary range of literature, debate and critical analysis on everything from asking questions to interview relationships to interpreting people's memories. In this way, practice is informed by standing on the shoulders of lots of other people who have asked these questions and

explored these issues before. Conversely, you can't really be an oral history theoretician without actually practising it, without actually doing interviews, interpreting them, and working with people's stories. And so the best theory and the best theorists are informed by their work as practitioners, and the best practitioners are informed by the theory.

The second thing that has underpinned my teaching practice, and is where Janis was moving to, is this notion that you get a graduate or Honours student who wants to do oral history and you just send them off to do it or you say, 'go and read Paul Thompson's book *The Voice of the Past*, then go and do it'. This is what happened to me. My first interviews were just appalling. There was no training. So, when I got a job in adult education at Sussex University, the first thing I wanted to do was to create courses to make reflective practitioners and to improve everything from people working in community contexts to people doing PhDs. I wanted to improve the way they did oral history, both the way they made interviews and then interpreted and used them by moving between theory and practice.

The learning model that I use is that of a spiral. We all start on the spiral bringing in lots of expertise as communicators, listeners and so on. And there is a spiral of engagement between practice and theory as you go on which means that, for someone who has been doing interviews for thirty years, you are in one sense only as good as your next interview. And that's a new learning experience. It also means that the novice who comes in is bringing lots of qualities and expertise with them but actually having extraordinary learning when they do their first interviews and actually reflect on them.

My courses require students to do reading and to do assessment. They are usually a semester long. In my case, I've tended to work with groups of between ten and twenty students which is increasingly difficult to do in a higher education context but, for this sort of work, it is a good number because it can be a workshop and a seminar.

And the other thing is that I do two interconnected units – one on recording oral histories and one on interpreting memories. This is partly because in a semester there is not enough time to cover both aspects. And I try to get students to do both courses so that they see the spiral continues across two semesters.

My focus here is the recording oral history unit. And the spiral of learning involves getting students to read, debate, do interviews, reflect on them, workshop ideas, try out scenarios, analyse their own material and write or make things with the interviews.

And there are some basic resources that you need to have to teach this sort of course well.

Teaching Resources

It really helps if you've got a small bank of equipment that students can borrow. I tend to have two or three digital recorders that I scrape and steal over the years and have available, and then the students have a mixture of a range of different quality stuff. It means that if they want to try recording in good quality digital machines, they can access and borrow those, and they can alternatively use their laptops or, in the old days, their mini-disks or whatever. So they get a sense of the range of possibilities and why it matters to create good, archival quality audio sound.

The second resource is a website that is available to students. It has a bank of resources, teaching materials, weblinks to oral history projects and archives all round the world, and examples of interviews that they can use. This has really transformed my teaching over the last few years because it's become much easier to get the students when they're practicing their interviews to listen to and look at other people's interviews, or when they're practicing interpretation they have a set of five of my migration interviews and then to do some interpretation using that material themselves.

A third resource: Rob Perks and I made the *Oral History Reader* in the 1990s because I was sick of photocopying readings for teaching and I thought, well, let's create an anthology of what we thought were forty wonderful pieces of writing about oral history theory and practice from around the world, and we've now done a second edition.⁶ I use that as a set text in all my teaching for both recording and interpreting and I encourage students in Australia to get Beth Robertson's *Handbook*⁷ for the nuts and bolts and how to do it. Everything else they can get because so many journals are online.

And the last resource for this theory and practice work, is to have a teaching space that works. I try and find a space that has breakout possibilities so that when you're getting students to do practice interviews, they can get out of the same

room. I love a whiteboard, I use a felt tip pen. I also have a computer with a data projector so that, as a class, we can all listen to an interview, watch the transcript alongside at the same time and talk about what's going on or students can load up their interviews on the computer and we can all listen to them together in the class.

Practice interviews and preparation

Doing practice interviews is absolutely essential to the recording oral history unit. I get the students to do at least three practice interviews within a twelve week unit. But, before they do that, I get them to do a number of things so that I feel like they'll be more or less ready to start. I get them to do a lot of reading, thinking and debating on the origins, aims and contexts of oral history. We look at memory debates. For this I use examples of extracts from interviews and get the students to think about how this memory is working, what's going on in the interview as someone is trying to remember their life, what are the factors shaping that memory. We do more of that in the interpreting course but, before they do interviews, I want them to think hard about that.

And I get them to write. It's good to get people to write early and give them feedback early. So, within a month or so, I get them to write an essay about one aspect of theory and practice so that they engage with the literature. Then we start to get more practical.

There is at least one session on doing project preparation where I get them all to imagine a project which is usually the history of the university. They're in charge of doing the fiftieth anniversary history. It's going to involve oral history. And they have to think through all the issues – logistical, financial, sampling, and so on. So they are imagining themselves as someone running an oral history project on a big scale before they actually think about doing interviews.

The last preparatory thing before they start doing practice interviews, is ways of thinking about how people do interviews. I play examples of video interviews that previous students have lent me where they got it all wrong. I play some of my own interviews where things didn't work out. I get them to brainstorm do's and don'ts and realise that actually it's quite complicated and that there's not necessarily a right way to do oral history. And I get them to read all sorts of wonderful writings about doing interviews.

The first practice interview they do, they pair up and do it out of class between weeks or between fortnights, and everyone has the same topic. There is no easy or safe topic for practice interviews. I've ended up with one that they all have in common - starting university. I get them to imagine they're part of an oral history project about people coming to university. They have to devise question guidelines and then do an hour each way, paired interview on that topic. By this stage they've been together as a class for four or five weeks and have got a degree of trust and understanding, but they also know it is a real interview. They are already having to think about all the ethical and personal issues, look at consent forms, and think about how they deal with the sometimes difficult stuff that comes up in any interview. They do that and they come back from that interview to the next class just bursting with conversation, ideas, challenges. I'm not too fussed about equipment at this stage. Although I ask them to try and use equipment, I just want to get them used to asking questions and also being on the other side, being interviewed. They learn just as much from being interviewed as interviewing.

The next practice interview is in class. A week's session is devoted to doing a practice interview but in threes this time, where the third person is the evaluator. They rotate the roles. They do about half an hour each way interviewing, and the third person watches and listens and then gives feedback. They're watching other people do it as well as doing it themselves as well as being interviewed. This provides them with another way into understanding and seeing what's going on. What I'm hoping they're learning by now is not just how interviews work generally, but also what works for them. What are their skills and weaknesses as oral history interviewers.

The third interview they do is outside class, where they interview someone completely unrelated to the course and on a subject of their own interest. It is a real interview, if you like. By that time, they've already done a couple. They're still pretty frightened and worried about it but it's a real light bulb moment when they actually put it into practice.

Ongoing reading and assessment

Alongside the practice interviews, we are still doing lots of reading about interview relationships, ethical issues, and all that sort of stuff. And the most important thing is that the assessment ties into the learning because

the second piece of assessment is a critical analysis of their interview. They can write about any aspect – the interview relationship, about how memory worked, about how they asked questions, whatever. It doesn't matter. I get them to write critically and reflectively drawing upon the literature but also drawing upon their own experience. Over the years, some of these student essays have been published.⁸

Comments

JS I get my students to do a fairly early essay on an aspect of theory and practice and they continue to be surprised when I say that I want you to use that for your final reflective piece after you've done your interviews. I'm always struck by how often our undergrad students do a piece of assessment and then they're done with that and it actually does not have relevance for anything else and then they do the next bit and the next bit.

Another thing is that, as well as getting students to do practice interviews that are on real topics, I also do a series of scenarios. The purpose is to talk about what knowledge the interviewers and narrators might be bringing to the interview. I have miniature summaries, so that the interviewer has theirs and doesn't get to see the narrator's. The interviewer knows what the project is, what they're interviewing about, a little bit of information about the person they are interviewing but, in some cases, has some tricky extra little things built in.

AS The comment I had is especially on what Al said about standing on big shoulders. Chicago is a very intimidating place. It's a big city, it's cold and it's Studs Terkel's shoulders in a city of big shoulders. What we do is use Terkel's work to talk about how to evaluate, how to be an interviewer and we use some of the criticism about his work. We look at the interviews and the transcripts which are now finally being made available.⁹

JW I have mainly distance education students and I encourage them to keep reflective journals or diaries so that they are actually writing all the time about the learning experience while they are doing oral history. Also the immersion for them, by long distance, in interviews is now gratefully available online and on the (unit) website. So it's a case of listening critically and constantly writing reflectively about the experience, and the whole notion of active learning. And, I reinforce Al and Joanna's point about encouraging students to do things that live well beyond their university assignments. Some of my students, like Al's, have published their oral history assignments.¹⁰

Forms of engagement

JS I am thinking of a variety of forms of engagement. There is the potential for student engagement – and sometimes disengagement – with oral history itself; the engagement with the community; and whether oral history, at least at the undergraduate level where I teach it, actually promotes engagement or disengagement with the broader discipline of History.

We have already seen that oral history offers particularly extensive opportunities for students for engagement with subject matter. That is one of the beauties of oral history. It is the engagement between theory and practice, the engagement with ethics, and the engagement with the community. And I think I would have said the next bit much more confidently ten years ago when I was starting off teaching oral history, I say it with much less confidence now. One of the advantages that I find for my undergraduate students is that the oral history literature, although it is ever expanding and we are all contributing to that fact, still seems to offer a manageable volume of theory for them. Often in other undergrad history courses, the theory is not nearly as apparent to the students. So, within the restricted span of a single semester there is a real chance to get closer than they usually do to a sense of what it might be to enjoy expertise in a particular field or literature. And, for me, one of the great enjoyments of teaching oral history continues to be that sense of how we can empower our students, how we can make our students aware that, in fact, they are incredibly capable people. As Al said, they bring all this knowledge and skills with them and, perhaps sadly, sometimes universities are not always all that good at actually valuing what they bring.

I think there's not much risk of student disengagement with oral history, which is lovely. There probably, however, have to be a couple of conditions that are met. There has to be sufficient support and reassurance for those students who are hesitant. I certainly have undergrads who are perhaps taking the course because it fits quite neatly into their timetable and they perhaps haven't read the course outline before they turn up. And they're quite shocked. They are going to have to talk to people! What's that going to be all about! So, some of the students certainly need reassurance about how it's actually quite a nice experience to engage with people in your research. Also, there are students who are often very worried about what if it's a disastrous interview, will they have blown their chances in their grades for

the semester. The other thing I've found very useful is that I'm very upfront with my students and say that it's actually fine for them to decide that they don't like oral history. I want them to work out by the end of semester whether oral history is something they enjoy or not. This in itself often arouses really interesting discussions among the students about what is the role of liking and disliking particular research methods and particular topics.

A very obvious area of engagement is with the community. My students have interviewed people as far away as Britain and the US and on an amazing range of topics like experiences in World War II and being an expat in Hong Kong. But, almost inevitably, most of the students will do local topics. My favourite recent one is a great history of a local amateur theatre that three of the students got together to do. There's a history of surfing that a couple of students did; feminism among rural women; a history of adoption. All sorts of local topics.

The last form of engagement is the relation between oral history and the broader discipline of history at universities. We've had a recent report called 'Historical thinking in higher education' and pretty typically the finding was that undergrad history students when they were asked what's historical thinking all about, said that it was about reading journal articles and books.¹¹ When the history academics were interviewed, they said history's all about engagement with primary sources. One of the recommendations of that report is that people like me who run history programmes need to make sure that there are plenty of opportunities for students to engage with primary sources. Certainly, over the last decade, my students have been very enthusiastic about their experiences in oral history and sometimes that enthusiasm is expressed along the following lines: 'we really like the course (and that's lovely to hear) 'cause it's not like that other history stuff, you know that normal boring stuff you do in the other bits of your history curriculum'. I suspect it's that issue of students getting an authentic experience in oral history courses because they really have to have that practical experience of interviews. They engage in what my students tend to think is real research. Because of that, one of my concerns is that sometimes enjoyment of the oral history course at undergrad level might encourage disengagement with other bits of the curriculum. More positively, however, I think that oral history courses actually offer a very effective model for other history courses about how to actually get across the core values of our discipline.

Comments

AT Just three quick thoughts. One is this issue about students being terrified of being assessed for doing a bad interview. One of the things I learned very quickly was never to assess the actual practice interviews that they do. So that, although in that second critical analysis they have to submit a portfolio of all their interview materials – audio, documentation etc – and I give them feedback on it, it's actually the reflective writing that matters. Sometimes the worst interview creates the best reflections and the most learning, and that makes them feel a bit safer when doing the interviews.

The second thing: I have mostly worked with adult or mature students, most of whom have an idea about the project they want to do, so they tend to do lots of different things. Just occasionally I've worked with a younger group of students who are happy to be marshalled into sharing one topic together and that's quite different and also quite exciting, when you get them working on one project over a couple of years or a year. There are pros and cons for either.

And the last thought was about the practice interviews and whether students interview someone they know, typically a grandparent, or someone they don't know. The first thing I say is, don't expect that someone you know will be easier because usually it is much more challenging and often not the best first interview. And the second thing they have to start thinking about is how the relationship and the knowing or not knowing makes a difference, and reflect on how that matters.

AS The Chicago State University has a community project that right now is engaging for a couple of reasons. It is the 75th anniversary of the New Deal Arts Projects in America. Basically, the project in Chicago involves getting students to research archival oral histories, and to engage with that part of Chicago's black belt where writer Richard Wright gathered his oral histories during the Great Depression.¹² In doing this, they are also contributing to a new initiative with SPARK Media, the American Library Association and the Black Metropolis Research Consortium.¹³

Ethical thinking and practice

JS One of the critically valuable things about oral history is that it is very often the first time that undergraduate students have to think about the consequences of the research they do for others and the effect of that research on them.

And when I get to the issue of ethics – and it's partly to do with the requirements of university ethics committees – I become much bossier in my course. My students are sternly warned that they cannot do any interviews until after week 5 which is our focus week on ethics. We start by talking about safety. We work through if a student feels unsafe during an interview how they would extract themselves from that situation. As a class we work through the OHAA guidelines.¹⁴ And most of that conversation is about what will that actually mean in practice? How do we translate that into experience?

The part that is crucially important is when, having recognised the value of the OHAA guidelines, the discussion actually goes beyond them. We talk about what Valerie Yow calls those subtle ethical dimensions of relationships between narrators and interviewers.¹⁵ We talk about things like rapport and friendship and what are the consequences in terms of the level of information that you do or don't hear from your narrator. We talk about the narrator getting upset during an interview. We talk about what if the interviewer is upset by what they're confronted with. And we talk about those contrasting views about how much should our narrators know about us. I also try – and perhaps this is partly being in the School of Social Sciences – to introduce them to contrasting processes. Some of my sociology colleagues, for example, have been involved in projects where they didn't reveal that they were researchers or they revealed they were researchers but not the actual topic of their research and the people they were engaging with thought they were actually interested in something else. So we compare that with the OHAA guidelines about integrity and honesty and what that might mean.

At this point, the session was opened to questions and discussion. Points raised included the importance of teaching about learning to listen and hear, informed consent and ethics clearance, video histories, interpretation and over-interpretation, and different approaches to oral history. The session ended with the comment and question – 'We have recorded this – should it be made available in some form?' Applause provided an affirmative. This edited version is the result.

(Endnotes)

- 1 The unit is currently being taught by Dr David Trudinger.
- 2 This was part of the Australia-wide amalgamation of Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs) and Universities, and involved resistance, tension and difficulties.
- 3 In 2011, UNE initiated a new Bachelor of Historical Inquiry and Practice which has at its core the applied history units and values that we had brought from the CAE.
- 4 Visit the OHAA website (http://www.ohaa.org.au/page/how_to_do_oral_history.html) for a list of oral history courses currently available at Australian universities. Note that two of those on the list – those at the Queensland University of Technology and Murdoch University in Western Australia – were initiated following this session at the 2009 OHAA Conference. For an overview of oral history in universities see Janis Wilton, ‘Oral history in universities: from margins to mainstream’ in Donald Ritchie (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, Oxford, 2011, pp.470-489.
- 5 Alistair Thomson, ‘Teaching oral history to undergraduate researchers’, in Alan Booth and Paul Hyland (eds), *The Handbook of University History Teaching*, Manchester, 2000, pp 154-165.
- 6 Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader*, Second Edition, London, 2006.
- 7 Beth Robertson, *Oral History Handbook*, Fifth Edition, Adelaide, 2006.
- 8 For example: Krista Woodley, ‘Let the data sing: representing discourse in poetic form’, *Oral History*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2004, pp. 49-58; and Lorraine Sitzia, ‘Telling Arthur’s story: oral history relationships and shared authority’, *Oral History*, vol. 27, no. 2, 1999 pp. 58-67.
- 9 They are housed in the Chicago History Museum - <http://www.chicagohs.org/planavisit/aboutcollection/oralhistory/?searchterm=terkel>
- 10 See, for example, articles by Jennifer Barrkman, Joanna Boileau, Elizabeth Craig, Katharine Perry and Denise Phillips in the Oral History Association of Australia Journal.
- 11 Marnie Hughes-Warrington et. al., *Historical Thinking in Higher Education: Final Report*, Australian Learning and Teaching Council, Sydney, 2009, p.7. Available from <http://www.theaha.org.au/reports/images/hlthinkinghighered.pdf>
- 12 For more details on the project see the Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection at Carter-Woodson Regional Library, <http://www.chipublib.org/branch/details/library/woodson-regional/p/FeatHarsh/> and ‘Soul of a people: writing America’s story’, SPARK Media, <http://sparkmediablog.blogspot.com/>.
- 13 For more details on the BMRC project see <http://www.blackmetropolisresearch.org/>
- 14 Available from http://www.ohaa.org.au/page/guidelines_of_ethical_practice.html
- 15 Valerie Yow, ‘Ethics and interpersonal relationships in oral history research’, *Oral History Review*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1995, pp.51-66.

Report: 'Eminent Australians' oral history program in South Australia

June Edwards

Since I retired in 2008 from the State Library of South Australia (SLSA) I have been meaning to write about the Library's involvement with the 'Eminent Australians' Oral History program run by the National Library of Australia (NLA). A South Australian 'eminent person' is someone who has been recognised in the State, in Australia and usually internationally for their contribution to society.

When I became the Archival Field Officer in 2003 with responsibility for the oral history collection I found a vibrant program that was built on oral histories donated by professional and volunteer oral historians. The growth of the collection depended on the work and goodwill of South Australian oral historians who were willing to record the largely undocumented stories of people living in the State. Most of the work was done on a volunteer basis with occasional commissioned work from organisations and some work financed by State or Commonwealth grants. Very few interviews had been commissioned by the SLSA, as the oral history budget was miniscule. Library funding was provided only for a small number of transcripts to be made available each year as a way of supporting projects being undertaken by the donors. Both Beth Robertson and Trish Walker, as the previous Oral History Officers, had themselves undertaken interviews with a range of people in order to strengthen or fill gaps in the collection. The lack of an ongoing budget to enable commissioned interviews reinforced the need to provide effective training programs for those undertaking individual interviews or larger projects.

Once in the position I discovered that two interviews of artists - John Dowie (artist and sculptor) and Silvio Apponyi (sculptor)¹ - had been commissioned in 1999 and 2000 using funds from the 'Eminent Australians' Oral History program managed by the NLA. It appeared that there may be an opportunity to progress this association so I contacted Mark Cranfield who was the Oral History Curator at the time. Mark was keen to establish a program of interviews in South Australia as there were plenty of opportunities and the South Australian oral historians known to the NLA were highly regarded.

It was agreed that the NLA would fund up to five life story interviews per year and use oral historians who were approved by the NLA. The recordings would be housed in both the NLA and the SLSA's JD Somerville Oral History collection. The NLA would pay for a timed log to be produced by the interviewers and the SLSA would pay for a full transcript of each interview. The SLSA would produce a list of people they would like to interview and run it past the NLA for approval. The interviewers were required to use the DAT recorder rather than the Marantz cassette recorder. The digital recordings were sent to the NLA and they returned cassette copies to the SLSA. Once new digital recorders were purchased by the SLSA the interviewers changed to using these and the audio technician downloaded the recordings and provided the NLA with a digital copy. Once the logistics were worked out it was decided that the SLSA should produce a list of interviewees with an arts, scientific or sports background. This started a very productive joint oral history program which continues to this day.

From 2003 until 2008 the following interviews were completed:

- John Daly: Professor at the University of South Australia lecturing in the history and sociology of sport and a very successful Australian athletics coach
- Stephen Skillitzi: Founder of the hot glass studio movement in Australia and a practicing glass artist
- Dr Basil Hetzel: Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Adelaide and one of the earliest researchers on the impact of iodine deficiency on thyroid disease
- Maxwell (Max) Edgar Fatchen: Prominent journalist and children's author
- Milton Moon: Celebrated ceramicist and educator
- Max Lyle: Celebrated sculptor and educator
- Kym Bonython: Entrepreneur with involvement in the arts, music and speed racing
- Anita (Kay) Lawrence: Professor and celebrated textile artist
- Emeritus Professor Freda Briggs: Leader in early childhood education and child protection

- Bruno Krummins: Latvian migrant and former Lieutenant Governor of South Australia
- Nicholas (Nick) Mount: Celebrated glass artist
- Jeff Mincham: Celebrated ceramicist
- Dr Donald Beard: Surgeon in the Korean and Vietnam Wars and doctor for the South Australian Cricket Association
- Merrion (Mem) Fox: Prominent children's author
- Andrew Steiner: Celebrated sculptor
- Keith Norrish: Prominent scientist
- Rosemary Crowley: South Australian Labor Senator
- Ieva Pocius: Celebrated sculptor
- John and Ruth Kubasiewicz: Post-war migrants from Poland
- Robert Hannaford: Celebrated artist and portraitist
- Sandra Kanck: Democrats member of parliament in South Australia
- Gillian Rubenstein: Prominent author
- Hossein and Angela Valamanesh: Celebrated artists
- Henrique d'Assumpcao: Prominent scientist²

Since then my successor at the State Library, Tonia Eldridge, has organised another 10 interviews, including interviews with Premier Mike Rann and Terry Hicks³ about his son David.

The impact of instigating this joint arrangement with the NLA has many strands. A positive relationship developed between the staff at the NLA and the SLSA which led to a greater appreciation of each other's roles and meetings between the staff of each institution.

The SLSA now has an annual budget from the NLA which it can spend on commissioned interviews, including timed logs. Gaps in the oral history collection have been filled and expanded, especially in the arts and scientific areas. The Library can respond to suggestions from the community of interesting people who need their story recorded. Mara Kolomitsev from the Latvian Museum, for instance, suggested that Bruno Krummins be interviewed as he had contributed so much to the South Australian community as a whole and the Latvian group in particular, which led to his becoming Lieutenant Governor of South Australia.

Both the NLA and SLSA now have a developing collection of interviews of remarkable individuals which record each person's life story. The interviews document the influences which resulted in the choices the interviewees made in life. All the people who have been interviewed show strength of character and drive. Dr Basil Hetzel was still travelling the world in his 80s to ensure nations and communities understood the importance of the research into iodine in the diet and the lives it saves and improves. John Daly committed himself to sport both in the academic stream and as an Australian athletics coach with involvement in the

Olympics. Keith Norrish was a pioneer in X-Ray spectrometry and published an extraordinary number of articles. When Milton Moon received an Australian Artist Creative Fellowship in 1994 it gave him joy. He talks about the creative process, penetrating something deeply and an artwork providing mystery.

The importance of a supportive family is very evident in the interviews. Nick Mount talks about his parents' views and their 'liberal' approach to their children to provide love and nurture in the context of freedom, so even though his mother thought he would make a good accountant Nick was free to pursue life as a glass artist. Mem Fox's father was a charismatic individual with a strong religious faith who became the subject of her children's book *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*⁴.

Early experiences often have a large impact on a person's life. With Stephen Skillitzi it was his education at Sydney Grammar School and his art teacher, Gordon McCausland who was a ceramicist and painter of the modern school. For Kay Lawrence being engaged in things she loved gave her direction in life. She could not imagine a life not engaged with art. She made good friends and mentors while at art school who gave her confidence, particularly Geoff Wilson, who taught her design. Freda Briggs' first job in the police force in England set her on her path of early childhood education and child protection. Milton Moon was in the RAN during World War II and his visit to Miyajima in Japan inspired his first interest in pottery.

As with all interviews however, there are off-shoots or themes which reveal further stories. For instance Stephen Skillitzi, Ieva Pocius, Milton Moon, Max Lyle, Jeff Mincham and Kay Lawrence all taught art at different times. The interviews record the dynamism of the art schools, the interesting pool of artists who were teachers, and how the art studios, the administration, and outlook of art education have changed over time. The impact of World War II on individuals comes through in different ways. Artist John Dowie was one of the Rats of Tobruk. Kym Bonython was a pilot. John and Ruth Kubasiewicz talk about what it was like in Poland. In April 1943, the Gestapo came at 4.30 am and moved John's entire family and thousands of others into forced labour in Germany. John was parted from the rest of his family and never saw his father again. Andrew Steiner's Jewish background means he continues to this day producing work, and giving talks, about the impact of the holocaust. Andrew does not feel guilt that he survived when others died. However, he believes that the survivors are bound to try to ensure that such atrocities no longer occur. Andrew's wartime experience is him, it is like 'breathing in and breathing out'.⁵

The interviews are a record of migrant experience in South Australia. The post-World War II era of displaced persons finding a new home in South Australia is found

in Bruno Krumins' story coming from Latvia, John and Ruth Kubasiewicz from Poland, Andrew Steiner from Hungary, and Ieva Pocius from Lithuania. Stories of English migration are there with Gillian Rubinstein, Stephen Skillitzi and Freda Briggs. A more recent story is Hossein Valamanesh migrating from Teheran to Western Australia to be with his girlfriend of the time.

Work is an obvious theme, as all the interviewees are dedicated to their chosen field. The beauty of work which gives someone direction and satisfaction comes through very clearly. Freda Briggs fought mandatory retirement at 65 years. Eventually she was contracted to age 71 years, and continued to teach and research past that age.

Faith and religion are a recurring theme. The importance of Christianity and in particular the university-based Student Christian Movement was central for Dr Basil Hetzel. His interest in the relationship between religion and medical practice led him to encourage full-time chaplaincy services in South Australia's public hospitals and the Lifeline 24-hour counselling services. Sandra Kanck's childhood association with the Methodist Church was a major influence for social justice in her life. Mem Fox spent her childhood with her missionary parents at Hope Fountain Mission near Bulawayo, Rhodesia. For Andrew Steiner his survival during World War II has confirmed his adherence to Judaism.

The impact of the 'Eminent Australians' program on the interviewers has been practical and developmental. The SLSA has been able to commission paid interviews by oral historians. The list of interviewers endorsed by the NLA was short but over time it has grown and hopefully will continue to grow in the future. The NLA has confidence in the interviewers it employs in South Australia as they have a wide experience not only working on the 'Eminent Australians' project but other oral history endeavours. Some projects have been suggested by the interviewers themselves, such as interviews with people in the apple and pear industry in Australia.

Interviewers Rob Linn, Susan Marsden, Karen George, Peter Donovan and Alison McDougall have participated in training at the NLA in Canberra and used the NLA's equipment, which is different to the State Library's recorders. Being recognised by the NLA has enabled interviewers to become involved in other projects run by the National Library. This has meant that there have been professional development opportunities, work on a variety of oral history projects, and increased experience and expertise. This has been personally beneficial, has contributed to a broader outlook for the OHAA SA/NT branch and added other insights when delivering oral history workshops.

A term often expressed by the interviewers about their

involvement with the 'Eminent Australians' project is 'what a privilege' it is to be able to record the person's life story. It is special to record a person's full story as it provides a more complex perspective of that individual which is not always recorded when the interview has a narrow focus on a specific theme, era or subject. There was also trepidation about ensuring the interviews were well researched, especially when the person was involved in uncommon fields such as Keith Norrish and X-Ray spectrometry. With people like Terry Hicks, the interview needed to be thorough, as David Hicks' story is significant today, let alone in years to come. There seemed to be a heightened sense of responsibility for the interviewers undertaking these life story interviews. Also there was pressure to ensure the recording was technically perfect. However, enthusiasm and respect for the interviewees was a universal response so the oral historians without a doubt enjoyed their experience.

The impact on the interviewees was initial bemusement to think that they were 'eminent'. All participated in the interviewing process with openness and frankness. Some became enthusiastic about recording aspects of their lives which were not in written records. For instance Stephen Skillitzi felt better for having documented his role in the hot glass movement in Australia. For some, such as journalist and children's author Max Fatchen and children's author Mem Fox, who have always been good storytellers, discussing their lives was second nature – perhaps because they work with words. For others often it was the first time they had thought through and talked about their own story from childhood to the present day. The interviews were an affirmation of their lives and their positive contribution to society and family. The interviews gave each one an interesting perspective on what had influenced their decision-making and path in life. Threads and synergies appeared which were enlightening.

The interviews had other beneficial aspects to them. Basil Hetzel was working on his biography at the time so the interview was a useful summary. Robert Hannaford had a retrospective exhibition after the interview and a book was published looking at his life's work. Again the interview helped with this project. Kay Lawrence has become an interviewer! Supported by the NLA she is recording the story of those who worked with her on the woven tapestry which was commissioned for the then new Parliament House in Canberra.

Interviewees gained a new perspective on the importance of personal history. Archives, videos, publications and ephemera have been donated to the SLSA and the NLA which complement the interviews. Archivist Neil Thomas and I visited Robert Hannaford at his studio in Riverton to assess his archives and found a true gem which documented his life from childhood to

the present day. He was politely and firmly encouraged to protect the collection and think about preservation in the long term in an institution – preferably the SLSA. The interview had made him more conscious of the significance of his archives. Rosemary Crowley gave a lecture entitled ‘Alive and Archived’ at a Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial conference in Adelaide.

Interviewees opened up to us. We visited the Jewish synagogue with Andrew Steiner and his wife. I attended a very amusing exhibition of Stephen Skillitzi’s glass work. Jeff Mincham had a most wonderful retrospective of his ceramics which emerge from the landscape and he gave a terrific talk at the Jam Factory. When Basil Hetzel’s biography was completed I attended the launch which was a very friendly and warm celebration of his life.

In a way, interviewing eminent people is in opposition to the accepted philosophy of oral history work. To quote Studs Terkel, ‘I’m interested in ... those millions and multi-millions of people down through the centuries who made the wheels go round but never made our traditional history book’⁶. However, even though the interviewees for this project are considered ‘eminent’, what comes through is that they all began as essentially ‘ordinary’ people (albeit from very diverse backgrounds) and as such offer inspiration for the rest of us. For South Australia, the ‘Eminent Australians’ oral history project has highlighted a wealth of talented, intelligent, creative, hardworking and truly resilient people who have been recognised in their field both nationally and internationally. The NLA support for this program has been extremely beneficial for the SLSA, South Australian oral historians and for the interviewees themselves. The interviews are an affirmation of the worth of these individuals’ lives and I am thankful that they make the world a more positive and inspirational place.

(Endnotes)

- 1 John Dowie, interview with Jenny Palmer 19.04, 3.05 & 19.05.99, State Library of South Australia (SLSA), (OH 534); OH 562 Silvio Apponyi, interview with Jenny Palmer 6.03, 15.03 & 27.03.00, SLSA (OH 562);
- 2 John Daly, interview with Peter Donovan 22.10 & 29.10.03, SLSA (OH 677);
Stephen Skillitzi, interview with Rob Lin 27.11.03, SLSA (OH 681);
Dr Basil Hetzel, interview with Peter Donovan 15.01 and 22.01.04, SLSA (OH 684);
Milton Moon, interview with Peter Donovan 2.07 & 9.07.04, SLSA OH 698.
Maxwell Edgar Fatchen, interview with Peter Donovan 24.08.04, SLSA (OH 705);
Max Lyle, interview with Rob Lin 4.08.04, SLSA (OH 710);

- Kym Bonython, interview with Rob Lin 22.09.04, SLSA (OH 711);
Anita Kay Lawrence, interview with Peter Donovan 17.11.04, SLSA OH 698.
Freda Briggs, interview with Rob Lin 14.12.04, SLSA (OH 727);
Bruno Krumins, interview with Rob Lin 24.05.05, SLSA (OH 731);
Nicholas John Mount, interview with Rob Lin 16.08.05, SLSA (OH 742);
Jeff Mincham, interview with Peter Donovan 20.08.05, SLSA (OH 749);
Donald Beard, interview with Rob Lin 29.09.05, SLSA (OH 750);
Merrion (Mem) Frances Fox, interview with Rob Lin 2.12.05; 21.03.06, SLSA (OH 759);
Andrew Steiner, interview with Peter Donovan 6.12.05, SLSA (OH 761);
John and Ruth Kubasiewicz, interview with Rob Lin 29.03.06, SLSA (OH 772);
Keith Norrish, interview with Peter Donovan 5.10.06, SLSA (OH 759);
Rosemary Cowley, interview with Alison McDougall 11.10 & 18.10.06, SLSA (OH 759);
Ieva Pocius, interview with Rob Lin 25.09.06, SLSA (OH 797);
Robert Hannaford, interview with Rob Lin 14.03.07, SLSA (OH 812);
Hon Sandra Kanck MLC. Interview with Alison McDougall 26.10.07, SLSA (OH 833);
Gillian Rubinstein. Interview with Susan Marsden 6.11 & 7.11.07, SLSA (OH 835);
Henrique Antonio d’Assumpcao. Interview with Peter Donovan 23.01.08, SLSA (OH 842);
Hossein and Angela Valamanesh. Interview with Rob Lin 8.11 & 22.11.07, SLSA (OH 852);
- 3 Premier Mike Rann, interview with Dr Susan Marsden 24.02, 15.04 & 15.06.09, SLSA, (OH 901); Terry Hicks, interview with Alison McDougall 5.08, 17.08, & 26.08.09, SLSA, (OH 912);
 - 4 Fox, Mem, Omnibus Books, Adelaide, 1984.
 - 5 Andrew Steiner, interview with Peter Donovan 6.12.05, SLSA (OH 761);
 - 6 <http://interview.sweetsearch.com/2010/12/studs-terkel.html>, Interview of the day, viewed 16 July 2011.

President's Report 2010–2011

It gives me great pleasure to present the annual report of the Oral History Association of Australia for 2010–2011.

Last August saw the Association's first Annual General Meeting, required by the new constitution in place of a Biennial General Meeting. As the vast majority of members could not be present in Launceston the meeting was conducted as a teleconference. Little discussion is possible with such a format and no election was required, so the formal business was covered quickly. There can be no doubt that every second year's AGM, held in conjunction with the national conference, will remain the meeting in which to conduct major business.

The principal achievement for the last year has been the completion of the new website which finally went live in January. It was very unfortunate that we were not notified that the url of 'ohaa.net.au' needed to be renewed. As a result we had to obtain a new url (with 'org' replacing 'net') and then register it with Google to maximise the chances of the OHAA coming out top of the list when 'oral history' is searched for. It is hoped that all members have now bookmarked the new address. Thanks to Jill Adams and Sarah Sanderson of the Victorian Branch for volunteering to keep the site up to date.

The new web design is much more attractive and easy to navigate, and considerably more information is available. The section 'How to do Oral History' allows us to spruik our various publications and workshops as well as university courses available around the country. Another major innovation is the Index to all past Journals. This Index, originally compiled by Beth Robertson for the years 1979–1998, was updated in 2009 by Elaine Peta Crisp, and again by Francis Good to include the articles from the 2010 Journal. I am delighted to let you know that Francis has volunteered to continue to provide an updated version for forthcoming Journals. By including the Index online rather than publishing it in a Journal, as happened previously, the information about past articles is now readily accessible to all.

The continually-updated Index is especially important as during the year we have organised the scanning of all 25 past Journals which were not hitherto available electronically. We now have a complete run online at Informit, accessible through libraries. A bonus is that there is less pressure to keep boxes of past Journals. Now that storage space is at a premium institutions are less inclined to allow several boxes to be kept in a back corner; and it is of course difficult for private individuals to provide the required space, let alone the necessary security from fire etc. At present past Journals are stored at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery though it is unclear if this can continue much longer.

At the last Biennial General Meeting in 2009 it was decided to continue the work on remoulding the constitution to better reflect the changed way of working since the original constitution was written. Unfortunately, the process has been beset with difficulties, due in large part to a series of medical events amongst the Constitution Working Group which prevented any work for months at a time. Reluctantly therefore the decision was finally made to focus only on some small changes to ensure the constitution worked well.

As a result of a proposal put forward by the New South Wales Branch, who administer the prestigious Hazel de Berg Award, the decision was made to open this Award for Excellence in Oral History to non-members of the OHAA.

I must thank the New South Wales branch, especially Rosie Block and Berenice Evans, for their very capable handling of memberships from subscription agencies, often referred to in shorthand as 'standing orders'. After ten years they have stepped aside, and the Tasmanian Branch has now taken over this role.

Thanks also to the Victorian Branch for the excellent organisation of the 2011 conference in Melbourne, and to the South Australian Branch for already beginning the work on hosting the 2013 conference in Adelaide.

Finally, as I stand down from the presidency after two years let me thank the other members of the

National Committee. In particular I need to mention the executive: Rosie Block (Vice-President), Margaret Eldridge (Secretary) and especially Lana Wall who has done much more than just capably fulfil the duties of Treasurer. A special mention must be made of Terry Whitebeach who while coping with personal difficulties managed to bring out the 2010 issue of the Journal; and to Sue Anderson who volunteered to take over the editorship when Terry could not continue in 2011. They have all been of great assistance and have made my job much easier.

Jill Cassidy

Reports 2010/2011

New South Wales Branch President's Report

This past twelve months marks a time of change and new opportunities for our Association. It began with a change in leadership as the inimitable Rosie Block retired as President after nearly twenty years in that role not only for OHAA NSW but also as Oral History Curator for the State Library of NSW. Rosie's long commitment and enthusiasm for oral history has meant that we have a very strong membership of 248 and a contact list of approx 100. For twenty years our Association has been well supported by the State Library of NSW. They have provided us with an administrative base and partnered many workshops and seminars over the years. This year has seen OHAA NSW established as an entirely independent entity and develop a collaborative partnership with the Royal Australian Historical Society with History House becoming our registered office. Later this year we will jointly sponsor an oral history workshop for our members and Local Historical Societies across the state. RAHS has granted reciprocal benefits for our members to use the RAHS library if they are working on OHAA projects and 'members rates' for RAHS activities and annual conference.

Our relationship with the State Library remains strong and we have co-hosted two seminar/workshops this year. It has been encouraging to welcome Sally Hone as the Library's new Curator of Oral History and draw on her expertise in using digital technology to ensure good quality sound recordings and ongoing preservation of oral history interviews. We continue to give support for the digitisation of Library's marvellous oral history collection.

This year OHAA NSW has built collaborative partnerships with other like minded associations. We accepted an invitation from the History Council to develop an oral history page on their website highlighting this year's theme 'Eat History.' With Museums and Galleries NSW and in collaboration with ANU and the NSW State Library we conducted an

exciting two day program New Ways with Oral History – presentations, workshops and discussions on capturing and interpreting our collective stories. The event was a sell out and attracted people with a great range of backgrounds: academics, students, local studies librarians, researchers, staff and volunteers of museums, heritage consultants, historians, historical societies, school and cultural archivists, family historians and staff from a number of Councils from across Sydney and around the state. This diversity shows that the profile of oral history is rising as it is being recognised as an important part of historical methodology.

Digital knowledge and technology is constantly expanding, creating new possibilities for oral historians in allowing community access to interviews for a wide range of purposes. Our research into the current recording standards required by major repositories for oral histories was lead by Trish Levido. In order to assist a large proportion of our membership, Trish also undertook a review of current digital equipment suitable for non-professional use which was capable of meeting these standards. This review has been picked up by many organisations but of course it is only relevant to this point of time. The challenge of digital technology is keeping up-to-date as prices go down and more models of digital recorders come onto the market. These reviews provided the basis for an evaluation of our training workshops which have now been revised to include more details about the benefits of digital technology and offer practical hands-on skill development in interviewing, editing, sound storage and preservation. Our members have warmly welcomed these developments which I am sure play a role in making the Oral History Association a recognised referral point for the wider community. Trish Levido and Rosie Block have presented workshops on oral history theory and practice for members and several community groups this year. We receive many more requests than we are able to fulfil and are grateful to be able to refer enquirers to the OHAA Oral History Handbook and our website resources. Other State OHAA Branches are also conducting training and we are keen to see a national network forum develop so

that we may learn from each other to develop best practice standards.

Our seminar presenters have been excellent and varied: Laila Elimoos 'The Island of Peter Pan or the island of the Dammed? Writing a history of people with intellectual disability resident on Peat Island NSW', Dr. Jo Kijas 'Lighthouse Keeping : a partnership about the lighthouses of northern NSW,' Dr. Siobhan McHugh 'From Rough Diamond to a Gem: cutting and polishing oral history for radio broadcast,' Dr. Janis Wilton 'Talking objects: the place of objects in our remembered experiences,' Kevin Bradley, Curator Oral History and Director Sound Preservation National Library of Australia and Dr. Paula Hamilton, Centre for Public History UTS stimulated our thinking with their presentation 'Creating, using and preserving oral histories – issues and challenges' and were joined by Dr. Sandy Blair, Institute for Professional Practice in Heritage and the Arts ANU to present 'Using oral history as a source-creating content, working critically and ethically.' Denise Phillips OHAA NSW scholarship winner, spoke of her impressions of the International Oral History Conference in Prague. We will all remember Louise Darmody's poignant examples of 'How Oral Histories/Stories can save Lives.'

Digital technology has been a decided asset to the Association as we revamped our administrative practices and systems. A new publication Oral History Network News is circulated monthly to all members. It carries topical and current information of interest to oral historians including grant funding opportunities. Community organisations are able to advertise their oral history projects and seek expressions of interest. OHAA does not act as a broker; all negotiations are between the organisation and the oral historian. The April 2011 edition of our six monthly newsletter VOICEPRINT was the last hard copy edition which from now on will be delivered via the internet. We owe a debt of thanks to Joyce Cribb our ever efficient and helpful Voiceprint editor for the last 15 years and we are extremely grateful that she is ready for the challenge to continue as Editor as we move into the digital era.

Change is always unsettling but OHAA NSW's experience is that it is also rewarding. This year's program has only been possible by the concerted work of an enthusiastic committee: Rosie Block, Roslyn Burge, Michael Clarke, Joyce Cribb, Louise Darmody, Frank Heimans, Trish Levido, Graham Levido, Carol McKirdy, Di Ritch, Sue Rosen, Peter Rubinstein, and Frances Rush. Rising costs are a major hurdle to overcome. This year OHAA NSW has taken out Public Liability and Public Risk Insurance Policies. Our Association is a voluntary one, all very busy people, and without the expertise of our very part time bookkeeper First Class Accounts,

we would not have been able to balance the cost of program expansion within the limitations of our income. With greater awareness of the place oral history can play in preserving our community memory for future generations, the challenge now is to focus on programs and activities in which we can particularly contribute to an interdisciplinary and multi-layered understanding of history.

Sandra Blamey

Queensland Branch President's Report

Queensland committee had another busy and exciting year. It was my last year as the president of the Queensland Branch. It was a very rewarding time for me. I learned a lot about our craft and met many extraordinary people. In the years to come I am going to concentrate on further studies in oral history and transmedia storytelling (QUT) and continue my contribution to the Queensland branch. In the meantime I am passing my microphone to Ariella van Luyn.

Ariella has been a member of the Association for four years and has become a very valued contributor to the Queensland branch. She brought in her genuine enthusiasm, resourcefulness and expertise in oral history, creative writing and workshop facilitation. In her post on the Queensland branch website Ariella reflected on her personal connection with oral history:

"I joined when I began my PhD investigating the fictionalising of oral history. I first discovered the thrill of hearing someone telling their life story during a vacation research program at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), when I interviewed four Sisters of Mercy at the Mater Hospital. The compelling qualities of their stories struck me, as an emerging writer, as something more powerful than anything I could ever invent"(http://www.ohaaqld.org.au/index.php?/Blog.html).

As a writer, Ariella incorporates oral history interviews in her practice and last year one of her stories based on oral history was published in *One Book Many Brisbanes 5*. Her article, 'Fictionalising Oral History: Narrative Analysis, Voice and Identity,' was peer reviewed and published in the OHAA journal in November 2010. She has since taken up the role of Chair on the Journal's Editorial Board. As a President, she is working hard to ensure that oral histories are collected and (re)presented according to the best set of standards available, and in an ethical and responsible manner. She sees the Association continuing to work with the State Library of Queensland and is keen to ensure that this is the case.

As a committee we worked hard to convert our ideas into practice. We continue developing our website and

it has now become a portal for our members where they can find the necessary information, search *Delicious*, an online library of web resources, and engage in conversation on the issues of oral history through the blog.

This year we continued working on providing better workshops for our members. Many of them were eager to obtain the necessary training but could not afford the fee or were unable to travel to the training venue. Following feedback from them we decided to apply for a grant to enable us to run a workshop program across the State. The first round of grant applications was unsuccessful but we then re-applied for two different grants, from Jupiters Casino and from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund. This time we were successful.

The funding will enable us to provide workshops across the State focusing on collecting, recording, transcribing and editing oral histories. In addition, the workshops will encourage participants to produce oral histories in highly accessible formats, such as digital stories. The workshops will also explore how oral history can be used in the contexts of museum exhibitions, television or radio programmes and web pages. In addition, we hope to train participants about the requirements for depositing oral histories in appropriate public and research libraries where they will be preserved for present and future generations and will enrich Queensland's history.

In late 2010 we designed a set of community workshops to cover the fundamental aspects of a typical oral history project. The workshops are facilitated by key committee members and best practitioners in the field of oral history. Every workshop is run twice during the year ensuring those interested have increased opportunities to participate. The workshops provide an opportunity for participants to learn the best practice of oral history, to meet people involved in oral history projects, and to be inspired by the many and innovative ways oral histories are being gathered and presented.

Our workshop schedule is as follows:

- Oral History Basics – overview of a standard oral history project (1 day).
- Overview of ethics/copyright/permissions/standards (1/2 day).
- Introduction to photography/video for interviewing (1/2 day).
- Overview of the recording equipment/scanning. File management and standards (1/2 day).
- Introduction to editing/transcribing/sound editing: Audacity and Express Scribe software (1/2 day).
- Interviewing- theory and practice (1 day).
- What to do with the recorded material: offers

suggestions for showcasing oral history transcripts, audio, video and photos as writing, digital stories, exhibitions, books, blogs, web community space and family chronicles (1 day).

More details can be found on the Association website: www.ohaaqld.org.au

The first round of workshops was a very rewarding experience and we learned a lot from it. Our team will be presenting a paper about our teaching model at the up-coming national conference in Melbourne.

We also provided workshops to the different groups and societies across the State. For example, our leading facilitators, Helen Klæbe, Ariella van Luyn and Bryan Crawford, travelled to Cardwell, Northern Queensland, to deliver a workshop to the local historic society and its members. The area was devastated by the recent floods and Cardwell Museum was hit hard. We felt honoured to be able to assist our colleagues in the difficult times. The group presented our 'signature' workshop that included oral history basics for community groups, interview techniques and equipment training, and we left Cardwell Historic Society with a set of recording equipment.

We have established a very good relationship with the Lesbian, Gay, Bi- and Trans-sexual Resource Centre and it has become a tradition to run a workshop for this community once a year. Another interesting workshop was with the Wynnum Historic society. It was good to see how fast our recommendations were taken on board. Some of the recording equipment was borrowed still hot after the presentation and used by the members of the Society for practicing for an up-coming oral history project.

We continue supporting our members in their professional development. In 2011 our committee offered a scholarship of \$1,000.00 to attend the International Conference in Prague. The scholarship was offered on a competitive basis and I was the lucky one who won it. This year we offered \$500 bursaries to attend the national conference in Melbourne and two of our members, Catherine Cottle and Sandy Liddle, presented very strong cases. We were very happy to support them in their endeavours.

At the moment our committee comprises President Ariella van Luyn, Secretary Suzanne Mulligan, Treasurer Kate Roberts, Editor and Webmaster Karen Barrett, Loans Officer Maxine Kendall, Dr Helen Klæbe, our main workshop facilitator, and Lena Volkova. We are looking forward to continuing to serve our members in Queensland and contributing to understanding and development of oral history internationally.

Lena Volkova
Immediate Past President

South Australian Branch President's Report

The Branch held the 2009/2010 AGM in August 2010 at the Royal Geographic Society meeting room in Adelaide. Madeleine Regan and several of her interviewees from her 'Italian market gardeners' project talked about the significance of recording their memories. At least nine Italian families who originated from the northern Italian Veneto region worked market gardens in the area known as St James Park from the late 1920s. The area is now Kidman Park in the western suburbs of Adelaide and the market gardeners identified the centre of activity as Frogmore Road. The aim of the project is to capture memories and experiences of the members of the families who were involved in the market gardens from the late 1920s. The farmers were tenants on this land before they were approached by the owner about selling them the land. Most bought the holdings they worked and today the sons and daughters of the first market gardeners on Frogmore Road still have a strong bond and meet regularly as close friends. It was a very heart-warming presentation which highlighted how a project with a tight focus can have a very broad social historical significance. The OHAA (SA Branch) committee for 2010/11 comprises:

June Edwards – President and Treasurer
Catherine Manning – Secretary and Membership
Alison McDougall – Newsletter Editor
Dr Karen George – Oral History workshops
Dr Catherine Murphy – Handbooks
Madeleine Regan – 175th Project Coordinator; and new member
Tonia Eldridge – State Library of South Australia's Oral History Program Coordinator.

During the past year, we have seen a number of activities initiated by the South Australian Branch. In July 2010 we ran a 'How to do oral history' workshop with a good turnout. Karen George ran the session and Silver Moon from the State Library handled equipment training. Catherine Manning and Tonia Eldridge were the organisers of another successful event.

In September I gave a lecture on oral history to students in the Business Information Management course at the University of South Australia, which created interest. In October members went to the Migration Museum to see the two exhibitions, *Suburban dreams: house and home in Adelaide 1945-1965* and *Home is where the heart is*. Mandy Paul from History SA and Julie Collins from the Architectural Museum at the University of South Australia talked about *Suburban Dreams*. A section on the Home Builders Club was close to the Branch's heart as members were interviewed by the Branch a decade ago. Julie talked about how the

system worked, namely accruing hours working on other people's houses before receiving help from those individuals to build their own house. A lot of people remained in their house all their lives and had a great feeling of achievement and belonging. A section on the SA Housing Trust looked at the development of Elizabeth and included footage of the Queen. The 1956 architecture exhibition in the Botanic Gardens which brought 'modern' ideas to Adelaide was also featured.

Catherine Manning talked about *Home is where the heart is* which explored the experience of migrants to South Australia post-war and the importance of their homes. Oral history interviews gathered many stories of how people settled in SA and built their homes. A lovely exhibit was a family's move from living in a Holden's container, to a galvanised iron house, to finally a substantial brick house, all three built on the same block. Wonderful photographs revealed that occupational health and safety wasn't really a consideration, with one fellow doing a handstand on the rafters of a home! (Pre-planking?) The exhibition revealed the magic of building your own home; the importance of home in settling into a new country; the sense of achievement which can be conveyed to family in their original country; providing a home and life for the children; adapting to a new environment; and the initiative and skill of people a generation ago when being an owner/builder was normal.

In November Karen George and Peter Kolomitsev ran a 'How to do oral history' workshop at the State Library. People came from public libraries, historical societies, the YWCA, museums and interviewees from Madeleine's Italian market gardens project who have now become interviewers! So once again there was a lot of interest.

In early 2011 Branch member Sue Anderson stepped into the role of editor of the OHAA National Journal at the last minute after a call from President Jill Cassidy for someone to fill the place of 2010 Editor Terry Whitebeach, who had to withdraw for personal reasons.

I attended the launch of the Professional Historians of Australia SA website, *SA 175/Celebrating South Australia*. It is a tremendous resource created to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the establishment of South Australia in 1836. It comprises many hundreds of entries written by members of the PHA (SA) over more than 30 years. Many of these entries and images have never appeared in public before, while others are reproduced because the original item is now out of print or not otherwise digitised. Some entries are newly-written. All are focussed on the history and heritage of South Australia. They vary in length from paragraph entries to substantial essays, chapters and

reports, and they include 'On this day' entries for every day of the year. The URL is: <http://www.sahistorians.org.au/175/index.html>

Our annual *Lizzie Russell Oral History Grant* once again had a number of really good submissions. Two grants were awarded, the first to Christeen Schoepf for her project 'What the chair heard', relating to the Mayoral Chair of Port Pirie, which has been part of people's lives since early settlement. The second was awarded to the Friends of Adelaide Harmony Choir, who are undertaking an oral history of the organisation.

Catherine Murphy has been busy sending out Oral History Handbooks and we are happy to report that sales have already surpassed last years'.

Alison McDougall also needs to be thanked for producing two excellent editions of the South Australian newsletter, *Word of Mouth*. A pdf version is now available for members who would prefer to receive it electronically.

Of particular interest, over the last year Madeleine Regan, Allison Murchie and our web designer David Smids have been working hard to create the SA 175th anniversary oral history project web gateway. Thanks to all those who have contributed recordings in SA and the NT which total 20 in all. Peter Kolomitsev and Silver Moon at the State Library of South Australia created the MP3 versions of the interviews for loading onto the site. History SA awarded the OHAA (SA Branch) a grant of \$1300 towards our project under the SA175 Grant Fund. This was gratefully received! Thanks to both History SA and the State Library of South Australia for their valuable contributions to the project. There has been a lot for Madeleine to co-ordinate and I must thank her for her well organised approach. The launch of the website took place on Tuesday 7 July at the State Library of South Australia. This web gateway is intended as an inaugural project with the ability to add new interviews over time. It can be accessed at www.ohaa-sa.com.au/category/interviews.

The committee and Annmarie Reid have met to work out a broad strategy for the 2013 conference which will be held in Adelaide. We have decided on the title: *She said, he said – contested histories and the evolving role of oral history*. We look forward to developing the conference further in the coming year.

June Edwards

Tasmanian Branch President's Report

The last twelve months have seen a period of quiet recovery from the preceding hectic two years of organising the national conference.

Last year we held a very interesting seminar in conjunction with our Biennial General Meeting. The keynote address was given by Ian Terry who spoke on 'It's a Matter of Values: stories from the Gordon-below-Franklin dam dispute 1982-83.' It was fascinating to hear some of the stories associated with this seminal event in Tasmania's history. Garry Richardson talked about his evolution as an oral historian, with special mention of his new book on Binalong Bay, in a talk entitled 'Falling into the role of an oral historian: the story of *The Harbour*.' Pauline Schindler rounded off the day with 'The highpoints and hassles of a transcriber'. She was able to draw on her decades-long experience and all of us who have transcribed interviews could relate to her stories of the laughs and frustrations involved.

Partly as a result of the 2009 National Conference we have built up our finances to the extent that we were able for the first time to offer two bursaries for students to attend the 2011 conference in Melbourne. Unfortunately our only applicant had to withdraw before attending as the conference was too close to university exams. Hopefully we will have better luck in two years' time.

We have moved the date of our annual workshop to October, mainly to get away from the clash with a number of other events which had a detrimental effect on attendance last year. It will be interesting to see if this is effective in boosting numbers. In the meantime we are looking forward to our August seminar, when Tony Walker will talk on 'Tasmania's Wine Industry', based on his MA thesis (in progress). He will be followed by Lana Wall who has been diligently researching the life of 'Lindsay Charles Haslem; a rough diamond and fly fisherman *extraordinaire*.' The day will include a session on digital recording and a social lunch for members to get to know each other.

No annual report from the Tasmanian Branch would be complete without mentioning the continuing support of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery. Finally, I must as always thank the hard-working committee. At the Biennial General Meeting Terry Fritsche agreed to become the branch secretary; it is the first time in many years that we have had a secretary and she has made a big difference. Jan Critchett and Dorothy Rosemann continued to act very capably in their roles of treasurer and minutes secretary respectively, as did Elaine Crisp who shares the editorship of *Real to Reel*. Bruce Beattie, Heather Felton and Lana Wall round out the committee and I thank them all.

Jill Cassidy

Victorian Branch President's Report

The Victorian Branch has worked with a wonderful committee of professional historians to plan for the OHAA National Conference, in Melbourne in October 2011. Alistair Thomson has provided excellent leadership and Kerrie Alexander has given her outstanding administrative skills to the committee. The committee was very fortunate to have this expertise in the planning process. Keynote speakers include Steven High: Chair in Public History and co-director of the Center [sic] for Oral History and Digital Storytelling at Concordia University, Montreal; Nathalie Nguyen: Australian Research Fellow, University of Melbourne; and Peter Read: Australian Research Council Professorial Fellow, University of Sydney. The pre-conference workshops have proved very popular and the conference dinner has been based on recipes from Hannah Maclurcan's 1898 Australian cookbook. Melbourne culinary historian and food writer Charmaine O'Brien agreed to speak about Mrs Maclurcan and Australian 19th Century regional food.

This year professional historian Sarah Rood presented a workshop for emerging oral historians. It was a full day workshop and covered interview techniques, ethics and some practical interviewing and evaluation of interviews. Sarah has worked on a number of oral history projects and was able to share many examples of good and bad interviews and tips on what not to do in an oral history interview. We have been lucky to have access to William Angliss Culinary Institute for our workshops and meetings – I work there – and so we were incredibly well fed!

Melbourne writer Arnold Zable spoke at our AGM in 2010. Arnold has been described as 'the A to Z of everything to do with Melbourne and migration' and held a captive audience as he spoke about listening to, fictionalising and re-telling migrant and refugee stories. His approach is different to that of oral historians. He does not record interviews: he listens carefully and engages with his subject and their surroundings. Arnold writes fictional accounts of their stories – some too difficult and traumatic to ever tell as non-fiction. He had many insights to offer our profession.

We invited Scott Jamieson from Sound Corp, a retail audio business in Melbourne, to speak about storing digital recordings and a range of audio equipment that is now available for oral history interviews. This was a very valuable session for members and many of their practical questions were answered. Recording technology is moving very quickly now and it is possible to record excellent WAV files on equipment that can be purchased for under \$200. I have posted an 'information sheet PDF file' on his recommendations on our website and this can be downloaded.

And now to the most exciting development for the year ... our new website! Many thanks to Alan Howell, who developed the site for us free of charge. Our aim is to update the home page with news feeds as they occur and eventually to direct most of our member traffic to the site for updates, member news and our newsletter – Rewind.

The address is <http://oralhistoryvictoria.org.au/>

Jill Adams

Western Australian Branch President's Report

We have had a few changes to the committee this year and I would like to thank everyone who has worked hard to continue the work of the Branch. Dr Mary Anne Jebb was our president for the first half of the year until she moved to Canberra to take up a position at ANU. Jan Partridge continued her good work until deciding to move to the eastern states to be closer to family. Denise Cook stepped in to take over the presidency for the remainder of the year. Lindy Wallace has been our tireless treasurer, Dawn Palm worked hard as secretary, and Margaret McKerihan has continued to maintain our website despite having to leave the committee halfway through the year. Jan McCahon Marshall has ably edited four editions of our newsletter, *Play Back*, been secretary of the Oral History Records Rescue Group and also helped the newer members on the committee by sharing her extensive knowledge of committee procedures and the oral history world generally. Denise Cook was membership secretary, vice president and later president. Kris Bizacca was chair of the Oral History Records Rescue Group. Our other hardworking committee members were Hilaire Natt, Gordon Hamilton, Crena Fitzgerald, Ursula Ladzinski and Elaine Rabbitt.

The Oral History Records Rescue Group project to digitise the State Library of WA oral history collection is well under way, using a grant of \$800,000 from Lotterywest. By December the sound studios at the State Library were completed, and a project manager and audio technicians had been appointed. By March 789 hours of oral history cassette recordings had been digitised – representing 188 interviews.

In addition, the Western Australian Parliament has agreed to pay \$55,000 to digitise the Parliamentary Oral History Project interviews currently on cassette tape in the State Library collection. This extra funding will ensure that the parliamentary oral histories are preserved in digital format. It will also free up funding from the Lotterywest grant to enable more of the State Library's collection to be digitised in the current project.

On a smaller scale, the Branch continues to give grants of up to \$500 to assist oral history projects or

for attendance at conferences. This year Nyabing Historical Society received \$250 for digitising reel-to-reel tapes originally recorded in 1964. Apparently some of the stories recorded about the ways families came to live in the district are not the same as those currently told! A grant of \$500 was also awarded for recording oral histories to assist in producing the history of St Georges Hall in Carnarvon, 1905–2005. The most recent grant recipient is the Sisters of Mercy West Perth who received \$500 to record oral history interviews with the Sisters about their early lives, their lives in the Congregation and the ministries they've undertaken, such as teaching in schools.

In September 2010, we held our state conference in the former timber-milling community of Jarrahdale, 60 kilometres south of Perth. 'Voices of Change: Tracking Communities Using Oral History' was jointly hosted by the Jarrahdale Heritage Society. Keynote speaker Siobhan McHugh, from the University of Wollongong, gave us a fascinating insight into her radio documentary, *Marrying Out*, which won Gold at the New York Radio Festival shortly afterwards. Her presentation on the perils of Protestant-Catholic marriages in Australia generated a lot of discussion! Other features of the weekend were video recording workshops run by Clive Taylor and Dr Peter Gifford, a transcribing workshop with Jan McCahon Marshall and Margaret McKerihan, several great conference papers, and visits to key heritage sites around Jarrahdale. Funding from Lotterywest enabled us to offer bursaries to a number of people attending the conference. Thanks to Jan McCahon Marshall, Lindy Wallace and the Jarrahdale Heritage Society for organising this event.

Our AGM in August was held at the new Wanneroo Cultural Centre and included a tour of the museum and local studies collections – oral history is a feature of both.

At our November meeting, Jon Readhead, archivist at the Royal Perth Yacht Club, entertained us with tales of the club's history. Committee member Margaret McKerihan also played excerpts from interviews she had recently recorded with club members – as always the different voices brought the stories to life.

In early 2011 railway buses were our focus. John Young from the Bus Preservation Society spoke to a meeting in February about collecting oral histories for his book, *Railway Road Buses and Trucks of WA*. In April, we organised a Bunyips-by-Bus outing to Whiteman Park in the north-east of Perth. This included a tour of the park on a 1951 bus, as well as visits to the exhibition 'Wetlands – from Bunyip to Beautiful', the Revolutions Transport Heritage Centre, Bus Preservation Society and Mussel Pool.

In April volunteers headed to the Fairbridge Festival of World and Folk Music to record vox pop type interviews. Questions focused on people's first visit to

Fairbridge Festival, their best and worst experiences at the Festival, changes in the Festival over time, and their most memorable Festival performance. Fairbridge Festival plans to use the recordings on their website as part of their twentieth anniversary celebrations in 2012.

In November 2010 the Oral History Association had a stall at the Heritage Hub in the Perth Town Hall. This was part of the Heritage Days–Living Stories event organised by Heritage Perth.

We are currently organising our 2011 Forum/AGM, 'Voices: Past, Present, Future'. This brings back the popular live interview, this time with Professor Geoffrey Bolton, to be conducted by Dr Criena Fitzgerald. As well as speakers, a new feature will be poster sessions over an extended morning tea, where people can chat and find out more about oral history projects in WA.

The Association continues to run oral history training workshops. Doug Ayre and Julia Wallis, with assistance from Gordon Hamilton, presented the Introductory workshop five times in Perth over the last financial year. Doug Ayre also gave Introductory workshops in Albany and Toodyay. Denise Cook, firstly with Dr Mary Anne Jebb and later with Dr Ron Chapman, presented Using Digital Equipment workshops four times throughout the year.

We continue to make our Marantz PMD 660 and 671 recorders available to members, with the bookings being ably managed by Jan McCahon Marshall.

Denise Cook
Acting President

OHAA Finanacial Statement

Oral History Association of Australia End of Financial Year 2009/2010 Report


Receipts		2009/2010
Journal Sales	\$	1,011.01
Sponsoring entries	\$	657.81
Contribution 1500 members	\$	8,367.20
Interest from term deposits	\$	3,321.05
Transfer of repayment of loan	\$	2,000.00
Copyright	\$	248.82
Library	\$	62.14
Total	\$	12,348.23
Expenditure		
Telephone Rates	\$	474.08
Company printing charges	\$	1,564.00
Website	\$	275.05
OHAA - other grants	\$	1,100.00
Unrec'd pt payments	\$	248.77
Postage/Stationery	\$	5.50
Bank fees	\$	47.50
Indemnity/OL fees	\$	165.00
Security	\$	404.02
Total	\$	4,903.92
Shortfall	\$	5,309.31

Reconciliation

Cheque Account 2009/2010	\$	8,442.13
Bank Deposit	\$	10,147.00
Total	\$	28,589.13
Bank Shortfall	\$	7,109.79
Cash balance	\$	25,507.00
Cheque Account 2009/2010	\$	11,459.00
Term Deposit	\$	15,152.05
Total	\$	26,611.05
Less unrec'd cheque	\$	248.13
Plus 2 outstanding from 2008/09	\$	62.58
Total	\$	26,425.50

Government Bank Term Deposit No. 06 20003097 4213 of \$10,152.05 was released 2nd January, 2010. Balance year to 31st with the interest to be directed to the general account for the year of the future.
Lana E. Hall, Financial Treasurer OHAA

Reviewed and found correct in accordance with and subject to the Director of the annual audit for the 2009/2010 period 13th July 2010



Reviews and book notes

Review

Carina Hoang (ed.) *Boat People: Personal Stories from the Vietnamese Exodus 1975-1996*, Fremantle Press and Carina Hoang Communications, 2010, pp.247 ISBN: 9780646542911

Refugees who are fortunate enough to find new homes and rebuild their lives tend to fall into two categories. The majority almost never speak of their persecution and displacement. These refugees see little benefit and significant risk in reliving past pains. Often they suspect that people who were indifferent to their plight back then, would care even less now. Then there are those refugees who have a burning desire to bear witness. These individuals believe that all who are like them must speak and all others should listen. They believe that through acts of remembering we give future generations the best chance of avoiding the calamities of history.

Carina Hoang falls squarely into the latter category. This ample and engaging book addresses her concern that 'the world might never know' or perhaps come to forget about the sufferings, courage and sacrifices of the million or so Vietnamese boatpeople. Hoang left Vietnam at the age of sixteen in a rickety wooden boat with her two younger siblings and four hundred other people. After resettling in the United States she attained a Chemistry degree and MBA, and held management positions before moving to Perth with her family. She has her own communications company, helps boatpeople locate the graves of loved ones and is completing her PhD dissertation, elements of which can be found in *Boat People*.

Boat People is not like other biographical collections. It is an illustrated book, which is to say that the memories of Vietnamese boatpeople are presented in short memoirs and illustrations. The photographs—obtained from private collections, the UNHCR, government archives and *The West Australian*—compel us to ask, 'What led these people to take such risks?' and 'How did they endure such hardship?' There are images of boat hulls crammed full of people, their grimy limbs

tightly entwined and their faces either contorted in agony or blank with acceptance. There are many photographs from refugee identification cards that show boatpeople freshly plucked from the ocean. They are all holding blackboards that state their name, date of birth and the registration number of the boat on which they arrived. Whether it is baby Lam Quang Minh (DOB 15.05.1978, HG3438) or grandmother Quan My (DOB circa 1899, R8552) they all have something in common. There is not the slightest hint of a grin or any suggestion of relief at coming to the end of an ordeal. Instead, their gazes reveal both an acceptance of harsh fate and a determination to face whatever the future holds. I have seen that same haunting look in the identification pictures taken of my family when we first arrived at a Malaysia refugee camp in 1979.

There are also reproductions of primary documents in *Boatpeople*. Envelopes adhered to pages are marked 'Confidential', inviting us to peer inside. Without giving away the exact contents, there are refugee acceptance letters and personal notes to loved ones, all of which changed the trajectory of peoples' lives. These documents, presented as time capsules, put us in the shoes of both the refugees and the researchers on their respective journeys of escape and discovery. The researchers do not provide much when it comes to their methodology or sampling which is not surprising given that they were driven by passion and not professional reward. But even if academics have little to gain from the book in this regard, *Boatpeople* has much to offer in terms of illuminating some of different ways in which we might present our work to each other and the public. Hoang and her design team have put together a beautiful book that can be read from cover to cover, but also used as a coffee table book that can be dipped into for jolts of inspiration. Some pages come with faux coffee mug stains so you don't even have to wear it in.

Another distinctive and valuable feature of this book is that it includes accounts not only from refugees, but also those who had close and sustained dealings with them: social workers, journalists, diplomats and bureaucrats. Each story is unique and compelling. However, if there is a weakness of the book it is that

Hoang offers us morsels rather than mains. It might have been more satiating to include fewer contributors and more fulsome narratives.

In putting this book together Hoang had to confront the vexed issue of taking into account her own biases along with those of her readership. This is of course a challenge for all authors and academics. However, it manifests itself for Vietnamese living overseas in a distinct and difficult way. Specifically, there are some very forceful Vietnamese immigrants in the West who have been severely wounded by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) and who read every sentence that is not deeply critical of it as being tantamount to appeasement. Just as Jews can have nothing good to say about the Nazis, right-minded Vietnamese must reserve only scorn for the SRV. Gratefully, the stories in *Boatpeople* raise questions that are intrinsically political without answering them for us. Hoang achieves this by focusing more on boatpeople's journeys and less on the persecution that propelled them. However, at the end of the book the authors' ideological inclination comes clearly into view. The Chronology, which is invariably selective, informs us that in 1964 the Gulf of Tonkin Incident which instigated the start of formal US military operations in Vietnam involved North Vietnamese attacking 'two US destroyers sitting in international waters.' The vast bulk of scholarship has placed a great question mark over whether the US was provoked in such a way.

As a Vietnamese boatperson it is impossible to read this book and not make comparisons. The fearful secrecy of organising escape, the perilous voyage and at times bleak wait in refugee camps are familiar to my family and many other Indochinese boatpeople. But there are also some horrific and heroic accounts that makes one wonder whether some people are made of a different mettle. There were individuals who tried to escape a dozen times before getting out of Vietnam, women who were repeatedly raped and beaten and a boat that was attacked and ransacked by Thai pirates seven times in ten hours. Shern Nguyen kept his sons alive by feeding them a rambutan seed a day and tricking them into drinking his urine. Single mother Thien Nga and her three youngest children spent two weeks at sea in a tiny boat with only the stars and their prayers to guide them. This book is obviously sympathetic to the refugees, but it is not a hagiography. There are brief references to theft, treachery and even cannibalism which remind us that adversity accentuates both the best and worst sides of human nature.

It is also difficult not to compare and contrast the current wave of boatpeople arriving on Australia's shores. The fundamental forces that drove the Indochinese boatpeople of the late twentieth century and Iraqi and Afghan boatpeople of the early twenty-first century to leave their homes and risk their lives are by and large identical: all are pushed out by oppression and drawn

towards the prospect of freedom and security. In both cases the boatpeople came from countries in which Australian armed forces were committed to a professed fight against tyranny. Australia resettled 110,996 Indochinese refugees from 1975 to 1995 and, while there was a great deal of debate and consternation over this historic intake of foreigners, these boatpeople did not evoke the sort of uproar and controversy that we have seen in recent years.

The shift in perception towards boatpeople is alluded to in Hoang's book. By international decree those who landed on foreign shores before 15 June 1989 were presumed to be 'refugees' and therefore did not have to fear forced repatriation. Those who came afterwards were 'asylum seekers' who were screened to ensure that they were not economic migrants, in it for the money. During the Cold War, entrepreneurialism was a sign of a displaced person's commitment to liberal capitalist freedoms; after the Cold War, it was a sign of greed. Boatpeople have since dropped even further in our esteem so that today they are commonly referred to as 'illegals' or sometimes perceived to be threats to our security and wellbeing.

Another important difference between then and now is that the vast majority of Indochinese boatpeople who Australia took in came in a somewhat orderly process via camps in Southeast Asia. Only 1,750 arrived directly on our shores. So clearly the issue of who decides who comes to this country and the means by which they come is of great significance to many Australians.

In years to come there will surely be books and works like Hoang's that reflect upon the ordeals of contemporary boatpeople, if only because there must always be someone to bear witness. One wonders what they will say, and how they will judge us.

Kim Huynh

Australian National University

An edited version of this review first appeared in *The Canberra Times*.

Review

John Yiannakis, *Odysseus in the Golden West*, Perth (WA), Network Books, 2009, pp.458 ISBN: 9781920845537

Australia as an immigrant society has produced a wide range of books and articles about the migrant experience, the impact of various cultures upon Australia and the contribution which a variety of ethnicities have made to Australian culture and life in general. They start with the early memoirs of explorers and immigrants in the Victorian period, who were overwhelmingly from the British Isles. Then came

memorial volumes of the Irish in Australia or the Scots. With the mass immigration of Europeans after 1947 this genre blossomed, creating a distinctive 'ethnic' literature based mainly on personal experiences. The largest elements here were Europeans and especially Jews, Italians and Greeks, adding to the already extensive literature of and about the Irish and the Scots. Much less, in quantity, was created by equally large intakes, such as the English, the Germans, the Yugoslavs and the Dutch. Some communities, such as the Poles and the Ukrainians, preferred to write in their own language, which hid their experiences from most others. With the ending of White Australia in 1972, there was an increase in literature from Asian migrants, especially the Vietnamese. But the flourishing British Indian literature has yet to develop, and there is little from the Filipinos or the Arabs.

The traditional approaches to writing about 'ethnic' groups followed three paths. First and earliest were the institutional and commemorative volumes beloved of the Victorians. These were often funded by important individuals, who naturally expected to be mentioned at some length. Organisations, too, were indignant if their contribution was overlooked. Such books and articles were favoured both by those from the United Kingdom and by Germans, Jews and later by the various Slavs and central Europeans. They are great sources for historians but often tedious as histories in themselves. Many search for the 'first' of their clan to have reached Australia, often with more enthusiasm than accuracy.

The second approach is from 'contributions', where every individual is mentioned if he or she has attained fame either within their own community or, better still in the 'mainstream'. In Australia, where the British/Irish contribution was so overpowering before 1950, such famous individuals give credence to the notion that Australia was always a multicultural society in which all are treated on their merit. A whole series of this genre was published by AE Press of Melbourne in the 1980s. Of varying quality, they provided the foundations of work for the Bicentenary of 1988 aiming to show that Australia was truly multicultural. They dealt almost exclusively with Europeans. Only the Scots and Cornish were honoured from the United Kingdom

The third approach was influenced by social science rather than history. It drew on interviews and personal memories rather than official reports and media. To succeed it needed interviewers who were from the appropriate culture and fluent in its languages. This became increasingly complex as immigration moved from Britain and Europe towards Asia, the Middle East and finally Africa. Multiculturalism in its origins in the mid-1970s had been inspired and developed by Europeans. Consequently, the experiences of the British were largely overlooked as they were assumed to have merged easily into the 'mainstream'. The experiences

of Asians could only be reached if they were English-speaking, as were many from India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. But most of these were still in the settlement phase and reluctant to write about themselves or their communities. Many from Asia and the Middle East were refugees. Like the Jews and East Europeans before them, they were often reluctant to dwell on their sufferings until they had established themselves permanently in Australia.

Between the British and Europeans, who stopped coming in large numbers in the 1970s, and the Asians, who took their places from the 1980s, there were a number of ethnic communities which had fully established themselves and made the passage from being foreigners to being an accepted part of the local scene. The best organised, most vocal and most productive of relevant studies, came from the Greeks. With their own language (unrelated to others), their own Orthodox religion, their long history of a dispersed diaspora, the prestige of their classical learning and philosophy and their continuing struggle to define, protect and advance Hellenism, the Greeks were very adept at balancing homeland and 'host society' cultures. It is this society, isolated in Western Australia, that John Yiannakis analyses so well in his *Odyssey in the Golden West*. He uses all three of the approaches outlined above – community history, oral evidence, and social science analysis.

The society he describes may appear united and effective to those outside it. Greeks have been in Western Australia for over a century. One omission from this exhaustive account is the early settlement and success of Greeks from the remote island of Castellorizo off the coast of Turkey. They play a central role in his narrative since 1947, but their early days are not described as much as might be expected. In particular their spread northwards along the coastal shipping service, which provided the only means of transport before airlines, had created a community in Darwin. This must be the most isolated of its kind in the English-speaking world.

The Castellorizians still constitute what there is of a Greek Australian upper class, not only in Western Australia but to a lesser extent in Sydney and Melbourne. A large part of the author's institutional history turns on their attempts to retain that position against the influx of new arrivals from Greece since 1947 and later from Egypt, Cyprus and South Africa. The tiny island homeland of the 'Cassies' has sent abroad an estimated 20,000 people of whom the majority live in Australia. They have no particular reason to be so dominant, coming from a typical sea and rural background. But their unique position within shouting distance of Turkey may have inspired their adherence to Greek culture in the diaspora, as well as encouraging their continuing emigration for over a century.

Institutional history is at the core of this excellent study, which is true for other Greek diaspora communities elsewhere. A small base of Greece-born peaked at 5,443 in Western Australia in 1966 and dropped to 3,025 forty years later. But the Greek Orthodox population, which includes locally born later generations, has risen to 12,611 and has recently been reinforced from South Africa. Apart from the usual island fraternities and religious, sporting and welfare organisations, Western Australia also maintained an Hellenic Council and a Greek Orthodox Community. Competition between these two was endemic, especially as their functions were never clearly defined. Evidence of the reasons and results of this rivalry are based here on oral history. They suggest according to Yiannakis that 'there are in reality many Greek communities in Perth. There is no universality in Greek identity, custom or customs'.¹

This is a very rich and complex study, running into 380 pages of text followed by a further set of 100 pages of appendices, statistical material and notes, including a list of the many interviewees. The detail is challenging for non-Greeks. Some further detail might have helped to distinguish the functions of the Hellenic and Orthodox organisations. I would like to have seen more about the Western Australian Greek community's place in Australian politics. The ALP and the Liberals get three references only in an extensive index. One suspects that the Left is much weaker in Perth than in Melbourne. Certainly there is little evidence of active enrolment or election through the two major parties. Perhaps the Perth Greeks were too absorbed in their own complex affairs to bother.

In conclusion, this looks like a coffee table book. But it goes far beyond that to create arguably the most detailed and revealing picture of a well defined ethnic community in the Australian context. Its use of interviews is particularly creative. It avoids the tables and polling which reduce the human interest of many other attempts to write histories of migrant communities.

Dr James Jupp AM

Australian National University

¹ p.385

Review

Cahal McLaughlin, *Recording Memories from Political Violence: a film-maker's journey*, Intellect Books, 2010, pp.164 ISBN: 9781841503011

'As writers, we articulate thoughts and experiences, but as photographers and filmmakers we articulate images of looking and being.' (David MacDougall)

With its roots in a PhD thesis, *Recording Memories from Political Violence: a film-maker's journey* is an

interdisciplinary analysis of the use of filmic and textual techniques to record testimony-giving. Based on his work in Northern Ireland and South Africa, author and filmmaker Cahal McLaughlin turns his attention to the role of film-making in providing perceptual, as well as conceptual, knowledge in survivor story-telling.

McLaughlin structures his book as a 'how-to' manual: the first chapter is an in-depth analysis of research questions, establishing context and methodologies, followed by chapter-by-chapter case studies on story-telling filmmaking projects - survivors of the Springhill Massacre, reparations in South Africa and work with Khulumani (Xhosa for 'speak out'), the Prisons Memory Archive, and journeys and stories by Irish political prisoners in the Maze and Long Kesh. These subsequent chapters are a fascinating story of retelling, the unpredictability of memory, consultation and healing.

Healing represents a large part of McLaughlin's book, though he cautiously decries that claims of reparative memory should not be exaggerated. One of the South African participants, while unable to find out the truth behind her husband's shooting, finds the filmmaking process more beneficial than the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. There is also a severely injured witness from the Springhill Massacre who grows in strength and confidence as he tells his story. In South Africa, McLaughlin describes bearing witness to the combination of political organisation and psychological healing in a public forum.

As in all aspects of recording history, ethics play a major part in McLaughlin's dealings with interviewees. Collaboration is complex in documentary filmmaking, and McLaughlin points to there being a necessary imbalance in power, such as a director being responsible for the overall vision of a work. Needless to say, this does take on an ethical dimension and McLaughlin's discussion of consultation processes cover situations such as involving participants in all stages of production, post-production, distribution and exhibition, navigating choppy waters of dispute resolution between organisations and survivors in relation to their testimony, and the sensitivity needed to present work that may have political, personal or security repercussions for survivors.

Perhaps one of the most striking retellings in this book involves the importance of location and the physicality of memory. In the powerful documentary *S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (2002) which brought together (then) teenage prison guards and survivors in Tuol Sleng prison in Phnom Penh to watch them recreating daily routines, and in one memorable scene, a guard starts assaulting an imaginary prisoner. McLaughlin establishes something similar in *Inside Stories*, where ex-prisoners are filmed inside the prison, remembering stories they had forgotten, wandering

around cells and corridors and using their bodies to retell and relive the experiences.

In his films, McLaughlin eschews use of archival imagery in favour of the contemporary. The first reason is fiercely practical - to avoid the expense and issues around copyright. But the second is more philosophically seated - in order to consider the past from the viewpoint of the present, and to allow a new version of 'truth' to sit alongside 'official', accepted or even sometimes iconoclastic media coverage. Recording Memories from Political Violence is studded with such images - photographs and frame captures from his films - the skeleton of a trapped dead bird at the Maze and Long Kesh prison, tile mural of the victims of violence in Springhill, an empty prison control room with monitors blank and deplete of technology at the Maze, and a victim of apartheid arguing with a government official for restitution.

Dotted throughout the book, these images illustrate the power of the storytelling. McLaughlin is surprisingly candid about the shortcomings in his productions, citing the example of the importance of strong visual linkages to measure up to the power of the spoken words by confessing that his visual stories in *A Prisoner's Journey* do not have the necessary resonance. Detailed aesthetic analysis plays a part in McLaughlin's deconstruction - he describes using conventional mise en scene in the documentary about apartheid survivor testimony so that it would be accessible to a wide audience.

Throughout the case studies, McLaughlin tantalisingly describes, in the broadest terms, some of the survivor testimony to illustrate how an interviewee reacts to a particular filming situation or stimulus. It leaves the reader wanting more - a snippet or two of transcript, a case study of a particular testimony - and this goes to the heart of the dilemma in rendering McLaughlin's filmmaking to textual form. It would be easy to satisfy the reader in this way, but the text would lack the sense of perception and knowing which visual recording promotes. And, while sometimes frustrating for the reader, it is true to the approach of McLaughlin's methodology.

Recording Memories from Political Violence: a Film-maker's Journey is an excellent resource for filmmakers, oral historians seeking to learn about documentary filmmaking, and anyone working in survivor-oriented community development initiatives.

Fiona Gunn

National Film and Sound Archive

Review

David Walker, *Not Dark Yet: A Personal History*, Giramondo Publishing 2011, pp.322 ISBN: 97819920882655

Few historians write personal histories and for good reasons. Their concern is usually with the wider world beyond the confines of family, locality and frequently the century they live in themselves.

David Walker is an historian whose work frequently deals with Australia's long-term relationships with Asia and with the impact of the White Australia policy on northern Australian settlement. His writing on these issues has done much to break down the 'isolated continent' notion of Australian history. It might then seem surprising that he has now turned to writing a personal history. There was a personal reason. Macular degeneration, which rendered him legally blind, has made the pursuit of archive material more than taxing and prompted him to tackle another genre.

But *Not Dark Yet* is no conventional extended autobiography. Rather, he has turned the concept inside out by looking at the Walker McLaren and Bourne families, his South Australian forebears, through a lens with wider perspectives. The same themes that pervade his previous histories haunt this volume too, 19th and 20th century treatment of Chinese immigrants, attitudes towards Japanese, two World Wars and their impact on both family and Australian society.

At one stage the author had considered an alternative title for the book; 'Oswald's Onion', a reference to a mighty vegetable his grandfather had raised in 1917, weighing 1.2 kilograms and proudly displayed in Pearce's store in Burra. David Walker writes of this achievement:

There were one or two rival events taking place around that time. Australia was facing one of the biggest strikes in its history, complicated by the awful death toll from the Great War. The battle of the Somme had ended in stalemate in 1916 with a million dead. Passchendaele, with 700,000 followed in 1917, also the year of the Russian Revolution ... Measured against these events, Oswald's undeniably impressive onion speaks of a life of settled domesticity and quiet cultivation in a year of upheaval.

This wry comparison says much about the tone and texture of the book. If one stays with the lens metaphor, micro and macro sit in startling contrast in this history. The Walkers are also caught up in wars and lose family members. In World War Two Japanese soldiers beheaded David's uncle Laurie, on the island of Ambon, and another uncle, Alan, who served in the RAF, carried anguished memories in later life of bombing of Dresden, which he helped to bomb in World War Two. But other histories of the twentieth

century co-exist, including Oswald's prized onion. We look outwards from the particular to the universal and back again.

The author takes up the story of the deaths of his two uncles, examining closely the dangerous and deafening life of an RAF Aircrew and the consequences of their work for civilians below in Dresden. He travels to Ambon and meets an eyewitness to the massacre in which his uncle Laurie had been killed. The experience is painful and moving but at the same time David Walker comments on his own positive post-war perception of Japan and its people.

Gil Walker, David's father, was a schoolteacher whose reserved occupation had kept him out of World War Two. His work moved the family regularly around South Australia before he settled into urban retirement in Adelaide. David retraces these years to give a picture of twentieth century schooling and rural communities. The Walker family live in different houses, different towns, buy their first car, a source of great pride and David and his siblings attend different schools.

We also get glimpses of contemporary attitudes towards politics and history through the comments of David's parents. In retirement in the early 1960s they travel, discover the world beyond Australia, and write detailed notes of their experience. These offer the reader a sense of discovery, of personal educational experience in an era when not everybody had yet been everywhere, even if travel convinced them, as their son noted, that:

The power and immediacy of European civilization confirmed their suspicion that Australia was a nation without a history or none worth speaking of. It was all too recent and lacking in grandeur. They failed to note the long Aboriginal past. They saw no history there.

A view that changes for David's father much later in life when, with his son, he visits a massacre site in the Grampians. Gil Walker comes away saying, 'It was murder wasn't it.'

The budding historian does give an account of his own history, the usual difficult adolescence, sex education or the lack of it, his brief unsuccessful career as a wool-classer and even more amusingly his apprenticeship at the Australian National University where he gives a rich picture of the eccentricities of academic life.

Not Dark Yet concludes with a description of his mother's last years, spent in the dimming world of Alzheimer's Disease, an all too common situation for families today. It is a moving and fitting end to an account that brings big and little histories together and makes Not Dark Yet much more than a personal history. It is also a rich, funny and also poignant social history.

Bill Bunbury
Murdoch University

Review

Jan Gothard, *Greater Expectations: Living With Down Syndrome in the 21st Century*, Fremantle Press, 2011, pp.368 ISBN: 9781921361777

Jan Gothard's title, *Greater Expectations*, neatly links time and hope in attitudes towards Down syndrome. Named after an English doctor, John Langdon Down, who identified the condition in 1866, Down Syndrome has remained largely misunderstood until very recently.

Using verbatim accounts from parents and children who have coped with the condition, often in very testing circumstances, *Greater Expectations* combines documented and personal histories in a way that is accessible, frequently moving and for any family currently living with Down Syndrome offspring, an extremely helpful account of how others have dealt with the experience of the condition in their own families. This is a point Professor Fiona Stanley makes in her Foreword: 'It is the book I'd want to read if I had a child with Down Syndrome.' A situation the author faced herself. As Jan Gothard acknowledges in her Introduction this had also been a personal quest.

A researcher's position is never neutral, but I have felt particularly challenged by this work. My interest in disability is as old as my daughter. As she has grown up I have become increasingly aware of how an everyday life lived with disability can be a social and political battleground, of which my daughter still remains largely unaware but one in which her parents engage on a daily basis.

The work was the result of more than ten years of interviewing. Jan Gothard has drawn out accounts of situations ranging from initial shock at birth, family reaction and acceptance, schooling and the possibilities for work and independence in adult life for Down Syndrome children.

It is startling to realise, as one hears these experiences, how long both ignorance and false assumptions about Down Syndrome have prevailed in the community, often surprisingly within the medical profession, offset, it should be said, with honourable exceptions. It is in this context that Oral History plays a strong role. The weight of so many congruent stories adds great authority to Jan Gothard's findings. These are carefully balanced. We hear of insensitive attitudes from some doctors. As the author herself comments:

Some doctors seem to see the disability of the patient before they see the patient as a person requiring treatment. Moreover they regard the parents in the same way and they too become a focus of interrogation.

Such attitudes are matched, however, by recollections of good sense and empathy. Dealing with a mother concerned that her child might have major health

problems, one doctor's medical check was as reassuring as his advice: 'Just take her home and treat her like you would any of your other kids. Empathy often tempered by wisdom, as in this response from one doctor, as to how a child with Down Syndrome might affect the quality of family life: 'The child with Down Syndrome is part of the family, not the whole.'

What I found interesting about the structure of the book is its natural narrative. While there are discrete passages that describe the nature and symptoms of Down Syndrome and other sections that outline the growth of knowledge of the condition, much of what we learn about how individuals and families have handled Down Syndrome comes from their own mouths. Their stories give us a sense of hearing as much as reading and they bring us close to the reality these families have faced.

It is also a lifelong reality. What are the educational expectations of Down syndrome children and how have they been met or not met and how do they prescribe their adult roles as employees and part of the community? These are sensitively explored with tales of both indifference and empathy.

Health and longevity are also big issues. Some children have needed operations to improve their condition. Those who live in the country sometimes have less access to medical treatment than city dwellers. Perception and expectations have changed, sometimes for the better. Despite their parents' initial fears some children have exhibited milder symptoms of what was once called Mongolism or Mongolian Idiocy, a term now recognised as both racially offensive and inaccurate.

Chapter 7, 'We've Got To Outlive Him' raises a sober, and for many families, an inescapable question. When parents have done their best to ensure the happiness and well being of a Down syndrome child and later adult, their own longevity and health may well prove decisive in determining their offspring's quality of life. This chapter examines the provision of accommodation and care, again through personal experience. Decisions like leaving home and seeking independence come into this context as well and, despite considerable improvement in the area of appropriate housing and care, there are not always clear solutions.

As the book concludes 'Greater Expectations' do emerge and while the 'political and social battleground' still exists, there are clear signs of ebbing conflict as acceptance and understanding grows. Many Down syndrome children now exceed community expectations both in longevity and achievement and the book draws on their affirmative experiences.

One can only agree with Fiona Stanley's comment above. There is a need for a book on this subject that looks at the human, affective aspect of this issue as

well as its clinical dimension. I suspect that many readers will be able to take comfort from this narrative. Hearing these stories they will know they're not on their own.

Bill Bunbury

Murdoch University

Review

Gillian Cowlshaw, *The City's Outback*, University of NSW Press, 2009, pp.264, ISBN: 9781921410871

I began to read *The City's Outback* as a welcome analysis of the previously little researched field of urban Indigeneity in which there is a dearth of published information. This is perhaps because the stereotype of urban Indigenous peoples as 'inauthentic', and more 'traditional' peoples from remote regions as 'authentic' has continued to pervade the mindset of the wider public, if not that of some anthropologists and cultural studies scholars. As Cowlshaw points out, local Aboriginal people are generally hidden from the urban majority and are represented largely by shocking and negative images. With this in mind, Cowlshaw aims to present *The City's Outback* as a challenge to the homogenous 'construction and reproduction of Aborigines as "a problem" (p.3).'

This is an admirable aim and one that has been at the heart of the discourse for the last 30 or more years. It is my opinion that getting as many Indigenous stories as possible into circulation helps educate the public and works towards redressing this issue, so Cowlshaw's work is welcomed for this reason alone. Cowlshaw is also refreshingly open about many of the difficulties of working in this arena. For example, she (p.110) acknowledges that when doing the fieldwork, she did not think about the purpose of recording some of the life stories other than to provide her interviewees with their own story, told in their own words (p.110). Thus it is something of a wonder that Cowlshaw was able to produce a book from these field materials at all.

Cowlshaw tells us that she undertook the fieldwork for this project at the behest of her one-time voluble critic and now friend, Frank Doolan, a western New South Wales Aboriginal man then living in Mt Druitt in Sydney's west (p.15). Doolan was keen to have the voices of his otherwise silenced local community heard and Cowlshaw considered the opportunity to have Doolan as 'chief informant' for the project 'too good to miss' (p.19). Thus Cowlshaw applied for funding for the project, which she acknowledges would not only cover expenses in Mt Druitt, but also sanction the work and 'confer legitimacy' on her position in the university where she worked (p.20). This kind of honesty is rare.

The City's Outback is peppered with small insights into issues of contestation that can occur during such collaborations, something that is usually considered distasteful to discuss. In endeavouring to highlight the intrinsic nature of personal relationships within the research process, she particularly reflects on:

the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds, their overlapping and interweaving, their co-constructedness, their self-knowledge, and their everyday reality. (p.30).

At the same time, Cowlshaw acknowledges that:

Fieldwork is notoriously messy, fraught, painful and exhilarating, but it also entails serious boredom, and some days are 'wasted' trying to find people, travelling to a cancelled event, sitting around listening to banalities and repetitions which must be endured, because they do have significance. (p.130).

However, Cowlshaw stops short of expressing her frustration or indeed any feelings about such issues, except when doing so is prudent. For example, she cites the instance of a flippant comment made by her about Aboriginal people being very familiar with 'homes' [institutions]. A young Aboriginal woman present quickly corrected Cowlshaw by saying that she had never been 'locked up', to which Cowlshaw responds, '...I tell her I'm sorry. I'm horrified by how easily I can stereotype, hurt, interpellate (p.135).' Alternatively, Cowlshaw does admit to 'feeling bad and angry (p.162)' when one of the Aboriginal people employed by her to transcribe some tapes lost two of them.

Nevertheless, in some instances Cowlshaw does at times relate specific instances of her Mount Druitt fieldwork to broader frustrations of cross-cultural work, albeit in tempered phraseology, such as 'the familiar frustration of working in others' worlds to other rhythms' (p.47).

What most interested me about this book was the way in which Cowlshaw uses it as a launching-pad for a defence of the non-Indigenous field worker's role (pp.65-67), something I believe is long overdue. According to Cowlshaw a critical anthropology has led to a deconstruction of colonial power relations that has caused a change of direction within the discipline. She says:

None of us is innocent of power. All researchers and writers enter fields of historical forces and established understandings. When 'post-colonial' critics turn on their forebears they attempt to disown their own involvement in

powerful institutions. We cannot escape the conditions that make our intellectual work possible, but we can make these conditions visible. Further, we can try to pull the rug out from under established feet. (p.66).

In addition, Cowlshaw questions the creation of new cultural stereotypes when she says that:

We have each been saddled with an Indigenous or Anglo identity, one injured, the other apologetic. The (past) suffering of the Indigenous people is the moral ground of our concern. Our emotional orientations are pre-ordained. That they are all exemplars of Aboriginality is assumed, but are we equally exemplars of whiteness (p.104)?

Again, I welcome the opening of debate on this issue, as I feel it is one that has been avoided in the past.

In this book Cowlshaw ambitiously covers a wide range of issues that prevail in the Indigenous/non-Indigenous working relationship, from Stolen Generations (pp.94-100) to the feel-good sentimentality of romanticizing Aboriginality (p.182). This attempt to offer 'a contribution to, and a contestation of, ... knowledge [of the discipline] and the anxieties and ideologies that suffuse it' (p.2) is interspersed with transcript excerpts from the stories of the Aboriginal people of Mount Druitt. I am a little disappointed however at Cowlshaw's use of altered grammar and spelling, such as 'they wouldn't of understood' (p.118) and 'I was fostered, me parents were fostered as well and now me daughter's fostered' (p.138). Such methodology can be argued to reinforce historical negative stereotypes of Aboriginal people.

A close read of this book gave me the impression that Cowlshaw was unsure of the purpose of recording the stories and that her interest in the wider issues possibly drove her methodology for the publication. This is not meant as a criticism, but rather the reverse. Knowing as I do from my own work in this area, producing a published text from recorded oral history can be an exceptionally arduous task at any level. While I think that this book is of a different calibre to some of her other work, Cowlshaw should be applauded for undertaking the project and for her frank discussion of the issues surrounding it.

Sue Anderson

University of South Australia

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Notes on Contributors

Dr Sue Anderson

Sue Anderson has a PhD in Cultural Studies from Flinders University on the topic of cross-cultural collaborative Indigenous auto/biography. This was based on her oral historical collaboration with Dr Doreen Kartinyeri for the production of *Doreen Kartinyeri: My Ngarrindjeri Calling* (Aboriginal Studies Press, 2008). Sue has been a cultural heritage consultant, archaeologist and professional oral historian for many years and is the author of a number of publications, predominantly in the fields of Indigenous oral history, history, archaeology, anthropology and contemporary issues. Sue is currently teaching in the David Unaipon School of Indigenous Education and Research at the University of South Australia.

Dr Bill Bunbury

Bill Bunbury is an ABC broadcaster /documentary maker and oral historian of 40 years experience. He has received 5 international and national awards for his work, including the New York Gold Medal History Award for his documentary 'Timber For Gold.' He is the author of 11 books and has been commissioned to create many hours of interviews for national and State collections as well as Indigenous communities. He was awarded an Honorary D.Litt for services to Social History and Broadcasting and made Adjunct Professor History and Communications at Murdoch University.

June Edwards

June had an eclectic career as an archivist in the National Archives of Australia, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, James Cook University of North Queensland, State Records of South Australia and the State Library of South Australia. She joined the Oral History Association in Queensland in 1992 when she worked as the University Archivist at James Cook University of North Queensland. The Archives began an oral history program of staff associated with the early development of the university. Together with Barbara Erskine they ran oral history workshops, held the oral history conference for the Queensland Branch on Magnetic Island and included a discussion of oral history in the Australian Society of Archivists' conference which was run in tandem with the Magnetic Island event. From 2004 until 2008 June was the Archival Field Officer at the State Library of South Australia where she looked after the oral history program, developing the collection, running and hosting workshops and supporting individuals and groups who undertook oral history projects. She has been President of the OHAA SA Branch since 2006, and the SA representative on

the OHAA National Council since 2007. June has retired from the 9 to 5 routine but is still involved in the oral history and archives' worlds doing lecturing at the University of South Australia and some interviewing on a volunteer basis.

Miranda Francis

Miranda Francis is an academic librarian with an interest in history stemming from her undergraduate studies at the University of Melbourne in the early 1990s. Recently she indulged this interest and completed a Master of History at Monash University. As part of this degree, she was introduced to oral history - and she is a convert. She hopes to be able to explore oral history further, specifically the area of life review in the elderly.

Fiona Gunn

Fiona Gunn works at the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia. She holds a Bachelor of Visual Arts in Film and Television Production and a Bachelor of Laws. In 2009, Fiona was awarded a fellowship to attend the L. Jeffrey Selznick School of Film Preservation at George Eastman House, Rochester, New York. Her research interests include the orphan works problem in museums and archives, copyright in cultural institutions, and audiovisual advocacy and human rights.

Dr Kim Huynh

Kim Huynh lectures in politics and international relations at the Australian National University. He has written a book about his parents' lives during and after the Indochinese Wars entitled *Where the Sea Takes Us*.

Dr James Jupp

James Jupp A.M., FASSA is an adjunct associate professor in the Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute at the Australian National University. He has written extensively on immigration and multiculturalism and has edited two encyclopedias - *The Australian People* (1988 and 2001) and *The Encyclopedia of Religion in Australia* (2009). In 2004 he was awarded the Order of Australia for services to multiculturalism and Australian history.

Peter Kolomitsev and Silver Moon

Peter and Silver are both highly experienced sound engineers and are currently working in the State Library of South Australia's Audio Preservation studios. They are both mad audio geeks and spend their time at the library playing with audio equipment and reformatting the library's extensive collection of oral histories and

other audio gems. But in contrast they spend their free time...playing with audio equipment and recording various audio gems.

Judy Lovell

Judy Lovell is in the final stages of a PhD with Canberra University, examining the links between cultural practice, contemporary painting and story-telling and education in the context of Mrs. Kathleen Kemarre Wallace's work. Lovell and Mrs Wallace co-authored a book in Mrs Wallace's voice, *Listen deeply let these stories in* (IAD Press, 2009). Living in the Northern Territory with her family since 2000, creating capacity within Aboriginal community organisations using linkages with the arts, enterprise development, adult education and training networks has been the focus of her work. Prior to life in the Northern Territory, she taught for four years at RMIT University, collaborating to develop and deliver course work for the Master of Arts Therapy program, which ran there from 1996-2006. Lovell is particularly engaged by creative social science research, and is currently employed at Ninti One Ltd as a Senior Researcher working with Aboriginal and other stakeholders to engage with social science research that benefits remote Australia.

Dr Siobhan McHugh

Siobhan McHugh has been making radio documentaries based on oral history for 30 years. She is also the author of five books based on oral history, including 'The Snowy - The People Behind the Power' (Heinemann 1989), which won the NSW Premier's Award for non-fiction, and 'Minefields and Miniskirts' (Doubleday 1993), about Australian women in the Vietnam war. Her work has been shortlisted for the United Nations Media Peace Prize, a Walkley Award, the NSW Premier's History Prize and a Eureka Science Prize, while 'Marrying Out' won a gold medal at the 2010 New York Radio Festival. Siobhan lectures in Journalism at University of Wollongong.

Dr Philippa Martyr

Philippa Martyr completed her PhD at University of Western Australia in 1994 and then went to work at the Tasmanian School of Nursing, Launceston, for the next six years, teaching health sociology and research methods. In 2001 Philippa went to the UK as a Visiting Fellow at Oxford Brookes University and the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, University of East Anglia, Norwich, while writing *Paradise of Quacks: an alternative history of medicine in Australia*, (Macleay Press, 2002). She returned to Western Australia in 2007 and now works at the Centre for Clinical Research in Neuropsychiatry, Mount Claremont. Philippa is currently researching the history of Claremont Mental Hospital, which was for 70 years Western Australia's principal stand-alone psychiatric institution. She has contributed to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*

and has also published in a range of scholarly, academic and popular journals.

Denise Phillips

Denise Phillips is a PhD candidate from the University of New England. Using oral histories, her thesis will explore the interwoven experiences of loss, grief and hope among Hazara refugees from Afghanistan, now living in Australia. Completing her BA (Hons) degree in 2008, Denise was awarded the University Medal and Edgar H. Booth Memorial prize and medal for academic merit.

Madeleine Regan

Madeleine Regan is a former secondary school teacher who is keenly interested in oral history and the history of Italian migration in Australia. She has worked as a freelance consultant for eight years. As a committee member of the Oral History Association of Australia (SA Branch) she coordinated the project to develop the OHAA (SA/NT) web gateway for oral history interviews to mark the 175th anniversary of the establishment of South Australia in 2011. Madeleine has developed the oral history project, *From the Veneto to Frogmore and Findon Roads: Stories of Italian market gardeners 1920s – 1970s* over five years.

Christeen Schoepf

Christeen Schoepf is a member of the OHAA (SA Branch) and has recently moved to Armidale, NSW to begin a PhD at the University of New England. She completed a BA (Hons) majoring in Australian History and Archaeology/Paleo-anthropology and an Advanced Diploma in Local, Family and Applied History. Christeen's research interests revolve mainly around migration history and settlement and the home-front during the First World War. Her PhD thesis topic is the 'Cheer-Up Society' of wartime South Australia, and the work undertaken by thousands of women to make the lives of the tens of thousands of predominantly young soldiers and sailors departing for, or returning from the war, a less trying and more comfortable transition.

Associate Professor Janis Wilton OAM

Janis Wilton is a public and oral historian based at the University of New England. A former President of the International Oral History Association and recipient of the 2009 Hazel de Berg Award for Excellence in Oral History, her teaching and research practice focus particularly on the place and role of oral history in local, community and family histories. Recent publications and projects include *Golden Threads: The Chinese in Regional NSW* (2004), *Different Sights: New England Immigrants* (2009) and *Maitland Jewish Cemetery: A Monument to Dreams and Deeds* (2010). Website: www.une.edu.au/staff/jwilton.php

Obituary

Margaret Joyce Reid (1918 – 2011)

The Sydney Heritage Fleet's sailing barque James Craig was host on a sunny Sydney Saturday afternoon – the 4th of June – to a gathering of friends and family who had come to bid Margaret Reid farewell and to remember her life. Important among the tributes was the reference to her interest in maritime matters and in memory itself, both of which inspired Margaret Reid to document the history of mariners and workers, old ships and sailing craft in and around Sydney Harbour.

She joined the Sydney Maritime Museum as a volunteer in 1981 after she retired from her position as a departmental secretary at Sydney University. After serving in various capacities at the Museum she joined the proposed oral history group. The others (all men) thought she should be the secretary (the only woman) of this new endeavour, but she was determined to be an interviewer. The New South Wales branch of the Oral History Association of Australia had been established in 1978, but apart from a meeting once a year there was not much association activity. Margaret had to teach herself oral history from books and bought her first (she admits poor) recording equipment.

The Museum had opened at Birkenhead Point in the nineteen sixties and already had a collection of boats including the James Craig which was still in Tasmania where it had been rescued from disintegration. There was great interest in restoring the vessels of the collection, this restoration to be aided by the memories of those who had sailed in them, owned them, captained them, built or supplied them. Margaret, together with Judy Lee, another volunteer, set out to capture the recollections of these 'old salts', of their vessels, their voyages and their busy lives.

Some years later the Museum had to relocate from Birkenhead Point and the vessels were transferred to other locations and the administration to an old wool store in Ultimo. It was to this place in 1991 that Vaughan Evans of blessed maritime memory took me to meet Margaret. He thought that the priceless recordings ought to be in a safe repository and they should be in the Mitchell Library. Margaret met me with suspicion. She had, it transpired, fought so hard



to establish the collection that she found my offer yet another interference which she would have to defeat.

However, when she understood that the Library's new oral history program would provide, jointly with the Oral History Association, seminars, workshops and advice she was much reassured. She became immediately a regular attendee at seminars and conferences and all were to benefit from her direct experience in oral history. She was made an Honorary Life Member of the Association in 1997.

At the time of my calling at Ultimo she was not ready to relinquish the collection which was still being transcribed by other volunteers – one of them in long hand, but beautifully legible! A later visit took me to her next office, a container on the dockside at Rozelle. The Australian National Maritime Museum had been established at Darling Harbour, but the Sydney Museum held itself aloof although they lent some of their craft to the national institution.

Throughout her time at the Museum Margaret was very much in 'a man's world', but she enjoyed the company of the younger volunteer lads engaged in restoring the boats, but did not brook any encroachment on her territory from their older colleagues. At her commemoration service her daughter Pat quoted her - 'I try to do the right thing as long as it suits me!' She was passionately attached to the Museum and when she was commissioned by Ryde Library to conduct interviews on the waterfront around Sydney Harbour for their collection she donated the \$700 she earned to her own much loved institution. Her hearing had begun to deteriorate so, unable to conduct interviews herself, she set out to complete the arrangement and documentation of the collection.

It was then, in 1993, that she decided to send the oral histories to the Mitchell Library for safe-keeping. It was a wrench to give them up, but it was time, she thought. The Mitchell Library regards this collection rightfully as one of the jewels in its oral history crown. The program at the Museum has continued unevenly, but its additions have continued to be added to the Mitchell Library. As I write it is hoped that interviewing will continue and when it does it will be a further tribute to Margaret's energy and dedication in recording over many years the personal stories of Sydney's waterfront dwellers and workers.

In an interview with her conducted by Katja Grynberg and Susie Phillips (two of her successors) in 1997, she said in conclusion that she trusted that the promise by the government that the James Craig would be berthed at Pier Seven, Darling Harbour, would be fulfilled. Furthermore she hoped that there would be more cooperation between the Australian National Maritime Museum and the renamed Sydney Heritage Fleet. She lived to see that both indeed have taken place. On that sunny day in June we all bade Margaret farewell on her beloved James Craig at Pier Seven with the Fleet's collection of vessels stored behind and alongside - near neighbours now to the national institution, and jointly attracting the visiting crowds.

Vale Margaret in your last harbour!

Membership Information

Oral History Association of Australia



The Oral History Association of Australia (OHAA) was established in 1978. The objectives of the Association are to:

- Promote the practice and methods of oral history
- Educate in the use of oral history methods
- Encourage discussion of all problems in oral history
- Foster the preservation of oral history records in Australia
- Share information about oral history projects.

Branch seminars and workshops are held regularly throughout the year, while a national conference is held every two years. Many of the papers from conferences appear in the OHAA Journal.

Members receive a copy of the annual OHAA Journal, and newsletters and publications from their individual branches. Among other publications, the South Australian Branch of the OHAA has published the Oral History Handbook by Beth Robertson, which is available to members at a discounted price.

(Note: **Australian Capital Territory** members join the New South Wales Branch and Northern Territory members join the South Australian Branch.)

OHAA website: www.ohaa.org.au

Enquiries should be directed to State branches at the following addresses:

National Executive

President, OHAA: Jill Cassidy
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PO Box 403,
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Mobile 0418 178 098
Email: mandjcassidy@gmail.com
Website: www.ohaa.org.au

ACT

Incorporated into the New South Wales Branch

New South Wales

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Incorporated into the South Australian Branch
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Queensland

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Contributions are invited from Australia and overseas for publication in the OHAA Journal No. 34, 2012

Communities of memory

Contributions are invited in the following 3 categories:

A Papers on the following themes (limit: 5,500 words):

- Papers presented at OHAA's Biennial National Conference, October 2011, Melbourne, *Communities of Memory*, or others addressing the themes of the conference.
- Ethical, methodological, legal and technological challenges being met in the practice, collection and usage of oral history, both in Australia and abroad.
- Critiques/analyses of strategies and protocols in projects, the perceived value and meanings attributed by oral historians to their work, or the way in which projects and agencies handle their involvement.

B Articles/Project reports: articles describing specific projects, the information gained through them, and principal outcomes or practice issues identified in the process (*limit: 4,000 words*).

C Reviews of books and other publications in Australia or elsewhere that are of interest to the oral history community (*limit: 1,500 words*). This may include reviews of static or internet available exhibitions, or any projects presented for a public audience.

Photographs, drawings and other illustrations are particularly welcome, and may be offered for any of the above categories of contribution.

Deadline for submissions: 1 April 2012

Forward to:

Dr Sue Anderson, General Editor, OHAA Journal, 2012 Email:

Sue.Anderson@unisa.edu.au

Peer Review

If requested by authors, papers offered for publication in the OHAA Journal may be submitted to the OHAA Publication Committee for peer review.

However, note these important points:

- Papers for peer review must show a high standard of scholarship, and reflect a sound appreciation of current and historical issues on the topics discussed.
- Papers for peer review may be submitted at any time; however, if not received by the Editorial Board by 28 February 2012, they may not be processed in time for publication in the 2012 issue of the Journal; furthermore, regardless of when offers are forwarded to the Committee, the review process may not necessarily be completed in time for publication in the next available Journal due to time constraints of reviewers.
- Before being submitted for peer review, papers will first be assessed for suitability by the OHAA Editorial Board (which comprises a chair, the Journal Editor and two other panellists. Authors will be advised by the Chair of the outcome.

Papers for peer review should be forwarded to:

Ariella Van Luyn

Chair, OHAA Editorial Board

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