

demonstrates deftly how it helped construct and preserve the family as photographic memory and social unit.

Finally, Roger Blackley, Ruth Harvey and Gary Blackman examine 'both the historical moment of an image's production and the challenges of responsibly interrogating problematic images from the past', whether they include displays of preserved heads, the use of the vernacular in art objects, or reproducing a contemporary image from a historical negative. (Should all the blemishes be included?) It is stimulating to see contemporary issues related to historical photography explored and thus the changing functions of such images over time.

In the end, however, I was left wanting more. Reading the essays sequentially, some authors' analysis became quite mechanical: a close reading, yes, but the more adept scholars could put this in a wider and deeper context. A thematic arrangement, rather than a chronological one, may have been more effective. The editors' introduction lays the ground for — and begs the question of — when someone will have the courage to produce a critical history of the medium in New Zealand in all its complexity, with due attention to the visual, the material and ultimately the cultural meanings this technological marvel had and still has. As Max Quanchi notes in his concluding essay, in a call for considering the region's photographic history as a whole: 'To make the next step we need to trawl through the archives ... we need to select and highlight superb practice and seminal single images; and we also need to highlight the power and influence of the mass of photographic material that entered the public domain and the public consciousness of those who lived in New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific Islands.'

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Jagged Seas: The New Zealand Seamen's Union, 1879–2003. By David Grant. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 2012. 383pp. NZ price: \$55.00. ISBN: 978-1-877257-99-5.

THE SEAMEN'S UNION has a long and nearly unbroken history, and this book is a very worthwhile study of one of the major forces within New Zealand's organised labour movement. It begins with a careful chronicle of the union's development in the 1880s and its early successes, notably in challenging the Northern Steamship Company by the simple expedient of chartering union-run ships. Perhaps emboldened by that victory, John Andrew Millar and his colleagues formed the Maritime Council to federate seamen, miners and watersiders. This assertiveness took place against the background of a very rapid wave of unionisation in many trades and occupations, but the council's defeat in the Maritime Strike of 1890 is well known. The seamen, like other unions, had to painfully rebuild, and after Millar's election to Parliament in 1893 the union was dominated for nearly 20 years by William Belcher, a convinced arbitrationist and Liberal. Only slowly did the union recover the ground lost in 1890, and it is clear that up until 1914, if not later, Belcher's moderate brand of labour politics was endorsed by most of the membership.

This moderation remains something a puzzle, for seamen had much in common with miners and watersiders in the arduous and dangerous nature of their work. Grant identifies a number of explanations. The leadership controlled the ship delegates, who dispensed patronage. Seafarers at sea were detached from onshore concerns and could not attend mass meetings. Many older men remembered 1890. Auckland was weak; many mosquito fleet crew members identified with the small shipowner. Of these factors, I suggest that autocratic leadership was the most important; and, in fact, there is much discussion of the rivalries between successive leaders. After Belcher, W.T. Young, not much less

committed to arbitration, dominated the union for 15 years and worked hard to make it a truly national union rather than a federation of branches. Wartime greatly enhanced the union's bargaining power and Young's position, but the post-war recession saw wage cuts and a ten-week national strike in 1922–1923. Fintan Patrick Walsh, at that time a radical, rose to prominence and ousted Young in 1927. Grant's discussion of Walsh is extremely astute. Walsh maintained his powerbase in the seamen's union not only through his assertive methods, but because he delivered the goods both in industrial negotiation and, after 1935, through his relationship with ministers. Paradoxically, however, while Walsh allied himself with Sid Holland to break the watersiders in 1951, the seamen struck in support of the watersiders. Walsh wisely realised that if he attempted a showdown with the union on this matter he would lose his powerbase.

Walsh's tenure ended only with his death in 1963. His successor, Bill ('Pincher') Martin radically reformed matters, overseeing internal democracy, delegate training and improved hiring procedures. By the mid-1960s, too, the union was active politically as well as industrially. The union had more than its share of disputes, culminating in the deregistration of 1971. Martin's position was ambiguous. He wanted some militancy, but to keep the union under control, he supported the Labour party, even though he was disenchanted by its moderation. A talented and very different unionist from Walsh, Martin nevertheless continued to deliver for the membership. A major preoccupation after 1965 was the campaign for a New Zealand-owned shipping line. The union was all too mindful of the extortionate profits made by the British Conference monopoly, and found unlikely allies among farmers and even some National MPs for a state-owned New Zealand line. Tragically, the Shipping Corporation of New Zealand, established by the Kirk government, was undercapitalised, had no guaranteed share of New Zealand freight and so was vulnerable to undercutting, and in the end was privatised by the fourth Labour government. Remarkably, the union held up during the Bolger years, despite the Employment Contracts Act. This was in no small measure due to Martin's successor, Dave Morgan, whose very astute leadership made him the target of vilification by right-wingers like the cartoonist Garrick Tremain. The union's survival in these difficult years is well told in *Jagged Seas*.

For all the merits of this book I have some reservations. Sometimes there is a wider context which is not emphasised. The mobilisation of thousands of workers in the late 1880s is discussed by Erik Olssen's *Building the New World*, and perhaps reading that would have made Grant less dismissive of the working-class members of Parliament who won office during the 1890s. The discussion of the Maritime Council would have benefitted from consideration of Len Richardson's study of the miners and their union. The sidebar on solidarity ('second to none') may well be true, but rather glosses over the union's lack of enthusiasm for working-class solidarity in 1913. On some matters the account is a little one-sided. The union refused to join the Council of Trade Unions for some years, and we have a faithful account of the seamen's view of the CTU — that it would be dominated by those who were not proper unionists. This implies that 'proper unionists' are militant men (for gender is the ghost at this feast as one sidebar makes very clear), who have learnt on the job rather than through apprenticeship or other formal qualification. Likewise, we have the criticism of Ken Douglas for not calling a general strike over the Employment Contracts Bill in 1990, but no discussion of alternative views. Did those who stayed out of the CTU because they feared its moderation make that a self-fulfilling prophecy? Could they have given the CTU the votes for a general strike in 1990? That is a counterfactual, of course, and perhaps tangential to what is a fine study of an important and durable union.

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