

the university art collection. His jubilee history *Victoria University College; An Essay Towards a History* was widely admired.

He worked with others in efforts to keep wartime restrictions on speech and publications to a minimum. He played his part in the moves that led to the creation of the Wellington Chamber Music Society and, later, the New Zealand Federation of Chamber Music Societies. He took the lead in the defence of civil liberties during the 1951 waterfront crisis, and became the long-serving and highly respected president of the New Zealand Council for Civil Liberties that was formed soon after.

Beaglehole's feeling for his homeland had slowly become much more positive. He came to see himself as a member of a culture which, though it had yet to reach some kind of maturity, was not to be written off. In 1954, in his commemorative public lecture *The New Zealand Scholar* — the title did homage to Emerson — he suggested that New Zealanders were perhaps experiencing an intellectual revolution comparable with the one Americans had been through a century previously.

By then he was well into the immense labour of preparing Cook's and Banks's journals of Cook's Pacific voyages for publication and writing Cook's biography, works which would be acknowledged to be among the great achievements of twentieth-century scholarship. The two long chapters that recount what stood behind that achievement are appropriately titled 'the Scholar at Work' and are the climax of the biography.

John Beaglehole's writings on Cook remain definitive. Some later researchers, among them Anne Salmond, have offered variant explanations of the Hawaiian cultural background to Cook's death. But, as Tim Beaglehole notes, Cook himself remains essentially as John Beaglehole left him.

Among the many pleasures of this fine biography, I particularly liked Tim Beaglehole's deft use of John Beaglehole's letters to get inside his mind at important moments in his life.

WILLIAM RENWICK

Wellington

The Bookmen's Dominion: Cultural Life in New Zealand 1920–1950. By Chris Hilliard. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2006. 136 pp. NZ price: \$34.99. ISBN 1-86940-362-2.

NEW ZEALAND HISTORICAL WRITING has not been strong in intellectual history. For over 60 years E.H. McCormick's centennial history, *Letters and Art in New Zealand*, has stood as the founding text. Its conclusions have been enriched by a number of biographies of individual scholars and writers, some excellent work on ideas about the Maori, and at last several studies of literary groups by scholars like Lawrence Jones and Mark Williams. But the study of intellectuals as a social group, which includes non-fiction authors alongside the so-called 'creative' writers and explores the relationship between intellectuals' social role and their ideas, has been sadly lacking. *The Bookmen's Dominion*, the third in AUP's lively argumentative series of short book-essays in cultural and social history, is to be greatly welcomed.

In four pacy and entertaining chapters Chris Hilliard sets out to describe the boosters and promoters who essentially ruled New Zealand's book world in the inter-war period. This is not a story of great minds or profound ideas. Hilliard's interests are, first, in the cultural apparatus of writing and publishing in these years. So institutions like Author's Week, journals like *Art in New Zealand*, or *The New Zealand Artists' Annual*, and episodes like the hilarious effort to write a detective novel collectively, are explored. Second, Hilliard provides a series of short portraits of some of the leading figures of

this provincial community. Many were journalists like Pat Lawlor, James Cowan or Charles Marris. Others were librarians like Guy Sholefield or Johannes Andersen. The interests of these people ranged from poetry to fiction to history; and they were largely, although not exclusively, a Wellington group. Conspicuously absent were university-based academics.

Hilliard's concern is not to elevate such figures into major literary figures, although he does recognize where they made original contributions, such as Cowan's pioneering and invaluable use of oral history to record the events of the New Zealand Wars. Rather he wants to understand them as a social phenomenon whose fierce commitment to creating a book world was an important moment in the New Zealand cultural tradition. He comes at the bookmen through the eyes of the younger *Phoenix*-Caxton generation for whom they were the cultural 'dead wood' to be cleared out of the way. Hilliard evokes the world of the bookmen beautifully. He draws on some wonderful photographs (many the work of S.P. Andrew), which are generously reproduced as full-page plates; and he has a lively eye for the apt and humorous quote. We are given the first stanza of O.N. Gillespie's 'Evensong':

Sing a song of washing-up — shining clean plates
Chattering together like a crowd of old mates:
Buxom cups and saucers, and little white bowls
Purely and demurely bright like little girl-souls.

Hilliard also has an acute sense of the gender politics of his bookmen, who, as he observes, were blokey — rather like Gillespie's washing-up, a 'crowd of old mates'. They liked to mix their literature with their crates of beer. Yet they also promoted women writers like Eileen Duggan, Jessie Mackay and Robin Hyde. Further, as Hilliard observes, the young rebels of the *Phoenix*-Caxton crowd condemned the values and literary promotions of the bookmen (Charles Marris's anthology *Kowhai Gold* being the greatest offender) on the grounds that it was 'leisurely-whimsy feminine-mimsy stuff', the 'Menstrual School of Poetry'.

Of course, as Hilliard shows at the end of the book, the revolt of the younger writers was not just because they regarded the bookmen's culture as one of 'petticoats and frills'. The bookmen resisted modernism in all its forms. They held to a sense of literature as 'beauty' and they thought younger writers were peddling smut. There was also, at least in the world of history, an occupational clash — younger academics like J.C. Beaglehole and James Rutherford came at professional history from a quite different standpoint to the journalists like Cowan and Buick.

Yet arguably Hilliard is too focused on the *Phoenix*-Caxton-university attack on the bookmen. Although the book is dated 1920-1950 most of the work and the events described occur in the 1930s and 1940s. But by then many of the people in the group were coming to the end of their careers. Horace Fildes died in 1937, Buick in 1938, James Cowan in 1943, Charles Marris in 1947. To fully understand the concerns of this generation one needs to go back much earlier in time, as far back as the 1890s when publications such as *The New Zealand Illustrated Magazine* emerged, and when young writers like Cowan, Elsdon Best and Arthur Adams developed a vision for a New Zealand intellectual life. It was a world that established strong links across the Tasman, especially with the *Bulletin*, and placed a heavy emphasis upon the value to a 'new society' of the instant history and mythology of the Maori. There has been some work on this group, which is really where the bookmen's ideas were born, and it is ignored by Hilliard (notably by Keith Sorrenson, Kerry Howe, Mark Williams and myself). Elsdon Best is not mentioned. But you cannot understand people in their intellectual dotage without also looking at them in their youth. It can also be argued that a second

group who get little space in this book and provided another important context for the intellectual jostling of the period were the left-wing writers who congregated around the progressive bookshops and *Tomorrow* magazine. This has been well documented by Rachel Barrowman. Her book, *Popular Vision*, is ignored. The great value of *The Bookmen's Dominion* is its rich sense of the infrastructure of intellectual life in the 1930s. If so, then completeness is the reader's natural expectation, and it is not always satisfied in this otherwise stimulating book.

JOCK PHILLIPS

Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, Wellington

Douglas Lilburn: His Life and Music. By Philip Norman. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 2005. 468 pp. NZ price: \$55.00. ISBN 1-877257-17-6.

DOUGLAS GORDON LILBURN (1915–2001) is New Zealand's best known composer, his works embracing orchestral, chamber, piano, vocal and electro-acoustic music. His fame has probably increased since his death with new CD releases of his compositions, a ten-part Radio New Zealand documentary of his life and music, the 50-minute radio feature *Douglas Lilburn — Man Alone* (2004), and now a biography. The reclusive Lilburn would not have welcomed this biography, or any biography, during his lifetime; he described biographers as 'maggots on the meat of reputation' (pp.7, 358). Without carrying the imagery further, it seems that Lilburn has no cause for complaint. He often enough felt that he was getting insufficient recognition, but this major biography is evidence enough that his stature and reputation are assured, at least in the circles within which I move.

All the same, it was a struggle to get where he did. 'Out of nowhere', writes Philip Norman, 'and against considerable opposition — some deliberate, some unintentional — he forged a composing career notable for its lack of artistic compromise' (p.8). Lilburn did not get off to a flying start. Brought up on a farm in the Rangitikei, he only took up music at the age of 14 as a boarder at Waitaki Boys' High School, which he hated with a passion, learning the piano and completing his first composition two years later. Juvenilia or not, 'it does contain some relatively adventurous harmonic progressions', says his biographer. There was always the feeling of disadvantage on Lilburn's part that he came too late to music, but he won the Percy Grainger Prize in 1936 with the tone poem *Forest*. Although his father gave him an allowance to study composition at the Royal College of Music in London, the family did not think much of his musical endeavours until decades later, and this despite Lilburn winning prizes and scholarships at the Royal College as well as his compositions winning two first prizes and a second placing in New Zealand's National Centennial Celebrations Competition in 1940. Later that year he was recalled to New Zealand to help with the farm and from there he returned to Christchurch to embark on the precarious life of a freelance musician. It was a wretched way to make a living and in 1947 he took what he later described as his 'bow to necessity' (p.205) with a teaching appointment at Victoria University College. A wider recognition for his work gradually came to the fore, culminating in being a recipient in 1988 of New Zealand's highest honour, the Order of New Zealand. Even so, lurking not far beneath the surface were insecurities — those perennial 'doubts and disabilities and confusions', as he termed them, with 'the same old D.L. looking for some reason for existence' (p.321). Strangely, while Lilburn craved the reassurance of recognition, he was uncomfortable when it came his way. Equally, while embracing New Zealand as his country, he was at constant war with its more philistine aspects.

The perplexing mix of accomplishment, ambivalence, discouragement, scaled-down opportunity and ultimate recognition, not to mention volatile personal relationships, places