Fast Forward: Oral History in a Time of Change

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

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The editor of the Journal welcomes offers of material suitable for possible publication in the 2017 issue, No. 39. See the call for papers at the end of this Journal, or the Oral History Australia website, www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au. Suitable items include papers for peer-review, un-refereed articles (such as project and conference reports) and book reviews.

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Cover images:

'Get-together'
'The Beinhauer family's house'
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Editor's Report

This edition of the Oral History Australia Journal represents the last print version, as the National Committee has decided that it is time for us to join the digital revolution and convert to an e-journal. The major reason for this is one of cost, as printing and distribution of the Journal is by far the largest expense for our organisation. The money freed up by going on-line will allow other exciting ventures to be pursued.

This is sad in that I have enjoyed having a hard copy of the Journal lying around to read at my leisure and then put on the bookshelf. On the other hand, it will be a god-send for me not to have to physically load and label envelopes and lug boxes of Journals to the post office, often in forty-degree heat! The way it will work on-line is that members will be given a pin number with which to access the Journal via the national website, so rest assured that members will continue to have first-priority readership.

Three papers in this issue have been peer-reviewed. The first looks at how oral history contributes to business history; a discussion of the relationship between the practice of native title research and oral history follows; and finally the role of oral history in bearing witness in public memorials is examined.

Apart from these refereed papers, we have fewer than the usual number of project reports in this issue. I hope people will continue to offer their project reports for future issues of the Journal as these are always interesting to read, enrich the content and help readers keep in touch with what projects have been and are happening around the country, and sometimes overseas.

For example, we have here a very diverse group of articles in this category. One discusses interviews from South America, where respondents' recent experience has included torture and witness to murder and massacre. Articles about Australian projects include two from Western Australia, firstly on the history of an industrial township, and another where respondents were interviewed about their perceptions of the intricate relationship between plant indigeneity and the natural heritage of flora. Further, multiple interviews about the history of regional amateur theatre, and recollections of a veteran of the Vietnam war are the focus of two other articles.

For the production of this Journal I have had the very welcome assistance of Francis Good, who kindly stepped in to take up the slack when my full-time workload and research activities took their toll on my time. I can't thank Francis enough for his kind offer, his professional approach, his knowledge deriving from his past Editorship of the Journal, and his design skills, which far surpass anything I could manage! By doing this voluntarily he has also saved Oral History Australia about $1,000 in design fees, so double thanks go to Francis.

Please see the two Calls for Papers at the back of this edition and let anyone you know who is planning to present at the 2017 Conference in Sydney, or is involved in an oral history project, to consider submitting an article for next year's Journal.

Sue Anderson

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Forged in Totalitarian Terror, Fomenting Social Justice: Oral History and Memory in Latin America

David Carey Jr.

Abstract

A long history of colonialism and imperialism that morphed into late twentieth-century military regimes that tortured, murdered and massacred people distinguishes the practice of oral history in Latin America from that in other parts of the world. The recent past characterized by state violence makes recovering those histories inherently political, but it also influences such related topics of labor, migration, gender, class, ethnicity, and race since people who survived civil wars cannot help but be shaped by them. With so many Latin American nations struggling to chart a course through post-conflict societies, oral history research and scholarship encourages transitions to more just, transparent, and democratic states. Complex, contradictory and faulty, memory is particularly vexing in such politically charged contexts, partly because people regularly call upon its healing powers. In a region that offers examples of how to balance academic integrity and social activism gracefully, professionally and efficaciously, practitioners of oral history in Latin America have charted courses that can inspire and inform oral history and Latin American research and scholarship more broadly.

* * * *

In a region where military regimes tortured, murdered and massacred people in the last third of the twentieth century, violent pasts shape oral history research and scholarship. With so many Latin American nations struggling to chart a course through post-conflict politics, research often resonates beyond the hallowed halls of academia. Many Latin American scholars consider that decrying human rights abuses and political corruption is a cornerstone of their work. "Probably owing to the nature of our Latin American realities, the comings and goings of caudillos, military coups, dictatorships and constant violations of human rights, the work and products of oral history acquire a fundamental dimension, its character of denunciation," posits Mexican historian Eugenia Meyer.[1] In many nations, a long history of authoritarian regimes dating to the nineteenth century and punctuated in the first part of the twentieth century informed military rule that marked the last third of the twentieth century. Even as surprisingly affirmative recollections of totalitarian rulers emerge in oral histories, documenting past injustices holds the hope of avoiding or mitigating future ones. Therein lies oral history's tremendous potential in Latin America: to assist in the rebuilding of post conflict nations. By excavating the past, confronting the many truths of what happened, and filling in lacuna left by archival materials or a lack thereof, oral history research can facilitate transitions to more stable, accountable, and just states.

As a field, oral history began to find fertile ground in Latin America around the same time the military in Brazil (1964-1985), Chile (1973-1988), Argentina (1976-1983), and elsewhere overthrew democratically elected governments and introduced repressive rule. Institutions in Chile, Argentina, and Colombia launched oral history projects to investigate human rights abuses and other subjects. A nineteen-year-old activist when she was arrested in 1970, Brazilian historian Jessie Jane Vieira de Souza recalls being transported in a police vehicle when she went into labour, giving birth to her daughter in the hospital, and waking up to "armed guards in my room, around my bed."[2] She called some friends who had the guards removed from her room that day. But she later awoke to shouts of:

> "Let's kill her" – "let's kidnap her." I woke up frightened, grabbed the phone, but it was dead. I yelled for the nurse, but she did not come. That continued for the rest of the night.

Still terrified, she was transferred back to prison shortly thereafter. Ranging from the birth of her daughter to threats of kidnapping and murder, her account reveals how oral history can access profound understandings of political prisoners' plights.

The same methodology that reveals marginalized perspectives also give voices to oppressors. A study of 23 police officers involved in torturing alleged subversives during Brazil's military dictatorship demonstrates that violence takes a toll on perpetrators as well as victims. In addition to psychosomatic complaints, executioners describe the toll their work took on their marriages and other relationships. Analysing those accounts, Martha Huggins and her co-authors show how changes in the Brazilian state shaped violence in workers' personal narratives and moral codes, particularly how they justified violence. In light of the effects suffered by victims and perpetrators alike, the authors frame torture as a public health threat and reveal "how organizational systems … foster and excuse police atrocities."[3]

For many scholars from the region, Latin America's radical political context offers a broader purpose to oral history – one reminiscent of the oral history projects in the United States involving Blacks, Native Americans, and women in the 1960s.[4] Shared techniques and methods are but one manifestation of the way social histories of ethnic groups, immigrants, prisoners, and others at the peripheries of power in the United States and Europe influenced Latin American scholars who increasingly used oral history to understand the participation and perspectives of those traditionally absent in the historical record.[5] At the same time, characteristics that Latin America shares with other developing regions such as Africa differentiate the practice of oral history there from that practised in the United States. In addition to a long history of colonialism and imperialism, Latin America has been deeply marked by late twentieth-century military regimes that deposed civilian governments and ruled ruthlessly.[6] Perhaps more than any other geographic area, politics and history shape the practice and scholarship of oral history in Latin America.

Increasingly, political and legal practices are using personal testimony as a crucial resource. Oral history research has informed Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and judicial proceedings against Latin American architects of civil war, genocide, and other human rights abuses. Although they constitute a different type of oral source and are mediated by judges and lawyers instead of scholars, courtroom testimonies about the past have been particularly powerful in Latin America. The 2013 trial of Guatemalan dictator José Efraín Ríos Montt, who during his seventeen-month rule from 1982 to 1983 orchestrated attacks that razed hundreds of indigenous communities and killed tens of thousands of (mostly Maya) people, offers an example of how oral testimonies shape outcomes. With 103 K'iche'-Mayas testifying against Ríos Montt, survivors' traumatic recollections of the past directly informed the judicial proceedings and Judge Yassmín Barrios' May 10, 2013 verdict that found Ríos Montt guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity. Even though Guatemala's Constitutional Court overturned the ruling, impunity is increasingly being eroded in Latin America. By contributing to that process, oral history facilitates transitions to more peaceful, transparent, and democratic societies.

The process of rebuilding post-conflict societies in Latin America is most successful when survivors are not compelled to fit their stories into larger narratives, but rather when they are recognized as valid whether they adhere to or diverge from official discourse. With a program dubbed the Amnesty Caravan, the Brazilian government is doing just that by sending officials to states to hold public trials wherein each survivor has ten minutes to share their experiences. If the Amnesty Committee considers the account compelling, on behalf of the Brazilian government they ask for forgiveness for the damage caused by the military dictatorship's abuses. Brazilian historian Dulce Pandolfi describes her reaction after recounting the torture and incarceration she endured in 1979 and 1980:

> The government is now before me, bowing to me and treating me this way, how wonderful! ... That was when I crumbled, I felt very compensated, it was a beautiful thing! … It does not erase the past, but we feel that finally citizenship has arrived in our country … It was a very beautiful moment in my life.[7]

Approaching the past "from an amnesty perspective" helps states and societies address particularly vexing aspects of their pasts to build more fruitful futures.[8] Recognizing oral history's role in helping people to tell their stories and disseminating them more broadly, Brazilian historian Maria Paula Araújo asserts, "Oral history is playing an effective role in the democratic transition of Latin America."[9] Practitioners of oral history in Latin America have charted courses that can inspire and inform the field more broadly.

Memory, Totalitarianism and Terror

Since wartime discourages the creation of some documents and restricts access to others, oral sources are vital for studying those pasts. Explaining how the Guatemalan guerrilla group Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (Armed Rebel Forces, FAR) drafted laws to maintain control over their members and to avoid military infiltration during the civil war, one FAR commander revealed why much information about violent conflicts can only be obtained orally: "This has not been written/recorded anywhere."[10] If security dictated that even laws were not documented, then little else was. As Uruguayan historian Silvia Dutrénit Bielous explains: "Clandestine and semi-legal activities do not favour the sustained production of newspapers or documents."[11] In contrast, such state entities of terror as the military and police documented their strategies, procedures, and exploits. But officials either restricted access to those papers or denied their existence.[12] That context fuelled Guatemalan conservatives' critique that the nation's human rights reports were baseless because their findings were grounded in oral testimony rather than documentary evidence. The integrity and legitimacy of the field of oral history has never been more important.

In addition to attempts to occlude archival evidence of the past, political and military elites advance narratives that contest those of former insurgents, victims, bystanders, and other participants and observers – many of whom are semiliterate or illiterate. Oral histories are one of the few sources and methods that can inform and counterbalance such hegemonic discourse. Argentine historian Liliana Barela argues, "oral history techniques are … often the only manner … [for] examining periods of dictatorial governments."[13]

In Latin America as in many parts of the world, understanding the recent past is contingent upon oral sources. This is especially true in postcolonial societies where a large number of people are illiterate, where storytelling remains an important means of transmitting knowledge, and where written records are scarce (particularly from peripheral perspectives – whether they be elites or marginalized populations).

In nations that have suffered widespread trauma, tensions and conflict often mark interpretations of the past. In light of the threat posed by *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) during Peru's twenty-year civil war, some Peruvians argued that former president Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000) was a hero; others considered him a despot who violated human rights. Heated debate rekindled after the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's *Final Report* in 2003. Based on their reading of it, some people recrafted their accounts of the civil war depending on whether or not they thought it was necessary to suspend civil liberties to achieve security. Fujimori's subsequent trial, conviction, and sentence of 25 years in prison for crimes against humanity precipitated another round of discussions about how Peru's recent past should be reconstructed.[14]

Contemporary violence colours how people look back on what can seem a halcyon history. General Jorge Ubico's dictatorship (1931-1944) offers insight into this process. His heavy-handed and at times harsh rule had different meanings for Guatemalans who lived through it than for historians assessing it via the archival record. Whereas historians generally portray Ubico as one of Latin America's most brutal dictators and some Mayas (particularly those living in the remote regions where Ubico exerted little control) maintain a certain antipathy toward his rule, many Mayas in the central highlands laud him for levelling race relations and maintaining security by applying his personalized lone-ranger style

of justice.[15] Conducted during the middle of Guatemala's civil war (1960-1996), Guatemalan anthropologist Claudia Dary's 1985 study of Kaqchikel oral histories reveals a critical assessment of Ubico. Referencing the government's excessive demands on their time and labour, informants described his dictatorship as "bitter." To ensure that citizens complied, his administration assigned cards to verify requirements ranging from road labour to vaccination control. "Through these papers, Ubico had the town well tied up," insisted one interviewee.[16] In sharp contrast, shortly after the 1996 Peace Accords, Kaqchikel elders in the same town lauded Ubico because he brought peace, order, and justice to the region and respected Maya ethnicity. Compared to late twentieth-century lethal, capricious military rule, Ubico's iron-fisted regime, which clearly articulated the rules of the game and spared (at times even aided) people who abided by them, was benign.[17] Problematizing memory is crucial to scholars' contextualization and analysis of such dramatically different historical perspectives.

Similarly positive memories of Ubico's counterpart Maximiliano Hernández Martínez (1931-1944) are common among Salvadoran elders who survived a 1932 massacre over which he presided. Perceptions of Martínez's indigenous origins and sympathy for the rural poor before the massacre, and pro-Indian actions after it, buoyed his reputation among indigenous people.[18] These and other nuances of authoritarian regimes have reframed the way historians think about dictatorial rule in Latin America. More broadly, such memories are an example of what anthropologist Michael Taussig calls "contradictory images, dialectical images … [that] bring our own expectations and understandings to a momentary standstill."[19] Seemingly incongruous accounts remind us that oral histories do not advance a particular politics.

Although tempting to conclude that such oral histories vindicate dictatorships, these sources demonstrate the complexity of memory and counter narratives that challenge hegemonic interpretations about the functioning of authoritarian regimes on the ground. As historian Jeffrey Gould points out in his comparison of Guatemala and El Salvador:

> This seemingly anomalous support for right-wing authoritarians whose hands were soaked in indigenous blood can only be understood in the context of a deep divide in the political culture of the two countries, dramatically exacerbated in Salvador by the legacy of 1932,[20]

and in Guatemala by the legacy of the 1944 Patzicía massacre.[21]

Oral histories help to explain support for dictatorial regimes in some places. They also tease out how memories of authoritarian rule shape democratic institutions that emerged in Latin America by the 1980s and 1990s. Contested interpretations of state-sanctioned violence continue to mark politics in many Latin American nations.

By repealing laws that granted amnesty to Dirty War murderers and torturers, Argentina opened a space for historical reconstruction. Upholding the repeal two years later in 2005, Argentina's Supreme Court found the laws unconstitutional because they were "oriented toward '*forgetting* grave violations of human rights."[22] According to the judges, amnesia threatened to make the nation susceptible to future horrors; memory was the antidote. By trying human rights crimes, the judicial system facilitated a public mourning process for those whose loved ones were "disappeared".

Understanding the power brokers and state institutions that shaped people's lives is critical for reconstructing the past. When she interviewed relatives of the disappeared in Chile, Argentina, El Salvador, and Guatemala who kept referring to the "national security doctrine" to explain repression and frame their resistance, Jennifer Schirmer decided she had to interview the military officials who shaped that doctrine:

> To understand the actions of a repressive State toward its citizens, especially toward the women I was studying, I needed to speak with high-ranking military officers."[23]

She interviewed more than fifty Guatemalan military officers, including General Héctor Alejandro Gramajo Morales, who she interviewed eighteen times because of his crucial role in many aspects of the military's anti-insurgency campaign and his close relationship to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, U.S. Army, and U.S. Embassy during the civil war. In addition to revealing the rationale and progenitors of the military's infamous Beans and Bullets (*frijoles o fusiles*) program and officers' tendency to deploy the latter more than the former, Schirmer points to the ways military officers who assumed impunity for human rights violations undermined Guatemala's efforts to establish a participatory democracy.[24]

Interviews with the former Argentine dictator Jorge Rafael Videla (1976-1981), who in 2008 admitted to ordering the murder of between 7,000 and 8,000 people during his rule, similarly sheds light on how military governments squashed dissent and maintained a culture of fear.[25]

Despite military regimes' campaigns of terror and destruction, some groups maintained their cohesion and thus facilitated subsequent democratic transitions. While some elites allied with and benefitted from military dictatorships, others were persecuted and exiled for their opposition. Refusing to succumb to fascist rule in Uruguay, Argentina, and Brazil, political elites clandestinely met, organized and strategized.[26] Argentine leader Deolindo Felipe Bittel explained:

> The first thing we had to do was bury the dead, cure the injured, and recruit [*reclutar*] to see what we had left.[27]

Determined to reinstate constitutional rule and democracy "without demagogy," party leaders set aside their political ideologies and united in opposition to the military dictatorship.[28] When the military coup and ensuing dictatorship in Uruguay (1973-1984) removed politicians from office, banned political activity, and disappeared political leaders, party leaders there too adapted and positioned themselves to regain political power. According to the Uruguayan soccer-player-turned-historian Gerardo Caetano, political parties that survived repressive rule demonstrated that "everything was possible."[29] Their resilience offered hope

to battered civilians. Even the armed forces recognized how crucial political parties were to institutionalizing the government.[30] Though excluded from power, political parties remained integral to political institutions and rule. Given the dearth of archival information about clandestine activity during civil wars, oral history interviews with those politicians are one of the few extant sources for understanding histories of dictatorship in Latin America.[31] In one manifestation that explains the absence of a paper trail, when political elites fell from power, they used birthdays, tributes, and other festivities as excuses "to get together, debate, and design action plans."[32] Without the insights and experiences of political elites, understanding authoritarian rule and transitions to more democratic governments would be limited.

Conclusion:

Its long popular history notwithstanding, oral history as a discipline in Latin America experienced its most formative years during brutal dictatorial rule in many nations. As those countries seek to build more peaceful, transparent, and just societies, oral history facilitates that process. Perhaps nowhere else in the world has oral history played such a vital role in civil society's quest for justice, representation, and transparency. While some Latin American oral historians have pursued projects that steer clear of politics or sensitive issues, others like Brazilian historian Antonio Torres Montenegro consider their work crucial to ensuring that governments informed by social justice "do not fail and create opportunities for a new round of governments of the right to spring forth."[33]

Such activist approaches can shape oral history research and scholarship in ways that are difficult to perceive. Acknowledging those and other influences, researchers strive for transparency regarding their motives and perspectives to facilitate audiences' capacity to critique the work. The region offers a number of examples of how to balance academic integrity and social activism gracefully, professionally, and efficaciously.

Multiple contrasting narratives about the past can inform inclusive national debates critical for strengthening democratic societies. In Latin America's post-conflict societies, oral history allows survivors to craft their own stories whether they resonate with or challenge discourses of reconciliation that seek to establish a single healing narrative about horrific pasts. Breaking free from narratives of collective victimization permits individuals to cast themselves as protagonists instead of victims.[34] De-colonial approaches and outcomes are particularly imperative in regions like Latin America, where nations that have been shaped by (oftentimes violent) colonial and neo-colonial circumstances continue to strive for more just, equitable, and peaceful societies.

Endnotes

[1] Eugenia Meyer, "Recuperando, recordando, denunciando, custodiando la memoria del pasado puesto al día, Historia oral en Latinoamérica y el Caribe," *Historia y Fuente Oral* 5 (1991), 140.

[2] Maria Paula Araújo, "História oral, memória e reparação: Reflexões sobre a importância do testemunho na superação de contextos de violência política," *Forum d'histoire orale* Edición Especial: Historia Oral en América Latina, guest edited by Pablo Pozzi, Alexander Freund, Gerardo Necoechea and Robson Laverdi (2002), 1 (accessed February 12, 2015); available from **http://www.oralhistoryforum.ca/index.php/ohf/issue/view/42.**

[3] Martha Huggins, Mika Haritos-Fatouros, and Philip Zimbardo *Violence Workers: Police Torturers and Murderers Reconstruct Brazilian Atrocities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), xviii.

[4] José Carlos Sebe Bom Meihy, "The Radicalization of Oral History," *Words and Silences* new series 2, no. 1 (2003): 31-41.

[5] Eugenia Meyer and Alicia Olivera de Bonfil, "La historia oral: Origen, metodología, desarrollo y perspectivas," *Historia Mexicana* 21 (October-December 1971): 372-87; James Wilkie, "Postulates of the Oral History Center for Latin America," *Journal of Library History* 2 (January 1967): 45-55; Peter Winn, "Oral History and the Factory Study: New Approaches to Labor History," *Latin American Research Review* 14, no. 2 (1979): 130-40.

[6] Pablo Pozzi, "Oral History in Latin America," *Oral Forum d'histoire orale* 32, Edición Especial: Historia Oral en América Latina, guest edited by Pablo Pozzi, Alexander Freund, Gerardo Necoechea and Robson Laverdi (2012), (last accessed December 17, 2015) available at http://www.oralhistoryforum.ca/index.php/ohf/article/view/442/505.

[7] Araújo, "História oral, memória e reparação," 18.

[8] Araújo, "História oral, memória e reparação," 2.

[9] Araújo, "História oral, memória e reparação," 18.

[10] Silvia Posocco, *Secrecy and Insurgency: Socialities and Knowledge Practices in Guatemala*. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2014), 164.

[11] Silvia Dutrénit Bielous, *El maremoto militar y el archipiélago partidario. Testimonios para la historia reciente de los partidos politicos Uruguayos*, by Silvia Dutrénit Bielous (Montevideo: Productora Editorial, 1994), 20.

[12] For example, Guatemalan authorities had denied the existence of the National Police Archive until investigators from the Human Rights Ombudsman Office stumbled upon it while inspecting a rat-infested munitions depot in downtown Guatemala City on July 5, 2005. With the majority of its some 80 million pages pertaining to Guatemala's civil war, the archive houses the largest collection of secret state documents in Latin America. See Kirsten A Weld, *Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

[13] Barela, "Oral History."

[14] Pamela Yates, "Memoryscape" *ReVista: Harvard Review of Latin America* (Fall 2013), 60.

[15] Compare for example, Kenneth Grieb, *Guatemalan Caudillo: The Regime of Jorge Ubico, Guatemala 1931-1944* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1979); Forster, *The Time of Freedom*; David Carey Jr., *Our Elders Teach Us: Maya-Kaqchikel Historical Perspectives. Xkib'ij kan qate' qatata'* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001).

[16] Claudia Dary, *Relatos de los Antiguos: Estudios de la tradición oral de Comalapa, Chimaltenango*. (Guatemala: Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, 1992), 61.

[17] Carey Jr., *Our Elders Teach Us*.

[18] Jeffrey Gould and Aldo Lauria Santiago, *To Rise in Darkness: Revolution, Repression, and Memory in El Salvador* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 242.

[19] Michael Taussig, "Violence and Resistance in the Americas: The Legacy of Conquest," in *Twenty Years of the Journal of Historical Sociology. Volume 2: Challenging the Field* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 24.

[20] Gould and Santiago, *To Rise in Darkness*, 243.

[21] David Carey Jr., "A Democracy Born in Violence: Maya Perceptions of the 1944 Patzicía Massacre and the 1954 Coup," in *After the Coup: An Ethnographic Reframing of Guatemala 1954* ed. Timothy J. Smith and Abigail E. Adams (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 73-98.

[22] Sam Ferguson, "Judging Memory," *LASAFORUM* xliv, no. 3 (summer 2013), 21.

[23] Jennifer Schirmer, "Interviewing Military Officers: A Woman Researcher's Perspective," *ReVista: Harvard Review of Latin America* (winter 1998).

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[25] Ceferino Beato, *Disposición final: La confesión de Videla sobre los desaparecidos* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2012).

[26] Silvia Dutrénit Bielous, ed., *Diversidad partidaria y dictaduras: Argentina, Brasil y Uruguay* (Mexico: Instituto Mora, 1996); Silvia Dutrénit Bielous, "Asuntos y temas partidarios en la memoria de las elites radical y peronista," in *A viente años del golpe. Con memoria democrática*, ed. Hugo Quiroga y César Teach (Rosario, Argentina: Homo Sapiens, 1996), 151-56.

[27] Dutrénit, "Asuntos y temas partidarios en la memoria de las elites radical y peronista," 152.

[28] Dutrénit, "Asuntos y temas partidarios en la memoria de las elites radical y peronista," 144, 158-61.

[29] Gerardo Caetano, "Prólogo," in *El maremoto militar y el archipiélago partidario. Testimonios para la historia reciente de los partidos politicos Uruguayos*, by Silvia Dutrénit Bielous (Montevideo: Productora Editorial, 1994), 12.

[30] Silvia Dutrénit Bielous, "Del margen al cnetro del sistema politico: los partidos Uruguayos durante la dictadura," in *Diversidad partidaria y dictaduras: Argentina, Brasil y Uruguay*, ed. Silvia Dutrénit Bielous, 235-317 (Mexico City: Instituto Mora, 1996).

[31] Dutrénit, *El maremoto military y el archipiélago partidario*, 17-18, 20; Gerardo Caetano, "Introducción general," in *Diversidad partidaria y dictaduras: Argentina, Brasil y Uruguay*, ed. Silvia Dutrénit Bielous (Mexico City: Instituto Mora, 1996), 13-14, 16.

[32] Silvia Dutrénit Bielous, "La memoria de los politicos: Sobre la pérdida y la recuperación de su estelaridad," in *Cuéntame como fue: Introducción a la historia oral*, ed. Gerardo Necoechea and Pablo Pozzi, 85-90 (Buenos Aires: Imago Mundi, 2008), 88.

[33] Antonio Torres Montenegro, "Dominación cultural y memoria, otras historias," in *Caminos de historia y memoria en América Latina*, ed. Gerardo Necoechea Gracia and Torres. Montenegro (Buenos Aires: Imago Mundi/RELAHO, 2011), 156-57.

[34] Araújo, "História oral, memória e reparação," 1.

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The Wundowie History Project

Bobbie Oliver

Abstract

The town of Wundowie, in the Avon Valley, Western Australia, was established to develop a local iron and steel industry during World War II. Wundowie was designed on Garden City principles, and it became home to European immigrant communities as well as locals and other Australians. The views and experiences of past and present Wundowie residents are central to this project.

This paper outlines a history project by Curtin University academics in partnership with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Perth Branch, to collect people's memories of working or living in Wundowie. Consequently, oral history is a significant research methodology The project has two main aims: to collect and preserve a history of Wundowie and its industries, and to study its evolution from a wholly government-owned, single-industry town. We argue that Wundowie has claims to uniqueness. The town survived the iron and steel industry being privatised and the blast furnaces and other industries closing, and remains a viable community. Our study aims to understand how Wundowie has avoided becoming a ghost town like many other rural mining and industries centres, and thus to inform our knowledge of sustainability and resilience in rural Australia.

Introduction and aims

The town of Wundowie is situated 67 kilometres east of Perth, in the Avon Valley. Although beginning its post-settlement history humbly enough as a small railway siding on the line running from Perth to Northam and east to the Goldfields, Wundowie now has a rich history, involving its foundation and its adaptation to changing circumstances. Wundowie's significant aesthetic, historic, social and scientific value makes it a suitable site in which to study facets of Australian history, culture and society in the second half of the 20th century. Established to develop a local iron and steel industry during World War II, Wundowie was designed on Garden City principles, and it became home to European immigrant communities as well as locals and other Australians. The views and experiences of past and present Wundowie residents are central to this project.

This paper outlines an oral history project by Curtin University academics, Amanda Davies, Diana MacCallum and myself, in partnership with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Perth Branch, to collect the memories of residents and past residents who worked or lived in Wundowie. The project has two main aims: to collect and preserve a history of Wundowie and its industries, and to study its evolution from a wholly government-owned, single-industry town into the community of the present day. Wundowie has survived the iron and steel industry being privatised, and the blast furnaces and other industries closing, yet it remains a viable community. Our study aims to understand how Wundowie has avoided becoming a ghost town like many other rural mining and industries centres, and thus inform our knowledge of sustainability and resilience in rural Australia. This paper, therefore, is more of a work-in-prospect as any findings are based on the few interviews and materials gathered to date.

History

In 1941, the state government established a charcoal, iron and steel industry at Wundowie. During World War II, Western Australia had difficulty accessing supplies of iron and steel from the eastern states. The location was determined by the presence of iron ore deposits locally and at Koolyanobbing to the east, the nearby railway and plentiful timber for charcoal. The charcoal process yielded higher quality iron ore than ore extracted using coke.[1]

The town was government owned and was constructed on leasehold land. The townsite, which was gazetted in 1948, was developed in line with Garden City Town Planning Philosophy, with the original curvilinear street pattern occupying the bottom of the valley. Although subsequent development on the slopes followed the traditional grid pattern, the original streetscape remains unaffected by this development, as is evident from a map or an aerial view of the town. Wundowie also retains distinct functioning areas; the industrial zone (the site of the foundry) is situated to the south and east, with direct access to rail, road, power and the Goldfields water pipeline. The civic core (incorporating shire offices, shops, school, churches, police station, community hall, swimming pool and library) was built between the houses and the industrial zone. Ten per cent of the land was devoted to open space.

Construction of the blast furnace occurred between 1945 and 1948; the timber mill began operations in 1947, and the refinery began production in 1950. By the late 1950s, annual pig iron output was over 24,000 tons. While still under government control, the industry changed its name to Wundowie Charcoal and Iron in the 1960s. It was sold to Agnew Clough in 1974 for $395,000.[2] To place this sum in the context of present-day prices, the median house price in Perth in 1974 was $18,500[3] – so the industry was sold for a sum approximating the price of 21 houses. Using this yardstick, with median house prices in Perth in 2013 at around $500,000,[4] a comparative amount today would be $10.5 million; however, that does not take into account the massive boom in house prices that began in the early 2000s. Later, the government was criticised for selling at such a low price.[5] The current owner, Bradken, purchased the foundry in 2006 for eight million dollars.[6] The industry now operates as Wundowie Foundry Pty Ltd.

Because the town was created to serve the iron and steel industry established there, it had an immigrant population, from other parts of the state and around Australia, but also, post-World War II, Wundowie was a destination for displaced persons from Europe. A number of these people and their descendants still live in the town. Indeed, Wundowie seems to be the kind of place where people stay, as is illustrated by the recollections of some of the people interviewed for the History project. To date,

13 interviews have been conducted, 11 by Julia Wallis and two by myself, with present or former residents of Wundowie. Already patterns are emerging that indicate the strength of community in Wundowie. The following are three examples.

Examples of the oral histories

Rosina Cassidy

Rosina Cassidy and her family arrived in 1959, from Tone River timber mill, near Kojonup, after her father-in-law was appointed to run the Wundowie timber mill. Rosina's husband was a forklift and crane driver. She worked as a Home Economics Assistant at the High School and later as a cleaner in the Primary School. Her eldest son was apprenticed to the saw doctor in the mill, and the next son served his apprenticeship in the foundry. Although Rosina was widowed in 2001 and her children have moved elsewhere, she is still a resident in the town.[7] The major industry of the town was iron and steel production, but Rosina's story signifies the experience of working in supporting industries. The timber mill has established because of the local supply of wandoo and jarrah hardwood for furniture making and house construction, but also because the timber off-cuts were converted to charcoal for the processing of high-quality ore in the foundry.[8]

William Beinhauer

William Beinhauer (known as 'Beanie') was born in a refugee camp in Europe in 1946, to Polish prisoners of war. The family arrived in Australia in 1950 and, after a few weeks in the migrant camp at Northam, where Beanie's sister was born, they were relocated in Wundowie. The settlement was known as Mairinger and the road Mairinger Way was named after it. Beanie's father, Josef, a carpenter, helped to build the calico and timber huts where the family and their neighbours (mostly Polish refugees) lived until they were rehoused in the town in two-bedroom, wooden cottages. By all accounts, the huts were very rudimentary – Rosina Cassidy also commented that they 'weren't very nice'.

Beanie's mother suffered a nervous breakdown in 1956 and spent two years in hospital. As the oldest child, it was his duty to look after his three younger siblings. His father was employed in the timber mill and later in the blast furnace (where he sometimes worked 12 to 16 hour shifts). Josef Beinhauer also built the Catholic Church in Wundowie, and found time to tend a vegetable garden at the cottage. When the family moved to Spearwood to start a market garden, Beanie remained in Wundowie and moved into single men's quarters. Houses were for married men only. Rent for houses or board and lodging was automatically deducted from the workers' pay packets.[9] After Beanie married Gillian, whose family lived in Chidlow, they were offered a choice of three houses in Wundowie to live in. They settled in a three-bedroom cottage in Crowea Terrace, later moving to another location in the town. Like Rosina, Beanie was happy living in the town and he and his family remained there after he left the now-privately owned foundry and took other work, culminating in a position as Chief Inspector for Western Power.

A significant aspect of the town's history is as a location for 'displaced persons', as refugees from post-war Europe were known. The immigrant population was very strong in Wundowie. William Beinhauer can speak Polish, Ukrainian, Yugoslav and a little German, as well as English. He mentioned encountering prejudice at school and in the wider community against 'New Australians', and doubtless this strengthened the feeling of community among the immigrants.[10] The photographs that he permitted the project to copy show a vibrant social life, carried on against the odds in primitive and sometimes hostile conditions.[11]

Wundowie Timber Mill in 1991 – 12 years after its closure – showing the waste timber that was used as fuel in the retort to make high quality iron.

Courtesy of Ian Lyon, donated to the Wundowie History Project and used with permission.

(Above) The wood and canvas home of the Beinhauer family, which was their first 'house' at Wundowie in the early 1950s. William Beinhauer is the small boy standing beside the chimney.

(Below) The Polish immigrant community at Wundowie often held get-togethers. Here members of the Dymek, Michalak, Byrzdra, Blaszcak and Olschewski families gather for a meal.

Images courtesy of William Beinhauer, donated to the Wundowie History Project and used with permission

There is also the industrial and union history of the town. As an electrical fitter, 'Beanie' served as an Electrical Trades Union (ETU) representative at Wundowie Iron & Steel for 10 years. His work involved maintenance on motors and conveyor belts. He also visited the iron ore mine at Koolyanobbing to do maintenance work and went to the timber mills. Despite the dangerous nature of the work, there were few fatalities, most of which occurred felling timber. But 'Beanie' recalled a welder being killed and another fatality when a rigger fell from the top of a 150-foot stack. Most of these men were buried in the town cemetery – there was traditionally a big funeral followed by a wake.[12] This practice also emphasises the tight community in Wundowie.

Bill Pearce

The dangerous working conditions horrified Bill Pearce when he first visited Wundowie in the 1960s as a mechanical engineering trainee with Australian Iron & Steel at Kwinana. The visitors were the only people on site wearing safety helmets. When he returned to work there a decade later, he found the work practices in the sawmill had not changed, although the company was providing safety helmets, gloves and protective clothing.[13]

Bill Pearce was born in Perth in 1943, which was about the same time as Wundowie was being planned. He began his working life constructing the iron making plant at Kwinana, and undertook training at the blast furnace in the Port Kembla Steelworks, where he met his wife Siglinde. After working in Port Kembla, BHP's head office in Melbourne, and undertaking a six months exchange with Nippon Steel Corporation in Japan, Pearce was offered a position at Wundowie as Works Manager at the foundry, recently privatised, having been purchased by Agnew Clough. It was an opportunity to pursue general management. He planned to stay for three years and then move on, but he remained for 29 years, because he was permitted to institute the changes he wanted to make. It was an enormous change of career, but ultimately he regarded it as both very challenging and immensely rewarding. The move was also a very big gamble for the family, moving from NSW to WA.

Pearce was in overall control of the industry, including the timber mill, which was one of many new experiences for him when he took charge of the industry in Wundowie. He had previously negotiated with unions, but not in the workplace with so many diverse unions as he found in WA. Apart from the previously mentioned ETU, site unions included the Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association (FEDFA), whose members drove the stationary engines in the foundry, the Plumbers, the Australian Workers Union (AWU) and the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU), which covered mechanical fitters and other engineering trades. Pearce worked for and eventually got a site agreement. From his perspective, the relationship between management and the unions was 'ultimately good'. He recalled only one dispute that occurred after the steel works closed and only the foundry remained open, and this involved the operation of a bonus system, which resulted in a two-week strike. Pearce said that he was able to use the experience he had gained during his visit to Japan to solve the dispute, by impressing upon all parties that working 'towards the common good' would benefit everyone. He instituted a system whereby various sections had responsibility for their own working areas. Management was also subject to the bonus if they made good decisions.[14]

The Wundowie Iron Plant in 1991.

Courtesy of Ian Lyon, donated to the Wundowie History Project and used with permission.

The Pearces had planned to purchase a house in Mundaring, a suburb of Perth in the hills, but were told they had to live in Wundowie, a condition retained by Agnew Clough from the days of government ownership. The accommodation offered to them was a weatherboard and fibro, three-bedroom house. Pearce said that Siglinde and the children loved the environment, but the Pearce children did not attend the local school. Pearce and his wife decided that the children should not be exposed to fallout that might occur as a result of any 'adverse decisions' that the Works Manager made in the foundry, so they were schooled firstly in Mundaring and later in Northam. This decision also reflects how much Wundowie was perceived as being 'a company town', where (it would seem) people not only knew one another, but also knew one another's business.

Unique aspects of the town

Perhaps the town's greatest claim to uniqueness lies in the production process for iron and steel. Pearce emphasised that the Foundry concentrated on quality rather than quantity, and produced pig iron that was world-renowned. The charcoal iron and steel industry was 'a unique and highly integrated operation' centred on 'the smelting of iron ore into liquid iron by using charcoal as the reductant in small blast furnaces'. Supplementary processes included power generation, 'chemical refining of by-products' got by creating charcoal from the wood, and (ultimately) using molten iron to produce castings in sand moulds. Thus the industry produced both pig iron and castings. Wundowie pig iron was known internationally for its purity.[15]

Isolation, in particular, presented many operational challenges. The community was to some extent 'insulated' from the outside world and it was difficult to institute change – improvements to safety being one such example. Pearce's early experience of the poor safety conditions at Wundowie was a formative one. During his tenure as Works Manger, which lasted from 1977 to 2006, he placed great importance on safety and saw conditions improve considerably. For instance, Pearce drew attention to unsafe clothing, such as polyester. Wool or flannel was much safer in an environment where there was molten metal and fire. He recalled a flash fire in the docking mill, in which three men suffered burns. One of those injured was Ken Cassidy, Rosina's husband, who afterwards insisted that his life was saved by wearing a woollen jumper, rather than a much more flammable polyester material. Later, safety clothing became a condition of employment. By the time the plant was sold, the industry record was well above required safety standards.[16]

The whole town was geared to 'the industry', as people referred to it. It was not until the blast furnaces shut down in 1981, that the focus changed to the foundry. The closure of the timber mill also affected the town as a lot of local girls found work there. The workforce was reduced as businesses were cut back or closed. The workforce numbered 400 when Pearce became Works Manager: it was 82 when he left. The refinery was closed in 1977; the sawmill in 1979, the crushing plant at Koolyanobbing was sold in 1981. The high school, which at one time had 200 students, closed in 1989 as the population decreased.[17] Pearce negotiated with the workforce and the unions to work longer hours for same pay and managed to maintain the foundry. They began to develop their own products, such as the Wundowie potbelly stove, which was a great commercial success.[18]

Recent initiatives for reviving the town have not always been popular. It serves as a 'dormitory suburb' for some FIFO (fly in-fly out) workers to the mine sites in the Pilbara and there are plans to mine bauxite to the north. Some residents are concerned about the transitory nature of the FIFO population; others fear environmental damage from mining. One of the aims of the project is to assess how Wundowie addresses these challenges and whether this is a factor in the community's survival in the 21st century.

Veracity, perception and memory in conflict

In a project where oral history is a significant research methodology, problems of veracity, perception and memory are inevitable, and one has already become evident. One of the more controversial episodes of Wundowie's history concerned the ill-fated vanadium plant, opened in 1981. Vanadium is 'a hard, silvery grey, ductile and malleable transition metal', which occurs naturally in a number of minerals and fossil fuel deposits.[19] It is used in the production of steel alloys for high-speed tools, but also has some medical applications, such as in the treatment of diabetes. Vanadium is a rare product and so resources at Wundowie were diverted into it rather than improving the pig iron process.

According to Bill Pearce, there were three reasons for the failure of the vanadium industry in Wundowie. He stated that, firstly, the vanadium market plummeted and, secondly, the plant was not performing well. Thirdly, there was an expectation that the workforce from the pig iron works would find jobs in the vanadium plant, but the latter was much more modern and required high technical training. Consequently, most workers preferred to take a redundancy pay-out. The vanadium plant was closed the following year (1982) and the foundry remained as the only operating entity, which placed a huge burden on its viability.[20] But according to the ABC's *Nationwide* programme, the vanadium plant's operation brought severe health issues and discontent to the town. *Nationwide* reporter Murray McLaughlin visited the town and interviewed workers who said that they had been given one month's notice and a redundancy cheque. Others, who had been employed at the plant, raised concerns about health issues, including fears that the environment might create birth defects in their children, and complained of poorly maintained safety equipment.[21] Information published by the New Jersey (USA) Health Department in 2001 indicates that exposure to vanadium can result in all of the symptoms listed by the workers in Wundowie, including: skin and eye irritations; shortness of breath; nausea; vomiting; greenish discolouration of the tongue, headaches and dizziness.[22] This is one of many aspects of Wundowie's history requiring further research.

Conclusion – how unique is Wundowie?

In conclusion, it may seem a little premature to claim that Wundowie is 'unique' at this stage of our research; nevertheless, there are some features of the place that make it quite different from most country towns in Western Australia. Many towns and settlements were formed to exploit mineral wealth, and while this was the reason for Wundowie's foundation, it did not spring up like the principal towns of the Golden Mile, Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie-Boulder, morphing within a decade from scattered tent cities in large centres with fine buildings, built with profits from privately-owned mining companies. Nor was it conceived as a company town in the same way as were those in the Pilbara in the 1960s and 1970s – designed by mining companies for populations comprising mostly single men who intended to stay for a few years, earn good money and then depart.

The government put time and effort into designing and developing a community of families. As mentioned earlier, the town had specific zones separating industry (blast furnaces, foundry, timber mill), commerce (shops and businesses), public facilities (such as schools, swimming pool, library, town hall, churches, police station) and housing – although this separation of zones is common to mining towns elsewhere. The requirement for all employees, including management, to live in the town meant that it did become a community – no DIDO (drive in-drive out) was permitted. This simple strategy may provide lessons for the towns of the Pilbara where FIFO and DIDO arrangements are now commonplace. The attractive design of the town on the garden city principle, while not perhaps unique, is certainly unusual. It is clear that Wundowie was intended to be a place where people would enjoy living. And lastly, there is the process of pig iron production and purification, explained above, for which Wundowie was internationally known.

Endnotes

[1] Relix and Fiona Bush, *Wundowie Garden Town Conservation Plan,* (Publisher not stated,2008), Section 2.2 Origins of West Australia's Iron and Steel Industry, pp.9 ff.

[2] Relix and Bush, *Wundowie Garden Town Conservation Plan,* 2.1 Chronological Summary, pp 4-8.

[3] Peter Abelson and Demi Chung, 'Housing Prices in Australia: 1970 to 2003', Table 1, 'Annual median house prices ($) – capital cities', p. 8, accessed 4 February 2016 at: **http://www.econ.mq.edu.au/Econ_docs/research_papers2/2004_research_papers/Abelson_9_04.pdf**

[4] REIWA, 'Perth House Prices 1974 to 2013', accessed 4 February 2016 at: **https://reiwa.com.au/uploadedfiles/public/.../house-prices-2013-web.pdf.**

[5] Murray McLaughlin, Report on the Wundowie Vandanium Plant, *Nationwide,* ABC, 1981.

[6] 'Bradken buys Wundowie foundry for $8m', *Business News Western Australia,* 14 November 2006, accessed at 4 February 2016 at: **https://www.businessnews.com.au/article/Bradken-buys-Wundowie-foundry-for-8m**

[7] Rosina Cassidy, interviewed by the author, 21 November 2014, recording and summary held by the author.

[8] Rosina Cassidy, interview.

[9] William Beinhauer, interview with Julia Wallis, 17 May 2015, recording and summary held by the author.

[10] William Beinhauer, interview.

[11] William Beinhauer, photographic collection; copies held for the Wundowie History Project in the author's possession.

[12] William Beinhauer, interview.

[13] Bill Pearce, interviewed with Julia Wallis, 18 December 2014, recording and summary held by the author.

[14] Bill Pearce, interview.

[15] Bill Pearce, 'Supplementary information provided by W.E. Pearce', emailed to Julia Wallis, 29 November 2014, held by the Wundowie History Project.

[16] Bill Pearce, interview.

[17] Relix and Bush, *Wundowie Garden Town Conservation Plan,* 2.1 Chronological Summary.

[18] Bill Pearce, interview.

[19] 'Vanadium', **https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanadium**, accessed 4 February 2016.

[20] Bill Pearce, interview. In 1998-9 the price of vanadium pentoxide did, indeed, plummet to below production cost, but that was many years after Agnew Clough closed its plant in 1983. See AcTed consultants, 'Vanadium pentoxide & Ferrovanadium', accessed 4 February 2016 at: **http://www.chemlink.com.au/vanadium.htm.**

[21] ABC program *Nationwide,* Report by Murray McLaughlin, c. 1981

[22] New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, Hazardous Substance Fact Sheet, 2001: revised January 2007, accessed 4 February 2016 at: **http://nj.gov/health/eoh/rtkweb/documents/fs/3762.pdf**

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Rethinking Botanical Nativism: Oral History, Plant-Based Cultural Heritage and the Indigenous-Exotic Binary in Western Australia

John Ryan

Abstract

This paper begins with a series of questions that highlight the intricate relationship between natural heritage and plant indigeneity. In the Anthropocene – the designation of our current era of anthropogenic climate change impacting negatively on the ecosystems of the planet – what does the future hold for people with well-developed and enduring affections for indigenous flora? Conversely, what are the implications of having acutely averse feelings towards the non-indigenous plants of a place – those 'invasive', 'feral'[1] or 'weed'[2] species with which the indigenous (or native) species must often compete for resources? Moreover, how does an *unnatural plantscape*, consisting of non-native plants, impact, or even deaden, embodied sensory experience and appreciation of a place? Finally, how might the binary categories of *natural* or *unnatural* plantscape be defined, in the eyes (and in the noses, and on the tongues and fingers, that is, through the bodies) of community members with long-standing involvements with and emotional attachments to their flora?

Such ideas are necessarily entangled but also individually weighted with historical attitudes and cultural terminologies reflecting patterns of beliefs and biases towards the natural world, as the article will show. Developed in the context of the botanically diverse Southwest ecoregion of Western Australia (WA), the article aims to address these questions through an examination of the indigenous-exotic binary evident in oral histories conducted with plant enthusiasts in the city of Perth, WA, between 2009 and 2015. For the purpose of this discussion, the term *plant enthusiast* is used to refer to activists, artists, botanists, conservationists, horticulturalists, seed savers, tourists, writers and others who have affinities for plant life and who devote a considerable portion of their time, resources and energies to the protection or appreciation of the environment and, in particular, its plant taxa. The physical context of this discussion is considerably important. The southwest, including the Perth metropolitan area, is an internationally recognised biodiversity 'hotspot' and a site of extensive scientific research, international tourism, and conservation efforts at the local and international levels.[3] The region supports a vast endemic array of plant, animal, and fungal species – many of which are seriously threatened, endangered or face extinction.[4] Moreover, of the Southwest's more than eight-thousand total plant species, approximately thirty-five per cent are endemic, or occurring nowhere else on earth in a non-cultivated, or wild, state.

Conserving biocultural heritage in Western Australia

Despite the national and global focus on its species richness, the Southwest is not only a hotspot of biodiversity but also of biologically-related cultural diversity. Hence, cultural heritage is part and parcel of the biological heritage of the region. To put it differently, cultural and biological forms of heritage are, in practice, interwoven – an interdependence expressed in the concept 'biocultural diversity', as posited by anthropologists, historians and heritage scholars.[5] As biodiversity vanishes, the cultural heritage surrounding it also becomes threatened. In Australia, the conservation of biocultural heritage is challenged by different factors, including climate change, species loss, suburban development, cultural fragmentation and a lack of conservation methodologies that take both nature and culture into equal consideration. In the state of Western Australia, for example, ninety-seven per cent of the biodiverse *kwongan*, or heathland, ecosystem near Perth has been cleared since European settlement.[6] In response to diminished plant populations and increasingly fragmented bushland areas, measures such as gene banking and seed propagation aim to ensure the continuity of plant species in repositories (in national parks, ecological reserves and botanical gardens). Although critical to environmental conservation, such strategies, grounded in scientific methodologies, on the whole do not tend to encompass the safeguarding of biocultural heritage, including intangible forms expressed in human memories of plants and elicited in interviews – the subject of this article.

In 2013, with these concepts and questions in focus, the author began an online archival initiative, FloraCultures (www.FloraCultures.org.au), in order to document various manifestations of biocultural heritage in the rapidly changing capital area of Perth. Seeking a dialogic middle ground between disciplines – and more broadly between the sciences and the humanities – FloraCultures examines the complex intersections between cultural and biological heritage, where the decline of plants in the environment (living, growing organisms) is understood to affect the vitality of the cultural heritage referent to those plants.[7] One of the conservation outcomes of FloraCultures has been an online repository promoting the overlays between cultural heritage (for example, digitised versions of paintings, photography, prose, poetry, interviews, and other cultural artefacts) and Perth's native flora (wildflowers, orchids, shrubs, bushes, trees) through a variety of media, specifically including, for the present discussion, oral histories with Perth residents. The initiative seeks to preserve the tangible and intangible heritage of Southwest plants where *tangible natural heritage* refers to physical substances (*of living plants*), cultural artefacts (*made from, or referring to, plants*), and natural sites or ecosystems (*containing plants*).

In contrast to its tangible counterparts, *intangible natural heritage* comprises knowledge, practices, skills, representations, and expressions (including memory) that are derived from the environment (including its plantscape, defined as the landscape configured or perceived in terms of its plant life) and developed by a culture over time.[8] This term has evolved from theoretical advances in intangible cultural heritage, characterised as 'forms of cultural heritage that lack physical manifestation [and evoke] that which is untouchable, such as

knowledge, memories and feelings'.[9] UNESCO acknowledges 'oral traditions and expressions … social practices, rituals and festive events … knowledge and practices concerning nature' as intangible heritage needing urgent conservation globally today.[10] In working across these categories of nature and culture with reference to indigenous plant life, FloraCultures also seeks to advance human rights and cultural identity, particularly in Western Australia, in relation to natural heritage. The project recognises the importance of local flora to human heritage, identity and well-being; and, conversely, the significance of human conservation efforts to ensuring the continuity of botanical communities.

Interviews were conducted at the homes of the participants or at botanical sites, such as reserves and parks. Interviewees were asked about the former distributions of local species; childhood, family and community-based recollections of plants; sensory experiences of smelling, touching, tasting, hearing and seeing; local practices and events involving flora; and current environmental conditions affecting their local flora. The subjects were given space to speak freely about topics not directly addressed in the questions but which they believed to be relevant. The interview process served as a mechanism for eliciting and illuminating aspects of the intangible biocultural heritage surrounding Perth's plants. Importantly, one of the predominant themes that emerged in the interviews is the firm distinction between a *natural* and an *unnatural* member of the plant community. Often in striking ideological terms, the interviewees differentiated between *indigenous* (natural) and *exotic* (unnatural) where *indigenous plants* were regarded as those present in the Western Australian environment at the time of British settlement in 1829. Whereas the *indigenous*, *native* or *local* plants belonged to their greater community, *exotic*, *invasive* or *naturalised* weeds (e.g. South African cape daisies, or *Osteospermum* spp.) were viewed as outcasts and recent assailants that arrived after British settlement, from elsewhere in Australia, or from Africa, Europe or the Americas. Exotic plants were introduced to the Perth area unintentionally by colonists (in ship ballasts or cargo) or intentionally by agriculturalists (as food for livestock or to control land erosion), and have come to thrive in many parts of the city. In the interviews, exotic plants were often pitted against their indigenous counterparts. Many exotic species were at times demonised, hated and expunged, whereas most local species, especially those with prominent or showy flowers such as orchids, were valorised, loved and protected. These complex dynamics played out in the oral history work with Perth plant enthusiasts, as this article goes on to elaborate, revealing the problem of imposing conceptual categories on the natural world.

The indigenous-exotic binary

Traveling north from the city of Bunbury to Perth, a distance of about 150 kilometres, one can easily notice visually stunning examples of the region's invasive plants, especially along railways lines and other disturbed areas. A prominent example is Pink Wild Gladiolus (*Gladiolus caryophyllaceus*), a cosmopolitan species that many tourists and locals enjoy photographing . Despite its beauty, profusion and human appreciation, Wild Gladiolus is a garden escapee alien to Western Australia and originating in South Africa where, ironically, it is endangered. Around Perth, it is ranked as a high priority species where it rapidly overtakes bushland habitats.[11] If Gladiolus is the quintessential invasive plant – an *unnatural* species that *unnaturalises*, or corrupts, the local bush, converting it into an alien (and alienating) environment – then, for contrast, consider the Wreath Flower (*Lechenaultia macrantha*) whose remarkable pink, circular and prostrate flower appears briefly in the springtime (Figure 1). Most botanists and conservationists would agree that this species is genuinely native to Western Australia – part of the state's endemic flora. Although it is not listed as threatened, the plant is limited to areas in the northern Wheatbelt east of Geraldton, Western Australia (about four hours north of Perth by car) and is also linked to regional, community and, in terms of tourism, economic identity. It is indeed a charismatic plant, one that attracts legions of wildflower tourists each wildflower season; if Gladiolus is a quintessentially bad species, Wreath Flower is a paradigmatically good one.

Figure 1. Indigenous Wreath Flower (*Lechenaultia macrantha*) (pink and white) near Geraldton, Western Australia (Photo: John Ryan)

A prominent weedy tree species of Perth is the Lemon-Scented Gum (*Corymbia citriodora*) which lines the avenues of Kings Park and Botanic Gardens overlooking the Central Business District of the city (Figure 2). In areas of the coastal Swan Coastal Plain environment in which Perth is situated, this tree has become a serious weed and an aggressive species that overtakes native habitats.[12] If the Lemon-Scented Gum is a naturalised exotic plant – one which has reached a relative state of equilibrium with pre-existing species and also which has gained cultural significance in Perth – should it be considered part of the *natural* or *unnatural* plantscape? Is it only when a plant fails to conform to the ecological

Figure 2. Introduced Lemon-Scented Gum (*Corymbia citriodora*) at Kings Park and Botanic Gardens Near Perth (Photo: John Ryan)

Figure 3. Indigenous Tuart (*Eucalyptus gomphocephala*) at Kings Park. (Photo: John Ryan)

status quo and, instead, reaches weedy proportions that it becomes unnatural? In contrast, consider the indigenous Tuart (*Eucalyptus gomphocephala*). At Kings Park, visitors can admire a venerable Tuart in the centre of the constructed landscape of the botanical garden (Figure 3). This particular Tuart has been carefully managed by arborists at the park to ensure its survival because of its centrality to the Aboriginal heritage of the park. To be sure, the tree is recognised by the local Aboriginal people, the Whadjuck Nyoongar, as a culturally significant being that should be preserved, despite its state of increasing decay and decline. Is staving off the inevitable demise of a tree, for cultural heritage reasons, a *natural* or *unnatural* act within the largely cultivated plantscape of Kings Park?

These examples of Western Australian flowers and trees imply that, despite the rigidities of perceptions and ideologies, there is no fixed line demarcating *native* and *exotic* plant species and that, in practice, the categories blur. Yet, whilst the indigenous-exotic binary is contested by researchers in plant science and ecophilosophy for these reasons, the premise underpins many practical, on-the-ground conservation initiatives with a brand of hardline biological nativism. Noss notes the contradictions inherent to the indigenous-exotic binary, arguing that 'the terms "exotic" and "native" are about as ambiguous as any in our conservation lexicon (except perhaps "natural")'.[13] Nonetheless, Devine defines the terms *alien*, *non-native*, *exotic*, *introduced* and *non-indigenous* more prescriptively through a geographical criterion, stating that 'these labels apply to any animal, plant, or microbe found outside its natural range'.[14] Thus, an alien plant, or weed like Pink Wild Gladiolus, is one that is out of place, out of its natural range in South Africa. Other theorists focus on the *behaviour* of the plant in question, arguing that an exotic species is one that has failed to adapt cooperatively to the environment of local species.[15] Thus, an alien plant is one from somewhere else, from outside its natural range, but, more importantly, a diasporan that turns into a botanical miscreant in its new place. The environmental philosopher Holmes Rolston describes a native species as one that has adapted well, regardless of where it came from. Still, other scholars have critiqued the links between nature, natives, natality and nation that undercut any scientific or ecological rationale for the indigenous-exotic binary.[16]

Mark Woods and Paul Moriarity present five criteria of exoticality. Through the *human introduction criterion*, an exotic species is defined as the result of intentional or accidental introduction by humans. The *evolutionary criterion* states that a species is native if it originally evolved in the area. But the question remains, just how long must a plant have evolved in a region to be considered an original member of the flora? According to the *historical range criterion*, an exotic species has moved (or been moved) into an area where it has not previously existed. The *degradation criterion* defines an exotic species as harmful to the local environment. Hence, exotic plants are non-indigenous species that harm the ecosystem or displace indigenous flora. The last criterion of Woods and Moriarity is the *community membership criterion* in which exoticality is defined as a biological existence outside an ecological 'community of mutual dependence and controls'.[17] According to this criterion, a species is native to the degree that it is an integrated, or acculturated, member of a community. The last criterion specifies that an exotic species can become native over time if it achieves a state of dynamic equilibrium with local flora and fauna.

Most Western Australian exotics meet the *human introduction criterion*. An exotic plant is defined by biologists and conservationists as one introduced since European colonisation in 1829; in contrast, a native plant is one that existed at that date, as documented in the early writings of botanists and visitors to the Swan River Colony (the settlement era name of Perth). Moreover, most native (or indigenous; the terms being used synonymously) WA plant species, such as the Wreath Flower, meet the *evolutionary criterion*; in fact, the nutrient-deficient soils and demanding climate of Western Australia have forced local indigenous plants to adapt to harsh conditions over time. However, the *historical range criterion* is complicated when we consider the Gondwanaland origins of Western Australian flora, underlying a shared genetic ancestry with South African species. The historical range requirement is over-simplified if we accept 1829 as the cut-off date. For example, although the Lemon-Scented Gum originates in the eastern states, most people would recognise the trees as native in Western Australia. Finally, the *degradation criterion* is exemplified by Pink Wild Gladiolus displacing native plants. However, to the contrary, there are numerous species from outside of WA that have become important members of ecological communities, such as American Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) nuts eaten by endangered black cockatoos in Perth suburbs. This is an example of the *community membership criterion* of Woods and Moriarity.

Interviews with Perth's plant enthusiasts

FloraCultures' interviewees conveyed empirical knowledge of native and non-native plants, such as former distributions or interactions between species, gained through their own long-term observations. For these individuals, an *unnatural plantscape* is an obvious, phenomenological and emotional category of experience in which exotic species supplant native ones, where invasive plants corrupt, destroy or colonise a formerly diverse, functional and species-rich landscape. As a consequence of bearing witness over time to the transformation of a plantscape from largely native to largely non-native, my interviewees' memories clearly bear dimensions of loss and grief, or what Glenn Albrect terms *solastalgia*, a form of psychological distress caused by ecological change, or 'a homesickness while one is still at home'.[18] As a consequence, often implied in these interviews was a sense of antagonism towards the non-natives mixed with despair over the seemingly unending struggle to protect native species and local bushland areas. The oral histories suggested that an *unnatural plantscape* constitutes an interplay of scientific, environmental, aesthetic, emotional, and sensory values. In demonstrating these themes, this section now turns to the examination of some excerpts from the work with the participants, specifically one scientist, two conservationists and one artist.

Born in England in 1914, the centenarian plant scientist David Goodall came to Australia in 1948 after studying botany at Imperial College in London. Professor Goodall is now an Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Natural Sciences at Edith Cowan University in Perth, and is considered to be the oldest working scientist in Australia (ECU). For Goodall, the category of *indigenous* plants is a biological, aesthetic and, to some extent, emotional reality. In biological terms, indigenous plants are particularly those species that can be affected by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, a soil-borne water mould, responsible for a condition termed *root rot* or *dieback*, whereas exotic plants are generally immune. Goodall's assessment of indigeneity, in plant pathological terms, reflects Woods and Moriarty's evolutionary criterion for exoticality in which a species is regarded as native if it originally evolved in an area. However, in an unfortunate turn of circumstances for conservation, the place-specific evolution of WA plants underlies their susceptibility to the *P. cinnamomi* micro-organism. When I asked Goodall about the major threats to plant diversity in the Perth area, he comments that '*Phytophthora* is very serious. It's so easy to spread it around if one walks in the area. I believe it was imported. I don't think there was a comparable endemic infection before it came.'[19] In this instance, *Phytophthora* itself is an unwanted exotic that colonises aggressively, degrades the local environment, kills indigenous plants and generally flouts the community membership criterion of Woods and Moriarity.

What is more, from Goodall's perspective, indigenous Australian plant species are simply those that did not exist in England, at least based upon his childhood memories of the country. Considering his first impressions of the Australian plantscape when he arrived in the late 1940s, he responded:

> The most obvious thing is the trees. The eucalypts [gum trees] particularly. They're dominant and don't exist in the flora of England, of Europe at all. They are peculiar to Australia as original members of the flora. The casuarinas [sheoaks] are also peculiar to Australia. And other species I remember include the West Australia Christmas Tree, *Nuytsia floribunda*, which is a very striking parasite.[20]

In this interview extract, there is an aesthetic or perceptual basis to defining the indigeneity of WA plants. David calls attention to the Christmas Tree, a hemiparasitic species that is endemic to the Southwest of WA and flowers brilliantly in golden colours in December of each year around Perth. In characterising the tree as a 'striking parasite', Goodall intergrades aesthetics with ecology; additionally, in Goodall's view, the indigeneity of the Christmas Tree is linked to Western Australian identity and reflects the kinds of adaptations that the plants of the region must make to the extreme climatic conditions of the landscape (high solar radiation, drought, nutrient-deficient soils). Thus, indigenous plants become established in the plantscape through ecological mechanisms, such as predation, parasitisms and mutualisms, but also through cultural and historical associations.

To a lesser extent, for Goodall, botanical indigeneity (and, conversely, botanical exoticism, invasiveness, or naturalisation) involves emotional and mnemonic aspects related to inhabiting a place over time. Goodall intimates a sense of loss when he witnessed the destruction of the bush near his former home in Yanchep, about 45 minutes by car north of Perth. He commented, with a degree of restraint, that:

> We certainly see the loss of bushland in the northern suburbs. I *was not unhappy* to move out to Yanchep because of that [italics added]'.[21]

In other words, he *was not unhappy* to relocate to Maylands, one of the earliest Perth suburbs where the degradation of the original bushland is no longer as evident, where the process of unnaturalising the plantscape has already largely run its course. However, in this statement, particularly his use of a double-negative grammatical structure, Goodall circumvents the deeper emotional and personal consequences of habitat destruction, avoiding, in Albrecht's terms, the sense of solastalgia, or the distress of bearing witness to ecological change in one's home-place.

Whereas Goodall is reserved in matters of experience, such emotional aspects are more palpable in an interview with Kim Fletcher, a conservationist born in the Perth suburb of Armadale in 1937 to a family of wildflower enthusiasts and orchid lovers. Fletcher presently works as a volunteer guide with Kings Park and Botanic Garden where he leads tours of the grounds for the public. He is a retired teacher who devotes his time and energies to bushland conservation in Armadale where he still lives. Much of my interview with Fletcher discussed the rare orchid species he used to see in Perth growing up during the 1950s. Thus, for Fletcher, indigenous plants are related to, and to some extent derived from, family and childhood memories:

> Where I grew up was ideal for collecting orchids, particularly Spider and Enamel Orchids. It was sandy country. This has now disappeared altogether as bushland. It's covered with suburbia, and that probably started in the late '50s, early '60s.[22]

The solastalgic distress of witnessing the loss of native orchids near his home was a dominant theme in the interview. Fletcher recalls where orchid species once occurred, but much of the plantscape has since been overtaken by invasive weeds:

> Next to a drain under flooded gums there was a huge patch of what was formerly called *Caladenia menziesii*, the Rabbit Orchid. But many times I've gone back with a tear in my eye, looking at where they were among the weeds'.[23]

Specific weed culprits register sharply in Fletcher's recollections, as ecological miscreants or bio-invaders that have dramatically disturbed the equilibrium of the plantscape:

> There were lots of *Kunzea ericafolia* growing in Spearwood. They were so common. During the '80s, the site was cleared for housing. There is still some native bush there but it's been invaded by Arum Lilies and goodness knows what else.[24]

Like Pink Wild Gladiolus, Arum Lilies (*Zantedeschia aethiopica*) were introduced to Western Australia from South Africa and now proliferate in wetland areas. The degradation criterion of Woods and Moriarity is especially salient in Fletcher's conceptualisation of exotics such as the Arum; non-indigenous plants are those that have the capacity to overtake a plantscape, rendering it unnatural, fragmented, homogenous, or, even, emotionally depressing.

The perils posed by weed species recurred in an interview with Collin and Joy Wornes, the volunteer managers of the Wubin Herbarium, located about four hours northeast of Perth in a region of massive agricultural production known as the Wheatbelt. Their shire of Dalwallinu is internationally recognised for its diversity of Wattles or Acacia species. An event called Wattle Week is celebrated annually. In their oral history interview, they discussed the problems of wattles from eastern Australia turning into noxious weeds once transported to Western Australia. Joy Wornes commented:

> That's the problem in the south of WA now. Eastern states' species of Acacia were introduced, and now they are jamming the waterways.[25]

Collin Wornes further explained that:

> Down south [near Albany, WA], they have put wattles into a new habitat where they don't have competition. So the eastern states' species are killing our bushland. We have got to be careful too. But fortunately it is too dry here. Put those species in a high rainfall area and they'll go berserk in the bush. If you are going to introduce a species from interstate, make sure it doesn't take over your own bushland. Most of our weeds here [in Dalwallinu shire] are South African plants. We've got to be careful with things we introduce from South Africa'.[26]

The expressions 'killing our bushland', 'take over your own bushland' and 'go berserk' imply many of Woods and Moriarity's criteria. The exotics are introduced from the Eastern States or South Africa by deliberate human action. The wattles are pre-adapted to the higher rainfall areas of the south coast area of WA, but not to the dry climate of Dalwallinu and the greater Wheatbelt area. Moreover, these weed species historically did not occur in WA and were only recently transported, even within the frame of living community memory. Most importantly, exotic wattles degrade the local plantscape and, as aggressive colonisers, fail the community membership measure.

As the final interviewee presented in this article, Holly Story is an artist who, over the last twenty years, has used local plant materials in prints, embroideries, installations and sculptures. One indigenous species that is essential to Story's botanical art is the Western Australian Bloodroot (*Haemodorum spicatum*), which she uses as a dye. Story commented:

> … from *Haemodorum*, the Blood Root … and the Kangaroo Paw (*Anigozanthos manglesii*) does the same thing … – you can get beautiful pinks and mauves. It's not really a red, it's a range of pinks and mauves that you can push into a bluish colour if you use a different pH in the dye baths. I have learnt to manipulate colour slightly. I just think that's a most gorgeous colour. It's like the South Coast [of WA] sunsets. Especially in winter when the light's coming through the dark clouds, you get these amazing pink and salmon colours'.[27]

In this passage, the visual aspects of Bloodroot embody the aesthetic qualities of the South Coast environment, about five hours south of Perth by car. Indigeneity is an aesthetic category, for Story, that represents the broader environment of which the plant is part and parcel. Despite its aesthetic signification, Bloodroot, in Story's view, is also evolutionarily adapted to the difficult Western Australian climatic context:

> They grow in such difficult places. They seem to have refined everything to the absolute essential, so that the flowers of *Haemodorum* are black basically, and very small'.[28]

Summarising Story's perspective, indigenous plants are those species with aesthetic characteristics that can be manipulated in a tactile artistic practice, resulting in artefacts that are symbolic of the region and its particular beauty.

Conclusion: Rethinking biological nativism

In conclusion, many theorists, including Devine, Hettinger, Low, Mabey and Peretti, have asserted, or implied, that biological nativism does not rest on strong scientific foundations. Although it is clear that the demarcation between indigenous and exotic plants is indistinct at best, these interview excerpts indicate that a native or exotic plant can be constructed in ways not accounted for in Woods and Paul Moriarity's schema. For Kim Fletcher, an exotic plant is one that confounds, interrupts or destroys a family-based sense of place in relation to flora; *exotic* is therefore an emotional extension of the community membership criterion. What is more, David Goodall suggests that exoticism versus indigeneity can be construed at the dynamic interface of science, aesthetics and emotional responses. Ecological adaptation is a core principle for Collin and Joy Wornes in their conceptualisation of weedy tree species. For Holly Story, indigenous Western Australian plants, not exotic South African or Eastern Australian ones, underpin her identity as an artist and provide the means for her to develop creative responses to, and expressions of, regional character. Therefore, the indigenous-exotic binary and the unnatural plantscapes of Western Australia are not only scientific concerns, but also questions of community, culture and human individuality – aspects that should be further considered in oral history research on exoticality and nativeness in WA or elsewhere in the world.

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Putting on a Play: Country Dramatic Societies 1945–1970

Janet McGaw

Abstract

Amateur dramatic societies have existed in Australian country towns since the 1840s, fulfilling an important social and cultural role in places that have little access to professional theatre. For almost a century, numerous factors combined to hinder their long-term viability, including inadequate performance venues, over-reliance on temporary residents, and the absence of metropolitan cultural organisations to provide assistance. This changed after the Second World War when amateur theatre began to expand rapidly across the continent.

Despite their considerable contribution to the life of regional communities, country drama groups have been overlooked in the historiography of Australian theatre, partly because primary sources are scarce and difficult to access. This article shows how oral history can help researchers to recover the history of regional amateur theatre. It draws on interviews I conducted for my PhD thesis *Country Awakening: Amateur Theatre in New South Wales Regional Communities 1945-1970*, completed in 2015.

Background

Over 200 drama groups were established in country New South Wales between 1945 and 1970.[1] They ranged from modest play-reading circles run by the Country Women's Association to large, well-organised dramatic societies offering a regular program of plays and musicals in their own theatre. Some were short-lived; others are still in existence. Some were located in remote areas and were forced by their geography to be self-reliant; others were in regions with several population centres and were able to meet by way of drama festivals and touring. Some were established with the aim of producing serious dramatic works and promoting Australian playwrights; others wanted merely to entertain. Collectively, these groups provided country audiences with locally-produced plays and, in towns not visited by metropolitan touring companies, they were the only theatre available.

Country dramatic societies provide evidence of a rich theatrical life and strong community ties. However, their history is difficult to research because primary sources are scarce and spread over a vast area. Moreover, the sporadic nature of regional amateur theatre has meant that many groups left few traces behind. Where archives survive, they tend to concentrate on ephemeral material relating to individual performances rather than administrative records that document the inner workings of the society, the ebb and flow of membership, and the processes involved in mounting a production.

Sources

In an attempt to overcome the above obstacles when embarking on research for my PhD thesis, *Country Awakening: Amateur Theatre in New South Wales Regional Communities 1945-1970*, I selected three dramatic societies for detailed study. These were: Wagga Wagga School of Arts Players, Broken Hill Repertory Society and Cooma Little Theatre. Wagga Wagga School of Arts Players was established in May 1944 for the purpose of furthering the study of literature and dramatic art.[2] It was one of a number of societies that existed under the umbrella of the School of Arts to stimulate public interest in cultural activities. Broken Hill Repertory Society was established six months later by an ex-theatre professional with the support of the Zinc Corporation, the city's largest mining operation.[3] Its founders had ambitions for the new dramatic society to become part of the international repertory movement that was at that time well-established in Australian capital cities. Cooma Little Theatre, founded in November 1954, was one of a number of cultural organisations that emerged in Cooma during the 1950s to meet the needs of the rapidly expanding and ethnically diverse population that followed commencement of work on the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme.

Each of these groups offered a regular program of full-length productions from a repertoire dominated by British and American drama and comedy, but which also included musicals, revues, melodrama and Australian plays. They organised drama classes, workshops, play readings, discussions on theatrical topics, and a variety of social activities. The School of Arts Players and Cooma Little theatre also participated in drama festivals. Each had access to a rent-free performance venue and rehearsal space, as well as financial and in-kind support from local patrons.

The main criterion for selection of the three case studies was the availability of sufficient primary material to be able to reconstruct the history of each dramatic society, and to determine its role in the local community. Whilst the local sources enabled me to trace the development of each group from its foundation to the end of the 1960s, they left a number of questions unanswered, particularly in relation to the social composition of the membership, the group dynamics, the technical aspects of mounting a local production, and the personal experiences of the people who belonged.[4] To help fill these gaps, I interviewed 17 members and former members of the three dramatic societies, spanning the period 1948 to the present day, all of whom were keen to share what had been, and in some cases still was, an enjoyable and rewarding part of their life. Four participants illustrated their stories by reference to scrapbooks of performance programs, news cuttings, photographs and ephemera relating to the productions they were involved in. Individual recollections gave me a deeper understanding of why people joined a local dramatic society, who the members were, the ways they learned their skills, how they mounted a production with limited resources, and the personal satisfaction they gained during the course of their membership.

Joining up

Unsurprisingly, all of the participants joined the local dramatic society out of an interest in theatre, but for those who were new in town, it was also a way for them to meet people. Ida Buckley, a leading actress with the School of

Arts Players, was born in Adelong and moved to Wagga Wagga when she was 21. She recalled:

> I love theatre. I did a little bit of it at school. We used to have a school play each year and I was really rapt in it. And when I discovered there was a theatre group here, all I wanted to do was join. I came at the end of 1950, and I think it was the next year I found somebody who knew people there who would go along with me. I didn't just want to go on my own. I joined up then and I've been a member ever since.[5]

Cooma Little Theatre played an important role in the social life of newcomers who moved to Cooma in the 1950s and 1960s. Michael Bender was posted to Cooma from Sydney as a relief bank clerk in 1954 and stayed for four years. He heard about the Little Theatre on the grapevine and joined because he had heard it was 'fun', and there were interesting people in the group.[6]

In Broken Hill, stage manager Douglas Jones was 'hooked' after seeing Repertory's production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* in 1963, and made up his mind to become involved:

> A fellow called Bob Cawdle was the chairman. So I tracked him down to one of the Zinc mine residences, not knowing that he was a manager. I was an apprentice. As soon as I mentioned that I was interested in theatre, that was it. He was notorious for recruiting people to work back stage because it was easy to get people to go on stage. So the following Sunday, I started my apprenticeship learning how to build a set and gravitated into stage management from there.[7]

Once they joined, a high level of commitment was required to ensure that a planned production went ahead. In the early years of Broken Hill Repertory Society, rehearsals began at 11:00 pm in the foyer of Johnson's picture theatre after the last show had finished.[8] During the 1960s, Douglas Jones had no hesitation in putting in the necessary hours to stage manage six Repertory productions a year. In 1965, the musical *South Pacific* ran for 20 performances after months of rehearsal.

> That year of *South Pacific*, I reckon us 'techies' would have been involved in something like 45 to 50 performances for the year, and that's apart from what you're doing in between with all the preparatory stuff, building sets or shifting lights around or whatever. There was a lot happening, and you didn't look on it as a duty; it was fun. You did it for the love of it.[9]

The members

Prior to the interviews, I compiled lists of members of each dramatic society from newspaper articles and performance programs, but these sources told me very little about individuals, apart from their name and their role within the group. The interviewees provided valuable biographical information, as well as a general overview of the social composition of the membership. Evelyn Patterson, who worked as a scriptwriter and announcer at radio 2WG in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and who assisted backstage for the School of Arts Players, was the only person in Wagga Wagga who was able to shed light on the membership during that era. She observed that radio announcers were prominent in the early days.[10] Evelyn identified a number of 2WG staff who featured in acting and production roles, as well as people in the professions.

In Cooma, many of the members between 1955 and 1970 worked for the Snowy Mountains Authority. Ray McDermott, a member of the Little Theatre from 1958 to 1962, observed: 'They were mostly Snowy people, but I think they were mainly educated people looking to maybe get into a bit of culture.'[11] The theatre also provided a social outlet for the wives of professional staff who, in accordance with the conventions of the day, did not go out to work. There were at least 47 married couples in the group over a period of 15 years, representing almost one-quarter of the membership.

Broken Hill Repertory Society was the province of salaried employees of the mining companies, middle-class professionals and local business people for at least a decade after its foundation, and was considered outside this milieu to be an elite organisation. When office clerk Eleanor Williams joined in 1957: 'I was aware that I was stepping onto highly treasured ground. It was more or less elitist in those days, professionals. Workers: unknown.'[12] Class divisions were beginning break down by the early 1960s, but lingered on in some quarters. Douglas Jones, an apprentice moulder at the Zinc mine, described his experience on both sides of the class divide. His involvement in Repertory led to accusations by his workmates that he was 'hobnobbing' with the mine managers, but:

> The good thing was that Bob Cawdle made people like me feel welcome. I know that when for instance, he invited one of our make-up people and I to a board meeting, and one of the board member's reactions was along the lines of 'And who are *they*?', Bob's response was: 'They're here at my invitation.' And that was the end of the debate.[13]

Most interviewees commented on the large number of itinerant professionals in their group. School teachers formed the backbone of Broken Hill Repertory Society. In the 1960s, Broken Hill High School was the largest state high school in New South Wales,[14] and that meant a regular turnover of teaching staff on two or three-year postings. According to John Pickup, manager of the local ABC radio station, teachers injected new life into the organisation and provided the bulk of Repertory's actors and producers.[15] This meant that there was never any problem casting six productions a year.

Learning the Ropes

People joined country dramatic societies with varying levels of expertise. Some came with amateur or professional theatrical experience; others were novices who were keen to learn. Training was provided in a number of ways: summer drama schools in Sydney run by the Arts Council; local weekend schools organised by the British Drama League; in-house classes and workshops; and mentoring by professional producers.[16]

Wagga Wagga School of Arts funded the visit of a professional producer annually from 1960 with the aim of raising production standards.[17] Their role was to act as mentor to a nominated assistant producer, select and cast the play, begin the rehearsal process, then hand over to the assistant before returning in the week before opening night.[18] Participants from Wagga Wagga spoke highly of these theatre professionals and the way they inspired their own producers to attempt more challenging plays.[19]

Before the advent of organised drama schools, and for those who were unable to travel to Sydney to attend them, in-house training activities provided an alternative. Ida Buckley, who had no acting experience when she joined the Players, found participation in one-act plays invaluable because each performance was followed by a discussion, and members would offer the actors honest and constructive criticism.[20]

Some members went to extraordinary lengths to learn and improve their skills. Douglas Jones took his role as a stage manager very seriously.

> I used to make contact with stage managers in professional theatres and see if I could score a sort of backstage tour. The best one was [a visit to] the Tivoli Theatre in Melbourne. They allowed me to stay backstage for a performance, which is just about unknown in professional theatre. That was like a master class in stage management for me. They found me a spot sitting with the lighting bloke which was backstage, elevated, looking over the stage. The loud speaker giving the stage manager's call of the show was right next to me so I could hear what they were doing and look down. I had a bird's eye view of the stage. They were the lengths I went to to learn my job as a stage manager.[21]

A place to perform

The availability of a performance venue and somewhere to meet and rehearse was crucial to the long-term survival of a country dramatic society. All three groups were fortunate in this respect. In Wagga Wagga, the Players had access to a room in the School of Arts building that was converted into a small theatre in 1946.[22] Dennis Blackett, who joined the Players in 1961, described it as 'a great little theatre',[23] but it was too small for full-length plays. These were performed at the Wonderland Theatre and St Andrew's church hall. In 1963, the Players moved to a new purpose-built theatre, financed by the local Council and the proceeds of the sale of the School of Arts building. The Civic Theatre gave the Players more scope to produce shows with bigger casts and more elaborate sets, but they lost their spiritual home. Ida Buckley had mixed feelings about the move:

> The theatre opened and oh joy! But we lost a lot in the intimacy and the friendships because the Players' Nights seemed to fall apart and we weren't having the regular get-togethers. If somebody said: 'What do I do to join the School of Arts?' all you could say was: 'Well, pay your money and come along if there's a play being cast and you'll get a Bulletin to tell you', but you couldn't say: 'come to a monthly meeting'. We lost a lot.[24]

In Broken Hill, the Zinc Corporation funded the fit-out of a theatrette at the Police Boys' Club in a building owned by the New South Wales Police Department. John Barrett, who joined Repertory in 1965, described the atmosphere at this venue:

> Everybody used to be done up in a suit and tie. And if it was a summer play, it used to be bloody hot out there in that theatre. There was no air-conditioning whatsoever in those days, not even fans, because there was no exhaust.[25]

In early 1963, Repertory secured interest-free loans from the Mine Managers' Association and the ANZ Bank to build and fit out a new theatre, the Repertory Playhouse. Eleanor Williams, who acted as one of three guarantors, never doubted that the money would be repaid, despite her father's fear that they may lose their home if Repertory defaulted on the loan.[26]

Cooma Little Theatre was the beneficiary of the Snowy Mountains Authority's policy of encouraging and supporting the extra-curricular activities of its huge workforce.[27] This included a rent-free performance space in the recreation hall at East Camp Barracks, as well as club rooms for rehearsal, committee meetings and social events. Ray McDermott described an early club room, a disused barrack in Cooma West, where dust was a problem:

> How we weren't asphyxiated I don't know. After a show, we'd have a get together in our hall [club room], play music as loud as possible, with dancing, and have a few drinks and generally muck up. And that's where we had our committee meetings and rehearsals.[28]

Behind the scenes

The interviewees shed light on various technical matters that were not recorded in the written sources. Some participants described the creative methods they employed to produce sound, lighting and special effects. Cooma Little Theatre benefited from the technical expertise of the electrical engineers in the group. These included Ray McDermott, who built the amplifying system.

> I built a mixing panel with tape decks and turntables and the whole bit, so we actually had quite professional sound backing our plays and sound effects and so on. If I wanted something made, I'd be ringing up the base electrical workshops. It was wonderful to have that sort of facility.[29]

Broken Hill Repertory Society had a regular backstage crew who worked together on set construction, lighting, sound, stage management and make-up for every production, but sometimes the producer took charge.[30] Eleanor Williams described how she achieved the sound effects for *The Diary of Anne Frank* in June 1963.

> Luckily, the manager of the ABC, John Pickup, had a portable tape recorder. We wanted the Germans chasing somebody up a side street. And so we did that on the Adelaide Road at 6 o'clock in the morning with me in a pair of mine boots, being the runner, and then two of my friends who were German screaming out behind 'Halt! Halt! Stop! Stop you two!' It was perfect on tape. [Then] we had to give the impression of the door being broken down at the end of the play when the Germans were breaking in. So we got some fruit boxes – in those days they were wooden fruit boxes – and the boys had a couple of sledgehammers, and it was perfect. It was the most frightening sound.[31]

Memorable productions

I asked each participant if any one production stood out in their memory. Ray McDermott had parts in a number of plays, but his favourite was the melodrama *Only an Orphan Girl* in 1962*,* in which he played Arthur Rutherford, the villain of the piece.[32] This was Cooma Little Theatre's most successful production to date, running for a record number of performances in Cooma before being taken on tour to other settlements and work camps in the Snowy Mountains. It was presented in the style of a Victorian music-hall, and the audience was encouraged to hiss the villain and cheer the heroine. Ray produced a folder of memorabilia that included the performance program, song sheet, production photographs and publicity material, most of which was not available elsewhere. He also described a performance in the small rural community of Berridale where the cast was thrown into some confusion by the audience's reaction:

> Of course it was a melodrama and overacted. They took it seriously. You'd do a scene and come back and say, 'God, what's happening here?' And I remember Charles [the director] said, 'They think it's for real'. He said, 'look, I'll tell you what we'll do, play it straight'. That was the most amazing experience. The boisterous audience in Cooma were yelling out at us and throwing peanuts, and I'd answer them back. Berridale all sat there, quiet …[33]

In Wagga Wagga, Nancy Blacklow, who wrote a weekly theatre column for the *Daily Advertiser*, had fond memories of Terence Rattigan's costume play *The Sleeping Prince*, produced by the Players in 1965.

> [It] was quite beautiful. It had a lovely cast. I was doing props for it and the woman who was playing the showgirl was a very, very good friend of mine. At one stage they have supper and they had little squares of bread with caviar on. I used to have to make that each night and I'd put dollops of Vegemite on for them. I was running late one night and I was out of Vegemite and I grabbed what I could. I put coffee on and didn't tell her what I'd done. She took one mouthful and gagged and it was really quite appalling. But apart from that it was an elegant play.[34]

Eleanor Williams believed that her production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* was her most powerful:

> Even today, I can go out and talk to people, and they remember, and that's 58 years ago. It's something that you implanted in their minds. And as somebody said to me the other day, in *The Diary of Anne Frank,* the way we did it in that last few minutes, Edith Frank squatting on the floor with Anna, saying the twenty-third psalm. When I think of it, you know, you still get a bit emotional. And then this racking on the door and voices, and then we just completely blacked it out, shut the curtains. There was not a sound in that audience.[35]

Having a good time

Participants had fond memories of the social life and long-lasting friendships that grew out of their membership of the dramatic society. John Curtis, actor and producer with Broken Hill Repertory Society in the 1960s, gave a vivid account of the all-night parties that followed the last performance of every production.

> Socially, it was terrific. If we'd done six or seven performances, usually over a two-week period, you'd get to the last one, then you'd all go to somebody's place for a party that would last all night. Some people were flaked out and sleeping on the settee and some of us were cooking egg and bacon and having champagne for breakfast. It was just fun times. You had something in common that bound you together and you made good friends.[36]

Fay Walters, who came from a Wagga Wagga theatrical family, spoke about the way a shared love of theatre led to strong friendships within the Players:

> The greatest thing for me was the friends, the close association of a lot of people who were members. They had a life at home, but their social life was the theatre as well as their entertainment.[37]

Members gained social and theatrical attributes that they were able to carry over into other aspects of their lives. John Curtis went on to become a Minister of Religion and has been able to draw on skills he learned with Repertory to deliver his sermons.[38] In Wagga Wagga, Ida Buckley overcame her shyness to become one of the Players' most popular actresses:

> If they'd put me on stage first thing I would have probably died of fright. It was the aura of all these people who knew so much about theatre. But I think it helped me tremendously, and I don't think I would have made quite such a success had I not had the confidence that I gained through being in the School of Arts. And I saw it happen to other people. They'd come in, some shy little person, and they'd blossom and go on and do all sorts of things.[39]

Above all, participants achieved a sense of personal satisfaction from being part of a team effort and giving pleasure to their audiences. The following comments by John Curtis were typical:

> If people responded positively, you felt really good that you'd achieved something. You were there in one accord. You had a common goal and you worked hard to do it. It was never easy, holding down a job with family responsibilities and other commitments. To give that much time to it and try and do it well – it was a huge effort but it was really worth it. It taught me a lot.[40]

Conclusion

The aim of my thesis was to examine a neglected aspect of Australian theatre history. I was able to construct a narrative from the available primary and secondary sources in Sydney and in regional collections, but my understanding of the topic was deepened by the oral contribution of members and former members of the three country dramatic societies I selected for my case studies. The personal stories added valuable contextual detail and personal insights that was not available in the written sources.

There is still a great deal of research to be carried out at local level if we are to have a fuller understanding of the role of amateur drama in regional communities during different periods of Australian history. In the absence of a wide body of primary material relating to amateur theatre, the oral testimony of people who are or have been involved is an essential component of this research.

Endnotes

[1] I compiled a list of 225 dramatic societies, not including groups in Newcastle and Wollongong, from the following sources: Arts Council Annual Reports and scrapbooks, MLMSS 9055/33, Mitchell Library, Sydney; British Drama League Council minutes, membership application forms, and festival programs, MLMSS 3019 Y596-Y598, MLMSS 3019, add-on 1218 MLK 2327; Wagga Wagga School of Arts drama festival programs, RW/129, RW/150, Wagga Wagga School of Arts Records, Charles Sturt University Regional Archives, Wagga Wagga; various regional newspapers accessed via Trove, **http://www.trove.nla.gov.au.**

[2] Minutes of meeting to form a society as an addition to the services of the School of Arts, 29 May 1944, RW117/41, Wagga Wagga School of Arts records, Charles Sturt University Regional Archives, Wagga Wagga. Originally known as the Wagga Wagga Literary and Dramatic Society, its name was changed to the Wagga Wagga School of Arts Players in 1947.

[3] 'Formation of B.H. Repertory Society', *Barrier Miner*, Broken Hill, 25 October 1944, p. 2. Broken Hill Repertory Society is referred to by its colloquial name 'Repertory' throughout most of this article.

[4] The main collections I drew on were: Charles Sturt University Regional Archives, Wagga Wagga; Outback Archives, Broken Hill City Library; Cooma Library Local Studies Collection; Scrapbooks and ephemera held in Cooma Little Theatre.

[5] Ida Buckley, interviewed by author, Wagga Wagga, July 2013, recording and transcript held by author.

[6] Michael Bender, interviewed by author, Bodalla, March 2013, recording and transcript held by author.

[7] Douglas Jones, interviewed by author, Broken Hill, August 2013, recording and transcript held by author.

[8] Eleanor Williams, interviewed by author, Broken Hill, August 2013, recording and transcript held by author. Johnsons picture theatre was managed by Victor Bindley, founder of Broken Hill Repertory Society and Director of Productions 1944-1948.

[9] Douglas Jones, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*

[10] Evelyn Patterson, interviewed by author, Wagga Wagga, July 2013, recording and transcript held by author.

[11] Ray McDermott, interviewed by author, Artarmon, March 2013, recording and transcript held by author.

[12] Eleanor Williams, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*

[13] Douglas Jones, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*

[14] P A Le May (ed.), *Broken Hill High School: A Social History 1920-1995*, New South Wales Department of Education, Broken Hill, 1995, p. 9.

[15] John Pickup, interviewed by author by telephone, September 2013, unrecorded.

[16] Summer drama schools organised by the Arts Council began in 1957; British Drama League weekend schools began in Wauchope in 1954.

[17] Nancy Blacklow, interviewed by author, Wagga Wagga, July 2013, recording and transcript held by author.

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *Ibid*; Fay Walters, interviewed by author, Wagga Wagga, July 2013, recording and transcript held by author; Dennis Blackett, interviewed by author, Wagga Wagga, July 2013, recording and transcript held by author.

[20] Ida Buckley, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*

[21] Douglas Jones, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*

[22] Minutes of meeting of Wagga Wagga School of Arts General Committee, 12 August 1946, RW117/10; Wagga Wagga School of Arts *Bulletin,* September 1946, RW 117/10, Wagga Wagga School of Arts records, Charles Sturt University Regional Archives, Wagga Wagga.

[23] Ida Buckley, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*; Dennis Blackett, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*

[24] Ida Buckley, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*

[25] John Barrett, interviewed by author, Broken Hill, August 2013, recording and transcript held by author.

[26] Eleanor Williams, interviewed by author, *op. cit.* The loans were paid off by March 1978.

[27] W. Hudson, Direction no. 58, Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority Amenities Services, 13 November 1950, NAA A2915/1, Snowy Hydro Records, National Archives of Australia, Canberra.

[28] Ray McDermott, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*

[29] *Ibid*.

[30] Douglas Jones, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*

[31] Eleanor Williams, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*

[32] Ray McDermott, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*

[33] *Ibid*.

[34] Nancy Blacklow, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*

[35] Eleanor Williams, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*

[36] John Curtis, interviewed by author, Broken Hill, August 2013, recording and transcript held by author.

[37] Fay Walters, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*

[38] John Curtis, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*

[39] Ida Buckley, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*

[40] John Curtis, interviewed by author, *op. cit.*

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Call Sign 11 Alpha:
A soldier's perspective of combat in Vietnam

Mark Jamieson

Abstract

The primary focus of this paper is to provide the reader with one account and a glimpse into the life of a Forward Observer Assistant (FO Ack) during the Vietnam War. John Harms served with 102 Field Battery,[1] 12 Field Regiment Royal Australian Artillery (RAA) in Vietnam from 3 March 1968 to 4 February 1969. The article is based on oral interviews I conducted as a means of preserving the past. As James Bennett mentions in his, 'Human Values in Oral History',[2] oral history represents the lived event. [3] By interviewing John for this work, I have been able to continue with the tradition of oral history, a practice that is in itself steeped in history.

Introduction

18 August 2016 – what is the significance of this day? For some it is just another day of the year, but for others its significance is far more important as 18 August is Vietnam Veterans day, and just like on ANZAC day, veterans, families and friends attend services to remember Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

With access to veterans and veteran groups in today's climate, we as historians are spoilt for choice when it comes to prospective interviewees. With most Vietnam veterans entering into their seventies, those I have been closely associated with are more than happy to talk about and recount their experiences of being involved in what was, up until the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, Australia's longest war. That said, of course some may prefer to keep the past in the past, but for those willing, the opportunity to talk about their involvement in Vietnam is a cathartic and rewarding experience.

This draws me to the role of the historian, both the amateur and the professional, to tap into this rich vein of knowledge, and further extract, explore and most importantly with the veteran's permission, begin to recount their stories. For this purpose, oral history is the perfect tool to gather information for those seeking the worm's eye view and the lived experience of past events.

Methodology

Oral history is a practice of recording the past that extends back to the times of Herodotus, the father of history.[4] The objective of interviewing John Harms for this paper was to gain an insight into his role as a Forward Observer Assistant (FO Ack), and to inform the reader with what an FO Ack did in Vietnam, a role that many may not know too much about. More importantly, it provided John with the opportunity to tell his story. Paul Thompson, Allessandro Portelli and Nigel C. Hunt are all exponents of this art of gathering oral history. Thompson reasons that oral history has been, and remains in many ways, a principle source of communicating past human experience. It offers insights into areas of history not always covered by the written records.[5] Portelli, in 'The Time of My Life: Functions of Time in Oral History' states 'To tell a story is to take up arms against the threat of time, to resist time or to harness it. The telling of a story preserves the teller from oblivion'.[6] For Hunt, oral history is not an objectification of the past, but is the past as viewed by the participant, thus giving the participant a voice.[7] Hunt further expresses that this voice is vitally important as it provides a means for those who, more often than not, remain faceless, but who are no less important than the political and community leaders whose lives are recorded in the written record.[8]

Having interviewed several Vietnam veterans for my University Honours thesis, I am well aware of the guidelines set out by Raymond Opdenakker[9] and Charles T. Morrissey[10] in their work, 'Advantages and Disadvantages of Four Interview Techniques in Qualitative Research' and 'On Oral History Interviewing'. Both authors provide ample evidence around the importance of the face-to-face interview, and for the interviewer to have a solid understanding of the research area. Further adding to the interview guidelines set out by Opdenakker and Morrissey, Victor Minichiello, Rosalie Aroni et al, see the in-depth interview as being utilised to gain an insight into the interviewees' perspective. This technique and can assist in providing the human experience.[11]

Drawing on the above-mentioned works, I sent John a questionnaire advising him that the questions were optional, and he could elect to add or detract what he considered reasonable. The interviews took place at various times, through face-to-face meetings and telephone calls, with all interviews recorded using a digital recorder. Transcripts of each interview were typed up verbatim, and are kept in my possession for future use.

Talking about war

Oral history plays an important role in military history, since, without the input of those who served in the theatre of war, we would be solely reliant on official histories, commanders' diaries, after-action reports or other documentation. Official histories primarily draw upon the abovementioned, and this is evident in 'On the Offensive: The Australian Army in the Vietnam War 1967-1968',[12] the official history series devoted to the Vietnam War. The purpose of the official histories is to provide an overview of events, but what they do not always convey is the human value and experience associated with war. In an article titled 'Human Values in Oral History',[13] James Bennett establishes the importance of oral history as it represents the lived event, and by presenting the work in the words of the interviewee, it conveys an image of the person that becomes personal, not impersonal.[14] Bennett sees oral history as even more basic, and the key indicator is the *I remember*, as this is the personal viewpoint, or the human value.[15] Their individual memories, the *I remember*, belongs to them. This supports the objective of capturing the soldier's memory through the use of oral history.

Military history and oral history are intertwined; this is evident throughout time as veterans have told their stories. Edward M. Coffman, in 'Talking about War: Reflections of doing Oral History and Military History', recounts William Alexander Perry, a World War One

combat veteran. Perry explained how war becomes etched in the memory and that it had meaning, unlike daily life.[16] Barbara Allen in her work, 'The Personal Point of View in Orally Communicated History', compares written history and oral history. Allen stresses that each present a different type of history, but orally communicated history compliments, rather that supplements the written record.[17] Oral history is primarily event focused; something that is pertinent to the interviewee. Allen further adds that interviewees may include or exclude certain events when orally communicated because of a value. Each event incurs a value that is more or less important to the individual.[18] This is evident in the interviews I conducted with John in regards to his memory of events in Vietnam. John was involved in the Battle for Fire Support Patrol Base Coral (FSPB), 12 May to 6 June 1968, South Vietnam.[19] His recollections of this battle are rather non-existent, yet other events, like his first real contact with the enemy, and his hospitalisation because of a Chinese Communist anti-personnel mine are very clear. This positions Allen's theory of event-based oral history as being intensely personalised and why the human value is as equally important as written history.

Well done that man

Like many soldiers past and present, the veterans of Vietnam chose to enter into the military for many reasons, whether for the adventure, which we hear about for those who enlisted in World War One and World War Two, or for a trade, or for better opportunities. Each soldier has their own reasons for enlisting, and access to war diaries can provide us with this insight. But diaries, like official histories, do not always capture the lived event that is so highly spoken of. Fortunately, for all amateur and professional historians, oral and historically trained, we are still able to meet face-to-face with these Vietnam veterans and record the human value or 'lived event' of their experiences of war. I conducted my interviews with John Harms with this goal in mind.

John's path to the military was similar to many of those who adopted the khaki in conflicts many years before. Growing up in Western Australia, John left school in 1960 and started working as a jackaroo on a 1.25 million-acre cattle station. Although, this was a job that he enjoyed, and work that provided John with open spaces and adventure, something was missing. In 1963, John left the cattle station, journeyed from Western Australia and joined the Australian Army for a military career that would span twelve years. After an initial overseas deployment to Malaya with 'A' Battery RAA, in 1968 with the war in Vietnam at its height, John transferred to 102 Field Battery RAA in preparation for deployment to South Vietnam. After returning from Vietnam, John was promoted to Sergeant and posted to 16 Air Defence Regiment RAA then to First Recruit Training Battalion (1 RTB) at Kapooka.

Interviews I conducted for my University of Wollongong Honours thesis revealed an important aspect of the soldier in regards what they thought about going to Vietnam and war. This is by no means a representation of all Vietnam veterans, just those I interviewed that came from 102 Field Battery, viz.: Lieutenant Ian Ahearn, Bombardier Larry D'Arcy, Gunners' Tom Carmody and David Thomas. When asked what they thought about going to Vietnam, Ian Ahearn responded, 'it was the biggest show in town and I wasn't too worried at the time'.[20] Larry D'Arcy also expressed this sentiment when asked why he transferred from 'A' Battery to 102 Field Battery, 'to go to Vietnam was to do what I was trained to do, to be a soldier'.[21] Tom Carmody commented that, 'I didn't really give it too much thought; we were trained, so I wasn't really worried about going',[22] and David Thomas responded with, 'I was all for it, I had no problems whatsoever, and going to Vietnam did not worry me at all'.[23] John has also expressed this sentiment, when reasoning his transfer from 'A' Battery to 102 Field Battery for service in Vietnam and later while in Vietnam, why he wanted to get more involved in the action. Apart from Australian Vietnam veterans, in a recent book, 'Voices from the Vietnam War: Stories from American, Asian, and Russian Veterans', Curt Mason joined the United States Marines in 1969 and served with Headquarters and Support Company, Third Battalion, First Marine Division, U.S. Marine Corps, 1970 South Vietnam. Curt reasoned that, 'he wanted to participate in the most significant event of his generation, and didn't want to spend the rest of his life on the outside looking in'.[24] This small sample of veterans' responses further illustrates what Barbara Allen points to in her article, when she states that oral history is primarily event-focused; something that is pertinent to the individual.[25]

In country

John landed at Ton Son Nhut airport, South Vietnam on 3 March 1968 with 102 Field Battery to begin a 12-month tour of duty. From there, the battery was transferred to Nui Dat, home of the First Australian Task Force. John's first operational experience began about a week or so after landing in South Vietnam. His role was the Battery Commander Driver/Operator and he went out on operations with the Seventh Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (7RAR).

> It was a rude awakening, as on our first night a "flock" – I'll call them that name – they were, from memory, three American Huey gunships – decided the hill we had harboured up on for the night looked easier than the one that they were supposed to strafe and rocket. After some frantic radio calls, somebody got through to them that they were strafing the wrong hill, obviously to everyone's immense relief. That was my introduction to operations in Vietnam.[26]

As I mentioned earlier in 'Talking about War', memory recollection for the individual is defined by their very personal experience. When interviewing 102 Field Battery veterans who were engaged in the battle for FSPB Coral,[27] they all remember that battle as being prominent in their memories about Vietnam. John's recollection of his involvement in that battle has been left hazy.

> As far as what I did, I have no idea. All I remember was the first night, then when the bodies were buried, eating a can of ham and lima beans. In regards to what I did at Coral I cannot remember. Everything is just a blank.[28]

After FSPB Coral, John decided to become more involved, and an opportunity arose when an FO Ack position became available with the First Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), A Company (Coy). John

immediately applied and as fate had it, the Battery Commander who was his boss agreed. John quickly packed up his gear and joined the A Coy lines, which were on the perimeter wire at the back gate to Nui Dat.

One of the first things John learned was that what he had previously been taught no longer applied, due to the type of terrain in which he would now be operating. John was now the eyes at the sharp end of operations, and his communications back to 102 Field Battery needed to be clear and precise to avoid dropping a round short, or off target, which could have disastrous results for himself and those around him. The role of the FO Ack could be difficult at times, as the Forward Observers (FOs) were generally unable to see where the supporting artillery rounds landed, or the exact location of the enemy.

For John, his method was to rely primarily on the sound of impacting artillery and adjust fire accordingly. In addition to this, John was also required to travel with the forward platoon, while the boss stayed behind at Company Head Quarters (CHQ). As a consequence, John was conducting the fire missions, which never occurred in the training back home. This job was generally the responsibility of the FO Officer, usually a Captain, who would conduct the shoot, but now John called in the artillery.

Fire mission orders and the FO Ack

Fire Orders are complicated, with specific words having specific meanings. The ultimate aim being to NOT make a mistake, either in the transmission of the orders over the radio, or the transmission of a 'different' set of orders to the guns. I say 'different', because the orders from the Forward Observer (FO) relate to grid references and bearings, FO to Target, and this must be converted, by the Command Post (CP), into a bearing gun-target, an elevation (for range) and so on. Finally, for this preamble, the orders FO to CP are repeated back, verbatim, so the orders would go, '10 this is 12, Fire Mission Battery, over'; '12 this is 10, Fire Mission Battery, out,' where 12 is the FO and 10 is the CP.

At any given time, the artillery could be anywhere from five to eight kilometres away and they would fire and drop rounds where indicated by the FO. For simplicity, the following does not include the repeated orders, but provides the FO set of orders and shows the complexities faced by John as he called in supporting artillery.

Forward Observers Sequence of Orders: (orders in bold were mandatory)
Observer's Identification – 11 Alpha (John's call sign in South Vietnam)
Warning Order – 'Fire Mission…' (can be one, two, three, four, five guns, or Fire Mission Battery – all six guns). Larger missions would be Fire Mission Regiment, Fire Mission Division, and so on.
Location of Target - (normally a grid reference).
Direction – (the line, along which the FO will order corrections to the fall of shot).
Description of Target - (ridgeline, bunker…… etc.).
Method of Engagement - (may include trajectory, ammunition, distribution of fire, etc.).
At My Command - (the Command Post (CP) must report "Ready" when the guns are ready to fire).
Method of Adjustment or Method of Fire For Effect - (one gun is normally adjusted onto the target, the remainder of the guns 'follow' the orders but do not fire; OR the FO can use all six guns (Bty Adjust) which was the norm in Vietnam when Australian infantry were in contact with the enemy. Adjustment was followed by Fire for Effect, e.g. 'Five Rounds Fire for Effect' when all guns fire five rounds).

Report Time of Flight/Splash - (the CP informs the FO of the Time of Flight, so that the FO can calculate when to observe, OR Splash is reported to the FO five seconds before the round(s) is expected to hit the target). These details are available from Range Tables for the gun in use.

A full set of Orders, for a simple fire mission, might look something like this, without the Command Post (CP) repeating back the orders:

Forward Observer (FO) to the Command Post (CP)
'10 this is 12, Fire Mission Battery, over' – (FO wants all six guns)
'Grid 123456, Direction 166, over' – (at that grid reference, and I will adjust fire along the 1600mil line – 90 degrees).
'Enemy Bunkers, over' – (this is what we are shooting at).
'Adjust Fire, over' – (you select a gun and commence firing as soon as you are ready).
The fire orders are transformed from the Command Post (CP) to guns. When the guns receive, and understand the orders, they acknowledge the orders by activating a 'light on the Tannoy'.

The orders would then proceed:

Command Post (CP) to the guns
'Fire Mission Battery' - (as ordered by the FO).
'HE M51 Quick, Charge 4, No. 3 Load' – (ammunition to be used, the fuse setting, and nomination of the gun, which will adjust fire).
'Bearing 5650' – (bearing gun-target).
'Elevation 327' – (elevation required, with Charge 4, in order to hit the target).
'No 3, Adjust Fire' - (No. 3 can fire when the gun is laid). As soon as No. 3 fires, the Signaller in the CP will report "Shot, over" to the FO, to warn him that the projectile is on its way.[29]

With both of these sets of orders (FO–CP and CP–guns), there are a multitude of variations and almost no two sets of orders would be the same. The important part of the fire mission is the sequence of orders; this is something that is critical, especially when the artillery is firing their guns in support of the infantry. The worst-case scenario is a round falling among their troops, creating a blue on blue. To prevent a blue on blue from happening, the sequence of fire is known by all so that if an order is missed, the receiver of the order can ask for verification of what is missing.[30]

Operational (Op) involvement

Following is a list of operations that John was involved in while serving in South Vietnam.

Op Toan Thang II: 12 May – 6 June
Company (Coy) Operations: 6 July – 21 July
Op Elwood: 23 July
Op Platypus: 29 July – 6 August
Op Nowra: 8 August – 6 September
Op Hawkesbury: 12 September – 24 September
Op Windsor: 29 September – 11 October
Op Capitol 28 October – 24 November

John requiring some assistance to get out of the mud while on operations.[31]

Contact

John clearly remembers his first contact with the enemy, which occurred as they were making a river crossing. Just as John and his radio operator were starting to make their way up the riverbank, intense small arms fire erupted to their front, shredding a large clump of bamboo, making it quite hazardous to cross. While this was happening the Company Commander was calling for immediate rounds on the ground, and this was John's first real fire mission.

> To say it was daunting was an understatement bearing in mind that we did not have GPS, excellent maps and so on to determine our exact position on the ground, relative to the target. In fact, all we had by today's standard were rudimentary maps, counting our steps and a prismatic compass.[32]

Contacts with the enemy soon became commonplace and John's confidence in his navigational skills sharpened. It was just after one particular contact, John found, due to the extremely dense vegetation, that trying to direct the rounds was somewhat haphazard, and more than likely not as effective as they should be.

> After that operation I spoke to my boss about the accuracy of our mission and he suggested we use white phosphorous (WP) as ranging rounds until we had them on target, then switch to high explosive (HE).[33]

The plan was adopted and proved to be highly successful most of the time, but John still felt that despite the use of WP it was still difficult to put the rounds where they would cause maximum damage to the enemy. His decision was to get closer to the contact area and to move with the forward section, up to the very front. Captain Jacobs agreed with the idea and on the next operation, John and his radio operator, Gunner Barry, did just that.

On a few occasions when it was necessary, artillery rounds were called in very close, and orders were given to the guns 'DANGER CLOSE'. This call was sometimes required as the enemy had developed a tactic of getting as close as possible to the Australian position to avoid being caught by the Australian artillery. By employing the danger close tactic, John was able to get rounds in amongst the enemy positions. This tactic was only used when the artillery guns were to the rear so the rounds were coming in over his head, and when hitting the ground and exploding, the most dangerous shrapnel would fan out in a forward pattern. Some infantry soldiers, however, were not always happy with the FO Ack.

> The only problem was the grunts [sic] would loudly complain and strongly question if I knew what I was doing, as what was known as dead shrapnel would be landing in and around us. The danger was in fact minimal and the effect on the enemy was as expected – I think they may have been somewhat displeased.[34]

Anti-personnel mine incident

John explained that while on operations, when a contact occurred with the enemy, he felt that it was quite exciting, and at 23 years of age his only answer was 'that most males in their youth feel a sense of invulnerability and it never occurs to you that you could be next'.[35] That sense of invulnerability was soon tested during Operation (Op) Capitol when John was wounded in action (WIA) as a result of a well-placed Chinese Communist-supplied anti-personnel command-detonated mine. John's last fire mission while on Op Capitol occurred as they came upon a large enemy bunker system/training area, and very soon, they came under enemy fire. Moving into the complex John was greeted by a very strange sight.

> There was this small monkey sitting in the dust and dirt, obviously terrified, with huge eyes, and with six or so scrawny chickens at his/her feet. As a chicken wandered nearly out of the monkey's reach it would stretch out grasp it and pull it back closer to itself; it must have been comforting for it, and it was a very strange sight.[36]

John continued into the bunker system with the lead section. They had only moved a short distance into some particularly thick scrub when a massive dark red explosion detonated with black smoke, followed by a huge cloud of dust. John found himself winded and flat on his back. Not sure of what had occurred, he sat up and reached out for his weapon only to find that it was not in sight and must have been blown out of his hands.

> I then went to stand, and my left leg wouldn't function properly, and the pain started to set in. I looked down expecting the worst, as there was quite a lot of blood around my leg. Shrapnel struck me just below my left knee and left side of my foot, breaking a toe. I also had my rifle blown out of my hands and never did find it. I was lucky as at the time I was carrying my rifle across my body, barrel pointing down when the mine exploded, it must have taken some of the impact.[37]

Re-gaining his hearing, John was then aware of the incoming rounds that were quite close and cracking in and around his position. With very little cover, John made his way to a small depression in the ground that was able to provide him with some cover. At least 15 to 20 minutes passed until the platoon Sergeant Towns and Gunner Black were able to reach John and stretcher him back to a relatively quieter area where those killed in

action (KIA) and wounded in action (WIA) were placed. This position, John thinks, was A Coy CHQ.

Dust-off

Due to the trees in the area, the Dust-off helicopters were unable to land. They had to hover above the tree tops to enable extraction of the KIAs and WIAs. Some time passed before a RAAF helicopter arrived on the scene, only to leave, presumably as it was being shot at. This, as John recalls, 'was very disappointing'. A short time later another helicopter was hovering above them – this time it was the American pilots, who quickly lowered the extraction equipment and commenced winching up the WIAs.

John was the lucky last to go, and as he was being winched up, above the noise of the helicopter he could hear small arms fire cracking and ripping through the canopy presumably directed at the chopper. Next thing, John felt himself moving not only straight up, but also swinging forward through the trees as the helicopter quickly moved out of the contact area. To his immense relief, he was finally winched up, reached the skids of the helicopter and pulled in. The helicopter then continued to the port of Vung Tau and to the Australian Military hospital where he was to spend the next four weeks in recovery.

The mine incident was John's last fire mission in South Vietnam, and after being released from hospital, he re-joined 102 Field Battery on operations until their return home in 1969. He was promoted to Sergeant and posted to 16 Air Defence Regiment RAA then to 1 RTB at Kapooka. John married in 1969, and took his discharge in 1971. He spent a short period working in his father-in-law's spray painting business before joining the NSW Corrective Services in 1978. After a successful 16-year career, John retired as an Acting Superintendent.

Conclusion

Speaking with John and other veterans during the course of my studies and writings about their involvement in South Vietnam has been a worthy experience. The interviews provide the veterans opportunities to give a very personal account, and an insight into a period of their lives that many will never have the privilege of knowing; and also, by interviewing the veterans, I have been able to contribute to the field of oral history by adding the 'human value' that Bennet speaks about in his article. Having been to many 102 CORAL Battery reunions, meeting with the veterans, their wives and families, I have been able to enter into a very tight-knit community. This draws me back to Bennett.

In its very form, oral history affirms that human experience is not a consumer enterprise; rather, it is a matter of preserving life as much as it is a matter of preserving lives, and oral history itself says: 'Here something about human existence is worth remembering and preserving, something is not consumable'.[38]

Endnotes

[1] I have used 102 Field Battery for this article, as this was their title at that time. In 2008 at the 40th Anniversary of the battle for FSPB Coral, 102 Field Battery received the honour title and are now 102 CORAL Battery.

[2] Bennett, James. 'Human Values in Oral History', *Oral History Review,* vol. 11 (1983), pp.1-15.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[4] Hunt, Nigel. C. *Memory, War and Trauma,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 98.

[5] Thompson, Paul. 'The Voice of the Past', in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 25.

[6] Portelli, Allessandro. 'The Time of My Life: Functions of Time in Oral History', *International Journal of Oral History*, Vol. 2, no. 3, November (1981), p. 162.

[7] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, pp. 108-109.

[8] *Ibid*.

[9] Opdenakker, Raymond. 'Advantages and Disadvantages of Four Interview Techniques in Qualitative Research', *Qualitative Social Research,* vol. 7, no. 4, September (2006), pp. 1-13.

[10] Morrissey, Charles T. 'On oral history interviewing', in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson's (eds), *The Oral History Reader,* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 107-113.

[12] Minichiello, Victor, Aroni, Rosalie, Timewell, Eric, Alexander, Loris. *In-Depth Interviewing: Researching people* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire Pty Limited, 1990), p. 8.

[12] McNeill, Ian and Ekins, Ashley. *On the Offensive: The Australian Army in the Vietnam War 1967-1968,* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2003), pp. 347-381.

[13] Bennett, 'Human Values in Oral History', pp.1-15.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[16] Coffman, Edward M. 'Talking about War: Reflections on Doing Oral History and Military History', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 87, no. 2, September (2000), p. 582.

[17] Allen, Barbara. 'The Personal Point of View in Orally Communicated History', *Western Folklore,* Vol. 38, no. 2, April (1979), p. 113.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 115.

[19] Jamieson, Mark. 'Our guys were very good. We were a very capable battery, in fact we were an arrogant bunch. We were good: Fire Support Patrol Base Coral 12 May to 6 June 1968, South Vietnam', (Bachelor of Arts Honours thesis, School of Humanities and Social Inquiry, University of Wollongong, 2014), pp.1-112.

[20] Ahearn, Ian, interviewed by Mark Jamieson, February 2013, tape and transcript held by author.

[21] D'Arcy, Larry, interviewed by Mark Jamieson, February 2013, tape and transcript held by author.

[22] Carmody, Tom, interviewed by Mark Jamieson, June 2013, tape and transcript held by author.

[23] Thomas, David, interviewed by Mark Jamieson, March 2013, tape and transcript held by author.

[24] Li, Xiaobing. *Voices from the Vietnam War: Stories from American, Asian, and Russian Veterans,* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky), p. 112.

[25] Allen, 'The Personal Point of View in Orally Communicated History', p. 115.

[26] Harms, John, interviewed by Mark Jamieson, April 2015, tape and t'script held by author.

[27] Jamieson, 'Our guys were very good', pp.1-112.

[28] Harms, John, interviewed by Mark Jamieson, February 2016, tape and transcript held by author.

[29] *Ibid*.

[30] Jamieson, Mark. *365 and a Wakey: As told by Sergeant Larry D'Arcy*, (New South Wales, 2013), pp. 92-95.

[31] Photographer Unknown.

[32] Harms, interviewed by Mark Jamieson, October 2015, tape and transcript held by author.

[33] John Harms, interviewed by Mark Jamieson, October 2015, tape and transcript held by author.

[34] *Ibid*.

[35] *Ibid*.

[36] *Ibid*.

[37] *Ibid*.

[38] Bennett, 'Human Values in Oral History', p. 5.

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Shop Talk: Revisiting Business History and Oral History*

Matthew Bailey & Robert Crawford

**This paper has been peer-reviewed*

Abstract

This article argues that oral history has the potential to extend our understandings of Australian firms, business community, industry leaders and employees, yet few academics working in these fields have integrated it into their research. To illustrate our claims, we draw on oral histories gathered from two distinct but related industries – the advertising profession and the retail property sector – focusing on the hiring process and career paths of interviewees. By revealing some of the insights we have gained from these respective projects, we forward the case for academic business historians to pay greater attention to oral history and the opportunities and insights that can be gleaned from such an approach.

* * * * *

Reflecting on her career as a secretary in the 1960s, Gay Merchant fondly recalls her time at the Jackson Wain agency in North Sydney:

> You could get up to stuff that was harmless, but you had no fear that there was going to be serious consequences. You know, that was the essential feeling of the place. There was a bit of liberty because you worked in advertising.

Despite the fun working in an agency, Merchant was obliged to leave when she announced that she would be marrying a colleague. She subsequently took up a position with an importing firm, where the atmosphere was significantly more austere:

> It was a major shock to me. They paid a lot more money, but I couldn't wait to get out of there.[1]

Merchant's experiences provide unique perspectives of Australian business cultures and work practices that are seldom recorded in business documents. Despite the insights that such accounts offer into the everyday experience of Australians, they have attracted little attention from academic business historians.

We argue that academic historians working in business fields could make greater use of oral history, and that it holds the potential to fill significant gaps in our understanding of the past and, indeed, open new lines of inquiry. Business, as a general rule, does not document activities that appear tangential to its goals and operations. Mentoring, for example, might be formally sanctioned, but it also occurs informally and spontaneously; recruitment policies may be retained in archives, but the exchange of information during interviews and the attitudes of participants are unlikely to be revealed in extant sources. The reasons why people choose certain industries, or fall into particular employment roles, are also rarely found in written records. Oral history can access such workplace experiences and adds to our understanding of Australian business operations and culture. In this article we explore such ideas using oral histories drawn from two separate, though related, post-war Australian business history projects: the first, a history of the advertising agency and its place in a globalising industry; the second, a historical study of the retail property sector.

We begin with an outline of our respective projects, followed by historiographical context for the argument that business studies can and should make more use of oral history. We outline Rob Perks' claim that oral history in Britain has largely bypassed the business world, and consider the transferability of his claims to Australia. While there are similarities, particularly within the academy, we note that Australian professional historians have found considerable utility in business oral sources. From here we discuss the benefits that an increased engagement with oral history can bring to business history and, in particular, the insights this can provide about business culture. The second half of the paper provides evidence for this argument, drawing on examples from our respective projects exploring the hiring process and career paths.

Approaches

Funded by the Australian Research Council (DP120100777), the study of the advertising industry explored the globalisation of the advertising agency in Australia over the period spanning 1959 to 1989. With few industry archives documenting agency operations, the project conducted interviews with 120 individuals who either worked in or with key Australian advertising agencies. Participants were drawn from all departments of the agency – account service, creative, media, administration, accounts, production, dispatch – and at every level – from junior secretaries to global CEOs. Almost a third of the interviewees were women. Over the course of the semi-structured interviews spanning 1-4 hours, participants discussed their professional careers as well as their own life stories. In the process, they offered detailed and often candid insights into the professional, technical, political, cultural and social aspects of agency life. Such accounts were analysed in relation to archival documents and reports in the trade press.

The retail property project was smaller in scale and narrower in focus. Twenty-five interviews were conducted with executives from Australia's largest retail property firms, including Westfield, Lend Lease, GPT, Stockland and Charter Hall. Interviews lasting 1–2 hours shared a focus on operational matters, career paths, industry analysis, strategic decision-making and marketing. They were used to supplement archival sources, provide analysis of trends from within the industry, and to chart the career paths of industry leaders. The vast majority of interviewees were male, reflecting the gender imbalance at the upper levels of the retail property industry and, indeed, corporate Australia during the 1970s and 1980s. Funding limitations have precluded a wider scope of interviewees to date, but the current data set is envisaged as one component of larger study that will include oral evidence from public authorities, planners, employees, consumers, retailers and small business operators.

While discussion guides in both projects were utilised to loosely structure interviews, interviewers were open

minded in terms of expectations about responses within the topics raised, and allowed the conversation to flow into unplanned areas of discussion. The process proved highly productive. Interviews provided insights into the ways that individuals and decision-makers understood the historical shape of their industries. They revealed the ways in which major developments – such as globalisation and technological change – affected the everyday practices of individuals working in these businesses. The extent to which informal knowledge transfer occurs between firms and individuals was also made apparent. Career paths became journeys and were made more transparent as both executives and employees outlined their personal histories, their educational and employment backgrounds and their journeys through and across firms. By capturing personal stories and experiences, oral history thus provided us with both an archive of working life, as well as insights into the operations of firms and industries.

Business Oral History in Australia

Patrick Fridenson's contribution to *The Oxford Handbook of Business History* states that 'oral history has become a standard practice in business history for the study of the 20th and 21st centuries to an extent that is still unrivalled in most other parts of the historical profession'.[2] However, Rob Perks considers such claims to be somewhat exaggerated, particularly in the British context. In British business histories, 'oral evidence has been absent or subsidiary: rarely properly cited and acknowledged, let alone problematized, or interrogated as evidence'.[3] British oral historians, for their part, have largely avoided business as a subject of research because, Perks suggests, the discipline emerged during the 1960s and 1970s as a counter-narrative to the 'traditional' historical study of male elites.[4] While sympathetic to the motivation for such study as well as its social value, Perks argues that the focus has been too narrow. 'What has *not* developed at all in Britain', he argues, 'has been any tradition among oral historians to utilise their skills to explore areas of British society with which they have political and emotional differences'.[5] Noting that oral history offers a way of demystifying business processes as well as the people involved in them, he also underscores the significant contribution that oral history can make to business studies.[6]

Perks claims that American business historians have established a more productive interaction with oral history. This dynamic is attributable to the contrasting origins of the methodology: the principle initial architect of oral history in North America, Allan Nevins, was a business historian who interviewed elites, and much of the initial oral history work conducted in universities was corporate funded.[7] Nevins established the Columbia Center for Oral History in 1948. The Center currently holds an archive containing more than 10,000 interviews and is one of the largest collections of oral history in the United States.[8]

Oral historians have actively contributed to the collection of business related interviews in Australian repositories. The National Library of Australia thus boasts an impressive collection, including interviews with 150 'executives' as well as hundreds of other interviews where various aspects of Australian business are mentioned (notably the 'Australia 1938 OHP' collection).[9] There are also large holdings of oral histories in Australia's state libraries, produced largely by professional historians, which relate to business and industry. In addition, there are collections to be found at more local levels. The City of Sydney's oral history collection, for example, features 18 interviews exploring work, commerce, and industry with a particular focus on the city's retail sector.[10] These are threads from which rich tapestries of Australian business and social history can be written, and as such present an opportunity for academic researchers in the field. For example, James Murray's commissioned history of Woolworths makes extensive use of oral histories conducted by Jennifer Hudson.[11] Her interviews, spanning more than one hundred hours of recording, as well as transcripts, are housed in the State Library of NSW.[12] However only one article charting a general history of Woolworths has been produced from these invaluable interviews.[13]

Whilst a large amount of material is being collated by professional historians, and put to good use in the development of corporate histories, the shortage of scholarship in peer-reviewed journals suggests a more limited engagement by academics and certain similarities with the situation in Britain. Since 1979, the *Oral History Australia Journal* has published 48 articles on 'work', which it defines as 'articles about paid and unpaid work, unemployment, the 1930s Depression, and the labour movement and labour history'. Of these, 24 articles appear under the Industry Business and Commerce heading, which covers 'banks and banking, organisations and associations, and public sector services as well as industrial and company histories'. However, a closer inspection of the company histories listed under this heading indicates that they are restricted to articles on Bonds, Colgate and Woolworths. More revealing has been the treatment of oral history in Australian academic business history. Such historians have been unwilling to engage with oral history or simply unaware of it. Since 1997, only two articles in the *Australian Economic History Review* cite oral history as a keyword. Oral historians, of course, operate outside of such outlets, but as the peak Australian journals for oral history and economic and business history respectively, they offer a telling snapshot of the intersection between the fields.

Australian professional historians have been more enthusiastic users of oral history, frequently turning to interviews with historical actors to craft accounts of firms and industries. These have tended to fall into three broad categories: oral historians writing books and articles about specific firms or institutions based on new interviews; projects that draw on extant interviews, including those held by cultural institutions; and histories commissioned by firms for public relations purposes. Susan Marsden provides numerous examples of the first, including studies of the poker machine industry and coal operations in Newcastle, NSW.[14] An example of the second is Max Allen's history of the wine industry based on interviews recorded by Robb Linn.[15] Lastly, oral

history has proved a staple methodology for commissioned corporate histories, which have frequently relied on recorded accounts of workplace life by employees and executives to humanise the detail of firm operations and technological development.[16] Such publications not only demonstrate the type of work that is being produced for local, industry and general readerships by professional historians, they also constitute a useful resource for academic business historians.

Business Cultural History

The shortage of oral history in Australian academic scholarship is made more significant when one considers the potential it brings to the field. Writing in the *Journal of American History* in 1988, Carl Ryant argued that:

> … oral history – with its ability to customize evidence by the careful crafting of questions and its emphasis on all groups within a population or organization, from the lowest to the highest -– is well suited to the study of business history through investigation of corporate culture.[17]

Such subjects were a specific focus of the advertising industry project: to explore firm culture and its significance in shaping work practices, employee experiences and productive outputs over a three-decade timespan. Culture played a smaller role in the focus of the retail property project, but emerged in a number of interviews providing evidence of particular corporate cultures and their influence on decision-making processes, leadership, and the historical development of respective firms. These insights allowed us to extend our analysis of firm operations and industry change beyond conventional archival sources to consider the ways that personalities, relationships and culture have influenced the fortunes of firms and the shape of respective industries.[18] In doing so, the projects contribute to a growing scholarship in business history that has been influenced by the cultural turn.[19] This movement shifts the centre of analysis away from economic and structural forces, to recognise the causal power of cultural processes.[20]

Such expanding appeal is demonstrative of the possibilities the cultural turn brings to business scholarship, but also provokes a range of questions for historians in the field. As Hansen observes, these include reappraising methodologies. He argues that 'when culturally embedded signification is an integrated part of how humans make sense of the world, what we call our sources do not represent a clear window to the past.'[21] Whilst Hansen uses this insight to question traditional sources in new ways, it also points to the value of gathering fresh sources such as oral histories that can open new avenues for exploration. To demonstrate oral history's utility to scholars applying a cultural lens to business history, we now consider accounts of the hiring process in the advertising industry and career paths in the retail property sector.

Joining the Firm

As Australia's post-war economic boom was taking off, fields such as advertising and retail offered promising employment prospects to young men and women entering the workforce. In 1960, the Australian Association of Advertising Agencies (4As) published *A Career in an Advertising Agency*. The booklet offered an introduction to the advertising agency's operations by outlining the role of each position in an agency. While prospective agents were advised that '[y]our progress will depend on your own keenness and ability', they were offered no practical advice as to how they might land their first agency job.[22] Speaking to former agency staff about their entry into the agency not only reveals the interview process, it also provides insights into the broader practices and norms of Australian businesses.

In 1962, John Cowper was finishing high school with plans of becoming a teacher. However, a weak performance in his trial exams led him to reconsider his options. An aunt suggested advertising as an option. Cowper mentioned this to a friend whose father, Murray Evans, happened to be a leading figure in the 4As. The adman lent him some books on advertising, which presumably included *A Career in an Advertising Agency*. Cowper recalls he 'went home and read all of those books and thought that sounds interesting'.[23] Prior to completing high school, he was already contacting Sydney's largest advertising agencies with a view to securing work. At J. Walter Thompson, he was asked to identify the three best and three worst advertisements in the *Australian Women's Weekly* and to write 'a paper on why you thought they were good or bad'. He did the test but never heard back from the agency. Responding to an advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Cowper applied to Hansen Rubensohn-McCann Erickson. He was invited to the agency to participate in a number of tests and interviews. The tests covered dictation and English skills. In his interviews with the agency's general manager and personnel manager, Cowper was asked whether he understood 'what advertising was' as well as 'something about the role of advertising in the economy'. Together with ten or so other successful applicants, Cowper commenced his advertising career in the dispatch department.

Other interviewees from this period related similar experiences. Rob Palmer was an applicant at JWT whose advertisement analysis resulted in an invitation to be interviewed (twice) and to complete 'a fairly exhaustive industrial psychology test'.[24] Andrew Killey recalls being asked 'about my attitude to things, what I thought about … selling. They didn't ask me what my politics were, and they didn't ask me what school I went to'.[25] Applying to Hansen Rubensohn-McCann Erickson in 1965, Ian McDonald was interviewed by the same interviewers as Cowper. He recalls being asked about his education but looking back on the process, he feels that 'they were more interested in character and intelligence as opposed to any love of advertising'.[26]

Although the 1970s saw the end of the long economic boom, there was little sign of it in the advertising agencies. Larger, wealthier, and more glamorous than they had been two decades earlier, the advertising agencies were highly desirable workplaces, and would remain so over the boom years of the 1980s. Competition for the few entry-level positions had consequently intensified, yet in many ways, little had changed. Character and intelligence remained integral qualities. However, agencies increasingly had the luxury of looking for other attributes

and skills. On the advice of his sister who already worked in advertising, Michael Ritchie approached George Patterson, Australia's largest agency. The school leaver was given a test and then put through three interviews before he was admitted into the agency's traineeship scheme. Ritchie likened the experience to being interviewed for a conservative law firm, noting that interviewers were particularly interested in the fact that he had attended one of Sydney's elite private schools.[27] Nepotism would play a greater role for others. Esther Clerehan's father worked at Ogilvy & Mather, so when she decided that she too wanted to go into advertising, the agency's chairman told the personnel office in no uncertain terms: 'hire Clerehan's daughter'.[28] Education emerged as a way of standing out from the pack. Jane Caro and Mo Fox both entered advertising after completing literature degrees at university (although both had relatives in the industry).[29] In her interview at J. Walter Thompson in 1986, Fox drew on her literature analysis skills to answer the interviewer's questions about good and poor advertisements.[30] As the industry became larger, technology was used to speed things up. After submitting her portfolio via the post, Anne Miles' interview with McCann-Erickson was via telephone.[31]

Staff conducting the interviews offer further insights into the processes. While there were clearly standard questions and tests, interviewers also introduced their own questions. When interviewing candidates for junior positions in the creative department at Leo Burnett, creative director John Newton sought to gain an insight into their thinking by asking them 'about their interests in life … what they were reading, what films they were seeing, what plays they had seen, what they did with their lives'.[32] At George Patterson, Graham Cox interviewed countless young men and women who would 'never make a career in advertising … I think they were looking for a job, and I understood that'.[33] The successful applicants were those 'who convinced me that they actually had some feeling about advertising … [often] expressed naively but purely'. Cox also revealed that he was not simply a gatekeeper. In his experiences 'girls were … nearly always superior as prospects than the boys', as the 'girls quickly understood that this was a business office' whereas 'boys came initially … thinking it was [about] mateship'. Cox thus prioritised the appointment of women to the agency – to the point that a senior manager asked him in a board meeting to 'keep some balance so that we don't get criticised'. Such comments reveal that the cultural impact of the interview process was not lost on contemporaries.

In this case, oral history provides unique access into the job interview process and the ways in which formal and informal practices were utilised to select the right candidates. Despite their impact, Australian advertising agencies have not kept any records of these formal processes, let alone the informal ones. Oral history therefore emerges as a vital tool in accessing these ephemeral and undocumented systems. Moreover, it presents an opportunity to revisit the mindset of interviewees and interviewers, illustrating Perks' claim that oral history can demystify business processes. While the field of memory studies points to the challenges associated with this process, oral history nevertheless offers revealing insights that are otherwise absent from official records. Significantly, oral history also reveals the changes that took place over time. In this case such changes not only reveal the growth and development of the advertising agencies, they also reveal broader social and cultural shifts.

Career Paths

As with the advertising industry, the historical arc of the retail property sector shaped the ways in which careers started and developed. Interviewees who began their careers in the 1970s and early-1980s entered a relatively unsophisticated industry: consumer research was only nascent,[34] marketing was conflated with promotional activity,[35] there was little government regulation on retail leasing,[36] centre locations were selected instinctually in under-supplied retail geographies,[37] and professional training in centre management was virtually non-existent.[38] Despite the economic difficulties of the 1970s and early-1980s, and although development of shopping centres on the largest scale stagnated during this period, the introduction of discount department stores generated a new wave of mid-size centre development. In this environment, career opportunities emerged serendipitously for individuals who were able to meet a need within firms, and who were willing to travel to advance their positions in what was a rapidly expanding national industry unconstrained by historical precedent.

Perks notes that 'interviews with individuals who have risen through the ranks from the most junior levels prove especially fruitful' oral history sources.[39] The relative youth and rapid growth of the industry has meant that many current industry leaders have trodden such paths bringing to interviews an intimate and detailed knowledge of the sector. Graham Terry, who worked for Coles Myer recalls a conversation with Westfield founder Frank Lowy:

> "If your kid ever falls out of university [Terry says Lowy told him], put him into retail leasing, because he can make a shitload of money at a young age, and the entry barriers, it is very easy to get into." And I thought about that, and I sort of bombed out in school, and in leasing, I have done all right.

After leaving school, Terry worked for a small real estate firm leasing shops in a strip-shopping precinct, doing what he describes as 'very physical deals' – walking the precinct and conducting face-to-face meetings. He then successfully applied for a leasing job at Myer Shopping Centres, which hired three 'trainees to grow in the industry'. Terry's interview demonstrates a dichotomy in the youthful industry: whilst the first shopping centres were less than fifteen years old, some of the largest developers were well-established retail firms. In this environment, there were opportunities to enter firms that faced a shortage of local talent, but the scale and international connections of department store firms such as Myer offered the possibility of a solid grounding in the field. Oral history, Perks argues, provides insights into the knowledge flows that occur in such situations as well as the working relationships that facilitate them.[40]

Terry and his two fellow recruits were trained by international experts that Myer had imported to improve their operational capacity: 'I was just like a sponge with these guys… I was very fortunate, because it was better than going to university and… [they] just taught me everything about shopping centres'.[41]

The theme of success despite a poor academic record surfaces in other interviews with executives who began their careers in the 1970s or 1980s. John Schroder, who was chief operating officer of Westfield Group in the United States before joining Stockland where he holds the role of Group Executive & CEO Commercial Property, made his start at Lend Lease in the mid-1980s. Schroder recalls that he 'was a lousy student at university. I didn't care much about it. I showed up when I had to and scrapped through'.[42] He dropped out before returning to study commerce whilst also working as a waiter. Fate intervened when a professor with whom he had a good relationship offered Schroder and three others an opportunity to interview for jobs at Lend Lease. Schroder subsequently obtained a promotions role at Top Ryde, a small regional centre fifteen kilometres north-east of Sydney's central business district.

Other interviewees completed university qualifications but moved horizontally out of their field as opportunities arose. Michael Lonie, who became a key operative for Westfield, 'did economics but couldn't get a job so I ended up doing some marketing with Eli Lilly, the pharmaceutical company. I bumped into John Saunders and Frank Lowie [Westfield's founders], that's how I got going.'[43] Oral histories of these men's career paths thus reveal the serendipitous beginnings that marked many interviewees careers as well as the industry's comparatively humble origins that can be masked by its growth and success in intervening years. Schroder's initial pay was so low he continued to wait tables in the evenings for four or five years until his salary increased sufficiently to meet his financial commitments.

The success of shopping centres as retail distribution hubs brought numerous changes to the industry, including expanded scales of operation, more retail diversity within centres, increased financial complexity, greater government intervention in leasing, and more centralised management structures. This affected employment processes, as tertiary qualifications became more important avenues into the industry. It also expanded the range of opportunities for inter-firm mobility.[44] Greg Chub, for example, completed a Bachelor of Business in Land Economics in the mid-1980s before gaining a position at Lend Lease in the early-1990s. From there, he and two Lend Lease colleagues moved to the residential property developer Mirvac to develop a retail division. After advancing to head of retail at Mirvac, he briefly moved to Asia to run a joint venture between wealth management group Colonial First State and real estate management and investment advisors Jones-Lang Lasalle. Chubb then headed up the property division in the Coles supermarket firm, before taking the position of Head of Retail Property Services at Charter Hall.[45]

Chubb's career path reflects the complexity of the retail property sector by the 1990s, as different firms operating variously or conjointly as developers, managers and investors reshaped an industry that had begun in the late-1950s with a much smaller group of stakeholders. Chubb's mobility was intrinsically linked to his progression through the industry, taking on positions as required, but also seeking out opportunities for advancement in other firms. The expansion of such firms could also require considerable geographic mobility. When Schroder took up a position with Westfield in the mid-1990s, it involved extensive travel along the east coast of Australia, before the firm's international push took him to Kuala Lumpur and then the United States. He notes that 'whenever they asked me to do something I never said no'.[46] Like Chubb and other interviewees, intra-organisational mobility provided Schroder with an opportunity for knowledge acquisition and advancement: travelling where needed, he built up expertise that propelled him into and through executive ranks.[47]

As the interview sample of this project indicates, the impact of second-wave feminism on corporate employment practices has been delayed and incremental. Carol Schwartz, the first female president of both the Property Council of Victoria and the Property Council of Australia, recalls being told that she would '*never* be the president of the national property council', because of her gender.[48] She describes this as a 'red rag to a bull' that only fuelled her ambition. Schwartz has been both a pioneer and a fierce advocate for female representation at executive and board level in the industry. She notes that 'it is ridiculous to talk about the late-90s as being an era where no women existed in senior roles, but it is actually true'.

Oral history, in this retail property history project, thus offers insights into the ways that different executives have risen through the ranks, but also opens up questions for further research: how did employees of less senior rank, or with more constricted geographic mobility view the requirement to travel?[49] What impact has workplace re-situation had on families? What role did gender play in restricting or facilitating mobility, and how is this related to women's under-representation at senior levels of the retail property sector? Despite the efforts of Schwartz and others, the industry's executive ranks remain male dominated. In this project, then, oral history has operated as a constructive and a generative methodology: in the process of building an archive new questions have been raised, which will in turn inform conversations with fresh cohorts of interviewees.

Conclusion

Australian historians have compiled and utilised significant business oral history collections, indicating that oral historians' relationship with business history in Australia differs to some degree to the situation in Britain outlined by Perks. However, the absence oral history in academic business history is revealing. To this end, our insights into the advertising and retail property industries help demonstrate the value of constructed oral history archives for extending our understandings of industries and firms operating within them. By demystifying corporate culture and presenting new evidence about it

and the ways that corporate culture intersects with working lives, oral history offers insights that are simply unavailable in traditional archives.[50]

Projects such as those outlined in this article document the experiences of the white-collar and executive workforces, which all too easily disappear. While we do not argue that middle-class employees suffer the marginalisation experienced by many traditional oral history subjects (and whose voices the discipline has been instrumental in returning to the historical record), we nevertheless believe that business workers occupy an important place in the social matrix and that their experiences are therefore worthy of documentation. Employees in senior positions may be visible in the historical record, but even here their experiences are heavily mediated by the mediums through which they communicate, such as press releases or news reportage of specific business activities. Oral histories allow us to step beyond these instrumentally conditioned voices, both to access more intimate experiences, and to critically interrogate the cultural frameworks which shape business practice. This underscores the important contribution that oral history can make to academic business history, in which it is currently underused as a methodology. As this brief survey reveals, academic business historians can benefit greatly from utilising oral history, not to mention interviews already undertaken by historians working in other fields.

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Oral history, oral tradition and the practice of native title research*

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**This paper has been peer-reviewed*

Abstract:

This article explores the role of oral history in the native title research process, and demonstrates how the historical analysis of a Traditional Owner community history in Victoria used oral history interviews to provide additional value to the presentation of native title evidence for this group of claimants. By incorporating Indigenous perspectives and knowledge into the analysis of the history of this region, native title researchers showed how oral histories can be utilised for the fullest benefit of the people who provide them. The article also demonstrates the potential for the archive created by the native title research projects to be used in future projects to further benefit Victorian Aboriginal people. This article was developed from a paper given at the National Oral History Association of New Zealand Conference in 2014, entitled 'The challenges of oral history and native title'.

Introduction

Conducting oral history research involves navigating complex and nuanced interpretations of the past. Oral history interviews include narratives of a person's individual experience, as well as their experience as a member of a family, of a community, and of a society embedded in its cultural traditions. Oral history interviews conducted with Indigenous Australians within the native title legal process, pursuing land rights through the Federal Court or direct negotiations with state or territory governments, have an added complexity. This framework imposes some limitations on the information that interviewees are willing to share, and shapes the way that stories are told. This article builds upon the discourse of the challenges of writing history in a legal context. Many historians have published on the ethical and methodological challenges of the use of history in the courtroom, and the value of historical narratives to the native title research process.[1] This article addresses the specific challenge of using oral histories to inform historical narratives of the native title rights of Traditional Owner groups in Victoria.

In this article I define a conceptual distinction between two types of information that are given in the oral history interview: knowledge from a broad collective understanding which extends beyond an individual's personal experiences and memory, which I term oral tradition; and knowledge obtained from personal experience, which I term oral history. Using this distinction, I show how cultural identity and collective memory are expressed in oral history interviews and how this oral history information can be utilised in the historical analysis of evidence in native title proceedings. I discuss how the history of research of Indigenous peoples without their consent or collaborative participation has created an environment of distrust that persists in the work of native title researchers, and research with Indigenous participants more generally.

The methodology of a recent native title research project undertaken by myself and an anthropologist colleague has provided an opportunity to use the historical perspectives of native title claimants gained through oral history interviews in the presentation of native title evidence. The article situates the work of native title research within the limitations imposed by the legal framework of the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*, and shows how this can create a challenge for researchers considering how to use oral histories collected through the native title process in the future, for the greatest benefit of the communities and individuals that offer them.

As an historian working at Native Title Services Victoria (NTSV), the native title service provider in Victoria, I undertake historical research into the native title claims of Victorian Aboriginal people. The research we undertake is the subject of ongoing legal matters, and there are limitations on the use of the material collected for these matters, which remains the property of the Indigenous groups and individuals we work with. In this article while I am unable to use examples from interviews undertaken as a part of native title proceedings, I provide general examples aimed to contribute to a theoretical discussion of the use of oral history information in the native title context.

Oral history and native title

To start with, it is worth exploring in some more depth what native title research entails and what types of questions it seeks to answer. The *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)* (the Act), was developed in response to the *Mabo* native title determination in 1992, which established that the assumption of terra nullius – that the Australian continent was an empty land at the time of first British occupation – was a fallacy. The Act recognises that traditional laws and customs of Indigenous Australians, particularly in relation to the rights to land, existed before the British colonised Australia. It seeks to reconcile the concept of native title which exists in Aboriginal law into the Australian common law system. Native title can only exist in common law where the title defined by the Aboriginal laws and customs has not been extinguished by other forms of title or land use. The Act defines the key concept of native title rights and interests in the land and water as those derived from the traditional laws acknowledged, and traditional customs observed by a Traditional Owner society at the time of first contact. Native title research plays a role in assisting the courts to describe the rights and interests of a native title holding society, and to determine whether native title rights and interests have continued to exist since first contact.

Native title case law and jurisprudence has developed the understanding that for laws and customs to be deemed 'traditional,' it requires evidence of an underlying society which is bound by a set of normative practices which inform these laws and customs, and convincing evidence that the normative practices of contemporary claimants have their basis in the society of their ancestors. Claimants must also be able to prove that they have practiced these laws and customs continuously throughout the post-settlement period; a period of massive and destructive

change. This requires expert evidence, primarily that of anthropologists and historians. Essentially, if native title claimants can prove that they are descended from members of a Traditional Owner society which existed before the declaration of British sovereignty; that the claimants continue to exercise their rights and interests in respect to the land or waters; and that they have done so continuously since the arrival of British settlers, then their native title *may* continue to exist. This is a heavy burden of proof to bear.

Native title research in Victoria has taken a largely two pronged approach to providing the necessary evidence to prove native title. The first step is to define the society that existed 'pre-sovereignty' (a term used to mean pre-contact, and so one which corresponds to different dates in different parts of the country). Historians, anthropologists and other experts are asked to analyse the available written records to help build this picture of the Aboriginal groups or societies at the time of first contact. The second step is to describe the society of the native title claimants as it exists today, and then to show how the contemporary society has its foundations in the society of the past. It is understood that the two societies will not be identical; that cultural practices will have adapted to their contemporary context. That said it remains a very difficult task to meet the evidence requirements to prove continuity of law and custom and connection to country for societies which were actively targeted by colonists and missionaries for absorption into the dominant white settler culture.[2] It is only because Aboriginal identity and culture is so strong and resilient that native title rights are able to be successfully argued for in Victoria. This would not be possible without the use of oral history.

Oral history plays a significant role in native title research, and is used in various ways. One style of oral history that is used could also be described as oral testimony: claimant statements of their current cultural practices, and their direct cultural knowledge. This can be used by lawyers through affidavits or witness testimony, but is also often used by anthropologists in their expert reports. Anthropologists, through investigation and analysis, form expert opinions concerning claimant groups' contemporary cultural connection to land and waters within native title claim areas. Native title lawyers then use these opinions as evidence of the continuation of the rights and interests held by the ancestors of the claimants, as they are expressed through cultural practice.

Oral history is also used in native title research as a way of accessing historical information not otherwise found in the written record. One of the earliest arguments for oral history was for the creation of a set of sources that could unlock the pasts of minority groups that were otherwise silent in the dominant historical narrative.[3] Indigenous history was a prime candidate for this type of research.

Native title research has taken on this form of oral history as a way of finding evidence for native title connection that cannot be located in the documentary record. This use of oral history has met with some challenges from the legal system. Historian Alessandro Portelli refuted the claim that the problem of faulty memory, given distance from an event, was a problem that only oral sources faced. Portelli argued that written sources are just as susceptible to bias.[4] Still, the courts have questioned the veracity of some oral history evidence, based on the perception that oral history sources are unreliable. Some oral history statements, particularly those that make reference to dates or statistics,[5] can be contradicted using the written record, and have called whole testimonies into question. Justice Olney's decision in the *Members of the Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Community v Victoria* (1998) stated, 'In one instance two senior members of the claimant group were caught out telling deliberate lies, albeit about a relatively minor matter, but nevertheless incidents of that nature tend to cast a shadow over the other evidence of those witnesses.'[6] Olney J dismissed much of the oral history evidence presented in the case, basing his judgement instead on his own reading of the written documents from the historical period in question. Heather Goodall has written about how the legal commitment to a simple view of the past, the possibility of 'learning the facts', is shared by traditional positivist history. She argues that this view of the past has been challenged by post-structuralist histories, and no longer reflects how as historians we understand our discipline.[7] The view taken by the courts, that oral history (in the form of oral testimony) provides us with 'findings of fact,' fails to take into consideration the other ways that oral history information can be useful in uncovering the events of the past and their significance.

In a recent native title project in Victoria, I worked closely with an anthropologist colleague to develop a new format and approach for our report. For this project, oral history was used as a cornerstone of the methodology. This is not the first time that oral history, undertaken by a historian, was used in a land rights claim. Ann McGrath has written about her experience in the Northern Territory Land Claims process in the 1970s, of using oral history in her submission and having to justify its use as 'credible historical evidence'.[8] It was, however, the first project undertaken within NTSV that has engaged an historian to undertake sustained oral history work. Such work has traditionally been the domain of anthropologists, although historians have at times been involved in collecting oral genealogies. Anthropologists, who have specific training in observing and analysing social organisation and cultural practice, have different methodologies in the oral history interview, and produce different results. The focus of anthropologist-directed native title oral history interviews has been on that evidence which shows a link between the native title claimants and the society of Traditional Owners at the time of first contact. It has thus focussed on genealogies, oral traditions, and practical knowledge of traditional laws and customs.

This recent native title project required a more comprehensive historical analysis of the period between the 'pre-sovereignty' society and the contemporary society; a community history to provide the framework to explain the (cultural) adaptations of that society. Initially, oral history was considered because the written sources for the region were limited, and it was decided that speaking to members of the community would provide information that was not available otherwise. What emerged from the project was a consideration of the significant advantage

that oral history could offer. One of the consequences of this methodology was that a set of sources was collected that not only spoke of events and periods of the past, but also spoke to the identity of individuals and communities of families, and provided details of their responses to historical factors affecting the community. When interviewees talked about events, the meaning of these events to the community and their role in shaping the identity of our interviewees was also prominent. Seemingly routine events like going to school, travelling to see family or for work, and living in fringe communities or river camps near the regional towns, were able to be framed within this historical narrative as examples of native title connection and continuity. These stories then became evidence of a type of cultural practice; the assertion of an Aboriginal identity as an expression of culture.

Oral history and oral tradition

As a way of considering this type of native title evidence, I would like to explore the distinction between oral tradition and oral history as categories of information given in an oral history interview. In this article, I use these terms to distinguish between two categories: broadly held collective understandings, transmitted orally, that extend to a deeper past than individual memory allows, which I refer to here by the term 'oral tradition'; and knowledge from direct personal experience, which I refer to here by the term 'oral history'. I acknowledge that this is a somewhat artificial distinction. Anthropologist James Weiner has discussed the dangers of defining 'traditional' and 'historical' as separate concepts, not least that all traditions have a historical element to their creation and adaptation.[9] It is not my intention to set up an oppositional relationship between history and culture in this context. The distinction between the two terms in this context is methodological, and helps to describe the use of information from an oral history interview in the historical analysis of native title research.

Oral tradition has been the focus of the disciplines of anthropology, folklore and others, including oral historians. The oral transmission of knowledge is fundamental to Indigenous Australian cultures, and to identity formation. As knowledge is passed down, it gains authority through its transmission from ancestors to their descendants. As anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose has articulated, Indigenous Australians 'validate their knowledge by demonstrating that its authority derives from previous generations: they know, and they have the authority of knowledge, because they were told.'[10] James Weiner has also discussed how the construction of oral history and memory by Aboriginal people is an 'identity-building practice, fully culturally constituted.'[11] This type of information is important to the way that people understand their position within society, and provides the framework for their everyday experiences.

The second category, oral history, is knowledge which has been directly gained from the personal experience of the interviewee. While the category of oral history information is associated more readily with a life history interview, it is present in all oral history interviews, including native title oral history interviews. Stories, even oral traditions, are rarely told without being grounded in personal experience. Oral tradition and oral history can be difficult to separate as both can influence an individual's world view, cultural perspective and perception of self. In the context of this native title research project, interviewees were asked about their experiences growing up, where they lived, who they socialised with, and through these themes they narrated stories of their lives. This differed from questions targeted at oral traditions and direct cultural knowledge, however these stories also revealed information about cultural identity and practice that were useful as native title evidence.

The aim of using oral history for this project was to find information about a region of Victoria, and the lives and movements of the Aboriginal community in that region for which there was limited information in the written record; they had been written out of the histories of the region, silenced in the records. Heather Goodall has argued that before 1970, 'Australian history suffered an almost total absence of Aboriginal voices…because of their structural exclusion from access to the means to influence that dominant history.'[12] Factors such as poverty and discrimination led to disadvantage which barred them from participating in public discourse on the past. Ann McGrath was a part of the social history movement which reassessed the way that Aboriginal history was written, using oral history to capture Aboriginal voices and perspectives of the past. When working as a consultant historian on land claims in the Northern Territory, McGrath was appalled that oral history was not considered relevant to her submission. She wrote that, 'It was improper, in my view, for Australian history to be told exclusively from a European perspective, but totally inappropriate in an Aboriginal land claim'.[13] Oral history has provided an opportunity to include Aboriginal voices in writing their history.

Centennial publications and celebrated histories of these pioneering farming communities made little mention of the Aboriginal population, except the occasional reference to the last 'remnant' of the local tribes, or a nostalgic reflection on the now extinct 'noble savage'. These local histories, published in the mid-twentieth century, predated the social history movement in the 1970s which saw a new style of history writing focussed on the lives and experiences of Aboriginal people. It was immediately apparent from the oral history interviews that, contrary to the portrayal in these local histories, Aboriginal people had continued to live on the fringes of the white communities, their stories not yet lost to living memory. In a legal system where written documents are so heavily relied upon for an understanding of the past, historical analysis has risen to the fore in arguing for native title rights in 'difficult' areas like Victoria, where the disjuncture between the Traditional Owner society's association with land at the time of the assertion of British sovereignty and today seems to be great.[14] The oral histories undertaken as a part of this project provided an opportunity to challenge the narratives of the written histories of the area, which through the twentieth century had systematically excluded any Aboriginal presence in the historical landscape.

Culture, identity and native title

As practitioners of oral history know, the oral history interview is a collaborative venture which is directed by the interviewee as much as it is by the researcher. As Alistair Thomson described, 'The stories that we remember will not be exact representations of our past, but will draw upon aspects of that past and mould them to fit current identities and aspirations.'[15] When telling their story, people tend to try to convey what they think is significant to their version of the past and its meaning in the present.

In native title oral history interviews, researchers speak to people who have spent many years fighting to have their identity recognised through the legal process. Statements of identity and strength of cultural knowledge feature prominently in almost all of our interviews; statements like, 'We've always known where we're from,' or 'We are all one people, we know who we are'. There is a tendency on the part of both interviewees and native title practitioners to focus on statements relating to activities and practices that are identifiably 'Aboriginal'; practices such as hunting, fishing, gathering and using natural resources, speaking their language and spiritual beliefs. These, along with physical presence on country and caring for country through land management and cultural heritage activities, have featured prominently in native title oral history interviews. These aspects are recognisable as important to native title evidence because they are often articulated as forms of oral tradition – knowledge that has been orally transmitted through generations and that describes the rights and responsibilities of the members of the society. Along with genealogical information, describing family and kinship networks, these aspects of native title oral history interviews are crucial to the evidentiary basis for a demonstration of continuity of law and custom relevant to a determination of native title.

In addition to these vital elements of building a native title argument, this project presented another opportunity arising from these recent interviews. The assertions of identity in these oral history interviews, expressed in narrations of interviewees' personal experiences, strengthened the presentation of native title evidence. All of the elements of the interview that related to cultural practice remain vital, but now all the stories about families and communities standing together to combat small-town racism, destructive government policies, child removal, unemployment, homelessness, violence, and many other challenges, were put to use in the description of a proud community which had persisted by the strength of their shared identity through extreme adversity, and had achieved many celebrated benefits for the community. Stories of community members working as seasonal labourers, for example, were used as evidence that Traditional Owners made choices that kept them close to their traditional country, and to their kinship networks. In the oral history interviews, interviewees told stories of stolen generation children reaching adulthood and returning to find their family, a journey made possible in several cases by the wide network and common aim of this community; to get their children back home. Examples such as this which on the surface appear to show an interruption in continuity were, when properly contextualised, evidence of the resilience and continuity of that society and its traditions. The interviewees shared stories of community cooperatives that supported and guided their communities, providing services to combat the disadvantage that still plagues Australia's Indigenous peoples. By demonstrating through stories that the strong ties of community have persisted throughout a period of massive and destructive change (colonisation) and that the Traditional Owners have resisted the pressures to divide and assimilate their community, my anthropologist colleague and I were able to present a stronger argument that the society has maintained its core structure and functions, and therefore retained its native title rights.

When considering how this use of oral histories can offer a new approach to the inclusion of certain types of stories and personal experiences in the native title process, I consider experiences such as those of Karen Martin (Booran Mirraboopa), a native title claimant from Queensland who has written about her experience:

> I was an executive committee member of the Quandamooka Land Council when research was being compiled as evidence to satisfy criteria for [native title] registration. We had to prove that we were indeed the traditional owners of the land in question by disclosing our genealogies, customs, traditions, beliefs and knowledges. The criteria was based on western, anthropological notions of ownership, affiliation and association to fulfil western legal requirements. I watched with interest and listened to the ways in which our knowledges, cultures and beliefs were collected, analysed, interpreted and presented for this claim. Placing some faith in the concept of Native Title, I wanted to contribute to the collection of evidence. Although I was interviewed, I felt that my knowledge and experiences were measured against pre-determined categories of culture to which it was deemed I could provide no new or convincing examples. Since I did not speak the language, I had not grown up on the island, nor had I at that time lived on the island, I was not considered a potential witness. My life, my knowledge and my reality as a Noonuccal, Quandamooka woman was inconsequential according to the western, anthropological and legal structures of Native Title research. I was not alone, however, as other Quandamooka people shared the same concerns and frustration privately, and at community meetings. Others still, chose not to participate. I wondered how something that held much promise had actually taken more away.[16]

Martin's experience here highlights how the process of giving native title evidence can be unsatisfying, or worse, invalidating, for people's sense of identity. This native title research project considered the oral histories as more than the evidence of cultural and identifiably 'Aboriginal' and 'on country' activities. The community history written as a part of this project was able to produce a description of a society that claimants could more clearly see themselves and their community in, giving them a greater confidence that the research reflected their own understanding of their community, their traditions, and their shared past. Herein lies one of the ways in which oral history and native title research can have a positive impact on the Indigenous communities which seek rights through this process. The use of history in native title cases can empower the claimants 'by the experience of collectively sharing their stories of connection to land

with the court.'[17] This experience can serve to unify a community or strengthen its ties, and help to articulate a common purpose and common ground through the sharing of stories of a common past.

The limitations of a legal framework

While the native title research process can allow for the strengthening of collective identity through the articulation of collective memory and shared experiences, it can also be problematic if this identity is then denied through a negative outcome in the adversarial legal process. For Wayne Atkinson, a native title claimant of the Yorta Yorta, his experience led him to declare that the Native Title Industry, 'usurped Indigenous voices and has empowered itself on the backs of Indigenous claimants.'[18] To sacrifice so much time to share and define one's identity, and then have it rejected or its truth questioned, is devastating for a community of people who have already had their culture and identity challenged and oppressed for generations.

Native title is determined, in the end, by the Federal Court; one institution in a long line of institutions that represent white authority, and have historically undermined Aboriginal sovereignty and agency. In the context of the pursuit of native title rights, Indigenous peoples of Australia fight to have their forms of knowledge and cultural tradition valued and accepted within a western legal framework, which provides little room for discussion of cultural relativism.[19] As Julie Cruikshank has argued in the context of using oral tradition as a form of evidence in a case before the Canadian Supreme Court, oral traditions were evaluated in terms of how useful they could be in answering questions of Canadian law, which were not concepts that existed in the culture this evidence came from. In cases like these, Cruickshank argued, 'indigenous traditions are expected to provide answers to problems created by modern states in terms convenient to modern states.'[20] The problem lies in understanding the nature of 'truth,' which is narrowly defined in the legal context.[21]

Aboriginal research, trust, and community benefit

The native title process requires that claimants submit to research on their culture, knowledge and identity, for the analysis and comment of researchers. This process, an example of being the subject rather than an agent of the research, echoes a long history of research on Indigenous people without their informed consent and participation. Rod Hagen has written about his experiences as a native title anthropologist. He describes that claimants are 'highly indignant' of having their knowledge and traditions evaluated and interpreted by non-aboriginal scholars.[22] In my experience as a native title researcher, I see this expressed through what I would describe as 'research fatigue': regular exclamations that individuals have given enough of themselves, and should not be asked again to prove who they are. This fatigue is, I believe, a result of involvement in a research process without feeling any ownership of the outcomes. Martin asserts, for example, that Indigenous Australians are 'one of the most researched groups of people on earth.'[23] This is a perception that I frequently encounter in the course of my Victorian work. Martin suggests that, 'Indeed, in some social science disciplines we are over-researched, and this has generated mistrust, animosity and resistance from many Aboriginal people.'[24] Goodall discusses the politics of information control in the discipline of history as 'an important point in colonial power relationships between white settlers and Aborigines in Australia', where power is held almost exclusively by non-Aboriginal people. Goodall suggests that more than just the incorporation of Aboriginal voices into the sources that are used to write history, historians must also incorporate their interpretations, meanings and narratives into the analysis and discussion of the past.[25] In the native title context, researchers must be careful how they do this, given their role as independent experts. The perception of bias in the writing of native title history has meant that oral history information, or the perspectives of Aboriginal people on the written sources of their own history, has not always been effectively incorporated into the historical narrative. Native title historians Christine Choo and Margaret O'Connell write that the historian's role is 'to provide an opinion based on their knowledge of the documentary sources' of the particular group's native title interests.[26] Choo and O'Connell note that the use of archival sources is a limitation of their work, particularly given that these sources are predominantly written by non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal people.[27] I argue that we have under-utilised the rich information obtainable through oral history research that could be used to strengthen the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives in the representation of history in the native title research process. Indigenous perspectives can be included in our examination of the sources when oral history is included in the methodologies of history-driven native title research, and will strengthen our analysis when carefully considered. This does not challenge the independence of the historian, but rather allows the Traditional Owners to enter into a dialogue with the historian, and be better represented in the outcomes of the research process. Moreover, these methods are likely to enable the exploration of new possibilities for more collaborative forms of research, particularly once communities have achieved recognition of their native title.

While native title outcomes aim to benefit the collective interests of the group, and evidence is used in pursuit of that aim, the responsibility to protect the individual oral histories that are entrusted to native title researchers is paramount. In order to build trust with Traditional Owners, and retain that trust, NTSV have strict protocols about how information is collected, and for what purpose. Because of the personal risks of providing native title evidence, and the anxieties that elicits, as native title researchers we must assure interviewees that their information will be protected and utilised in their interests, by using consent forms that limit the ways the information can be used. Anonymity, where promised, is vital. The commitment to keep the personal information protected is essential to the success of the native title claim: without the trust of interviewees, native title researchers would not have access to their stories for the purpose of providing expert evidence in relation to their claim. Both privacy considerations and considerations of

legal privilege mean that access to those interviews is restricted and NTSV researchers generally do not acquire consent to release the information to anyone else, including members of the interviewees' families, unless such permission has been expressly granted by the interviewee. So, while there are good intentions in protecting the oral histories as carefully as they are and, I argue, are ethically bound to do, this puts native title representative bodies and service providers at grave risk of being perceived as gatekeepers of appropriated cultural knowledge. Pursuing ways to mitigate this perception and find ways to offer practical solutions for the future use of this material is a current focus of some native title representative bodies and service providers, but is a discussion beyond the scope of this article.[28]

What this recent project has highlighted to me is the potential for considering future uses for native title oral history. While the cultural knowledge (oral tradition) may remain protected and with limited access (although there are long-term implications for limiting access this material too), there could be potential for the oral history information to be shared with the wider community. The oral histories have value for native title purposes and these can provide tangible benefits to Traditional Owner communities, but they have potential to provide further outcomes. Achieving the most benefit out of any research with Indigenous participants is a key component of the guidelines for ethical research, and should be a focus for future research outcomes of the native title process.[29]

One example for the potential of these oral histories is a project working with the interviewees for this community history to develop a product that they view as valuable for themselves, their family and the community, and are comfortable sharing with each other and the wider community. The native title process can be very divisive for communities, as individuals and families may differ in their understandings of the past. The oral histories have the potential to bring together similar stories and emphasise some aspects of shared experience. A community history might describe the lives of ancestors, elders and families that have fought to stay together and keep their culture strong, and be a document that all individuals can recognise themselves within, and be proud of their achievements. It could also contribute to the conversation about the shared history of the Traditional Owners and the wider community, as a part of the reconciliation process.[30] Researchers working in native title representative bodies and service providers, like myself, are limited with time and resources, but we are working in a specialised field where we are privileged to receive the oral histories and oral traditions of many Traditional Owners, and after twenty years of collecting research information to pursue native title in Victoria, we have a very unique and valuable archive. I hope that native title researchers will be able to work with Traditional Owner communities in the future to create opportunities for pursuing projects, using this archive for the fullest benefit of the Aboriginal people of Victoria.

Conclusions

In a process that operates within a legal framework, native title oral history research has become a specialised, targeted aspect of a field which in the past has focussed more on evidence of oral tradition. The recent project I have described here has provided an opportunity to explore how historical analysis of native title oral history interviews can harness additional value in the oral history information, that is, the personal experiences of the interviewees, as evidence of native title connection and continuity. The evidence of personal and collective identity that comes through in the stories about participation in a strong and close knit community of Traditional Owners complements the often more foregrounded forms of native title evidence that are prominent in knowledge shared as oral tradition. It also opens up possibilities for undertaking collaborative work with the Traditional Owner communities which would enable these oral histories to be shared beyond the native title process, in a format which can be valuable for the Traditional Owner community, and the wider community. While this is still an aspirational goal, it is one which would have great benefit for future generations, and would be an important use for the oral histories that native title researchers are entrusted with through the native title process.

Endnotes

[1] Peter Read, 'The Stolen Generations, the historian and the court room', *Aboriginal History*, vol. 26, pp. 51-60; Christine Choo and Margaret O'Connell, 'Historical Narrative and Proof of Native Title', *Land, Rights, Laws Issues of Native Title*, vol. 3, no. 3, March 2000; Ann Curthoys, Ann Genovese and Alexander Reilly, *Rights and Redemption: History, Law and Indigenous People*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2008.

[2] This article does not intend to contribute to the discourse on the fairness of the native title process and the burden of proof, which has been commented on by native title researchers and legal professionals alike. Rather it will focus on the research tools available to us, and how we can use them to achieve the best outcomes for Traditional Owners. I will comment, however, that there has been much written about the challenges of the native title system as a way of pursuing land rights, and whether or not it offers any justice for Indigenous Australians. The burden of proof for demonstrating that native title rights exist rests with the claimants, and with so many silences in the written records, and decades of the denial of Indigenous culture and policies of forced assimilation, it is almost an impossible task in some areas of the country to prove. For some commentary see Lisa Strelein, *Compromised Jurisprudence: Native title cases since Mabo*, Aboriginal Studies Press, second edition, Canberra, 2009.

[3] Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge, second edition, London and New York, 2006, p. iv.

[4] Alessandro Portelli, 'What makes oral history different', in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge, second edition, London and New York, 2006, p. 37.

[5] Much like Alessandro Portelli's famous story of 'The death of Luigi Trastulli,' where the death of an Italian labourer shifted in the collective memory of his home town to coincide with an event which became of great significance to the collective identity of the town, oral history with Aboriginal interviewees

has revealed events such as frontier violence, or historical figures like Captain Cook, have taken on symbolic meaning to a community, and have been woven in to their own collective memories and ways of telling history. In my own research, traumatic experiences which affected large populations of Victorian Aboriginal people, such as massacres, life under the surveillance and control of government and missionaries, and political disempowerment, have shaped the collective memory of communities of Aboriginal people and have influenced some individual memories as a result.

[6] Federal Court of Australia, 'The Members of the Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Community v The State of Victoria and Others: Determination of Native Title pursuant to the Native Title Act', 18 December 1998, paragraph 21. Accessed online [5 September 2016]: **http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/FCA/1998/1606.html.**

[7] Heather Goodall, ''The Whole Truth and Nothing But…': Some Intersections of Western Law, Aboriginal History and Community Memory', in Bain Attwood and John Arnold (eds.), *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*, La Trobe University Press, Bundoora, 1992, p. 109.

[8] Ann McGrath, ''Stories for country': oral history and Aboriginal land claims', *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no. 9, 1987, p. 39.

[9] James F. Weiner, 'History, oral history, and memoriation in native title', in Benjamin R. Smith and Frances Morphy (eds.), *The Social Effects of Native Title: Recognition, Translation, Coexistence*, Australian National University E Press, Canberra, 2007, p. 218.

[10] Deborah Bird Rose, quoted in Julie Finlayson and Ann Curthoys, 'The Proof of Continuity of Native Title', *Land, Rights, Laws: Issues of Native Title*, vol. 1, no. 18, June 1997, p. 11.

[11] James F. Weiner, 'History, oral history, and memoriation in native title', in Benjamin R. Smith and Frances Morphy (eds.), *The Social Effects of Native Title: Recognition, Translation, Coexistence*, Australian National University E Press, Canberra, 2007, p. 220.

[12] Heather Goodall, 'Aboriginal history and the politics of information control', *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no. 9, 1987, p. 17.

[13] Ann McGrath, ''Stories for country': oral history and Aboriginal land claims', *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no. 9, 1987, p. 39.

[14] Julie Finlayson and Ann Curthoys, 'The Proof of Continuity of Native Title', *Land, Rights, Laws: Issues of Native Title*, vol. 1, no. 18, June 1997, p. 2.

[15] Alistair Thomson, quoted in Shurlee Swain, 'Honouring the Gift: ethical considerations in the oral history relationship', *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no. 19, 1997, p. 16.

[16] Karen Martin (Booran Mirraboopa), 'Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing: A Theoretical Framework and Methods for Indigenous and Indigenist Re-search', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 27, issue 76, 2003, pp. 204-205.

[17] Ann Curthoys, Ann Genovese and Alexander Reilly, *Rights and Redemption: History, Law and Indigenous People*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008, p. 106.

[18] Wayne Atkinson, 'Reflections on the Yorta Yorta Native Title Claim, 1994-2003', in Andrew Gunstone (ed.), *History, Politics and Knowledge: Essays in Australian Indigenous Studies*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, North Melbourne, 2008, p. 269.

[19] Lisa Strelein, *Compromised Jurisprudence: Native title cases since Mabo*, Aboriginal Studies Press, second edition, Canberra, 2009, p. 80.

[20] Julie Cruikshank, 'Notes and Comments: Oral tradition and oral history – reviewing some issues', *The Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 75, issue 3, 1994. Accessed online [24 February 2016]: **http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.slv.vic.gov.au/docview/224304385/fulltext/776356C4DDF543CEPQ/1?accountid=13905**

[21] For some discussion, see Lisa Strelein, *Compromised Jurisprudence: Native title cases since Mabo*, Aboriginal Studies Press, second edition, Canberra, 2009, pp. 77-81, 91; Rod Hagen, 'Ethnographic information and anthropological interpretations in a native title claim: the Yorta Yorta experience', *Aboriginal History*, vol. 25, 2001, p. 216; Nick Duff, 'What's needed to prove native title? Finding flexibility within the law on connectin', *AIATSIS Research Discussion Paper*, no. 35, 2014, pp. 31-33. Accessed online [24 February 2016]: **http://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/products/discussion_paper/whats-needed-to-prove-native-title.pdf**

[22] Rod Hagen, 'Ethnographic information and anthropological interpretations in a native title claim: the Yorta Yorta experience', *Aboriginal History*, vol. 25, 2001, p. 216.

[23] Karen Martin (Booran Mirraboopa), 'Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing: A Theoretical Framework and Methods for Indigenous and Indigenist Re-search', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 27, issue 76, 2003, p. 203.

[24] Karen Martin (Booran Mirraboopa), 'Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing: A Theoretical Framework and Methods for Indigenous and Indigenist Re-search', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 27, issue 76, 2003, p. 203.

[25] Heather Goodall, 'Aboriginal history and the politics of information control', *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no. 9, 1987, p. 31.

[26] Christine Choo and Margaret O'Connell, 'Historical Narrative and Proof of Native Title', *Land, Rights, Laws Issues of Native Title*, vol. 3, no. 3, March 2000, p. 2.

[27] Christine Choo and Margaret O'Connell, 'Historical Narrative and Proof of Native Title', *Land, Rights, Laws Issues of Native Title*, vol. 3, no. 3, March 2000, p. 4.

[28] Discussions of how to archive and appropriately manage access to research materials collected through the native title process has been ongoing, with considerations of legal privilege, privacy and the protection of Indigenous heritage and intellectual property. A recent report published by the research unit of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies details the results of a workshop and survey on this topic: Pamela Faye McGrath, Ludger Dinkler and Alexandra Andriolo, *Managing Information in Native Title: Survey and workshop report*, Native Title Research Unit, AIATSIS, Canberra, 2015. Accessed online [24 February 2016]: **http://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/products/report/mint_report_master_final.pdf**

[29] Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, *Guidelines for ethical research in Australian Indigenous studies*, AIATSIS, Canberra, 2012. Accessed online [24 February 2016]: **http://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/research-and-guides/ethics/gerais.pdf**

[30] The potential for oral history projects to be used for social purposes is not novel; see Paul Thompson, 'The Voice of the Past: Oral History', in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge, second edition, London and New York, 2006, p. 30.

Telling stories, bearing witness: public memorials and oral history*

Alison Atkinson-Phillips

**This paper has been peer-reviewed*

Abstract

Public memorials have long been understood as serving a political and pedagogic function. However, while traditional memorials (including those using non-traditional forms) are designed for mourners left behind, an emerging genre of public memorials commemorates lived experiences of loss and trauma. These are painful experiences that are often connected to the stories of a relatively recent (post)settler-colonial past. They include stories of child abuse, rape, forced separation of families and loss of land. Such memorials rarely 'stand alone', either physically or metaphorically. Survivors and their supporters have often had to work hard to bring these challenging and marginalised histories into the public sphere, and have engaged with a wide range of memory practices. This paper explores the ways memorials to lived experience draw on and interact with oral history work in order to 'bear witness' to the stories of survivors. While these memorials, in common with traditional memorials, usually serve a mourning and healing role for survivors, this paper is focused on their political function as testimony. The paper draws on ongoing research into Australia memorials that commemorate lived experiences of loss and trauma. Using two Australian case studies, I consider the layers of meaning created when oral histories are used in commemorative projects, and the way physical memory spaces can create space for storytelling.

Introduction

Public memorials have long been understood as serving a political and pedagogic function. However, while traditional memorials (including those using non-traditional forms) are designed for mourners left behind,[1] an emerging genre of public memorials commemorates lived experiences of loss and trauma. These are painful experiences that are often connected to the stories of a relatively recent (post)settler-colonial past. They include stories of child abuse, rape, forced separation of families and loss of land. Such memorials rarely 'stand alone', either physically or metaphorically. Survivors and their supporters have often had to work hard to bring these challenging and marginalised histories into the public sphere, and have engaged with a wide range of memory practices. This paper explores the relationship between two particular forms of witnessing: the seemingly direct form of the oral history interview, and the material and mediated form of public memorials. I consider two examples of memorials created in response to the histories that have come to public attention through national inquiries. The first is a government-funded memorial created as a formal act of symbolic reparation, in response to the findings of an Australian Senate inquiry into the experience of institutional and out-of-home care of children. I consider the influence of witness testimony and oral history on the development of the material memorial. The second example is a community-based memorial project that addresses the history of the Stolen Generations—Aboriginal people forcibly removed from their families. I consider the ways it has served as a launching point for oral storytelling. I use the term 'oral history' in a broad sense, as histories that are passed down verbally in the first instance, whether then transcribed into written testimony or used as source material for other kinds of history.

Australian witnessing in an international context

In the 1990s and early 2000s, Australia witnessed three public inquiries that have come to be understood as a 'trilogy'.[2] The reports of these inquiries—published as *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* (1997)[3], *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record, Report on Child Migration* (2001), and *Forgotten Australians: A Report on Australians who experienced Institutional or Out of Home Care as Children* (2004)—allowed the stories of children whose lives had been disrupted by misguided and cruel Government policies entry into the public debate. Many of the stories heard through these inquiries had previously been told in other forums, but these official inquiries brought a new sense of weight and importance. The first inquiry, conducted by the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC), created controversy in part because of its reliance on oral testimony. Yet the two following inquiries followed a similar practice, part of an international trend of witnessing to and acknowledgement of human rights abuse that has developed since the 1990s in countries that are coming to terms with past violence and conflict. Other acts of public witnessing have followed, including national oral history projects and memorials.

Testimony and truth-telling, as acts of witnessing, are a core part of the transitional justice approach to the past. The concept of transitional justice emerged in the context of the fall of South American dictatorships in the 1980s and early 1990s,[4] but has been increasingly adapted for other situations, including settler-colonial contexts such as Canada and Australia. There is a strong link between what Annette Wieviorka calls the 'era of the witness'[5] and practices of transitional justice. Wieviorka argued that the Eichmann Trial, which took place in Israel in the 1960s, was a pivotal moment in which witness testimony became privileged over archival documents in the public sphere. That trial used a single case to put on show the story of the Holocaust by having survivors speak about their personal experiences, only some of which were directly relevant to the particular defendant. The influence of this event can be seen in the practices of truth commissions, which form a core part of the 'transitional justice toolkit'.[6]

Although the Australian inquiries discussed here do not have the formal status of a truth commission, they each drew on elements of international truth and reconciliation practices in the way they conducted their inquiries and when framing their recommendations. For example, the *Forgotten Australians* report discusses reparation within the global context of responses to human rights abuses, using examples from Canada's response to its history of

residential schools and Ireland's responses to claims of institutional abuse of children. The recommendations of the Australian inquiries include acts of 'symbolic reparation'. That is, symbolic acts or processes designed to make amends for the past.[7] These included formal apologies, the creation of special exhibitions, the collection of oral histories, and the development of memorials. There is, therefore, an important link between practices that aim to redress the past and those that seek to witness or remember in the present.

In each of this trilogy of Australian inquiries, witnesses were able to participate in a number of different ways. In public and private hearings, survivors and other witnesses engaged directly with commissioners. People were also able to make written submissions. Some group submissions were collated by support groups which gathered together individual statements given in a supportive environment.[8] Forms of oral and written testimony have also been part of the repertoire of responses to these inquiries. The Federal Government funded two projects by the National Library of Australia: the Bringing Them Home Oral History Project and the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants Oral History Project. There now exists an archive of testimony that anyone wanting to understand this history can access. Other responses include national and state exhibitions, such as 'Broken Links: The Stolen Generations in Queensland' (2007) and the touring exhibition 'Inside: Life in Children's Homes and Institutions' (2011) developed by the National Museum of Australia to tell the story of children growing up in institutional care. These responses are inter-related, and are examples of transitional justice practices that have been used in Australia to explore and deal with this country's settler-colonial heritage. It is beyond the scope of this paper to evaluate the usefulness or otherwise of this approach, but it is important to understand that there is a wider body of what might broadly be described as 'memory work' that these memorial projects are connected to.

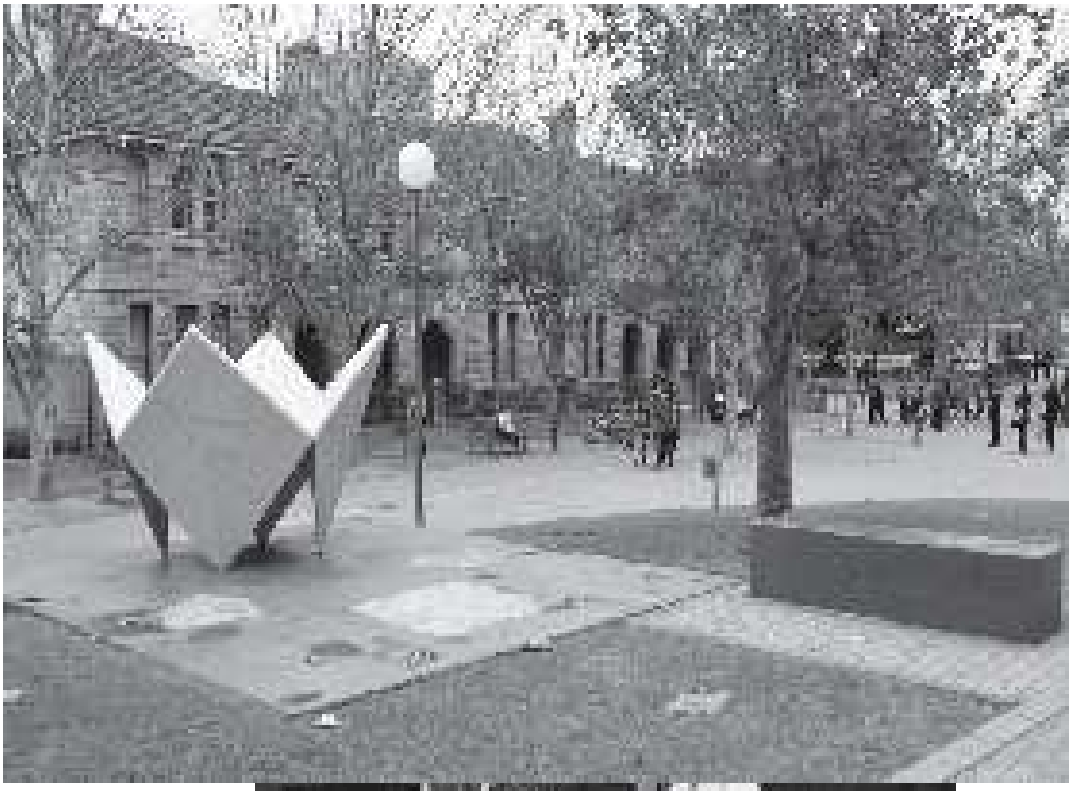
The research for these case studies was conducted as part of a study of Australian public memorials that commemorate lived experiences of loss and trauma. This is a relatively new genre of commemoration that has emerged in the past 30 years. Indeed, the creation of public memorials has emerged as one important way communities respond to the knowledge of human rights abuse. The majority of these memorials commemorate experiences within living memory. The survivors of the experience being mourned are therefore still alive, creating a very different situation to memorials that commemorate death.

The Forgotten Australians memorial discussed in the first case study is located in my home town of Perth, Western Australia. This has meant I have been able to research this memorial using a practice of what Melissa Mean and Charlie Tims call 'deep hanging out'.[9] As well as extensive on-site research, I conducted interviews with three people involved in planning the memorial, art consultant Andra Kins, writer Terri-ann White, and artist Judith Forrest, who each shared materials from their personal archive. I also had informal conversations with care leavers, survivors of the Australian institutional care system, at Tuart Place, a community organisation in Fremantle. I conducted formal interviews with three care leavers about their responses to the 'Unfolding Lives' memorial project as an acknowledgement of their experiences. Those interviews took place in 2014, while the exhibition 'Inside' was installed at the Western Australian Maritime Museum in Fremantle. The care leavers reflected on the meaning of the memorial alongside this other memory work.

The second case study, the Colebrook Reconciliation Park, is located in Eden Hills, on the outskirts of Adelaide, South Australia. Research for that case study was primarily conducted during a three-day visit in April 2015. During that time, I made multiple, extended visits to the Colebrook Reconciliation Park and surrounding areas. I also conducted on-site interviews, using the memorial or 'memory space' itself as a starting point for the interview. Some interviews were in other locations, and I was privileged to be invited into the homes of a number of participants, who shared their personal photographic archives with me. These cannot be reproduced here but have been important for my understanding Colebrook as a place of memory. The interview subjects included two members of the Tji Tji Tjuta (the group of Stolen Generations people associated with Colebrook Home); four non-Aboriginal members and ex-members of the Blackwood Reconciliation Group (BRG); and the artist Silvio Apponyi. I have also drawn on archival materials including published memoir, reportage from key events at the site, and oral history interviews conducted by others to inform my understanding of Colebrook as a place of memory. These have been referenced where relevant.

'Unfolding Lives' memorial as listening

'Unfolding Lives' is a public artwork by Judith Forrest, incorporating text by Terri-ann White. It is also a government-funded memorial to children who spent time in Western Australians state care during the 20th century. The memorial stands on a small grassy knoll between the main entrance of the Western Australian Museum and a row of bus stops on Beaufort Street in the centre of Perth. The memorial area is framed by a flat, red concrete base and a low wall on which the artwork's title is embossed, and onto which the memorial plaque is embedded. The sculpture itself is a fibreglass representation of a 'chatterbox'; a children's toy made by folding and unfolding paper to reveal secrets or predictions of fortune. The outside text gives clues to what the memorial is about: 'The Story that could not be told'; 'The stories of our lives'; 'Forgotten then found'; 'Home is where we live now'. The text on the interior 'folds' are more confronting. They are fragments that offer a glimpse into the childhood experience of those people known as the Forgotten Australians. On the red base are three embossed metal diagrams, suggestive of the shapes of the unfolded chatterbox. One of these contains the names of Western Australia's child institutions. The other two hold more general phrases and the testimony of care leavers. This combination of elements invites memorial participants to move around the space.



'Unfolding Lives' memorial to the Forgotten Australians, Perth, Western Australia.

Left: Detail of the memorial.

All images courtesy Alison Atkinson-Phillips

On one of the 'folds' in the centre of the chatterbox sculpture, the words 'not Aloud to Tork' are written in a child-like script. Quotation marks around the words draw attention to the fact that this is a direct quote from someone who spent their childhood in institutional care. The writer has also chosen to retain the mis-spelling, to emphasise one important part of this history: that a life in 'care' often involved lack of educational opportunities and this has an ongoing impact for people's lives. On the other hand, the person who was 'not Aloud to Tork' is now able to have their voice heard through this public artwork. These words are emblematic of what both the memorials I am researching and most oral history projects are trying to do, in terms of giving voice to people who have previously been silenced. But they also point to ethical issues that researchers and practitioners need to keep in mind—in particular, the educational and social disadvantage that often constrains people's access to the public sphere, and the ethical choices those who do have access to that public sphere need to make about how to facilitate, filter or frame those voices. Kevin Bradley and Anisa Puri have recently reflected on the broad spectrum of ethical decisions involved in oral history work, in the context of the Australian Generations Project. They make the point that the oral history projects developed in response to the HREOC and SCARC inquiries have led to a deepened understanding of the ethical issues involved in historical research.[10]

'Unfolding Lives' is one of a number of state funded memorials created in response to Recommendation 34 of the *Forgotten Australians* report, which requested the Australian Federal Government provide funding for 'suitable' memorials, in consultation with survivors. The Federal Government's response was to make $100,000 available, divided equally between the six states of Australia. In most cases, the state governments then contributed similar or substantially more funding towards public memorials. The advocacy of the Care Leavers of Australia Network (CLAN) influenced the SCARC, leading to the recommendation that memorials were an appropriate response. Specifically, CLAN's co-founder and then president, Joanna Penglase,[11] appeared before the Committee in February 2004, and made it clear she saw the public inquiry and the idea of a memorial as connected. She said,

> If only the day could come when we could say, 'I grew up in care,' and people could say, 'That would have been terrible. We know that, because it is now visible.'[12]

This emphasis on the role of the memorial as truth-telling has been reflected in interviews with care leavers. The idea of making history 'visible' is a metaphor connected to ideas at the core of oral history, of allowing the voiceless to be heard. Both metaphors are connected with the idea of truth-telling.

'Unfolding Lives' was commissioned as part of the Redress WA scheme. A formal apology and a 'prominent and permanent memorial' were key parts of the Redress WA scheme.[13] Care leavers were also offered the opportunity to record their own story on their official files. To participate, people needed to make a formal statement about their experiences whilst in care. This could include institutional settings managed by churches or other non-government organisations. Financial reparations were offered in the form of ex gratia payments to survivors of abuse or neglect. When the scheme was originally announced by the WA Labor Government in December 2007, the maximum payment was expected to be A$80,000. Such financial reparations are not compensation for suffering, but are another means of acknowledgment. However, the number of claimants was much higher than expected, and in 2009, the then Liberal Government announced that the maximum payment had been reduced to A$45,000. The minimum payment was also reduced, from A$10,000 to A$5000. News reports and letters to the editor are collated on the Find and Connect web page and document the level of outrage expressed by care leavers and their supporters.[14] In outlining this background, I aim to draw attention to the inter-connections between different forms of memory work. 'Unfolding Lives' was created in the context of the controversy created by the Redress WA scheme. Ereshnee Naidu has found that, in post-conflict societies, the 'success' of memorial projects in making a positive social impact 'depends on how it relates to other forms of reparations as well as the processes around which the memorial project is initiated'.[15] In light of this, it seems remarkable that 'Unfolding Lives' was so well received by those whose experience it commemorates.

'Unfolding Lives' is both an act of testimony and a response to testimony. The Department of Child Protection was responsible for the project, and a selection panel, consisting of government stakeholders, had the responsibility of choosing the artist and design. A Forgotten Australians Committee, made up of care leavers, served as a reference group. They had involvement but were not responsible for the choice of the artist or the final design. The ideas of the Forgotten Australians Committee were relayed to the artist via an expression of interest document created by art consultant Andra Kins.[16] Kins and Terri-ann White also met directly with the Committee. Neither White nor the artist chosen to create the memorial, Judith Forrest, are care leavers themselves. Instead, they responded to previous memory work done by care leavers who had participated in the Senate inquiry, in oral history projects, and who had written memoirs. Terri-ann White, the writer for the project, drew on direct quotes from care leavers who had spoken to the SCARC, or who had previously spoken to researchers and historians.[17] The 'chatterbox' form of the final memorial developed out of Judith Forrest's research. After playing with the idea of a shelf holding a trio of toys, she settled on the idea of the chatterbox in part because her research suggested it was a toy that had been played with by children around the world in different ways, and because it was a toy that could be made, 'even when kids had nothing else'.[18] Its use as a 'fortune teller' suggested the variability of children' fortunes and the element of luck. 'Unfolding Lives', then, could not exist without the previous memory work of testimony and oral history.

Oral histories are usually collected with the assumption that they will be listened to in full, although new technologies such as OHMS (the Oral History Metadata Synchroniser), developed by the University of Kentucky (www.oralhistoryonline.org/) or projects that engage with multiple media platforms, such as the Australian Generations Oral History Project (http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/australian-generations/), are disrupting that by offering alternative ways of accessing oral testimonies, through keyword mining and contextualised summaries.[19] Oral history collections that are gathered around a particular theme allow the complexity of multiple voices to emerge, if people are willing to spend the time to listen to multiple life narratives. In the memorial form, neither the fullness of the individual life narrative nor the complexity of the layered experiences of an oral history collection is available. White's emphasis on using clusters of words and phrases is an attempt to resist the presentation of the Forgotten Australians story as a single, contained narrative that can be left in the past. White was also aware that because of the location of the memorial, in a pedestrian thoroughfare, most people would experience it in a fleeting moment, with perhaps a number of such moments building up over time. She has elsewhere described her aim as encouraging visitors to 'ask the questions and put them into an empathic space'.[20]

For memorials to 'work' as an act of symbolic reparations, they need in some way to repair the relationship between the state and those it has wronged. At a basic level, memorials can be seen as a 'civil ritual of recognition'[21] that acknowledges that wrong has occurred. 'Unfolding Lives', then, can be understood as an act of listening carried out by an individual artist and writer on behalf of the state and the wider Western Australian community. One care leaver I interviewed said he had attended the federal government's apology to the Forgotten Australians in Canberra, and the most important moment for him was when the then Opposition Leader Malcolm Turnbull said, 'we believe you'.[22] This statement echoes the statements of other survivors about the importance of acknowledgement. The memorial is a public and visible way the state says, 'we believe you'.

Colebrook Reconciliation Park as a launching point for oral memory work

Colebrook Reconciliation Park is the site of the first Australian memorial that acknowledges the removal of Aboriginal children from their families and communities as a result of assimilationist government policies. It is

built on the site of the former Colebrook Home for Aboriginal Children, operated in Eden Hills on the outskirts of Adelaide by the United Aborigines Mission from 1943 to 1972.[23] The memorial project grew out of a local reconciliation study circle set up in the Blackwood area of Adelaide in the early 1990s. The study circle, which involved a predominantly non-Aboriginal group, developed into the Blackwood Reconciliation Group (BRG). It eventually connected with the network of ex-residents, some of whom joined the BRG. As part of the formal process of taking over responsibility for the site, now owned by the Aboriginal Lands Trust, the ex-residents formed a separately incorporated body known as the Tji Tji Tjuta, meaning 'all the children'. The Colebrook Reconciliation Park developed in the context of the relationship between the BRG and the Tji Tji Tjuta.

The first memorial plaque on the site was dedicated on the first of June 1997, just days after *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* was tabled in the Australian Parliament. The event had been planned months ahead, to coincide with the end of Reconciliation Week.[24] Ex-residents had been invited back to the site for a reunion event, and non-Aboriginal people were also invited to participate. For many 'Colebrook kids', it was the first time they had returned since childhood. Some had good memories of Colebrook Home, but many did not. For about 150 ex-residents who attended the reunion, it was a day of intense emotion. For the approximately 2000 other participants, the day was also significant. For some it was the first time they had heard directly the story of the Stolen Generations. For a number of local residents, discovering that the benevolent 'home' was implicated in the forced separation of families came as a shock,[25] and a number of long-term non-Aboriginal members of the BRG date their involvement to that day.[26]

One of the Home's most well-known ex-residents, Lowitja O'Donoghue, unveiled the plaque, which acknowledges the local traditional owners of the land, the Kaurna people, as well as acknowledging the place as the site of the Colebrook Home. O'Donoghue, an experienced public speaker and then chairperson of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), made an explicit connection between Colebrook and the wider Stolen Generations story in her speech, and called on the Australian Government for an official apology.[27]

Two significant sculptures were created in the context of the highly emotional and politically charged response to *Bringing Them Home.* Their focus is not on the experience of the Colebrook children but on their families left behind. Both sculptures were created by local artist Silvio Apponyi working with Aboriginal artist Shereen Rankine, and with two additional artists who were members of the Tji Tji Tjuta, Kunyi (June Anne) McInerney and her sister Tjula (Jane) Pole acting as advisors. The first to be created was the 'Fountain of Tears', also known as the 'Pool of Tears'. As the name suggests, it is a commemorative fountain. At its top is a bronze coolamon, a carrying vessel used in a number of Aboriginal cultures that has become a widely used image of stolen children. Water bubbles up from the centre of the coolamon and flows down over faces carved directly into the granite base of the fountain. The models for the sculptures, two women and two men, were ex-residents and people associated with the site, now the age their parents or grandparents would have been when they were taken. The images were carved directly into the rock by Silvio Apponyi during emotionally intense sittings, in which the models needed to let down their guard and learn to trust the artist.[28] The faces express pain, sorrow and anger; they bear witness to that which words alone cannot express.

The 'Fountain of Tears' was dedicated at another large reunion event in 1998. The night before, some members of the Tji Tji Tjuta and BRG camped out at the site. One of the leaders of the Tji Tji Tjuta, Avis Gale, was interviewed by Kim Gonsalves about her response to the memorials.[29] Gale discussed her emotional response to the sculpture, and the fact that it gave her an insight into her mother, who had never been able to express her feelings, 'The expression on her face… the pain and the hurt in that she didn't know how to express herself.' This recorded interview raises the question of how many other,

'Fountain of Tears' by Silvio Apponyi and Shereen Rankine.

'Grieving Mother' by Silvio Apponyi and Shereen Rankine.

unrecorded, conversations were started by the memorials. What kinds of storytelling happened because of this artwork that may not have otherwise been possible?

The dedication of the 'Fountain of Tears' gave the Colebrook project a higher profile, in turn allowing the group to raise funds for the sculpture they had wanted from the beginning. Dedicated in 1999, the 'Grieving Mother' is a bronze figure of a woman sitting on a rock, bent over her empty hands. Silvio Apponyi said that he did not want her to be a portrait of any one woman, and so 17 different women sat as models for different parts of her.[30] In her memoir, *Kick the Tin,* Doris Kartinyeri writes about the experience of sitting for the 'Fountain of Tears' sculpture, reminiscing about her experiences with onlookers and sharing 'sadness and laughter' while Silvio worked. How many more rich conversations were held while those 17 women sat for 'Grieving Mother'? Perhaps this is one reason the sculpture is so readily identified with. Almost two decades have passed, and even now her hands are rarely empty: they are filled with flowers or other tokens of affection, suggesting regular visitors. It is impossible to know if those visitors come alone or together, but it does seem that the 'Grieving Mother' has become a focal point. Lowitja O'Donoghue is reported as having taken a group of young Hazara asylum seekers to her on Mother's Day 2002, to give them an opportunity to remember their own mothers. Ali Reza, told the Sydney Morning Herald, 'We can see in that place our own story. The same [thing] happened to us, but in a different way.'[31] The Adoption Loss Adult Support (ALAS) group also claim the 'Grieving Mother' as a memorial for forced adoptions. Susan Hosking has raised concerns about the sculpture becoming a 'reconciliation commodity'[32]. While this is a legitimate concern, these co-options do point to the sculpture's ability to give expression to the story of Aboriginal mothers, stories that have largely been missing from the Stolen Generations archive.

Over the next decade, the site was developed from an empty block (mostly cleared of bushland but strewn with the rubble of the demolished Home) into a space for memory and remembering. The installation of 'Grieving Mother' was accompanied by the installation of a number of other plaques and photographic montages that are interspersed along a walking path through re-growing native bush. A few years later, a mural by Kunyi McInerney was added to the front wall. The plaques and mural are acts of truth-telling. They give an insight into what happened at Colebrook, the good and the bad. They also tell a story of reconciliation and hope.

The Blackwood Reconciliation Group met monthly for over a decade, and continues to meet, although less regularly.[33] Like many community groups, the members are ageing and have struggled to connect with the next generation. From the mid-1990s, the Colebrook Reconciliation Park offered a focus for the group, but it has not been its only project. As well as discussions about and practical work on the development and maintenance of the site, BRG gatherings involved educational sessions of specific topics, as well as less formal storytelling. In the summer months, the BRG has met at the storytelling circle that is now an important feature of the Colebrook site. While the sculptures and the memory space are important, so are the relationships that have developed through sharing stories. Sharing in this context means both telling and listening.

Colebrook now is a place where the stories of the Stolen Generations are told through art and word. It is a place for private contemplation and for personal rituals, as the constant flowers and notes at the Grieving Mother attest. It also, significantly, provides a space where stories can be passed on to the next generation. Doris Kartinyeri, a writer, is one of the ex-residents of Colebrook. In her memoir, Kick the Tin, she reflects on her life experiences and the meaning the Reconciliation Park has for her. Yet

Colebrook Mural by Kunyi McInerney.

despite having written this down in a book, she still responds to calls to visit the site, to pass on her experience to school groups and university students. She has continued to do this for almost two decades, despite the fact that she is getting on in years and lives on the other side of town. Linda Westphalen, an academic at Flinders University, became involved with the BRG in the early days of the reconciliation study circle. She has continued to host groups of students at the Colebrook story circle, to pass on the stories she heard through the BRG. In 2013, Aboriginal leader Roger Rigney worked with students from the local Blackwood High and St John's Grammar to create artworks for a new shed built near the storytelling circle, to provide shelter for groups who visit the site during bad weather. Again, the project involved passing on the story of Colebrook and the Stolen Generations. Lowitja O'Donoghue attended the launch, offering another opportunity for intergenerational engagement.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the connection between oral history and public memorials that commemorate lived experiences of loss and trauma. Oral histories as testimony have played an important role in bringing marginalised stories of (post)settler-colonial human rights abuses into the Australian public sphere. The 'Unfolding Lives' memorial is an example of the kind of nuanced and thoughtful commemorations that can be developed when those involved in the creation of memorials make use of this testimony to educate themselves. Memorials, in turn, have sometimes provided safe spaces for sharing stories in a more intimate way than that provided by government inquiries or formal oral history projects. The Colebrook Reconciliation Park offers one possibility of the ways memorials can be used as a launching pad for further memory work.

Colebrook Reconciliation Park storytelling circle.

Endnotes

[1] There is a wide body of literature on memorials. Recent studies include Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America,* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2010; Paul Ashton, Paula Hamilton and Rose Searby, *Places of the Heart: Memorials in Australia*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2012; Susanne Buckley-Zistel and Stefanie Schafer (eds), *Memorials in Times of Transition*, Intersentia, Cambridge, 2014; Quentin Stevens and Karen A. Franck, *Memorials as Spaces of Engagement: Design, Use and Meaning*. Routledge, New York, 2015.

[2] Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee, *Lost innocents: Righting the Record. Report on Child Migration*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2001, p. 8.; Committee, Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee, *Forgotten Australians: A Report on Australians who Experienced Institutional or Out-Of-Home Care as Children*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2004, p. 2.

[3] Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families,* Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, Canberra, 1997.

[4] Page Arthur, 'How "Transitions" Reshaped Human Rights: A Conceptual History of Transitional Justice', *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2009, pp. 321-67.

[5] Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, trans. J. Stark, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 2006.

[6] Bickford & Sodaro 2010 quoted in Susanne Buckley-Zistel and Stefanie Schafer (eds), *Memorials in Times of Transition*, Intersentia, Cambridge, 2014, p. 7.

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[9] Melissa Mean and Charlie Tims, *People make places: growing the public life of cities*, Demos, London, 2006.

[10] Kevin Bradley & Anisa Puri, 'Creating an Oral History Archive: Digital Opportunities and Ethical Issues', *Australian Historical Studies*, 47:1, 2016, p. 81.

[11] Joanna Penglas is author of the book *Orphans of the Living: Growing Up in 'care' in Twentieth-Century Australia*. Fremantle Press, 2007, which developed out of her own experience as a child in care, and her PhD research into this topic.

[12] Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee, *Official Committee Hansard,* 4 February 2004, viewed on 18 May 2014, **http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlinfo/download/committees/commsen/721/toc_pdf/3131-2.pdf**.

[13] Debra Rosser, 'Redress WA (2008 – 2011)', *Find & Connect*, Find & Connect web resource project for the Commonwealth of Australia, 2015, viewed 7 July 2016, **www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00505b.htm/**.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Naidu 2014, p. 35

[16] Andra Kins, interviewed by the author, April 2014, recording and transcript held by author.

[17] Terri-ann White, interviewed by the author, May 2014, recording and transcript held by author.

[18] Judith Forrest, interviewed by the author, April 2014, recording and transcript held by author

[19] Michael Frisch, 'Oral History in the Digital Age: Beyond the Raw and the Cooked' *Australian Historical Studies* 47:1, 2016, pp. 92-107.

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[21] Feutchtang quoted in Buckley-Zistel and Schafer, 2014, p. 10.

[22] Ron Love, interviewed by the author, June 2015, recording and transcript held by author.

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[24] Mike Brown, interviewed by the author, April 2015, recording and transcript held by the author.

[25] Linda Westphalen, interviewed by the author, April 2015, recording and transcript held by the author.

[26] Richard Merry, interviewed by the author, April 2015, recording and transcript held by the author.

[27] Linda Westphalen, interviewed by the author, April 2015, recording and transcript held by the author.

[28] Silvio Apponyi, interviewed by the author, April 2015, recording and transcript held by author.

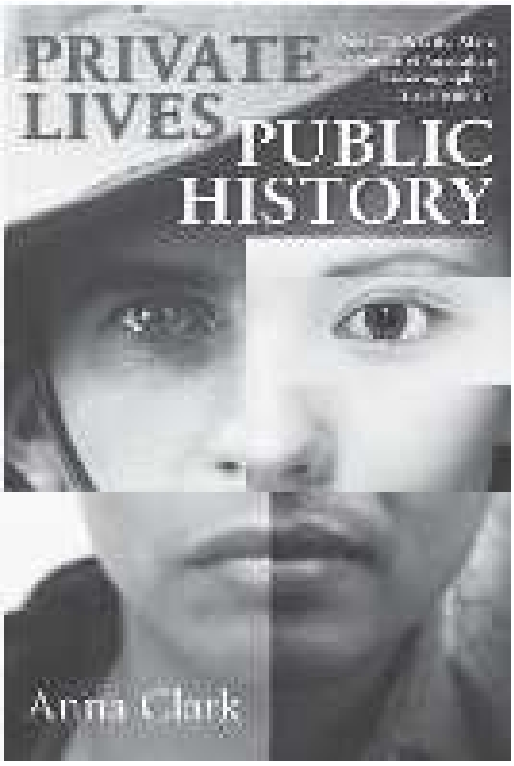
[29] Avis Gale, interviewed by Kim Gonsalves, May 1998, (video recording), recording held by author, courtesy of Blackwood Reconciliation Group.

[30] Silvio Apponyi, interviewed by the author, April 2015, recording and transcript held by author.

[31] Debra Jopson, 'The barefoot regent in her Afghan court', *Sydney Morning Herald,* March 2003.

[32] Susan Hosking, 'Colebrook Home and the Disappeared Past' *Westerly* 52, 2007, p. 153.

[33] Mike Lawson, interviewed by the author, April 2015, recording and transcript held by the author.



Anna Clark, *Private Lives, Public History,* Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2016. 277 pages. ISBN (pbk) 9780522868951.

In *Private Lives, Public History,* Clark offers an entirely readable and at times surprising exploration of the intersections between 'public history' and the private histories of 'ordinary people'. In a process she labels 'oral historiography', Clark interviewed one hundred people from community groups across the country. The book speaks directly and unashamedly to the uneasiness between popular and professional historical discourses. Clark challenges the concern some historians express over the proliferation of popular and personal history-making – the latter often lambasted by historians like David Lowenthal for being celebratory, nostalgic and uncritical. Instead, Clark expresses surprise at how nuanced an understanding of the past many 'ordinary people' hold. The book invites us to also question the limits and boundaries of 'doing history', and the benefits of further exploring public history-making as a sort of 'critical citizenship'. Indeed, historians need to better understand this 'historical consciousness', Clark gently urges.

While the 'history wars' might not be a term familiar to many of Clark's interviewees, they understand that history is and can be contested, and not just on a personal level, but collectively. Instead of being uncomfortable with contrasting views, individuals are capable of acknowledging positionality. People's insights into the nation's past are drawn from a range of stimuli and are indeed shaped by cultural attitudes and beliefs, which Clark's interviewees themselves are capable of recognising as determining factors in their comprehension of Australian history.

The intersections between public and private are what interests Clark here – how do people become invested in the nation's past? How might historians become involved in this process? The obvious answer is through personal background, but the mode and outcomes of this engagement are often surprising. Gauging historical memory through the opinions of 'ordinary people' is a complicated task, and here it reveals that people 'think historically' in order to place themselves and their narratives into historical context – a point to which oral historians and others working with autobiographical memory have been attuned. 'Powerful public narratives of the nation's past' are powerful not only because of the ubiquitous power of civic nationalism and the state apparatus behind narratives like the Anzac legend. They are also powerful because of their emotive pull. Clark offers familiar academic critiques of the Anzac legend, and its troubling militaristic and jingoistic connotations, but she also contrasts the civic with the emotional. Rather than lambast those who commemorate the day, she questions the emotions that arise in relation to Anzac Day. Clark argues that people's responses to commemorative spaces do not fit on a linear continuum, with connection on one side and critique on the other. Some who draw on grief, loss and death are capable of recognising and disliking the more celebratory elements of Anzac day, as it has evolved over the last decade, and yet participate in this civic ritual despite their ambivalence. Their historical subjectivity is, obviously, 'distinctly personal', but also layered and critical of the 'headlinese' contained in the media's coverage of Anzac.

In light of this, Clark argues that emotions are not the enemy of 'good' history, but rather essential to it. The empathy and perspective with which 'ordinary people' approach history is essential to its public construction and connectedness. These connections are not unhistorical, Clark urges; they are '*deeply* rooted in history'. After all, the forces that compel us to ask particular questions of the past can be highly emotional. These emotional connections, which some academic historians fear stymie historical inquiry, can also be starting points toward an inquiry. To dismiss this notion is to posit a disingenuous dichotomy between an imagined critical and unbiased historical profession and 'popular' history.

It is perhaps unsurprising that Clark concludes, like David Glassberg and Michael Frisch before her, that history becomes interesting to people 'once they can situate themselves and their own family stories within or alongside the national narrative'. The points of connection to the wider 'Australian story is framed by personal experience, rather than the overt presence of an innate, official and abstract national history'. This is not to say, however, that everyone is doing the particular work of historians (there is a tangible difference between a broad historical consciousness rooted in memory and emotional connections to the past, and the critical analysis of memory in relation to place and time) but rather that historians are not the sole arbitrators of the histories people choose to receive and interpret. Ordinary people capable of 'thinking historically' seek histories that allow them to anchor their lives and narratives in time and place, which academic history does not always provide. These are connections and processes historians should hope to understand if we are to foster a 'historically minded community.

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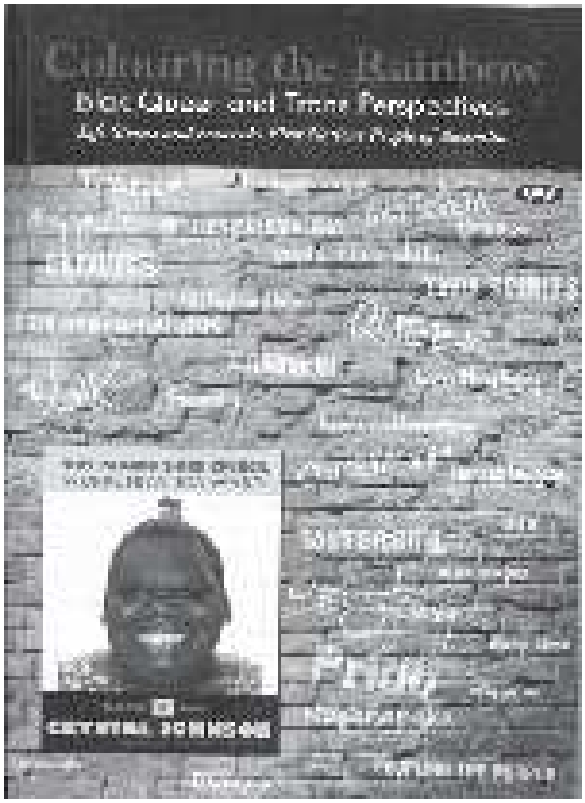

Dino Hodge, (editor), *Colouring the Rainbow. Blak, Queer and Trans Perspectives. Life Stories and Essays by First Nations People of Australia.* Wakefield Press, Mile End, South Australia, 2015. 324 pages. ISBN (pbk) 978 1 74305 393 5.

This book had its genesis when, in 1994, a group of seven people (three women and four men) collaborated on the essay 'Peopling the Empty Mirror: The Prospects for Lesbian and Gay Aboriginal history'.[1] Dino Hodge was one of the two non-Indigenous people of the group, which termed itself the 'Gays and Lesbians Aboriginal Alliance'. Developments since then have included a national symposium in 2014, consultations with community members, organisations and academics, and a national call for contributions for this book, which generated considerable interest.

The seventeen contributions published here include six re-presentations of recorded oral histories, as well as written life stories and essays on specific topics, some utilising an academic framework. An overarching theme that emerges from the interviews and life stories is the complexity of issues facing the contributors, and the diversity of individual differences in experiences and responses. Acceptance (or otherwise) of 'queerness' varies among family, peers, and within Aboriginal and mainstream community. While some have found support, whether from Aboriginal family and friends or the wider society, others have had to live through strong rejection, sometimes with violence and injury. Further, many relate how, in coming to terms with their sexuality, they have also had to deal with quite varied attitudes from non-Indigenous society to their Aboriginality, and they reflect on how this has impacted on the development of their own identification as Indigenous Australians.

Personal accounts are from people both of strongly traditional and more mixed backgrounds. The first contribution comes from Crystal Johnson, who describes the world of Aboriginal society as lived today on the Tiwi Islands. She went through men's initiation as a youth, yet later became a long-standing advocate for sistergirls and queer people, and was the first transwoman in the Northern Territory to be elected to any tier of government when elected to the Tiwi Islands Regional Council in 2012. The striking image on the book's cover is of her election poster, and her vibrant personality leaps from the page in this transcription of a recorded interview, underscoring the meaning of its title, 'The True Power of Being Proud'. Another interview follows, 'Staying Close to Family and Country', from Brie Ngala Curtis, who describes her upbringing within traditions and culture of four Central Australian language groups. She is now a well-known advocate for sistergirls, brotherboys and all queer people, and gives a very moving account of coming to terms with her sexual identity and the rejection she experienced, sometimes with physical violence. Curtis also details the support from traditional Elders and other peers for Sisters and Brothers NT, of which she was a founding member in 2014.

The personal psychological conflict that some contributors have had to work through is an important recurrent theme. Laniyuk Garcon-Mills grew up avoiding racist discrimination by denying her Aboriginality, which was inherited through her father. Upon coming out as a lesbian at university, she then faced hostility from her mother, who is of French-Irish descent, but recounts the strong support of peer groups. Eventually deciding to 'come home' to Darwin, she found a measure of acceptance of her sexuality, realised great affinity for country, and now feels ashamed that she ever felt uneasy about carrying an Aboriginal name. Ben Gertz grew up in north Queensland, and took a precocious interest in society and politics. At secondary school he thrived on sport and acted out perceived anti-gay prejudice with homophobic language and attitudes. At university and later, however, he became involved with LGBTI activism and a Pride Festival. He fortunately had an 'out' gay uncle who was a role model, and now feels comfortable as a young, gay Indigenous man. Nevertheless, he still feels he can never heal the wounds caused by past actions.

> Only through writing this do I feel it is appropriate to convey the pain and guilt I have felt for myself over a number of years. (100).

Perhaps it is only natural that activism is a strong thread running through a ground-breaking collection of personal accounts from people in this group. Samia Goudie, a woman of mixed descent who was taken as a child, was a hospice worker in the United States during the first flush of AIDS. She has a distinguished academic background in Australia, and now advocates for those who are the most disadvantaged.

> Prejudiced beliefs, homophobia and racism all do have an impact on our peoples. These have had an impact on my health and well-being, and continue to do so. There is still much work to be done. (138).

Brett Moonie displaced gay feelings with violence when young, and was not fully out until he was in his thirties. He emphasises the importance of family and peer support, and now works with community and elders, raising awareness and demonstrating solutions:

> … teaching the community to look after those people, and reminding them that they are, and always have been part of their own community. (146)

This touches on a key theme identified by Hodge at the outset: 'The book's contributors broadly consider indigeneity and colonialism with regard to gender and sexuality' (vii), which is promptly reinforced in the book's introduction by Troy-Anthony Baylis: 'The lived realities of colonisation have constructed a silencing that mutes Queer-Aboriginality', and has led to '… a heterocentric reading of Aboriginal cultures' (1). This idea is taken up in more detail in the academic essays presented in the final section of the book, 'Looking Out of the Mirror', where the prejudice against non-'straight' Aboriginal sexuality is analysed as a product of colonisation and the subsequent imposition of value systems that harbour multiple elements alien to the complexity of traditional Indigenous world-views and ways of being.

Readers will be impressed by the courage and pride shown by contributors – this is a powerful and at times very moving collection of stories, with many challenges to conventional ideas, not only of sexuality, but also of Aboriginal identity. But apart from its psychological and emotional impact, the book is a thoughtfully compiled reference work. Contributions are augmented throughout by endnotes, and a detailed eighteen-page glossary and twelve pages of index make it a valuable and scholarly resource. Marcia Langton, at one of the book's launches, commented that the conversation presented here on issues faced by this group is similar to the kind which began forty years ago among feminists about their identity, and is one whose time had come for Indigenous Australians who identify as 'queer' or trans. This book will be a profoundly effective springboard for launching the discussion into deeper waters.

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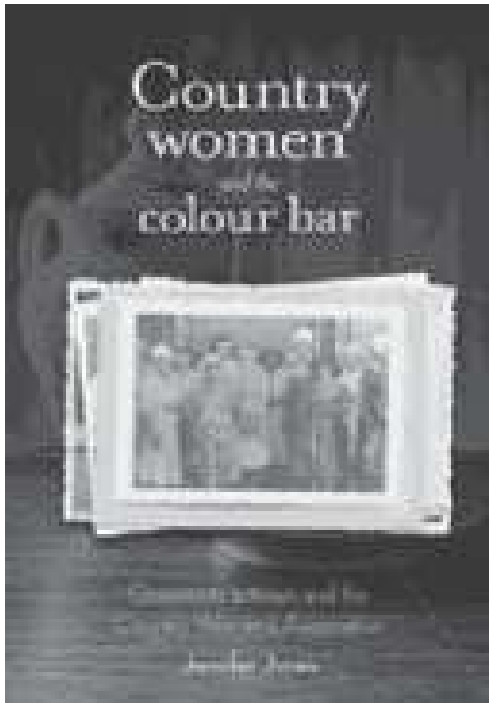
[1] Wendy Dunn/Holland, Maureen Fletcher, Dino Hodge, Gary Lee, E. J. Milera (John Cross), Rea Saunders and Jim Wafer (The Gays and Lesbians Aboriginal Alliance), 'Peopling the Empty Mirror: The Prospects for Lesbian and Gay Aboriginal History', in *Gay Perspectives II: More Essays in Australian Gay Culture*, ed. Robert Aldrich (Sydney, University of Sydney, 1994), 1-62, **http://alga.org.au/files/Peopling-the-Empty-Mirror.pdf.**

Jennifer Jones, *Country women and the colour bar: grassroots activism and the Country Women's Association*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2015. 229 pages. ISBN (pbk) 9781925302967.

Country women and the colour bar puts paid to some of the myths surrounding the Country Women's Association (CWA) of the 1950s and 1960s. Widely thought to be an ultra-conservative, class-conscious and racially exclusive organisation, Jennifer Jones challenges these concepts through a detailed analysis of the oral and archival records. Archival sources include the AIATSIS Library, the National Library, the State Library of New South Wales, State Records of New South Wales and Queensland, government publications, local records and private papers.



Over a period of seven years, from 2005 to 2011, interviews were undertaken with 17 Aboriginal people (mostly women, but at least one man) and 25 non-Aboriginal people (17 women and 8 men) for personal accounts of experiences within and with the Country Women's Associations of New South Wales and Queensland. Historic photographic evidence supports her research and her main argument that these associations have reached out to Aboriginal women, who have participated actively in them.

That is not to say that these organisations were free from racial discrimination against Aboriginal women, nor that Aboriginal women, 'dressed in the full ensemble of hat, gloves and matching accessories,' were 'assimilated individuals who had lost touch with their cultural values.'[1] On the contrary, what Jones draws out is the activism that underpins the difficult and determined efforts of Aboriginal women to negotiate and manoeuvre in the politics of the times, namely the move from segregation to assimilation.

Their ability to engage in this arena was, however, initiated by a few non-Aboriginal women within the CWA and it quickly became a popular movement for the CWA to establish Aboriginal branches from within Aboriginal communities, with varying success.

My own research would suggest that this sort of activity was not just a phenomenon of New South Wales and Queensland alone during this period. A number of interviews I have conducted with Aboriginal women attest to the pro-active interest of country women in South Australia during this period in the Aboriginal women residing in their districts. For example, until she was removed at age 10 in 1945 Doreen Kartinyeri grew up on Raukkan (formerly known as Point McLeay mission) on Lake Alexandrina in South Australia's southeast. She tells of women from the local Women's League coming in and teaching the Raukkan women to unpick second-hand clothing donated by charities and remake them into

clothes for the children; this was something her own mother did.[2] Later, as a young married woman living on Point Pearce mission on the Yorke Peninsula she recalls sewing exercises and afternoon teas with the Ladies' Guild in the 1950s and 1960s.[3] As this sort of cooperation already existed in South Australia it makes me wonder whether the actions of the New South Wales and Queensland CWA during this period were the result of the progressive moves of a few dedicated women within it or whether they were driven by the government assimilation policies that were the order of the day.

While Jones addresses the policies of assimilation throughout the book, she asserts that the endeavours of the CWA '… ***happened*** to align with Government priorities in assimilating Aboriginal people.'[4] Nevertheless, Jones talks about country women being '… ***enlisted*** to facilitate this process,'[5] (my emphasis) and particular women being embodied with the 'expected characteristics' required.[6] Growing up in New South Wales in the 1950s and 1960s I had very little knowledge of Aboriginal people, or of government policies towards them. Jones enlightens us on how much governments attempted to get the community involved in the assimilation process when she cites a 1958 brochure, 'Assimilation of our Aborigines,' calling on the community to provide 'sustained understanding and practical assistance.'[7] No doubt the 'well-bred, middle-class white women'[8] of the Country Women's Associations would have been keen to heed the call to assist.

This links the notion of non-Aboriginal women embracing Aboriginal women into their fold with the development of 'quiet' activism from pragmatic Aboriginal women who saw an opportunity to further their people. Long used to playing the white man's game, these women sought to fulfil the requirements of the Country Women's Associations in order to gain access to resources, gain stature (and hence power) in the community and to negotiate improvements for the Aboriginal community. Jones draws this out well.

Jones shows how the CWA women were lionised for their efforts to be inclusive,[9] despite their insistence on Aboriginal members being required to adhere to their policies, procedures and practices (based on access to middle-class incomes and resources) and criticised for any failure to do so. As Jones points out, Aboriginal women were keen to be good housewives with exacting standards, otherwise the Welfare would take their children.[10] This, for me, paints a picture of patronisation and oppression, albeit in a new form. This is not particularly spelled out by Jones and I feel that at times she is treading on eggshells rather than drawing a bold conclusion. Add to this the apparent compliance of Aboriginal women at the same time as they slowly introduce their own methods of participation (e.g. being 'handicraft minded'[11]) and begin to identify more with less privileged white members through the 'sympathy of bitter experience'[12] and one begins to see their resistance coming to the fore.

I am a little confused as to whether Jones' conclusion fits with the premises outlined in the body of her book. While we know the 'colour bar' still existed in the 1960s (as evidenced through the freedom rides, as Jones discusses), it should be remembered that this was an era of government assimilation policies and the government was encouraging community organisations to help implement them. I am still left wondering whether the women of the CWA were puppets of governments or progressives. Perhaps they were a little of both?

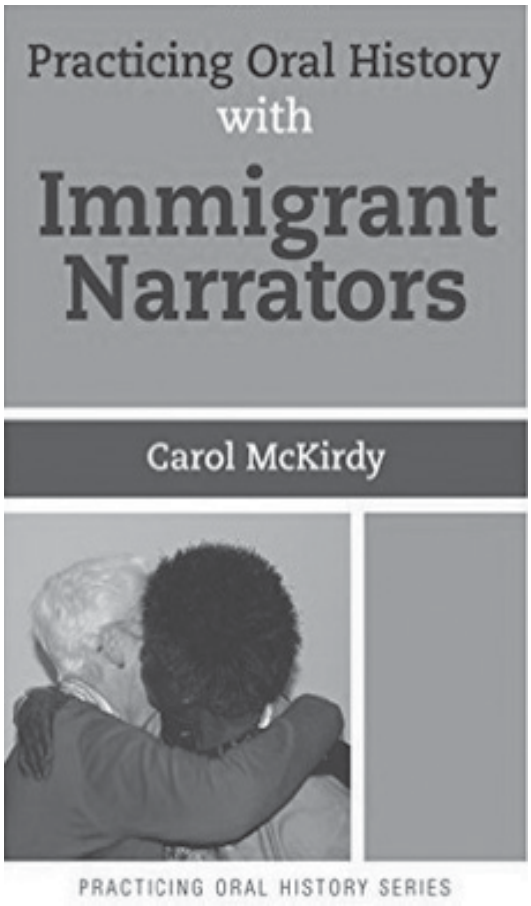
Whatever the answer, the subject is an otherwise unexplored one and the book a very interesting read.

Sue Anderson

[1] Grassroots activism, p. xii.
[2] Doreen Kartinyeri, interview with Sue Anderson, Tape 13, 10.12.2002, held by interviewer.
[3] Doreen Kartinyeri, interview with Sue Anderson, Tape 26, 6.04.2003, held by interviewer.
[4] Ibid., p. 11.
[5] Ibid., p. 21.
[6] Ibid., p. 22.
[7] Ibid, p. 46.
[8] Ibid., p. 22.
[9] See, for example, Chapter 3 'Kempsey.'[10] Ibid., p. 54.
[11] Ibid., p. 102.
[12] Ibid., p.75.

Carol McKirdy, *Practicing Oral History with Immigrant Narrators,* Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, CA. 177 pages. ISBN (pbk) 9781629580043.

With an estimated 232 million people world-wide currently living outside their country of origin (almost double the number twenty five years ago), it has never been more important to understand why and how people migrate. Whether seeking protection or opportunity (or both), the large scale movement of people has created challenges for governments and communities across the



globe. Too often, fear of economic or cultural encroachment by 'outsiders' has fuelled instability and xenophobia. First-hand stories that offer a deeper, more personal explanation of why and how people move can go some way to addressing the fear and mistrust of foreigners. Oral history, which has traditionally given voice to the disenfranchised, is an important tool in gathering these narratives. Carol McKirdy's *Practicing Oral History with Immigrant Narrators* is part how-to guide, part inspirational call to action to collect these migrant stories.

The book is part of Nancy MacKay's *Practicing Oral History* series, which offers experienced interviewers and novices alike practical guides for the planning, undertaking and management of oral history projects. The series aims to fill a gap in resources available for museums, historical societies, cultural institutions, libraries, classrooms, and community organisations to plan and implement oral history projects within and for specific user communities. Previous titles have included guides for historical organisations, intergenerational oral history projects as well as MacKay's excellent *From Interview to Archive (2007)*, her revised guide for managing oral history materials post-interview, a must read for librarians, archivists or anyone responsible for organizing, preserving, and making oral histories accessible.

Like the other titles in the series, McKirdy's contribution is concise, easy to follow and filled with handy tips and practical suggestions, including examples of release forms, generic introductory questions and templates for project details and field notes. McKirdy divides the book into nine short chapters that step the reader through the challenges and opportunities of working with immigrant narrators in collecting oral histories. The chapters are filled with moving case studies and vignettes drawn from McKirdy's quarter century of experience as an oral historian and language, literacy and numeracy educator working with adults from diverse migrant backgrounds in multicultural New South Wales. This background is evident everywhere, from stressing the need for particular care and preparedness when working with migrants and refugees who have suffered trauma, through to the highlighting the importance of developing cultural awareness for better quality interviews and good ethical practice. For McKirdy, working as an 'outsider' is no a barrier to effective communication with immigrant narrators provided that there is effective community engagement. This means taking time to establish contacts and support for a project by identifying and gaining support from key representatives and cooperative community contacts. The establishment of community ties and trust is seen as essential to a successful project and she warns of the pitfalls of an oral historian 'barging in' to a tight knit community without any consensus or buy in for a project. Specific examples of when, why and how oral historians have got it wrong in practicing oral histories with migrant communities would have strengthened this caution. Instead, McKirdy focuses on positive examples citing her own work with the Sudanese community in Sutherland Shire of New South Wales. With proper planning and effective community engagement, the project helped support refugee settlement and encouraged broader community understanding of cultural diversity in the area. She also presents examples of effective engagement in other migrant oral history projects that have more specific aims for scholarly research (Greek Australians) and the preservation of cultural heritage (Romanians in Minnesota).

What is missing is a more thorough discussion of the different aims of immigrant oral history projects, and how the positioning of the interviewer in relation to the community as an insider/outsider has a bearing on the outcome. If the aim of a project is first and foremost to build community cohesion and encourage a sense of inclusion of new migrant or refugee communities, as is the case with many government funded immigrant oral history projects in Australia, then a trusted, culturally competent 'outsider' is especially suited as interviewer to broach the cross-cultural divide. If the goal of a project is to gain a deeper understanding of the historical development of complex ethnic identity or identifies of a migrant community, then an insider with more specialised linguistic and cultural knowledge may gain different insights. What may look like a cohesive ethnic community from an outsider's perspective, fractures into multiple overlapping regional, class and generational identities on closer inspection by an insider. In my own work with Italian migrants in Western Australia for the 'Italian Lives' project which documented the history of Italians in Western Australia with a view to understanding the evolution of ethnic identity, we used multiple interviewers to tease apart the many nuances of 'Italian' ethnic identity. By using different kinds of interviewers for different migrant narrators, we were able to capture much more specific detail on how class, generational and regional differences cut across the idea of one cohesive ethnic community. Also key to our success in capturing the more fine grained nuances of identity was the use of not just bilingual, but multi-lingual interviewers skilled in various Italian dialects.

The question of language is especially important in the practice of oral history with immigrant narrators. McKirdy devotes two chapters to it: one elaborating on how interviewers can lower the barriers for communication with immigrant narrators from non-English speaking background; the second on the use of interpreters. Her chapter on the importance of language includes many useful specific examples on how use of particular collocation, idioms and grammar in English can be a barrier to effective communication with immigrant narrators. McKirdy argues that it is the interviewer's skill and grasp of the intricacies of the English language and the background language of the narrator, not just the immigrant narrator's English language competence, which determines whether conducting the interview in English in a hindrance to communication. She recommends the use of an interpreter only if the narrator's English language ability prevents them from telling the story with confidence and competence and devotes the following chapter to working with an interpreter.

As McKirdy rightly points out, while the use of an interpreter might be the only way of ensuring an oral history project is inclusive, working with an interpreter

poses many challenges, from cost to reluctance of immigrant narrators to speak through a third party or to the increased complexity of transcriptions. Another option, the use of bilingual interviewers, is only briefly touched upon by McKirdy. While she agrees that they can help deliver the best possible record of the narrator's story, she does not elaborate on how working in multiple languages they can help capture the subtleties and nuances of a story in a more detailed and complex way. The one flaw of the book is the lack of attention given to the question of what might be lost in translation if interviews are restricted to one language, and that language is not the immigrant narrator's first language. The Oral History Association's Principles and Best Practices for Oral History sets out that interviewers should, "*encourage narrators to respond to questions in their own style and language.*" Putting this principle into practice through the use of multi-lingual interviewers who can capture immigrant narratives in multiple languages is a complex challenge no doubt, but it is a practice that would result in more authentic voices and richer, more genuinely collaborative narratives. McKirdy is clear from the outset that the book is intended as a practical guide, not a forum for scholarly debate. The limited context provided on wider debates about language choice and insider knowledge versus objectivity, and the relationship of the oral historian to the interviewee does not take away from the book's key message and purpose which is to encourage and equip oral historians to work respectfully across ethnic boundaries in collecting migrant narratives. In doing so, they facilitate multiple perspectives on global migration that can help foster broader understanding one of most important and pressing social, political and economic issues of our time.

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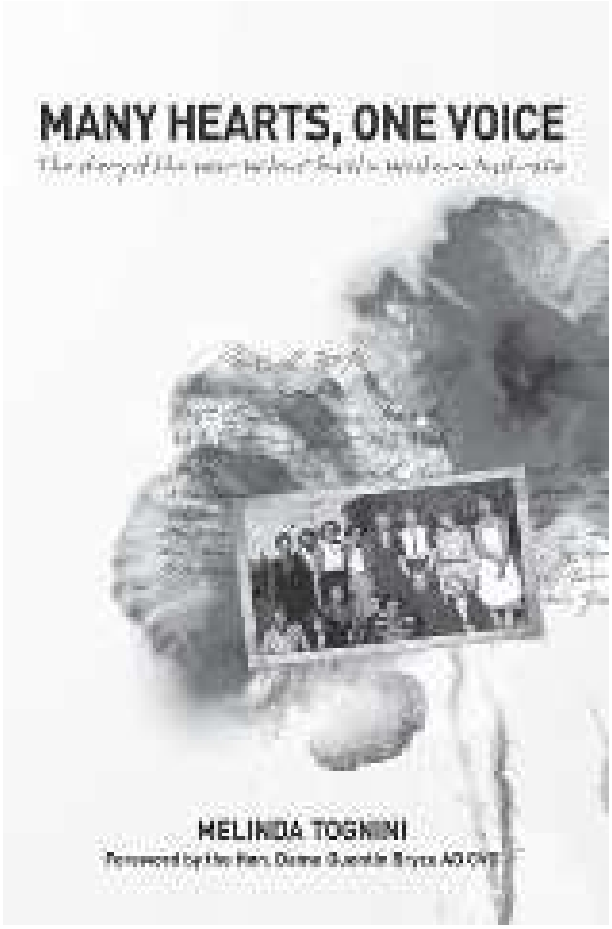
Melinda Tognini, *Many Hearts, One Voice: The Story of the War Widows' Guild in Western Australia,* Fremantle Press, Fremantle WA, 2015. 252 pages. ISBN (pbk) 9781925163179.

This story of the Western Australian branch of the War Widows' Guild was published in the seventieth anniversary year of the formation of the War Widows' Guild in Victoria. Instead of the 'corporate' history I anticipated, told through minute books and reports, Melinda Tognini springboards immediately into grief and memory, recounting the poignant exchange on the sands of Gallipoli in 2008 between a war widow from Western Australia (remembering her father's tales of fighting at Gallipoli) and a Turkish guide (whose uncle was killed there) during the Guild's first organised trip to that distant shore.

Twenty-five oral history interviews (some with multiple interviewees) conducted by the author are listed in the bibliography and one of the very satisfying strengths of this publication is the way the Guild's history is explored through the voices and stories of women recounting their experiences of the impact of wartime, widowhood and grief, and their engagement with the Guild.

Commissioned by the Western Australian War Widows' Guild, the book's ten chapters essentially follow the



chronological development of the WA Guild and its activities, including finding office locations, developing housing for war widows, raising funds and the continual work of lobbying. The Guild has always been keenly aware of its role, the importance of its achievements and its history, and its first national history was published in 1986. Like other historians of the Guild, Tognini draws on Mavis Thorpe Clark's publication, *No Mean Destiny,* and also acknowledges the influence of Joy Damousi's writings on the impact of grief. There are some long-lived Guild members in Western Australia and in charting the history of the organisation this publication draws on their experiences as members of the Guild, societal changes and the shifting needs of an ageing membership.

'Wartime in Western Australia' is the first chapter and the author interlaces brief accounts of young marriages and husbands' service in different theatres of war through the stories of a number of women. Some had married before the war and had children, others married during snatched times of leave in wartime and with husbands serving overseas spent only a few months living together. Tightly presented, these stores highlight these women's lives as wives and mothers and as working women 'contributing to the war effort' before their husbands were killed in wartime and their circumstances changed irrevocably. By VP Day in 1945 all were war widows and the euphoria of celebrations marking the end of war meant little; the nation was soon setting new priorities to retrain and provide employment for ex-servicemen.

The War Widows' Guild was formed in Victoria in 1945, and the next year in Western Australia, by Jessie Vasey, widow of General George Vasey; the foundation of

the organisation is recounted in Chapter 2. It was Mrs Vasey's determination and strength of purpose 'to facilitate self- help' among war widows (rather than another charity) which oversaw the organisation's swift establishment of branches nationally. Mrs Vasey was 48 years in 1945, older than many of the widows who joined the Guild when first formed, and she was fearless, furious, and encouraged war widows to aim high. The Guild was never afraid of giving 'the politicians hell', as the former Patron, Dame Quentin Bryce, describes the Guild in her foreword. In the immediate post-war years the federal government eventually increased war widows' pensions in 1947 by ten percent, which was still only half the basic wage. At the same time parliamentarians voted themselves a hefty fifty percent salary increase. Railing swiftly against this inequity, the Guild rallied two thousand war widows in Melbourne Town Hall to protest the inadequacy of the war widow's pension; one of their banners carried the blunt reminder to government: 'The cheapest thing used in the war was the serviceman's life'.

The Western Australian Branch of the Guild was formed on 29 November 1946 and in addition to the interim officers elected that day, extensive lists of committee members, office-bearers and State Presidents (and other titles) are provided in the appendices. The Guild is largely run by volunteer effort; it is interesting having read the personal stories of those widowed Guild women at the book's beginning, to see them take up roles within the Guild in subsequent chapters. Many of the names recur through the years, reinforcing their commitment to the Guild and volunteerism.

A number of established organisations helped the Guild, some assisting with networks, others such as the Army helping with accommodation in the 28th Battalion Drill Hall, and later the Returned and Services League provided offices at Anzac House. Mrs Vasey's ambition to provide war widows with weaving and craft skills to develop independence and opportunities to sell their work was adopted very successfully in Western Australia and it was interesting to read the detailed history of the Guild's weaving school, the fine linens and rugs woven, and Guild members' responses to new skills and friendships.

The Guild was a complex organisation. Making sense of the complexities of government pension benefits and of the Repatriation Act while repeatedly battling and coercing politicians anew with each change of ministry and government across a sweep of responsibilities, progressing public debate on behalf of war widows (whether members of the Guild or not), and at the same time managing a commercial for-profit kiosk, maintaining professional records, developing housing for war widows and ensuring the social needs of war widows were also met with get-togethers and other activities meant the Guild was big business. Repeatedly women took on senior roles in the organisation and retired exhausted.

None of the Guild's activities happened in isolation and it managed multiple ambitions for members. Whilst events are anchored to dates in the body of the text, it requires dedication on the part of the reader to keep track of the myriad activities and when they occurred. A select chronology would have been helpful. Despite that it is heartening to see the recognition given to so many Guild members who undertook 'behind the scenes' tasks – doing the books or working in the kitchen of the Kiosk – are mentioned by name, just as those who met the Royal Patron or represented the Guild in Canberra at the Jubilee commemoration of Anzac Day are.

Many believe war widows are main mourners, but recognition has been neither automatic nor swift. Reminding the government of its enduring commitment to war widows, maintaining links across kindred organisations, ensuring proper recognition and involvement in commemorative events requires constant vigilance and the Guild has never rested from its lobbying role. In 2008 the oldest person at the Gallipoli service was 90 year old Western Australian Guild member, Norma Harmsworth, who was part of a group organised by the Guild. It is quite extraordinary that the Guild had to wait until the formal ceremonies had finished before it could join with the rest of the general public and 'lay a wreath on behalf of all Australian war widows'. Only since 2010 has the Guild been accorded a place in the formal Australian Lone Pine Service at Gallipoli and it was not until 2013 that Guild members marched for the first time under their own banner in the Anzac Day march in Perth.

The Guild is a national organisation and each of its state branches developed independently, but were mindful of the greater strength they delivered in the media and to politicians by their unified fight, the 'one voice' in the title. This publication is not all glowing recollections and includes accounts of times of discord and disruption to the internal politics of a major lobbying organisation. Melinda Tongini has written a very readable account of the Guild in Western Australia, illuminating the organisational history with scores of stories of individual women's lives intersecting with the Guild: this is no mean achievement. In her acknowledgements Melinda Tongini refers to the collaborative process of writing and in *Many Hearts, One Voice* her close engagement with the formal records of the Guild has produced a warm account of the organisation's history. There is also a very real sense that working with the women of the Guild was equally imperative and rewarding for both author and the Guild.

The book is a good size (15x24cm) with a durable soft cover and robustly produced, holding together well after much shuffling back and forth of the pages. All images are black and white; some are too small to do their subjects justice and higher resolution may have improved clarity.

Roslyn Burge, rburge@ozemail.com.au

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REPORT:

Speaking Listening Interpreting – The Critical Engagement of Oral History. XIXth International Oral History Association Conference, Bengaluru, India, 27 June – 1 July 2016.

Cate Pattison and Sue Anderson

Relatively new to oral history, this was Cate's first international oral history conference and she saw attending the conference as a wonderful opportunity to submerge herself in the field. Hearing how it has been developed, applied and interpreted from scholars and practitioners from all over the world was captivating and inspirational. For Sue, it was only her second international conference, her first being the 2015 conference in Barcelona. Neither disappointed.

Delegates from 32 countries including India, Finland, Brazil, Spain, Czech Republic, South Africa, Austria, Ireland, New Zealand the UK and USA, to name a few, together with first-time delegates from China (Macau), Nepal, East Timor and Iran, descended on the Srishti Institute of Art Design and Technology in monsoonal Northern Bangalore for the conference. It was fantastic to connect with other Australians in the oral history community and see their work so enthusiastically received in this international context. IOHA President Indira Chowdhury with her hosting team and volunteers somehow managed to meet the challenges of moving everyone around various conference sites in Bangalore, keeping them happily fed and watered, and coercing all to comply with bureaucratic demands that only the Indian Government could concoct. A taxi journey in gridlocked Bangalore feels more like participation in the extreme sport of creative driving, so we all felt grateful to arrive safely at any destination and in awe of the skill executed by our trusty drivers.

Of the 157 presenters at the Conference, 12 were from Australia, 14 from the USA, eight from Spanish-speaking countries, seven from the Czech Republic, five from the UK, two from New Zealand and three from South Africa. The Conference organisers provided both Spanish translation for major events, as well as simultaneous slide translation for presentations, which was very effective.

Emerging through the conference was the proposal that oral history practice has the power to gather stories that can deliver counter narratives of past events, outside the dominant dialogue of nation building. National narrative templates ("India is an emerging economy"; "America is the land of the free") frequently fail to represent many people's lived experiences and emotional residue. Oral historians have the privileged opportunity to make sure the 'ugly histories' - often-inconvenient truths - are heard. Stretching over five days and nights, it would be impossible to mention all the incredible work shared. That dreadful dilemma of trying to choose between parallel sessions was ever-present. However, a few presentations stood out for Cate and deserve to be shared. A panel session 'Shifting Perspectives: Oral History and the Politics of Disaster' was chaired by Donald Ritchie and had the group gripped. Mark Cave's presentation on his work with first-response personnel from Cyclone Katrina showed how oral history is an important mouthpiece to counter a 'narrative of recovery' that silences painful memories, so often fashioned for political purpose. Rama Lakshmi talked about the 1984 gas tragedy of Bhopal and her work in setting up an independent oral history-based museum allowing the voices of those affected to continue to be heard, when government and business to this day have failed to acknowledge or compensate thousands of victims and their families. Finally, Thomas Doig from Monash University presented his research on the 2014 Hazelwood Coal Mine. Thomas showed how personal reflection on environment disasters can be an opportunity to make the impact of climate change meaningful and relevant.

Sue's interest in Indigenous oral history was adequately met in the session on Documenting Local Art and Design Traditions through Oral History, where Reeti Basu spoke on the Chitrakars in Naya in relation to individual and collective memory, while Nikhila Nanduri addressed graphic stories. Robyn Williams talked about the challenges of re-presenting Ngaanyatjarra oral stories and Alan Young (New Zealand) covered the social implications of the contribution of New Zealand designers.

The session on Indigenous Peoples and Colonisation offered the different perspectives on Indigenous oral history by presenters Sudeshna Dutta (India), Jayeola Moses Sunday (Nigeria) and Paige Raibmon (Canada). Sue's own paper challenging the need for accuracy in oral history recording engendered some lively debate that provided her with more material for consideration.

At other sessions, we got to know about new phone application technology Pixstori from Michael Frisch that enables the digital bonding of voice recording and photographs; a simple but brilliant concept to help stimulate interviewees and enable easy collection and sharing of material. In another session on public health, Bronwyn Gray from Auckland presented her 'digital storytelling' work, addressing stigma and discrimination suffered by women affected by HIV. Bronwyn had commissioned communication designers to produce short videos, *Altered Lives*, that beautifully illustrate her therapeutic interviews and broadened the reach of these poignant stories via online sharing, whist maintaining interviewee privacy. Other presentations ranged from academic panels on post-colonialism and discussion on the convergence of history and oral history. Ethical thinking and technology for taking oral history online was also examined.

As anyone who has attended an international conference will know, throwing a bunch of people from all over the world together can create some interesting dynamics. The challenges of language were often present, however this didn't put a stop to many lively debates. One memorable

session (including Deborah Nixon from the UTS with her fascinating work using photo elicitation to research pre-partition expat Railway communities in India) was led by a Nigerian chairwoman; taking charge of the attendees as one would a kindergarten class, and closing the session in joyous gospel song.

Formal events included the inauguration and opening plenary at the Chowdiah Memorial Hall. A traditional ceremony involving the burning of incense, reminiscent of our own Welcome to Country commenced the event after high tea. Later we were treated to a delightful performance of traditional shadow leather puppetry. A sumptuous conference dinner of South Indian fare was held on day three. The consensus as the week progressed was that Bangalorians are incapable of serving up food that is anything less than delicious. At the end of the conference some of us attended a heritage walk in the Nandi Valley run by local solicitor and history enthusiast Siddharth Raja where we visited an abandoned nineteenth century British graveyard in the village of Sultanpet, and the Bhoganandishwara Temple established in the early ninth century. A truly incredible experience.

With new friendships forged and a few shopping trips squeezed in, it was time to bid farewell to each other and make our way home. The next IOHA conference will be at the University of Jyväskylä, central Finland from 18 - 21 June 2018.

Bhoganandishwara Temple at the completion of our heritage walk. (Photographer unknown.)
Cate Pattison is fourth from left in the bottom row and Sue Anderson second from right, top row.

* * * * *

Notes on Contributors

Alison Atkinson-Phillips

Alison Atkinson-Phillips is a PhD candidate at the University of Technology, Sydney, based across the country in Perth, Western Australia. Her recently completed thesis is concerned with a new genre of Australian public memorials that acknowledge experiences of loss and trauma that people have lived through. More information about this project can be found on the project blog site, **www.notacelebration.blogspot.com**. Alison previously spent a decade working as a communications professional and religious journalist for the Uniting Church. She is an experienced interviewer and storyteller.

Matthew Bailey

Matthew Bailey is a Lecturer in Modern History at Macquarie University. He has published articles exploring retail and retail property history in a number of peer-reviewed journals including *Urban History*, *Australian Economic History Review, History Australia*, *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, and *Studies in Popular Culture.* He has employed oral history methodologies in a number of these articles and also draws on consumer testimony to write histories of consumption 'from below'. He is currently writing a monograph on the history of the retail property sector in Australia.

David Carey Jr.

David Carey is the Doehler Chair in History at Loyola University, Maryland, U.S.A. He received a Ph.D. in Latin American Studies from Tulane University and a B.A. in Government from the University of Notre Dame. In addition to writing some two dozen peer-reviewed articles and essays and editing two books, he is the author of *I Ask for Justice: Maya Women, Dictators, and Crime in Guatemala, 1898-1944* (2013); *Engendering Mayan History: Kaqchikel Women as Agents and Conduits of the Past, 1875–1970* (2006); *Ojer taq tzijob'äl kichin ri Kaqchikela' Winaqi'* (A History of the Kaqchikel People) (2004); *Our Elders Teach Us: Maya-Kaqchikel Historical Perspectives* (2001); and the forthcoming *Oral History in Latin America: Unlocking the Spoken Archive*.

Robert Crawford

Robert Crawford is Associate Professor of Public Communication at the University of Technology Sydney. His publications include: *But Wait, There's More … A History of Australia's Advertising Industry, 1900-2000*; *Consumer Australia: Historical Perspectives*; and *Bye the Beloved Country: South Africans in the UK, 1994-2009*. His articles have appeared in a range of Australian and international peer-reviewed journals, including *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, *Continuum*, *Consumption Markets & Culture*, and *Journal of Australian Studies*. His forthcoming co-authored book, *Through Glass Doors: Inside the World of Australian Advertising Agencies, 1959-1989* is based on oral history testimony.

Katrina Hodgson

Katrina Hodgson graduated from a Bachelor of Arts with honours in History from the University of Melbourne in 2010, having researched the Indigenous-settler relationships portrayed in Australia's public institutions. She completed a Masters of Public History in 2011, specialising in oral history methodology and practice. Since 2012 she has been working as an historian for Native Title Services Victoria, the native title service provider for the state, where she conducts historical research into the land rights claims of Traditional Owner groups in Victoria.

Mark Jamieson

Mark Jamieson is a member of the Professional Historians Association NSW/ACT, the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company and 12 Field Regiment (Vietnam) Association. He is a graduate from the University of Wollongong with Honours. His thesis was *Our guys were very good. We were a very capable battery, in fact we were an arrogant bunch. We were good: Fire Support Patrol Base Coral 12 May to 6 June 1968, South Vietnam*. Mark has previous work published in: Sabretache, The Journal and Proceedings of Australian Military History; Cannonball, Journal of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company; Military History and Heritage Victoria website; 12 Field Regiment (Vietnam) Association website and information bulletin. He has a close association with the men and their families from 102 CORAL Battery Royal Australian Artillery, and through this association he continues to interview veterans for future work. Mark is looking to continue with further studies on the Vietnam war with a focus on oral history, as he feels strongly that we must preserve the past for the future, so we do not forget.

Janet McGaw

Janet McGaw was awarded a PhD by the University of Sydney in 2015. Her thesis, *Country Awakening: Amateur Dramatic Societies in New South Regional Communities 1945-1970*, allowed her to explore aspects of a long-standing interest in the history of Australian theatre. During her candidature, Janet presented papers in Australia, England and the United States, and was twice awarded first runner-up in the Veronica Kelly Prize for best postgraduate paper at the annual conference of the Australasian Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies Association. Her work on the challenges facing researchers of amateur theatre was published in *Australasian Drama Studies* in 2012. She has also been published in *Popular Entertainment Studies*. Janet is a member of the Professional Historians Association NSW & ACT, Oral History NSW and RAPPT (Research into Amateur Performance and Private Theatricals), an international interdisciplinary network of researchers working on amateur performance.

Bobbie Oliver

Bobbie Oliver is an Associate Professor of History at Curtin University, where she teaches and researches history. Her latest book is *The Locomotive Enginemen: A history of the Western Australian Locomotive Engine Drivers', Firemen's and Cleaners Union* (2016). Other recent publications include: ' "On People and the Human Condition": Tom Stannage and Labour History' in Deborah Gare and Jenny Gregory, eds, *Tom Stannage: History from the Other Side: Studies in Western Australian History,* no. 29 (2015); and 'Conflict on the Waterfront: Fremantle Dock Workers and "New Unionism", 1889 to 1945' in Deborah Gare and Shane Burke, eds, *Fremantle. Empire, faith and conflict since 1829. Studies in Western Australian History,* no. 31, (2016).

John Charles Ryan

John Charles Ryan is Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Humanities at the University of Western Australia. From 2012 to 2015, he was Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the School of Communications and Arts at Edith Cowan University. His teaching and research activities cross between the Environmental and Digital Humanities. In particular, he has contributed to the fields of Ecocriticism (Australian and Southeast Asian) and Critical Plant Studies. He is the author, co-author, editor or co-editor of 10 interdisciplinary books, including the Bloomsbury title *Digital Arts: An Introduction to New Media* (2014) and *The Language of Plants: Science, Philosophy, Literature* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

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Membership Information

Oral History Australia

(formerly the Oral History Association of Australia)

The aims of Oral History Australia are to:

- Promote discussion and training on all aspects of the methodology and ethical practices of oral history as a discipline and a means of gathering and preserving social and cultural history;
- Foster preservation, access and use of oral history collections;
- Support State and Territory Oral History associations;
- Provide a national voice on all aspects of oral history; and
- Link Australian oral historians to the international oral history movement.

The Oral History Association of Australia was formed in 1978 and in 2013 was re-named Oral History Australia. It remains a non-profit body whose members practise and promote oral history.

Membership of Oral History Australia is comprised of the independently incorporated State and Territory associations of oral historians. The Northern Territory is affiliated with South Australia and the ACT with New South Wales.

All State Oral History Associations hold regular meetings, seminars and workshops and encourage members to lodge their work with libraries and archives for the benefit of researchers and to ensure preservation. Some states are able to provide recording equipment at very low rates to members.

The *Oral History Australia Journal* is published annually and its content reflects the diversity and vitality of oral history practice in Australia. Items for publication may be accepted from overseas-based contributors. All members of State Oral History Associations receive a copy of the annual *Journal* and newsletters from their State Associations. Among other publications, Oral History Australia South Australia/Northern Territory has published the *Oral History Handbook* by Beth M. Robertson, which is available to members of all State Associations at a discounted rate.

National conferences are held biennially focusing on current and future oral history projects as well as ongoing and evolving issues such as ethics and copyright. These conferences usually include international speakers.

The Oral History Australia website can be found at **www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au.**

State Oral History Associations

ACT
Incorporated into Oral History NSW

New South Wales
Oral History NSW Inc.
President: Anisa Puri
PO Box 261
Pennant Hills NSW 1715
Email: **membership@oralhistorynsw.org.au**
Website: **www.oralhistorynsw.org.au**

Northern Territory
Incorporated into Oral History Australia SA/NT

Queensland
Oral History Queensland Inc.
President: Margaret Ridley
PO Box 3296
Birkdale QLD 4159
Email: **info@ohq.org.au**
Website: **www.ohq.org.au**

South Australia
Oral History South Australia/Northern Territory Inc.
President: June Edwards
PO Box 3113
Unley SA 5061
Website: **www.oralhistorysant.org.au**

Tasmania
Oral History Tasmania Inc.
President: Jill Cassidy
C/- Queen Victoria Museum
PO Box 403
Launceston TAS 7250
Email: **president@oralhistorytas.org.au**
Website: **www.oralhistorytas.org.au**

Victoria
Oral History Victoria Inc.
President: Alistair Thomson
C- RHSV
239 A'Beckett St.,
Melbourne VIC 3000
Email: **alistair.thomson@monash.edu.au**
Website: **oralhistoryvictoria.org.au**

Western Australia
Oral History Association of Australia WA Branch Inc.
President: Doug Ayre
PO Box 1065
Nedlands WA 6909
Email: **ohaawa@gmail.com**
Website: **www.ohaa-wa.com.au**

Call for Papers

Contributions are invited from Australia and overseas for publication in

Oral History Australia Journal No. 39, 2017

'Moving memories: oral history in a global world'

Contributions are invited in the following three categories:

A:

Papers on the themes of the Biennial National Conference to be held in Sydney in September 2017 (*limit 5,500 words*), 'Moving Memories - Oral Histories in a Global World.' Themes are:

- Migration
- Journeys and pilgrimage
- Contested memories across cultures in local communities
- Sensory memories
- Oral history and emotions
- Movement across and within borders
- Mobile apps and podcasts for oral histories
- Oral history as listening
- Digital technology in a global world
- Place and belonging.

Papers in Category A may be submitted to the Oral History Australia Editorial Board for peer-review. However, please note:

- Papers for peer-review must demonstrate 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 the deadline for submissions of 28 February 2017, they may not be processed in time for publication in the 2016 issue of the Journal. Furthermore, regardless of when offers are forwarded to the Board, no guarantee of publication can be given, due to availability and time constraints of reviewers.
- Before being submitted for peer-review, papers will first be assessed for suitability by the Editorial Board. Authors will be advised of the recommendations made by the Chair of the Board.

Deadline for Category A submissions for peer-review: 28 Feb 2017

Forward to: Dr Ariella van Luyn, Chair, Oral History Australia Editorial Board,
email: **Ariella.vanLuyn@jcu.edu.au**,
mobile: 0401 925 228.

B:

Articles/project reports describing specific projects or conference reports, the information gained through them, and principal outcomes or practice issues identified in the process (*limit: 4,000 words*).

Deadline for Category B submissions: 1 April 2017

Forward to: Dr Sue Anderson, Editor, Oral History Australia Journal,
email: **Sue.Anderson@unisa.edu.au**

C:

Reviews of books and other publications from Australia or elsewhere that are of interest to the oral history community: may include reviews of static or internet available exhibitions, or any projects presented for a public audience (*limit 1,500 words*).

Deadline for Category C submissions: 1 April 2017

Forward to: Dr Jayne Persian, Reviews Editor, Oral History Australia Journal,
email: **Jayne.Persian@usq.edu.au.**

Accompanying Materials

Photographs, drawings and other illustrations are particularly welcome, and may be offered for any of the above categories of contribution. Please obtain written permission from image owners and make every endeavour to ascertain the name of the photographer.

For all contributions, see the Journal's Style Guide at Oral History Australia's website:
http://www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au/

Oral History Australia Conference 2017

'Moving memories: oral history in a global world'

Sydney Masonic Conference and Function Centre

Goulburn Street Sydney | 13–16 September 2017

CALL FOR PAPERS

Moving Memories, our title and main theme, refers to memories generated across space and time, both local and national, as well as cross-cultural and international. It also refers to memories which have an emotional impact on listeners: remembering which move us to laughter or tears. The theme draws on some of the new directions in oral history that address: the impact of migration and asylum-seeking around the world; as well as the exchange between narrator and listener that is 'memory work', or the emotional labour that is involved in memory practices such as oral history.

See the full Call for Papers at **http://bit.ly/2geECsd** for more detail on papers, roundtables and lightning sessions, important dates and submission contacts.

Deadline for submissions is 31 January 2017
Notification of acceptance of proposals: late February 2017
Registrations open: March 2017
Earlybird deadline: 30 June 2017

Further information:
OHAC Secretariat, DC Conferences,
tel. 02-9954-4400, or email **ohac2017@dcconferences.com.au**

See the conference website at: http://bit.ly/2gfk81w