

# TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE

## ***Germans: Travellers, Settlers and Their Descendants in South Australia*, edited by Peter Monteath (Wakefield Press, 2011)**

With small brush-strokes this publication paints details into the portrayal of Germans in South Australia. In a clear attempt to wipe away any stereotype of a homogeneous group of immigrants, *Germans* portrays a wide cast of characters, some receiving a much deserved biographic treatment, others playing their part in a broader story. This publication celebrates not just Germans who came to stay, but those who contributed, either to their own field or to the advancement of South Australian society, no matter how long their stay on our shores.

In the introduction Peter Monteath tells of Friedrich Gerstäcker, a German traveller who was trouble by the disunity he found amongst his countrymen in Adelaide. In this way Monteath emphasises the ‘sheer variety’ of Germans in South Australia (ix). Diversity is the theme of this compilation and Monteath sets the scene by introducing not just Lutherans but Catholics and Jews and those with ill-defined ties to church; not just labourers but urban craftsmen and tradesmen arriving as ‘economic refugees’ (xiii); not just rural farmers but the well-educated who ‘brought with them an intellectual energy and cosmopolitanism which bestowed huge benefits on what was still a tiny and precarious colony’ (xv).

The first four chapters focus on the interactions of Germans with South Australia’s indigenous population. Peter Mühlhäusler’s chapter highlights the communication between Germany’s ‘armchair academics’ (2) and an adventurous young fieldworker, Hermann Koeler. A twenty-four year old doctor, Koeler was amongst the first Germans to visit the colony. In ‘A vision frustrated’, Christine Lookwood presents a sobering depiction of the fight of Dresden missionaries to recognise land rights and encourage the use of indigenous languages in relations with South Australia’s indigenous population. Using their letters and diaries, Lockwood presents South Australia’s colonisation through the eyes of missionaries Teichelmann, Schuermann, Meyer and Klose. Bill Edwards traces the origins of the Moravian Church and its presence in South Australia. Edwards provides a brief biography of each of the German Moravian Brothers who were chosen for mission work in South Australia, and examines their influence on the Point McLeay and the Point Pearce missions and their missionary career in Australia and abroad.

In ‘Nothing pleasing to impart?’, Mary-Anne Gales provides a closer examination of the work of one of the Dresden Missionaries, Eduard Meyer, by detailing his work with the indigenous population of Encounter Bay. While he left eight years later, disillusioned ‘over his failure to win over a single convert’ (63), Meyer left behind a rich legacy in the form of extensive word and grammar lists in the Ramindjeri language. German missionaries, by insisting on preaching in the mother tongue of their intended converts, at a time when assimilation policies wrought so much damage, provided invaluable tools to facilitate modern-day ‘language renewal programs’ in indigenous languages (78). Another German who left a lasting legacy amid a backdrop of perceived failure is the ethnographer Erhard Eylmann. Wilfried Schröder’s captivating biographical sketch leaves no doubt that Eylmann’s

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contribution to the recorded knowledge of Indigenous South Australians should be acknowledged and honoured.

In her vivid portrayal of a family's motivation to migrate, Lois Zweck highlights the craftsmen, tradesmen and artisans that made up 'at least one-third' of 'nineteenth-century German arrivals to South Australia' (81). Many of these immigrants settled in the city and became a part of Adelaide's German population. It is from this urban group that Michael Bollen gathers his well-drawn cast of middle and upper class Germans of 'different faiths and fatherlands' (96) and their Anglo-German supporters (111). These players worked diligently to establish a subscription hospital, supported by a typically South Australian mix of voluntary contributions and government subsidies. In his chapter 'The man of the law', Horst K. Lücke provides a biographical sketch of a highly-educated urban German, Ulrich Hübbe, and a clear summary of the importance of the Torrens System to the growth of South Australia.

Three chapters of *Germans* provide much needed attention to those who travelled to South Australia aboard the 'three-masted barque *Princess Louise*', a vessel which 'brought to South Australia a remarkable group of passengers' (126). These passengers include Dr Carl Muecke, two of the four Schomburgk brothers, artist Alexander Schramm and entomologist Marianne Kreuzler. Pauline Payne shows how Schomburgk was able, through collaboration with a network of international and interstate contacts, to bring European culture to South Australia. Janice Lally and Peter Monteath illuminate the acute observations of the artist Alexander Schramm, and Philip Jones describes the efforts of an array of fascinating German intellectuals. These chapters show that many a romantic or dramatic tale can be drawn from the activities of those who contributed to the study of science and the arts in South Australia.

Women of the Barossa are brought to the fore through two descriptive chapters by Julie Tolley and Angela Heuzenroder. Tolley outlines the myriad of roles and responsibilities which women took on in the winemaking industry which brings the occupations and pursuits of the descendants of German migrants though to the current day. The reader can almost smell the freshly baked *Blitzkuchen* in Angela Heuzenroeder's 'The Barossa Cookery Book'. As this book was released in 1917 and again in 1932, this chapter marks a transition into a time of strained British-German relations during World War I and II.

The difficult subject of internment camps is tackled through two unique perspectives. In 'No man's land' Christine Winter takes us into the internment camps through the wives and children of interned German missionaries. By looking past the superficial evidence, Winter shows how these women fought to join their husbands, where the children could be educated in German and their families reunited. In her thoroughly researched chapter, Barbara Poniewierski asks us to acknowledge the pro-German, and even pro-Nazi, sentiment which existed in German communities, and the relatively small number of internments. In a contrasting but complimentary chapter, Peter Monteath demonstrates the sympathy and support offered from South Australians of German descent to those fleeing, or attempting to flee, anti-Semitism and persecution.

The chapters provided by John Miles and Catherine Speck provide redemption as the descendants of German immigrants to South Australia contribute to Australia's

war effort. In 'Penguins that flew', Miles delivers a biographical account with a floral depiction of Paul Pfeiffer; linguist, translator, university student, poet and RAAF airman (326). Catherine Speck allows Nora Heysen's light to shine, highlighting her role as 'the first Australian woman to be appointed an official war artist' (402). In the closing chapter 'Joining the club', Ingrid Münstermann shares her research into German migration to South Australia after 1945. By analysing membership to ethnic organisations, rates of out-marriage, naturalisation and language shift, Münstermann finds this group to be not quite invisible but 'highly acculturated' (431). Ingrid Münstermann reminds us that 'German heritage in all its forms' is worthy of preservation, even if it is in the form of 'symbolic ethnicity' (432). This publication goes a long way in providing those of us who have lost touch with our heritage a more complete picture in which to see ourselves and the experiences of South Australians of German origin.

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