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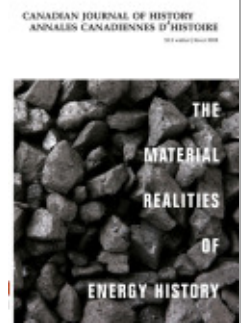
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*Grappling with the Bomb: Britain's Pacific H-Bomb Tests* by  
Nic Maclellan (review)

Roxanne Panchasi

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of the author's position in relation to her subject, and of the relationships between history, anthropology, and advocacy.

Smith-Norris has done an excellent job of re-centring US historians' attention on Cold War Oceania and of foregrounding the agency of Islanders. Because the book's case studies are so well contextualized and self-contained, instructors will be able to assign individual chapters as stand-alone texts in undergraduate and graduate courses. This book will be essential reading for students and historians of US foreign relations, the US in the world, and the global Cold War.

M.X. Mitchell, *Purdue University*



Nic Maclellan, *Grappling with the Bomb: Britain's Pacific H-Bomb Tests*. Acton: Australian National University Press, 2017. xxiv, 383 pp. \$55.00 AUD (paper), (also available open access).

Over sixty years ago, Britain launched a series of nuclear weapons tests at Malden Island and Christmas (Kiritimati) Island in the Pacific. Continuing an experimental program that had begun in Australia in 1952, the "Grapple" series included the detonation of nine bombs in 1957 and 1958. In this informative and accessible book, journalist Nic Maclellan investigates this brief but important period of Britain's nuclear past. A study that emphasizes the human story while exploring the technical, scientific, economic, political, and military aspects of the tests, Maclellan's history marshals multiple forms of evidence against a persistent "culture of secrecy" (8) surrounding these events.

Ultimately, the book is a call for justice for the victims of Britain's quest for nuclear power and prestige in the Cold War era. Placing the Grapple experiments within the broader context of nuclear testing by other Western powers in the Pacific, the book highlights the British government's failure to acknowledge the damage caused by its actions in the region. The tests had significant short-term and lasting impact on the lives of veterans, and on Indigenous inhabitants and ecosystems, including a range of health and psychological consequences for those exposed to the blasts, fallout, and radiation. As Maclellan points out, while the American and French governments have established protocols (however inadequate) to compensate those affected by their own tests in the Pacific, Britain has done little to address the harm caused by its own program in the area.

In each of *Grappling with the Bomb's* twenty-two brief chapters, the author focuses on a group or individual whose story offers a different vantage point on the tests' history and aftermath. Some chapters consider the biographies, motivations, and roles of political leaders such as Winston

Churchill, Harold MacMillan, and John F. Kennedy. Others explore the decisions and actions of military personnel, from high-ranking officers like Grapple Task Force Commander Wilfred Oulton, to the pilots, sailors, and soldiers (British and colonial) who made the experiments possible in myriad ways. Outlining the ideas and efforts of those who supported testing, Maclellan identifies forms of resistance to the Grapple program that came from various quarters: British parliamentarians who raised questions about the high costs of the nuclear weapons program; a Japanese government concerned with the interests of its fishermen; other nations calling for nuclear disarmament and a ban on testing; figures like James Burns, a businessman with plantation holdings in the area; and peace activists such as Harold Steele. Maclellan also considers the perspectives of local inhabitants, including fisherman, mothers, and children. Rinok Riklon and Lemeyo Abon, for example, experienced these events as young girls. The inclusion of oral testimonies such as theirs, reflecting on the events decades later, personalizes this history in meaningful ways.

Two "Interludes" supplement the book's multiple sources and points of view with respect to the Grapple tests. Appearing between chapters six and seven, "On radiation, safety and secrecy," points to a deplorable British neglect of a "duty of care" toward veterans and civilians that continues to this day. "Contested Illnesses" explores the range of medical conditions that have plagued veterans and their descendants — conditions linked to testing in ways that can be very difficult to establish with certainty, thus weakening the legal cases of victims who were exposed. This burden of proof, along with other impediments, has also frustrated survivors seeking reparations from the French government. Indeed protest from veterans and survivors' groups, and from Polynesian political leaders, have moved France to review its policies recently. (For more information on France's review, see *Radio New Zealand's* July 2017 report, "France Reconsiders Compensation Bids By Nuclear Test Veterans.")

Weaving together personal stories with archival sources, *Grappling with the Bomb* will prove a useful text for scholars and students seeking a comprehensive account of British nuclear testing and its legacies in the Pacific. Moving back and forth in time from the build up to the Grapple tests themselves to the investigation of their harmful effects, the book provides a detailed history while acknowledging individual experiences. It builds a strong case in support of ongoing efforts to push the British government to honour the memories and suffering of survivors with appropriate forms of commemoration and restitution. Veterans and local inhabitants are owed, Maclellan argues, not only for the results of insufficient medical and scientific knowledge regarding the dangers of radiation at the time of the tests, but also for the very deliberate risks the government and military took with the health and well being of its own personnel, and of Indigenous civilians. Written with a profound sense of the ways that history can be used to

confront injustices past and present, the book offers its evidence in service of a clear contemporary objective: “to remember the tragedy of the nuclear era in the Pacific, so we are never forced to repeat it” (16).

Roxanne Panchasi, *Simon Fraser University*



Michael J. Molloy, Peter Duschinsky, Kurt F. Jensen, and Robert Shalka, *Running on Empty: Canada and the Indochinese Refugees, 1975–1980*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press. xxiii, 582 pp. \$125.00 Cdn (cloth), \$39.95 Cdn (paper or e-book).

In November 2013, a group of scholars and members of the Canadian Immigration Historical Society met at York University in Toronto for a conference titled, “The Indochinese Refugee Movement 1975–1980 and the Launch of Canada’s Private Refugee Sponsorship Program.” As the birth of the Canadian sponsorship program was discussed, many in the room wondered out loud why a similar response was not being generated for the escalating crisis in Syria. Within two years, a photograph of a drowned boy woke up the world to the unfolding tragedy, refugees became an election issue in Canada, and the new federal government came in with a promise to bring in 25,000 Syrians within a year. As the practicalities of this promise came to light, the questions shifted to wondering how, in 1979–1980, the government managed to bring over 60,000 Indochinese refugees. In *Running on Empty: Canada and the Indochinese Refugees, 1975–1980*, Mike Molloy, Peter Duschinsky, Kurt F. Jensen, and Robert Shalka answer this question in a way that only former civil servants grounded in their field experience could — in immense detail.

Spanning over 600 pages, the book divides into three sections: first, a historical review of Canada’s involvement in the Indochinese refugee crisis; second, the Canadian resettlement operations in Southeast Asia; and third, the reception of refugees in Canada. The historical tracing of this narrative comes from the memory of many of those involved in the program and a deep reach into the government records preserved at Library and Archives Canada. Scholars keen on studying the Indochinese resettlement will find this book an invaluable resource and an analytical launch-pad of information that was previously only available piecemeal if one knew where to look or had the benefit of sitting down with Molloy and others over coffee. Those currently working as immigration officers, or on Canada’s immigration policies and laws, will be drawn to the inside understanding of policy development and likely be envious of the freedom of their predecessors, particularly given the somewhat mythologized and celebratory telling. Still others, with a longstanding or newly-found involvement in private