

The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices. By Elazar Barkan. W.W. Norton & Company, New York and London, 2000. 414 pp. NZ price: \$59.95. ISBN 0-393-04886-1.

HOW DO NATIONS make amends for historical injustices? How does the relatively recent global trend of making restitution for past wrongdoings relate to a kind of 'international morality'? And where and why has this been successful? These ambitious questions are tackled by cultural studies and history scholar Elazar Barkan in *The Guilt of Nations*, an overview of how nations have attempted to address past wrongs in the twentieth century.

The book takes the broad brush approach, considering a series of case studies. The first section, the 'Residues of World War II', looks specifically at German reparation to Jews in the wake of the war; the Japanese-American internment camps; the so-called 'comfort women' of Japan; the Russian 'plunder' of treasures and cultural artifacts as retribution against Germany; the dispute over 'Nazi gold' in Swiss hands; and the aftermath of the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. The second section of the book, 'Colonialism and its Aftermath', explores the restitution to Native Americans of land and sacred objects; the Hawaiian sovereignty movement; Aboriginal land rights in Australia; the situation of Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand; and reparation for slavery to African Americans. While this study is fairly comprehensive, Canada and South Africa, who have in recent times made moves towards reconciliation, are obvious omissions.

Barkan sets out his thesis early in the book. He is not interested in the 'victims culture' (or grievance history) but looks instead at 'the willingness of perpetrators to engage and accommodate the victims' demands' (p.ix), with an emphasis on the perpetrators *voluntarily* entering into such arrangements. This willingness Barkan terms the 'guilt of nations'. Alongside this he wrestles with the tension between individual rights and group rights in attempting a theory of restitution. Put simply, this theory is based on pragmatism. It prioritizes peace and argues that there can be no basis for the resolution of past injustices if violence prevails. Reconciliation must, if it is to survive in the long term, be durable in both practical and ethical terms. Restitution fulfils this need, Barkan argues, by providing 'a mechanism to implement an enlightened conception of the good' (p.346). While this theory might provide some kind of model for a comparative basis for resolution, it is, he cautions, not the solution for every case.

In recent years there has been something of an explosion of interest in and around this topic, particularly from scholars of international relations and political philosophy, with the majority of these texts examining human rights issues. Barkan draws on the classical work of Adam Smith, as well as the work of philosophers John Rawls, Richard Rorty and others. On the local front, Barkan's book covers some of the same ground as parts of Andrew Sharp's *Justice and the Maori* (1997), although the latter is focused exclusively on New Zealand. In his discussion of New Zealand, Barkan also touches on issues raised in Augie Fleras' and Paul Spoonley's *Recalling Aotearoa* (1999). *The Guilt of Nations* is not, however, as detailed as other truly comparative studies of indigenous rights and colonization, such as Ken Coates' and Paul McHugh's *Kokiri Ngatahi Living Relationships* (1998) and Paul Havemann's *Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Australia, Canada and New Zealand* (1999).

Undoubtedly, the chapter on New Zealand in *The Guilt of Nations* will be of most interest to New Zealand readers. Barkan gives a clear, albeit rather simplistic overview of the status of Maori in modern New Zealand society. New Zealand is, he argues, making substantial advances in redressing historical injustices, a fact he puts down to the proportionally large Maori population and the long history of Maori-Pakeha contact and co-operation. He mentions the present Treaty claims and settlement process and efforts to redress historical injustices, but makes no mention of previous attempts to deal with these issues which go back at least to the 1920s.

There are also some basic errors. New Zealand readers might be surprised to see Nga Puhi kaumatua Kingi Taurua referred to as 'the head of the Ngapuhi tribe and proclaimed king, Taurua' (p.281). Unfortunately most of the New Zealand material is based on newspaper articles, which are not the most reliable sources. But perhaps most troubling is Barkan's vision of New Zealand as a kind of *Once Were Warriors* writ large. He has been greatly influenced by the film (not the book) and frames his entire discussion around these harrowing images: the title of the chapter itself is 'Once Were Warriors' as though it were some kind of lament for a lost past. This scenario, he assumes, is the gritty realism of modern Maori life. One has to wonder if this was his first impression of New Zealand and if perhaps he too is being stereotypical in his portrayal of Maori. New Zealand-based researchers — including Ranginui Walker, Mason Durie and even the Waitangi Tribunal — have discussed the root causes of these social and economic problems with much more subtlety than has been done here.

On the other hand, it is good to see New Zealand included in a study such as *The Guilt of Nations*, for two main reasons. First, it reminds us that while conditions in New Zealand are specific to this place, Maori efforts for redress are in fact part of a wider (some might call it a 'postcolonial') process of reassessing the past and reclaiming power, and in fact they have much in common with other indigenous groups who are attempting to throw off the shackles of colonialism. Second, only when the modern Treaty settlements process is seen on an international stage can all New Zealanders appreciate that we are in fact making some headway towards resolution: that even getting to the negotiating table is progress in itself.

The Guilt of Nations should not be read as a comparative analysis or as a collection of detailed case studies: the reader wanting this will have to look elsewhere. But it does present a compelling argument on international morality, which will find a natural audience among historians as well as political scientists. The book is substantial and written in a lively and engaging style, but it might have been slightly more accessible if the author had dropped one of his many 'case studies' and inserted some photographs and maps instead. One is left with the impression that there is simply *too much* in this book: that each of the two sections he covers would constitute a book in itself! Overall, however, *The Guilt of Nations* is a book that any reader interested in what critics have termed the global 'guilt industry' should not be without.

GISELLE BYRNES

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Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850–1939, By David Walker. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1999. xv + 312 pp. Aus. price: \$29.95. ISBN 0-7022-3131-2.

THIS IS A REMARKABLE overview of Australia's engagement with Asia since the 1850s influx of Chinese goldminers and the Indian Mutiny. Its core argument is that Australia became a nation at the same time as concern mounted about the rise of the East as a threat to European supremacy. This in turn affected how Australians saw themselves, as an outpost of whiteness. *Anxious Nation* abounds in insights; for example, how fears of and fascination with Asia reinforced the bush legend by emphasizing the bushman's qualities as race hero. The Asian dynamic helps explain the more pronounced masculinism and racism in Australian national narratives. This is an open and interactive study, which illuminates Australia's history and collective identity by exploring a series of real and imagined encounters with its Asian neighbours.