
Editorial

History in the Making Journal Collective:

Isobelle Barrett Meyering

Rhiannon Davis

Kristie Flannery

Karol Florek

Stephanie Mawson

Kate Matthew

Kathryn Ticehurst

Matthew Varley

Editorial: What is History and Why Study It?

When E.H. Carr published his famous collection of essays in 1961 entitled *What is History?*, he unwittingly sparked a debate amongst several generations of undergraduate history students about the role of bias in the production of history.¹ Nevertheless, this fixation on locating, analysing and deconstructing bias in all historical sources has obscured some of Carr's more nuanced comments on the historical profession. Carr contends that bias is not merely exhibited within the source materials that we utilise when writing history, but is also found within ourselves as historians. What we choose to write about, the sources that we look at and those that we disregard, the 'facts', narratives and anecdotes that we elevate to illustrate our points – all of these choices are influenced by our own personal histories, social contexts and moral and ethical standpoints. As with the historical figures that we study, we are ourselves situated within our own historical contexts. Far from being a hindrance to the writing of good history, this personal subjectivity was for Carr the very essence of the practice of writing history itself. The fundamental purpose in studying history 'was to assist human society in understanding the present and moulding the future,' and for this we needed to be guided by our own concepts of social, cultural and moral good.²

The historical profession has moved some way since Carr's time. From a mid-century fixation on empirical evidence, broad generalisations and the location of cause and effect, we have moved

¹ E.H. Carr, *What is History?*, (New York: Random House, 1961)

² Richard J. Evans, 'Prologue: What is History? – Now,' in *What is History Now?*, ed. David Cannadine, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 2

through the post-modernist turn towards histories which incorporate traditions of ‘hermeneutics, phenomenology, structuralism, poststructuralism, deconstructionism, new historicism, feminism and post-feminism, post-Marxism, new pragmatism, postmodernism and so on.’³ Nowadays, history students must contemplate all of these *isms* when approaching the study of history. Gone are the grand narratives and sweeping statements; we are now more likely to fixate on the minutiae of detail in ever specialising fields of history. Carr’s call for a present-focussed, socially constructive historical practice has been virtually lost within these transformations of the discipline. Indeed many of the proponents of postmodern history see the historian’s bias as an unavoidable constraint rather than a social opportunity. Within this intermix of new theories on cultural, social, political, intellectual, gender and imperial histories, perhaps now more than ever students are prompted to ask the question – what exactly is history? Perhaps this is a question that can never be answered – if, as both Carr and the postmodernists suggest, the way we write history is always a reflection of our own historical moment, then history is always in the making.

While each of us seek to answer this question in our own way, the *History in the Making* project aims to transform history from a personal and private endeavour into a collective and constructive experience. In this way, we are taking up some of Carr’s call for a historical practice which is socially embedded. In our own idealistic way, we believe that the writing of history should be based on an engagement with the community at large, and what better way than to create our own community of budding historians? At the same time, we believe that the history we write is only ever improved when we take it outside of the confines of the academy and share it with others. It is for this reason that we seek to offer students of all levels the opportunity to participate in this project.

Of course, rather than pondering the philosophical nature of the practice of history, the average history student may ask the more pertinent question of – why study history? History as an academic discipline hardly wins prizes for providing the most immediately applicable workplace training. In an era of mass education, where having a university degree is almost a pre-requisite to any sort of professional job, many students look away from the ‘pure’ humanities such as history towards courses such as commerce, engineering, law and medicine which present the prospect of immediate transition into a profession. Yet despite this, the study of history does teach us new ways of thinking. The rigour of the academic discipline – famed amongst all humanities for having the most fastidious attitude towards copious footnotes – teaches the student to think both critically and precisely about the subjects that we research. As the broad study of the evolution and operation of human societies, cultures, economies and relationships, history combines the best of many other disciplines. History really does have a great deal to offer – if we didn’t believe this, this journal and the community which has grown around it would not exist. The strand which perhaps unites all of these things is the explanatory power of history. The more we learn about history, the more we can understand and explain the world around us, and in turn the more nuanced our explanations become. It is this facet which we believe principally drives students towards the discipline of history.

The best history students display nothing short of a deep curiosity about the world. The collection of essays that we present in this volume reflects this curiosity. Yet more than this, we believe that

³ William B. Robison, ‘On “What is History?” From Carr to Elton to Rorty and White. By Keith Jenkins,’ *Clio*, Vol. 28, No. 3, (Spring 1999), 355

this selection of essays represents work by students who have sought to go beyond the traditional canon of historical research currently in vogue at their respective universities. We like to publish the work of those who think differently, and each of these essays has something new to offer.

Once again, a great number of people have contributed to the production of this volume. We would like to thank our team of reviewers and editors who volunteered their time and made this issue possible. We would also like to welcome our newest member of the *History in the Making* Journal Collective, Kate Matthew from the University of Western Sydney.

As always, special thanks must be given to our partner institutions. We are proud to welcome to our partner base Murdoch University, the University of Western Sydney and the University of Melbourne. In addition, a very special acknowledgment must be made to the postgraduate students of ANU who donated a portion of their own budget to this project. Many of these postgraduate students have also worked as reviewers and editors on this issue, and we are very pleased to continue our close connection with them over the coming year.

The History in the Making Journal Collective

Acknowledgements

Editors

Julian Barr, *University of Queensland*

Alexis Bergantz, *Australian National University*

Jane-Anne Denison, *University of New England*

James Dunk, *University of Sydney*

Fiona Firth, *Australian National University*

Meggie Hutchinson, *Australian National University*

Lauren Mackay, *University of New England*

Elizabeth Miller, *University of Sydney*

Tristan Moss, *Australian National University*

Jessica O’Leary, *Monash University*

Naomi Parkinson, *University of Sydney*

Laura Stanley, *Victoria University*

Reviewers

Louise Baker, *Monash University*

Emma Bell, *Charles Sturt University*

Courtney Blunsdon, *University of New England*

Gemma Burden, *University of Queensland*

Darryl Burrowes, *Flinders University*

Hannah Climas, *Flinders University*

Kimberley Doyle, *Australian National University*

Emily Duthie, *Australian National University*

Samuel Finch, *University of Queensland*

Fiona Firth, *Australian National University*

Catherine Horne, *University of Sydney*

Chi Chi Huang, *University of Sydney*

Tim Jones, *Macquarie University*

Elaine Lay, *Monash University*

James Lesh, *University of Melbourne*

Christopher Mason, *University of Sydney*

Amy McKernan, *University of Melbourne*

Elizabeth Miller, *University of Sydney*

Julie Miller, *Macquarie University*

Catherine Parry, *University of New England*

Johanna Perheentupa, *University of New England*

Hannah Ryan, *University of Sydney*

Constantinos Scaros, *University of New England*

Christeen Schoepf, *University of New England*

Benjamin Sievwright, *University of Melbourne*

John Solomon, *University of New South Wales*

Maree Stanley, *University of Queensland*

Kate Walton, *University of Queensland*,

Andrew Watson, *University of Adelaide*

Mary Willett, *University of Sydney*

Beth Wright, *Australian National University*

Partners

ANU Postgraduate Students

Flinders University

James Cook University

Macquarie University

Monash University

Murdoch University

University of Melbourne

University of New England

University of New South Wales

University of Queensland

University of Sydney

University of Western Sydney

Article Abstracts

States and Social complexity: the Indus Valley (Harappan) Civilisation

Thomas Riisfeldt

First Year Undergraduate, University of New South Wales

This essay explores 'statehood' and argues Indus Valley (Harappan) Civilisation was *not* a state like contemporary Sumer and Egypt were, despite being equally complex – hence calling for revision of the unilineal anthropological model culminating in the state.

Frankish Involvement in the Gregorian mission to Kent

Sara Amos

Third Year Undergraduate, Monash University

This article re-examines the primary documents relating to the sixth century Gregorian Mission to Kent in light of the modern historiographical tradition which claims Frankish hegemony existed over the Kentish Kingdom under Aethelberht's rule. This tradition claims that the Gregorian mission to Kent must be seen as an extension of the authority of Merovingian Gaul over Kent. This article argues against this historiographical tradition as it is grounded in questionable interpretations of a small amount of primary material. It argues that the mission must be seen through the eyes of Pope Gregory the Great, the initiator of the mission, who viewed the mission within an apocalyptic framework. He wanted to save as many people as he could for the second coming and was not influenced by Merovingian politics.

A Bang or a Whimper? Big Ships, Big Guns, Big Ideas and World War One

Ronald Chambers,

Third Year Undergraduate, Macquarie University

In 1914, the Great Powers of Europe went to war using outmoded strategies based on obsolete technologies. The politicians and military strategists of the day had opted for navalism – the idea of

supremacy based on naval power. Navalism in the early twentieth century meant just one thing – big ships with big guns, the Dreadnought class battleships and heavy battle cruisers built by Britain and Germany. These weapons of mass destruction did not prevail when hostilities broke out, however. During World War One, the submarine, torpedo and mine along with aircraft, wireless and tank became the major defence technologies of sovereign nations, and battleships faded into obscurity. How could the most powerful nations of the day have got it so wrong?

This essay argues that the confrontation between Germany's desire for *Weltmacht* and British *Realpolitik*, resulted in military strategies for both sides that fractured in the heat of World War One conflict. These strategies fractured because their underpinning technologies changed more rapidly than the political and administrative apparatus could deal with, leading the Great Powers to war using outmoded strategies based on obsolete technologies.

Iolo Morganwg and the Place of Authenticity within the Creation of a Welsh Cultural Identity

Marcus Colla,

Third Year Undergraduate, University of Tasmania

Although not in any traditional sense a 'colonial culture', Welsh culture in the late eighteenth century was perpetually threatened by an encroaching sense of 'British' identity, of both an organic and imperialistic nature. As a 'forgotten frontier' within this dynamic era of British history (particularly when compared with Scotland and Ireland), Wales is an especially interesting case study in assessing cultural demise. More importantly, however, it is also a uniquely interesting case study in assessing cultural revival. Central to this revival was the character of Iolo Morganwg. In his capacities as a Romantic, antiquarian, author, nationalist, populist and – critically – forger, Morganwg did 'much to muddy the stream of Welsh historiography'. Furthermore, there is an additional element of Romanticism implicit in the texts of Morganwg and his compatriots, which obscures even further the discrepancy between historical manipulation and artistic creation. But perhaps most importantly for our present purposes, the antiquarian movement did have a substantial impact upon Welsh culture thereafter. This provides, in addition, yet another area of interpretation that generates wide-ranging considerations about the importance or relevance of authenticity to texts of historical cultural significance.

Feminine Love in the Twelfth Century – A Case Study: The *Mulier* in the Lost Love Letters and the Work of Female 'Mystics'

Eve Worth

Third Year Undergraduate, University of Bristol

This article compares the twelfth-century writings of the secular *mulier* in the *Lost Love Letters* with the work of religious female 'mystics' to draw comparisons about the way these authors chose to express love. An analysis of the use of imagery and the dominant discourses in their writings allows the author to draw conclusions about the characteristics of a feminine expression of love in this period. The conclusions of the article open up the possibility of questioning the widely held idea of 'uniqueness' in the work of Hildegard of Bingen.

Subaltern Studies: 'from Writing with (Socialist) Passion to Following the (Postmodern) Fashion'

Hannah Altern

Honours, Macquarie University

This article explores the changing place of subaltern studies within Indian historiography and its contribution to the creation of the histories of marginalised people. The article traces the shift of subaltern studies from a Marxist tradition towards a focus on cultural studies, through close study of its leading

journal, *Subaltern Studies*. In the course of this transition, *Subaltern Studies* has also influenced historians outside of the Subcontinent, and these are briefly examined.

How History Dealt with LBJ and his Vietnam War in Three Key Areas: Escalation, Management and the Tet Offensive Articles

Darryl Burrowes

Honours, Flinders University

This is a survey of some of the key Anglo-Saxon historiography of President Johnson's escalation of American involvement in the Vietnam War. It is a study of consensus and controversy in the literature. Discussion is limited to three areas: reasons for escalation, Johnson's management of the war and thirdly the implications of the Tet Offensive. The historiography under discussion will range from the contemporaneous to the present and include perspectives from the Johnson administration itself.

Nationalism and Federation: Creating the Commonwealth of Australia

Benjamin Sievwright

Graduate Certificate, University of Melbourne

This essay investigates the motives behind the Federation of Australia focussing especially on the form of nationalism presented by the 'bushman's bible', the *Bulletin*, during the period. In arguing for Australian nationalism as a key motivator behind the creation of the Commonwealth, much of the argument is structured by Paul Kelly's five pillars of Australian settlement and a number of other approaches to Federation by key historians are explored and assessed.

Head Reading the American Psycho: The Role of Phrenology in the Medical Construction of Insanity in the United States, 1830-1850

David Freeman

Graduate Diploma, University of New England

This paper examines the contributions of phrenology to the medical construction of the idea of insanity in the United States during the middle portion of the nineteenth century. At a time when psychiatry was coming into its own and brain functions began to be seen as the cause of mental illness, phrenology provided a convenient, scientifically supported (or so it was thought) justification for the behaviour of the mentally ill. In addition to this, phrenology was also a contributor to the early 'self-help' movement, which increased its appeal to medical authorities and the general public in Jacksonian America.

'Old Men Forget' or do they 'Remember with Advantages'? The Problem of Primary Sources and Objectivity

Bill Apter

Masters, Macquarie University

'Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day.'

Shakespeare's Henry V helped to create the myth of a Great King and has influenced histories of the Hundred Years War; the English remember Agincourt and their other victorious battles rather than the loss of the war. But Henry's speech on memory contains a critical truth regarding primary sources that has received less attention. Whilst old men do sometimes forget, it is their tendency to remember their feats with advantages in their memoirs and diaries that is the focus of this article. Examining

a number of key texts by twentieth-century Britons, this article discusses the role of memoirs and diaries in shaping the way the history of World War One and Two has been told. If primary sources are not objective and contain distortions, omissions and errors, can the truth be uncovered in secondary sources that make use of them?
