

acknowledge. Never one to shy away from 'big idea' history, Miles Fairburn confronts the exceptionalism which he sees as permeating mainstream accounts of New Zealand's past: a boldly argued attack on the complacency of others, with controversial and uncomfortable implications, it is vintage Fairburn. 'Chance residues', Bronwyn Dalley's essay on photographic sources and the writing of social history, is the least demanding piece in the book. Most historians would agree that photographs 'open rich doors into this country's social history', 'challenge conventional views, offer new insights, and flesh out existing accounts' (p.189). Barbara Brookes's examination of the furore which accompanied Germaine Greer's visit to New Zealand in 1972 focuses on issues of style, language and audience as the key to understanding the nature of this cultural watershed. Brookes writes with verve, relishing the opportunity to juxtapose the witchy, transgressive appeal Greer had in her supporters' eyes with her opponents' visceral dislike of hairy-legged harridanism. The 'war of words' which ensued illuminates the intersecting histories of politics, sex/gender and society. Finally, the collection is rounded off with the edited transcript of a conversation between Erik Olssen and the volume's editors. Titled 'The Shaping of a Field', it does not quite fit, being neither a comprehensive historiographical overview of the era in which Olssen produced his major works, nor a thorough-going assessment of those works themselves.

The title of this volume is a bit of an over-sell. History is not so much disputed or reimagined by the essays within as scrutinized and tested within social history's best traditions of inquiry. Nor is it clear how seriously we are meant to take the plural pasts of the volume's title. The carefulness with which most of the contributors support their arguments with detailed research and close-grained analysis sits oddly with the idea of an imagined past or pasts. For the most part the essays depict the past as singular, albeit not unitary. The past is depicted as knowable, with the caveat that different subject positions and different historical positions tend to produce different kinds of knowledge. Theories about how the past is best approached by researchers are treated as testable. Historians heavily committed to the linguistic turn will most likely find fault with the approaches taken here. Yet, as the essays illustrate, there is much to be gained from history's preference for theory as the servant of empirical inquiry, not the master. Postmodernity's emphasis on textual complexity can easily lead into historical dead ends where a fixation on the past as it has been written about displaces historical investigation into the past as it happened. None of these authors has any desire to end up in such a cul-de-sac. Language is treated as a tool and a resource for historians, so too are cultural artifacts such as photographs and the material remains unearthed by archeological excavation. Historiographically aware but not historiographically myopic, *Disputed Histories* is a stimulating and confident volume that embraces the complexity of the New Zealand past without ignoring the need to pass judgement on what those complexities mean.

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New Zealand as it Might Have Been. Edited by Stephen Levine. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2006. 300 pp. NZ price: \$34.95. ISBN 0-86473-545-6.

COUNTERFACTUAL HISTORY IS FASHIONABLE and problematic. A common justification is that it demonstrates the contingency of history and the illegitimacy of so-called determinist approaches. At its best, counterfactual history can be illuminating; the classic example is considering outcomes in Vietnam if Kennedy had stayed away from Dallas. This collection, arising out of an invitation-only conference, is with a few

exceptions disappointing. The reviewer is pleased to learn that the contributors had a great deal of fun but lighthearted and convivial speculation does not always translate well to the printed page.

Giselle Byrnes briefly addresses the question of what would have happened if the Treaty of Waitangi had not been signed, and devotes considerable space to musings on counterfactual history or, as she calls it, 'allohistory'. Byrnes implies that colonization would have been more limited and more disparate; she ignores the 1845 change of government in London after which New Zealand land policy was managed virtually without reference to the Treaty anyway. Janine Hayward deals rather better with a similar issue, her counterfactual being that the Treaty did not include Maori as citizens, which would have meant distinct Maori districts (as were provided for in the 1846 and 1852 Constitutions anyway).

Kathryn Hunter deals well with an old familiar, New Zealand joining an Australasian commonwealth in 1901. Her scenario has Western Australia staying out because New Zealand indigenous rights are imported into the rest of the federation. Hunter proceeds on the basis of a coherent proposition that regionalism is more important than nationhood, but some major points of difference in the twentieth century might have arisen. Would 2 (Eastern Australasia) Division have been left in the Middle East? How would New Zealand have fared under Arthur Calwell's broader Continental European immigration policy? Which New Zealanders might have been federal Prime Minister? What would have happened to John Curtin, Bob Hawke and Kim Beazley? No doubt we agree that Robert Muldoon and Jo Bjelke-Petersen would have been two warts on the backside of the body politic.

Erik Olssen's detailed discussion of a strikers' victory at Waihi in 1912 is intriguing. It would certainly have reinforced the militant wing of the Labour movement, but what would the response of New Zealand and British capitalists have been? It is not certain that a Labour administration would have turned out more radical: it is far from unknown for firebreathing radicals, or reputed ones, to change sides over their careers.

Three chapters discuss military history. The best is Ian McGibbon's, postulating a partial Japanese occupation of New Zealand after an American defeat at Midway. Denis McLean's account of Michael Joseph Savage declaring neutrality in 1939 is implausible and reflects the author's well-publicized disagreement with the nuclear-free policy of the 1980s. It ignores the fact that Savage and his colleagues were strongly motivated by resistance to fascism, evidenced in the growing independence of New Zealand foreign policy before 1939. Here another counterfactual has apparently crept in: there is something called the Republic of Eire in 1939.

A number of contributors deal with the 1980s and 1990s (interestingly there are no counterfactuals between 1945 and 1979). John Wilson wonders if Think Big might have worked. Of course it would have, in one sense, if oil prices had stayed high; state planning might have maintained a better reputation. But higher oil prices would have had serious consequences for the world economy which may not have been to New Zealand's advantage. Colin James explores a more assertive Brian Talboys who nevertheless loses the 1981 election. James's scenarios can be criticized. Talboys's less abrasive style might have helped National by drawing off anti-Muldoon votes from Social Credit. If Labour had won in 1981, it is implausible to suggest Muldoon would have come back as leader and Prime Minister in 1984; quite apart from his own health, the National Party has never reinstated a defeated leader. On the bigger picture James is safer: a significant degree of economic liberalization was likely by 1990. John Henderson's scenario of Lange obliging the United States reinforces the conventional wisdom that the nuclear issue kept Lange in power. Nigel Roberts likewise reinforces the conventional wisdom that Helen Clark was very lucky indeed that New Zealand First went into coalition with National in 1996. Jon Johansson's portrayal of Jim Bolger reining in Ruth Richardson

from the start is far less plausible, since much of Richardson's attack on beneficiaries and trade unions accorded with backwoods Tory prejudice anyway. Johansson ignores the extent to which this was the basis for an alliance between Richardson and Bill Birch in 1991.

It is striking that most of the alternative scenarios presented have the country finishing up largely where it is anyway. In seeking to question 'determinism' they reinforce it. The major lesson of this collection, however, is that if counterfactual history is thought to be worthwhile the construction of scenarios requires a great deal of care. And a minor quibble is that the cover bears no relationship to any of the scenarios discussed.

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Age of Enterprise: Rediscovering the New Zealand Entrepreneur 1880–1910. By Ian Hunter. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2007. viii + 280pp. NZ price: \$50.00. ISBN 978-1-86940-381-2.

NEW ZEALAND'S 'AGE OF ENTERPRISE' 1880–1910 was the heyday for small enterprise; this is the resounding lesson Ian Hunter provides in this book. Economic development in the colony was founded on small-scale, social network-based enterprises. With great clarity and an engaging style, this book affirms in a more comprehensive manner what diffuse work by economic historians such as Simon Ville, Steve Jones, Grant Fleming and others had already suspected: that economic growth in the colonial era was driven by entrepreneurial activity.

Of necessity, the study of wide-ranging entrepreneurial ventures concentrates research on structural aspects of a developing economy rather than aggregative, macroeconomic factors. In taking a mostly structural perspective the author offers convincing evidence in support of a long-held view associated with Gary Hawke's who has argued that there was no real macroeconomic 'depression' in New Zealand during the 1880s. However, this book is not a systematic, analytical economic history. Therefore the space devoted to macroeconomic issues is surprising. That the real economy in the 1880s and beyond was boosted by 'entrepreneurial fervour [which] deepened and expanded New Zealand's infant economy' (p.14) and that macroeconomic (especially financial) conditions were not booming, are surely propositions that can be held simultaneously? One thing is certain: the macroeconomic data are inconclusive. For instance, economists may legitimately read the £605,000 spent on public works from 1884 to 1887 (p.22) as countercyclical expenditure — as a substitute for unemployment relief in a troubled economy.

Chapter one offers a potted history of ideas on the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship which might be excused if the author's chosen audience is meant to be a more popular one. Be that as it may, this chapter does not do justice to nineteenth-century thought on the subject. There are many inaccuracies. Given space limitations I cite one example. The statement that Adam Smith and other classical political economists believed 'true wealth was generated from the land' (p.11) is an historical travesty. Smith was not a physiocrat; for him specialization in manufacturing industries created wealth.

The general business and industry context for the 'age of enterprise' is outlined in chapters two and three. Strong population growth, ongoing urbanization, government infrastructure spending and tax policy (taxes on profits were not levied up to 1896 and were low thereafter) all nurtured entrepreneurship. Financial stringencies, if not a financial crisis in the 1880s transmitted from abroad, constrained the development of New Zealand's financial markets and restricted bank lending. Chapter Seven demonstrates