Editors' Introduction

Sudesh Mishra and Russell Smith

This issue of *AHR* takes as its focus variations on the theme of minor history. Sudesh Mishra reminds us that minor histories are concerned not so much with excluded events as with events that are included within major historical narratives as exceptions to the norm. They constitute asides, snippets and fragments that depart from the dominant account. Since they are dangerous supplements, they are openly acknowledged in the major account but as exceptions that do not upset the rule. The figure that best captures this idea is the footnote. Set below the bar of the dominant account, the footnote has the potential to lead an argument astray. To defend against this possibility its exceptional status is duly recorded, but with a view to clinching precisely this fact—its exceptionality in the face of the non-exceptional event unfolding in the upper body of the argument. The footnote is visually and discursively disbarred from the dominant account. It is, therefore, that which is excluded at the moment of inclusion. Mishra's paper elaborates on this notion by examining *girmit*—a term coined by Indian coolie workers in Fiji to describe their ordeal in cane plantations—as the history of an exception vis-à-vis dominant accounts of indentured labour; he proceeds to show how an insane vagabond roaming the streets of Suva in the 1880s enters history as the figure of an exclusion because of her condition of unreasonable exceptionality; and concludes his account by noting that a coolie prisoner's 'wind' breaches penal regulations in another instance of minor history.

Nicole Anae sets her sights on a different species of minor history. Her essay takes as its focus an *itaukei* (indigenous Fijian) constable, Evarama, who famously apprehended and escorted the defaulting absconder, Elias Rosenwax, to Melbourne in the 1870s. While abroad, Evarama subverted static representations of indigenous corporeality and material cultures by mobilizing his considerable physical and cultural agency. Evarama, whether wittingly or otherwise, used his status as minor celebrity to break down stereotypical ethnographic representations of the *itaukei* by assuming multiple roles: 'native,' constable, champion swimmer, diver, etc.

Writing in a similar vein, Mandy Treagus employs the tactic of recoupment in her article on Makereti Papakura, a Maori performer, tourist guide, traveller, emigrant, cultural custodian and Oxford-trained anthropologist, who happened to straddle two centuries (1873-1930) and cultures. Treagus' nuanced reading of

Makereti's fluid engagement with Maori heritage and European modernity leads her to conclude that, in this instance at least, individual agency is inextricably bound up with tribal Te Arawa concerns.

Whereas Anae and Treagus focus on individual agency in their account of hybridity, self-representation and resistance, Margaret Mishra chooses to focus on an early manifestation of women's internationalism as exemplified in the transnational networks initiated by Indian, New Zealand and Australian women to improve the lot of women labourers in Fiji. Militant forms of resistance employed by indentured women were, Mishra argues, differently complemented by the committee that emerged from the transnational activity of middle-class women residing in the three colonies. Although the activities of this committee were bound up with patriarchal moral categories (honour, chastity, monogamy, etc.) and dovetailed with the politics of colonialism, Christianity and Indian nationalism, the committee's intervention led to an improvement of women workers' rights in the areas of health care, education and employment. The transnational women's lobby was effective partly because it mimicked colonial, patriarchal and nationalist values and structures to influence policy matters in Fiji.

In their dialogic collaboration, Rachel Buchanan and Maria Tumarkin reflect on alternative ethical ways of 'doing' history. They seek to move away from the notion of the archive as a repository of selective records and from the idea of history as a bloodless narrative built around recuperated data. They point out that the past announces itself in multiple ways—in everyday metaphors, gestures, habits, asides and through corporeal traces and emanations. They adduce two striking examples to illustrate their point. The first concerns the critical trope employed by a Maori woman at a thesis presentation ceremony. The trope—'taking bread from our mouths'—returns this figure of speech to its original place of material realization in the 1881 encounter between bread-offering Maoris and gun-wielding white colonists. Is an academic dissertation a form of bestowal or an act of expropriation? Is scholastic bread bequeathed as a gift or is it a form of appropriation? Does academic discourse repeat the original violence of history in another guise? Their second example, mounted against the tradition of disciplining memory and debunking archival narratives, draws on Derrida's notion of the crypt as a place of unspoken secrets and violent histories. A grandmother's compulsive habit of harvesting breadcrumbs testifies, symptomatically, to the encrypted history of the Ukrainian famine of 1931. Buchanan and Tumarkin offer other ways of taking note of minor and seemingly throwaway details in order to generate histories that refuse to discount the corporeal, the psychic and the everyday.

Drawing on Derrida's work on hauntology, John O'Carroll contends that writing is a type of spectral emanation and transmission that outlives periodicity.

He points out that historical subjects—and his exemplary figure, Totaram Sanadhya, spent two decades as a coolie worker in Fiji—survive their deaths through the contingencies of conjuration and haunting. As becoming-bodies, authorial spirits haunt the future of writing just as ghosts haunt the future from which they are absent. Sanadhya's writings, conceived as historical ephemera at best, evade their transitory status, escaping the 'synecdoche of a dimension of … [the] scene of [indenture]', by haunting different futures, authors, memories and genres. O'Carroll argues for the 'lingering evanescence' of Sanadhya's legacy and shows how it continues to haunt the works of contemporary historians, fiction writers, cultural theorists, playwrights and poets.

Adrian C. Mayer, too, is concerned with memory-work in the article that concludes this issue. His strategy is to juxtapose the memories of his several visits to Fiji, the earliest being in 1950 and the most recent in 2010, grouping them together to chronicle the changes and temporal shifts that have occurred in the island's rural settlements and families. The overlapping memories, and their tenuous connection to ground-level reality, generate a sense of unreality for the remembered pasts as well as the unfolding present. The distinguished anthropologist finds himself outside all timeframes with the result that reality itself appears uncannily unreal to him. While speculating on the tricks and ruses of memory, Mayer's essay, which is part-autobiography, part-scholarship, part-gift and part-valediction, affords an invaluable description of the transformations that have taken place in Fiji's economy, demography, dwelling places and life-worlds since the 1950s.