music played in the cultural and devotional life of the various stratum of societies at the time. While Fisher deals with a very specific place and time, and local variances do matter, the book provides an excellent entrée into the types of religious events and sounds that are encountered across Europe, giving the reader a visual and aural model into which knowledge acquired later can be inserted.

Mitigating a little against this suggestion, however, is the final surprising element of the book, albeit a less positive one. Oxford appears to have put the book to press without a conclusion. It stops with a "reconstruction" of a four-day pilgrimage of parishioners from St Martin's in Landshut to the shrine of St Benno in Munich in 1603. Comprising a raft of suggestions and surmises, the story of the pilgrimage simply peters out. Even as a chapter ending it seems incomplete. This is disappointing because it leaves the reader having to try to pull all of the threads of Fisher's argument together for her/ himself. Having found the book entirely satisfying to that point, it simply feels as if the final chapter was accidentally left out of the book.

Admittedly, Fisher does begin the book with a gripping anecdote of Protestants infiltrating a Catholic mass in 1558, and perhaps he was trying to conclude in a similarly anecdotal vein. But whereas the opening anecdote is dramatic and leads to an exposition of the conceptual framework and scope of the book, thereby providing the expected introductory chapter, the reconstructed pilgrimage is not a gripping tale, and, unlike the sacred walking journey it describes, leads the reader nowhere. Perhaps Fisher could write a conclusion now, and upload it to the website that contains all of his excellent extended reference material. Readers would surely thank him for doing so.

Nonetheless, whether he does this or not, the book's contribution to the field of early modern scholarship transcends the omission. Fisher's book may be an un-iced cake, but the cake itself is delicious.

Stephanie Rocke
Monash University

Once, Only the Swallows Were Free: A Memoir

Gabrielle Gouch
Hybrid Publishers, Melbourne: 2013. Paperback, 416 pages; RRP $30. ISBN- 978-19221665998

Once, Only the Swallows Were Free is a memoir by Gabrielle Gouch of her Jewish family's struggle in post-war communist Romania as they seek to imagine a new life in Israel. It is a narrative about life in two systems, communism and capitalism, but Gouch

more strongly conveys how family relationships are reconceptualised over time - their tensions, capacity for love, patience and compromise.

Gouch's memoir is not chronological. It shifts geographically from Romanian villages to Israeli suburbs, from childhood to adulthood remembering. The structure in some places feels disjointed at it jumps timeframes and countries. But Gouch's writing style is picturesque. It is filled with glorious anecdotes and written with fiction-like narrative flair and its overall impact is a beautiful story, notwithstanding the trauma it describes.

Gouch's memoir is less about herself and her life and more about her search to fill gaps in her family history. Most important is her estranged and disabled step-brother Tom, who stayed in Romania with his deceased mother's family, while the rest of the Leitner family migrated to Israel.

To learn more, a quarter of a century after she left, Gouch returns to Romania in the early 1990s and makes subsequent visits in the following decades to stay with Tom. During these visits and conversations with Tom, Gouch's understanding of her family changes as she integrates her recollections with Tom's perceptions. It is a story of deep sadness, hardship and compromise. It is also a narrative that demonstrates how memory and oral history reshapes understandings of family life.

Gouch's family – mother Roza, father Stefan, older step-brother Tom and younger brother Yossi – wait for just under a decade to receive passports to migrate to Israel. According to Gouch, the Romanian government relinquished Jews for Israel, not out of magnanimity or humanitarian motivations to reunite Jewish people, but because there was money to be made in the migration scheme. By the time the family migrated in the mid-1960s, Gouch recalls that the rumours they were being "sold" to Israel had "turned into fact" in their minds.

During this period, the family was profoundly influenced by the restrictive social and political conditions of Romanian life and the waiting and the longing to migrate. But each family member experienced the circumstances differently.

Roza had an aching need to leave Romania for Israel. Her daily ritual is focused on waiting for the postman who is a leitmotif of escape for Roza, where passports mean a new life and reuniting with her siblings. Gouch describes her anticipation of life in Israel as a place of warm winters, open borders, medical cures and travel. For Stefan, the move holds more pragmatic concerns, "It will be difficult, the hot climate, a new language".

While waiting, Gouch is expelled from University. It is not a private affair but a public expulsion in front of 500 students. Her family's application to migrate is seen as traitorous against Romania and there is no place for Gouch's education.

As the memoir unfolds, Gouch discovers details of her mother and father's life before and during World War II that gives Gouch more vivid emotional details helping her understand her parent's decisions and actions. For example, Roza's desperation to leave Romania is understood in the later parts of Gouch's memoir where she describes that many of Roza's family were murdered by Nazis, and Roza survived because her

family gave her their savings which she used to bribe border guards on a train from Hungary to Romania. Roza's becomes a nanny for a wealthy family in Romania, caring for a disabled boy Tom whose mother died in childbirth. Tom's father Stefan, and Roza eventually marry. They have two children, Gabrielle and Yossi.

Gouch's writing is emotionally honest and shows a great depth of contemplation and mediation as she learns, through Tom's memories and those of her parents, to reshape her interpretations of her family's life. Gouch considers that war destroyed her mother's sense of belonging and that her parent's marriage was likely "of necessity and compromise". She wonders what might have been had she been the child of two people who loved each other. As Gouch explores Roza and Stefan's life, partly through her memories and those of Tom, she begins to understand her parent's partnership and what led to Tom's estrangement from the family.

Gouch's memories also provide a first-hand account of the migration experience from communist Romania to Israel – the Promised Land. Israel's heat, poverty and war dominated Gouch's recollections, "… we were poor – not the Romanian way, the Israeli way. There was food on the table, but not much else. No phone, no washing machine, no hot water in the kitchen, and of course no air conditioner". Gouch's father Stefan commuted five hours each day to work six days a week in to his 70s and Roza struggled with the language so different in grammar and symbols she rarely spoke Hebrew outside the home. But by Gouch's account of her parent's perseverance, "they were Jews in a Jewish homeland, and that was enough for them".

Whilst Gouch is descriptive about the evolution of her understanding of family life, she is often silent about her own decision making, such as her choices about education in Romania and Israel and most noticeably her decision to later migrate to Australia. At times this is frustrating. I wanted to know more about Gouch. But her memoir is not about her, it is about her family and she brings an extraordinary depth of emotional understanding to the dynamics of her family relationships, particularly how war, wealth, poverty, Jewish persecution and communism shaped their interactions.

The memoir is an engaging study for those interested in memory studies or oral history. Gouch's recollections appear formed both from her own memory and those of her brother Tom, and demonstrate how remembering is integrated and tempered by new understandings of similar events. It is rich in detailed descriptions of family interaction complicated by religion and political forces. The memoir may interest researches of Jewish, migrant or World War II history.

Nicolette Snowden
Monash University