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**‘Anna Green and Megan Hutching (Editors), Oral History in Aotearoa New Zealand’**

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Anna Green and Megan Hutching (Editors), *Remembering and Becoming: Oral History in Australia New Zealand* (Otago University Press, 2024), 228pp. Paperback. NZ\$45. ISBN: 978-1-9900-4883-8.

This book aims to show how oral history and social memory contribute to our understanding of Aotearoa me Te Waipounamu New Zealand's history. The chapters illuminate aspects of the past inaccessible through conventional sources, challenge or add to existing perspectives, and reveal the connections between past, present and future.

Some chapters are a straightforward contribution or corrective to histories of unheard groups. Cheryl Ware's chapter highlights sex workers' evolving and complicated views on consent. Elizabeth Ward's chapter uses the memories of two adults looking back on childhoods in institutional care to show experiences missing from the official records. Megan Hutching uses narrative analysis to explain how World War II veteran Bill told his story as a hero's quest to mitigate his disappointment at capture, a less acceptable war story within popular memory.

The seminal influence of the subjective turn in oral history, pioneered by academics such as Luisa Passerini and Alessandro Portelli, is an underlying thread through many of the chapters. The authors are sensitive to the ways that their interviewees make meaning of their past lives from the present. Anna Green reveals how a Banks Peninsula farmer built his identity around his ancestors' migrations and farming experiences. Dean Broughton's interview with Margaret, which intended to focus on her birth father's ship jumping in Aotearoa New Zealand, became a detailed exploration of her adoption and reunification with her birth parents.

Several of my favourite chapters were exemplars of a very close reading of interview audio and text – revealing what omissions, structure and tone of voice signified. Helen Frizzell's and Pip Oldham's chapter focuses on an interview with a high-country farmer's wife about her kitchen. They skilfully tease out themes of intergenerational tension, marital dynamics and the importance of 'intelligence' in domestic labour. Jane Moodie's dissection of two oral histories from descendants of early European landholders provides multiple examples of subtle class distinctions and networks. Even an interviewee who ostensibly rejected his privilege is unable to escape certain class assumptions or benefits. This type of approach deepens and personalizes participants in our history in a way not usually seen in professional written histories.

Other chapters grapple with how oral history (as a European academic discipline) interacts or conflicts with indigenous practices of oral culture. Megan Pōtiki's Māori community in Ōtākou lost much of their te reo (Māori language) and cultural knowledge of tikanga (traditional customs and practices) due to colonising forces. Transmission of oral history cannot be taken for granted; knowledge is hard won and will not always come through elders. Margaret Kawharu reveals how oral history interviews with Ngāti Whātua, done as part of the Treaty of Waitangi Claim, were simultaneously valuable and disempowering. Some testimony was discarded if not considered helpful to the legal claim; other unofficial events went unrecorded even though they were vital to cultural memory. And Helena Cook's work on the Dawn Raids and Polynesian Panthers acknowledges the force of whakamā (shame) and cultural expectations in making many Pacifica people reluctant to share this history. There is a sense that this oral history is incomplete.

This book although very readable is aimed at an academic audience. If I consider who it might most help, I think back to myself as a graduate student starting

out in oral history - trying to find my way into a new discipline. There were plenty of methodological guides – on recording, interviewing, ethics and the role of the interviewer. But a book like this, full of Aotearoa New Zealand exemplars, would have provided homegrown inspiration for all the varied ways oral history and social memories can be used and written about. Perhaps I would have paid more attention to narrators' objects and homes, as Natalie Looyer does in her chapter on memories of a female academic's charming and chaotic house. Maybe I would have noted unique slang and language, as Deborah Dunsford does in her chapter on a rural childhood.

As Anna Green points out in her introduction, there are many strands of oral history in Aotearoa New Zealand. I believe this book points towards the increasing maturity of Aotearoa New Zealand oral history amongst academic, professional, and community oral historians. These chapters reveal their confidence in using oral history to challenge the dominant historical discourse, lean into subjectivity and complexity, and link the past to the present in creative ways.

*Rosemary Baird, Tohu Whenua*