

# From the Editors

We're back!

Despite the overwhelming feeling that we are living in 'unprecedented times', in which social fracturing and political contests loom large in Australian society, this issue turns our gaze to the past. During paradigm-shifting moments such as these, historians can provide valuable insight into past junctures that have also felt unprecedented. The research articles, essays and reviews in this edition centre on pivotal moments and struggles in Australian history in honour of the prolific Stuart Macintyre, Emeritus Professor in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne, who passed away in November of 2021. A reflective piece on Macintyre by Joel Barnes fittingly opens the issue. Barnes provides a sincere tribute to his former teacher and supervisor, capturing Macintyre's generous spirit and unparalleled contribution to the study of Australian history.

We are delighted to publish the 2020 Greg Denning lecture given by Professor Bronwen Douglas, historian of Pacific and Asian History at the Australian National University. Douglas uses three case studies or 'episodes of encounter' between Indigenous Oceanians and European voyagers, demonstrating the potency of ethnohistory as a historical method. Douglas shows how ethnographic history can illuminate tensions in the co-construction of 'anthropological' knowledge inherent in such episodes of encounter, shaped by 'scholarly discourses, European experience in Oceania, and Indigenous agency'. Focusing on the significance of local agency, Douglas locates these tensions in sixteenth-century Spanish, eighteenth-century British, and nineteenth-century French expeditions in 'Oceania'.

The research articles in this issue provide insight into the theme of contestation in Australian history and the impulse of different social groups to preserve the memory and dignity of people and places. The interwar period was a time of great upheaval and flux, of innovation and debate, and, as Thea Gardiner argues, a significant moment of change in the national politics of memory. Gardiner's article looks at both the physical and intangible aspects of interwar feminism through the lens of memory, asserting the introduction of a new subject of memorialisation, surfacing during moments of state and national commemoration across the country: the 'pioneer woman citizen'. Through an analysis of both material culture and women's centenary gift books, Gardiner draws attention to the contests over claims to both nation-building and historical remembrance. Joining and de-centring the dominant figure of memorialisation during this period – the 'citizen soldier' – the pioneer woman citizen reflected the emerging discourse of white interwar feminists vying for economic and political rights and fuller participation in public life. Crucially,

the construction of this new symbol of feminised nationhood reinforced the broader settler-colonial project, eclipsing the lives and memories of non-white migrants and First Nations people.

Where white-settler interwar feminists sought recognition and remembrance, members of the green ban movement of 1971-1975 agitated successfully for the preservation of significant heritage sites in Sydney's inner-city. James Hogg charts the green ban movement during this period, which drew together the New South Wales Builders' Labourers' Federation and members of local communities to protest the mass development of Sydney's historic buildings, bush and parkland, as well as diminishing inner-Sydney working-class housing. Using Herman and Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* as his theoretical basis, Hogg argues that Sydney's 'green ban' strike movement (1970-75), despite their exalted position in Australian historical memory, were met with considerable and sustained opposition from the organs of the Australian press. In distinction to previous accounts that suggest press representation of green bans were 'neutral at worst', Hogg demonstrates that Sydney's newspapers privileged fiscal damages, police perspectives, and developer interests to reassert the state as the sole legitimate executor of political power. Historicising the movement within contemporary struggles over public housing in Sydney, Hogg also suggests that the 'green bans' of the early 1970s are a historically delimited struggle with implications for contemporary activists that should be kept alive both in print and in practice.

In the following essay, Catherine Fist provides a compelling overview of physical memorials to frontier violence in Australia. Fist characterises three distinct periods of memorialisation corresponding to prevailing social and political discourse: the first, 1865 to 1965, produced white-washed monuments serving to construct a settler identity around 'victimhood and heroism'; the second period discussed, 1966 to 1999, reflecting emerging discourses on Aboriginal resistance and sacrifice, saw the production of counter-monuments representing memories that subverted and unsettled the meta-narrative of white triumph and victimhood inherent within previous monuments. The third period, 2000 to 2021, corresponds with discourses of reconciliation and counter-memories of resistance. Fist distinguishes between monuments that reinforce the reconciliation narrative – leaving the past in the past – with counter-monuments that keep history and contestation alive in the present.

Another space in which diverse accounts of First Nations and white-settler history are anchored in the present are galleries. Jack Norris reviews the National Gallery of Victoria's 2021 exhibition *She-Oak and Sunlight: Australian Impressionism*, reflecting on its exploration of First Nations histories and art. While the exhibition included the works of the Heidelberg School – Tom Roberts, Fredrick McCubbin and so on – it offered a counterpoint to histories that valorise it as 'Australia's first school of art' by pointing to a much longer tradition and history of First Nations art. By juxtaposing white-settler art with several works by Wurundjeri artist, elder and Ngurungaeta (leader) William Barak (c.1824-1903) from the NGV's collection, the exhibition communicated the 'multivocality of the Australian landscape' to its audience. By displaying a commitment to decolonising museum practice, the NGV and other galleries have a crucial role in framing, interpreting, and shifting histories of Australian art.

Several book reviews highlight the latest offerings in Australian history, demonstrating the scope and strength of Australian historiography from 2020 to 2022. Catherine Gay takes us through social historian Janet McCalman's *Vandemonians* (2021), a thrilling portrayal of Victoria's 'Vandemonians' – emancipated convicts from Van Diemen's Land who migrated to the Port Phillip district throughout the nineteenth century. Gay commends McCalman's ability to transform extensive

archival material into nuanced life- narratives, highlighting the historical, familial, gendered and dimensions of the Vandemonians' existence. Simon Farley's review of Sue Silverberg's *A Networked Community: Jewish Melbourne in the Nineteenth Century* (2020) lauds Silberberg's original contributions to the history of Melbourne and of Jews in Australia, while questioning her apparent failure to fully consider the settler-colonial dimensions of the subject matter. Closing the issue, James Hogg's review of Stuart Macintyre's *The Party: The Communist Party of Australia from Heyday to Reckoning* (2022) suggests the historian's final project is a fitting testament to not only the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), but to Macintyre's monolithic contribution to Australian historiography. Arguing that Macintyre successfully reanimates the individuals and ideas at the forefront of Australia's revolutionary vanguard, Hogg suggests 'the party' is no minor feat for Macintyre, whose own passion for the party has offered an exclusive insight into why Australian communism is a worthy object of inquiry - both as an expression of national identity and an incubator for a future that may one day materialise.

The MHJ 2021/22 Collective

Simon Farley

Thea Gardiner

Catherine Gay

James Hogg

Jonathan Tehusjarana