storytelling and audio walks alongside other public launches, conferences and workshops (213). Stories became featured in audio portraits on public transport, and a bus tour of Montreal became ‘an immersive storytelling space’ where stories were shared as the bus travelled to significant sites (210). It would have been valuable to have these projects explained in as much detail as other aspects of the project. As the interview is becoming one part of a longer collaborative process, the final chapter explores the emerging ethical considerations of collaboration.

Oral History at the Crossroads provides a valuable insight into interdisciplinary collaborative projects. The balance between story and analysis is carefully trod as the voice of interviewees resonates throughout and is complimented by methodological and theoretical discussions. Though at times the historical background of sites of mass violence is limited, the book makes a substantial contribution to the concept of collaboration and ‘shared authority’ in oral history projects and demonstrates what we can do with oral history beyond the recording. What is especially unique about this project is the collaborative community approach embedded in the project, and the great insights that can be learnt and applied to other oral history projects. The goal of transitioning from collection to curation demonstrates how we can deepen our engagement with oral history and further engage in community collaboration. The crossroads of oral history remain an exciting place to watch.

Gretel Evans
University of Melbourne

Tristram Hunt
Ten Cities That Made an Empire
ISBN: 9781846143250 (HBK) £25.00

Having previously published on the Victorian city and the life of Friedrich Engels, urbanist and politician Tristram Hunt has embarked on the ambitious study of the British Empire that explores the interwoven histories of empire, urban life and commodity exchange from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries. Broad in its geographical, temporal and content approach, Ten Cities That Made an Empire explores the intricacies of the Imperial experience with the intent of moving beyond the good/evil constructions of the British Empire (7–10), as well as the dichotomies of centre/periphery that often characterise studies on the subject.

To this end he undertakes a relatively innovative approach to the study of empire that combines aspects of urban history, historical biography, architectural history, cultural practices and material culture within a transnational framework,
in order to tease out the local and global connections of the modern era. Appealing to both popular and academic audiences, the book reveals and interrogates these complexities but, at the same time, the broad scope creates difficulties of research and interpretation that weaken the endeavour.

Hunt has chosen ten cities that each played an important role in the development of empire and the spread of British forms of culture, and he focuses on the interwoven aspects of commerce, manufacturing and the urban environment, both built and social, within them. From seventeenth-century Boston to eighteenth-century Bridgeport and Dublin, from nineteenth-century Hong Kong and Melbourne, to twentieth-century New Delhi and Liverpool, each chapter focuses on one city that was a locus for the exchange of goods, ideas and people from all over the British Empire and beyond.

Goods from the globe circulated through these sites and Hunt eloquently describes this exchange network that involved the distribution and redistribution of both raw and manufactured commodities ‘such as Bridgetown for sugar, Boston for fisheries or Melbourne for gold—and then the emergence of more complicated economies around them, from ship-building to financial services to foodstuffs, leisure and retail’ (11).

Throughout each chapter he emphasises the interconnectivity of the cities and colonies of the British Empire and the global web that connected them to the rest of the world. Hunt successfully intertwines this story of commodity exchange with the growth and development of these cities, alongside the development of urban modernity, the changes of attitude and intent of British Empire, as well as broader historical events and processes occurring amidst British expansion.

He also underscores the creation of British culture and manners that went alongside this trade and urban development, sometimes melding with local influences. These included architectural forms, the adoption and adaptation of British forms of sociability and political structures, as well as the conspicuous consumption of British-made or -inspired manufactured goods that contributed to the Anglicisation of these cities and their inhabitants to varying degrees.

Hunt’s engaging writing style and generally in-depth research ties all of these elements together and makes for a fascinating and thought provoking read. He has used a diversity of primary sources that range from newspapers to travelogues, memoirs to maps, official records to the
artworks and photographs that are used in abundance throughout and meticulously documented in the endnotes and the robust bibliography.

But the ambitious scope of the project is also responsible for some of its weaknesses. An in-depth analysis of the Melbourne chapter reveals the difficulties in exploring such a broad topic and the weaknesses in research and errors of fact (such as calling John Batman a bushranger (308)) would be evident to those familiar with the city’s history. Hunt’s description of Melbourne is the least nuanced of all of the chapters and follows the now familiar stories of gold; boom to bust; suburban development; the sport-loving Australian; the slums of inner city Melbourne; and the characterisation of Melbourne as ‘Another England’ (312–8). Although the emphasis on multiculturalism is a hallmark of other chapters, that on Melbourne almost completely ignores the racial diversity of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century city—except for the inevitable tokenistic nod to the Chinese population (332).

These weaknesses are probably partly due to the selection of sources (437–9). For Melbourne, the contemporary perspective is dominated by outside visitors such as Twopeny, Twain and Trollope, and emphasises British assessments of the Australian colonies. The secondary material utilised for the chapter is narrow and displays a lack of engagement with works that could shed a different light on the diverse and dynamic nature of the city’s urban and public culture—for example McCalman’s Struggletown (1984) or Brown-May’s Melbourne Street Life (1998).

The book could also engage more evenly with the complexities of settler societies, and interactions between Indigenous peoples and colonisers, and shies away from issues of postcolonialism, despite the intriguing discussion of the contemporary cities that accompany each chapter. In some cases Hunt delves into problematics and horrors of race and segregation in the imperial context—such as slavery in colonial America, Barbados and Cape Town, or the interactions of English settlers, the Khoekoe of South Africa, and Indian agency in Mumbai, Calcutta and New Delhi. But in others there is little or no indication that any such interactions occurred: in the characterisation of Boston the Massachusset people were decimated by disease, never to be heard of again (27–8); in Bridgetown the local ‘Caribs’ had left by the time the British arrived (70, 77), yet later settler reactions to them are mentioned; and the interactions between Aboriginal people and British settlers in the early days of Melbourne are ignored (eg Edmond’s 2010 Urbanizing Frontiers).

While the book aims to show a more diverse, interconnected and complex
empire—in which it does succeed to a great extent—it inadvertently continues to perpetuate an Orientalist and exoticised view of colonial spaces that at times reads as apologist and sits uncomfortably with readers versed in postcolonial discourse of empire. But it is, on the other hand, a valuable piece of research, not least in its transnational approach, which emphasises urban life as a lens through which we can view the complex and diverse global connections of the modern era.

Nicole Davis
University of Melbourne

JENNINGS, REBECCA
UNNAMED DESIRES: A SYDNEY LESBIAN HISTORY
(MELBOURNE: MONASH UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING, 2015).
ISBN 9781922235701 (PBK) $34.95

STELLA, FRANCESCA
LESBIAN LIVES IN SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET RUSSIA: POST/SOCIALISM AND GENDERED SEXUALITIES
(BASINGSTOKE: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2015).
ISBN 9781137321237 (HBK) £68.00

Recent work in lesbian history demonstrates a refreshing resurgence of scholarly interest in this still underdeveloped field. Much history of (homo)sexuality has been dominated by gay male narratives, justified by the overwhelming tendency for both penal and medical traditions to focus exclusively on male homosexuality, and the consequent imbalance in archival materials available to historians. Added to this, the broader social phenomenon of men’s sexuality being valued over women’s sexuality has meant that there is a greater cache of evidence charting public expressions of, and responses to, male homosexual identities, desires, social lives and political interventions.

Two books bring the field of women’s experiences of same-sex desire back into focus, but—importantly—also present a constructive challenge to this narrative. While exploring geographically and politically divergent contexts, both provide renewed models for how the history of women’s same-sex desires can be told.

Unnamed Desires: A Sydney Lesbian History by Rebecca Jennings is based on thirty-two oral history interviews and some rare personal memoirs. Already an expert on British lesbian history, this book is the product of a postdoctoral research fellowship at Macquarie University in Sydney. It fills an astonishing lacuna—it is the first full historical monograph