

some censor removed a chapter telling in detail of the rackets and of the padre's parade ground challenge of the opening of inspected brothels? The Japanese appear and disappear, forever cardboard. This reviewer, ex-soldier cum historian, is left with the suspicion that as good as this history is, and it is good, some sanitising has taken place. If it has, by whom?

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Landmark Productions, *The New Zealand Wars*, a five-part television series, screened on Television One, June–July 1998. (Video forthcoming.)

DURING a Historical Branch seminar last year, James Belich debated with visiting television directors the idea that good documentary television did not make good history. Television New Zealand's previous *New Zealand at War* series might be weighed in this light. However, Gaylene Preston's feature-length film, *War Stories Our Mothers Never Told Us*, which also made it to the small screen, was trenchant and disarmingly good video history. Both productions were primarily targeted at film or television audiences and only published in book-form after public screening. In contrast, Belich's recent five-part *New Zealand Wars* documentary was based on his acclaimed previously published history, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict*. The series charts a chronological course of military encounters between Maori and European forces during the nineteenth century. In spite of some weaknesses, the series succeeds, in bull-roaring fashion, to present New Zealand history as we have not seen it before.

*The New Zealand Wars* series seems to have been inspired by the recent ten-part US television series, *The Civil War*. The preface to the 1998 edition of Belich's book declares 'this is a book about New Zealand's great "Civil War"'. Still, there are anomalies in the selection and definition of events under focus in the television series. While the original text fixes the New Zealand wars as conflicts between 1845 and 1872, the television series ranges wider. For example, the inclusion of the 1843 Wairau 'incident' in the second episode is inconsistent with Belich's prior treatment of this event, presented in his book as background to the wars proper. Events occurring after 1872, such as John Bryce's attack on Parihaka, the 1898 Dog Tax Rebellion, even the 1916 armed seizure of Rua Kenana at Maungapohatu (describing Rua as the last casualty of the New Zealand wars), have also become the subject of the television series. There is considerable dissonance between Belich's exclusion of these and other post-1872 events from his book, as compared with their noted inclusion in the television series. We are left confronting a paradox, confused as to how Belich defines the New Zealand wars and whether, perhaps, the New Zealand wars are different from New Zealand's great 'Civil War'?

Coverage of the central conflict in the New Zealand wars, the invasion of Waikato, seemed comparatively swift. As presenter, film crew and audience hot-footed it through the Rohe Potae, there were some curious omissions. Most surprisingly, the series discounted all but indirect mention of the New Zealand Settlements Act and the Suppression of Rebellions Act. The effect of these two pieces of 'confiscation legislation'

propelled Maori either to continue to resist or to side with the Crown in the hope of avoiding raupatu. It is not something therefore to be smoothed over for simplicity's sake. Mention might also have been made of the role of Waikato Maori in guiding the British force around the single gap in the Paterangi line or of their assistance in the construction of Great South Road.

Yet these criticisms should not detract from what is a visual achievement in making history public. In the mid-1980s, James Axtell, the prominent North American colonial historian, commented on the need for academic historians to take the knowledge being progressed inside institutions outside to raise general public consciousness. In the New Zealand context, this is precisely what Belich has done and this desire to reinstate the New Zealand wars into the popular memory is an overarching theme through the series. Part of this success relates to having Belich not only as the historian responsible for screenwriting, but also as the presenter. Oral histories — in many cases captivating in themselves — were skilfully threaded with the other forms of evidence, adding credence to both Maori and Pakeha forms of representing the past. Music and visual imagery similarly provided a dramatic counterpoint to written documentary sources. Historical sites were visited, though more often they were shown as colourful backdrops rather than deployed as evidence themselves. This is to say nothing of the excellent 'virtual-realism' of computer-generated models: a CD-ROM would be a welcome next project.

The challenge in representing history before the public is to ensure that the history retains a sense of its own 'genealogy' and connections to the broader subject-discipline, in spite of any necessary simplification. Nightly newsreaders might 'tell it like it is', but, as historians, we cannot operate under such illusions. Belich, despite occasional references to the 'hard facts', is cautious to imbue a sense of his own role in the creation of a revisionist thesis. But there are occasions where the series might have paused to offer perspectives from other historians. Examples include Te Kooti's attack on Matawhero and the origins and nature of the Kingitanga. The series might also have made use of excerpts from previous film and documentary footage of the wars, in order to generate a sense of its own historicity. In the end, however, we must return to the question of how to present history via the medium of television. Though not the first to do so, *The New Zealand Wars*, rising above its shortcomings, does marry good television and good history and, in so doing, has staked an important place in New Zealand historiography.

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*Imagining Nations*. Edited by Geoffrey Cubitt. Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1998. 260 pp. UK price: £48.50 hb. ISBN 0-7190-5115-0.

*IMAGINING NATIONS* is concerned with the cultural work of 'nationalism' in a broad sense, 'the system of thought that takes nations to be basic and natural units of analysis'. In his introduction, Geoffrey Cubitt comments on the constituent essays and lucidly and intelligently discusses the issues raised by theories of the nation since the 1980s. The rest of the book is organized in three parts: 'Conceptualising Nationality', 'The Nation in Time' and 'The Nation in Space'.