

changing names of titled gentlemen, along with their numerous government positions, create confusions. Within the limits of literary prose Gascoigne indicates that Jenkinson, Secretary at War in 1780, who became Lord Hawkesbury and President of the Committee for Trade, is the same person as Lord Liverpool at the Committee for Trade in 1800. Perhaps more complex indexing or appendices listing names and positions would help but no easy solution has occurred to me. There are few errors but one which may confuse is the date at the top of p.124 where 1788 should be 1778.

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*Quicksands: Foundational Histories in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.* Edited by Klaus Neumann, Nicholas Thomas and Hilary Ericksen. University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1999. 281 pp. Aus. price: \$29.95. ISBN 0-86840-633-3.

APPROACHING the end of this century, few certainties remain within the discipline of history. The sure-footed confidence that prevailed in New Zealand and Australian historical writing well into the 1970s, sometimes beyond, seems now to be unremittingly eroded by doubt and indeterminacy. This aptly titled collection of essays is at once a sign, product of, and contribution to that process of destabilization, whereby the firm paths of the past are shown to be nowhere near as formidable as previously imagined. In both New Zealand and Australia, the editors contend, public anxiety over national identity has intensified recently in the face of the 'settler predicament': 'unsettlement brought about by settlement'. *Quicksands*, they emphasize, seeks neither to present nor re-present narratives of the nation but to venture along an entirely different course altogether — the book 'explores and questions fundamental narratives in both countries, and in doing so imagines alternative histories for the beginning of the new century'. To this end, the collection presents 12 essays, many of which are strongly interdisciplinary, from outstanding scholars including Deborah Bird Rose, Paul Carter, Judith Binney and Tim Rowse.

'Memories of Pasts to Come', the first of four parts of the book, is concerned principally with conceptions of time and the construction of narratives. Deborah Bird Rose, in a splendid opening chapter, observes the palindromic structure of the colonizer's time where the frontier — year zero — stands as the moment of disjunction between 'timeless land and historicised land'. Such a construction of time, she contends, inevitably portends the attainment of finality and closure not in the present but in the future, and in so doing effectively denies the possibility of resolution. A fundamental re-conceptualization is needed, Rose argues, 'expanding the present from a way station on the road to the future to the real domain of moral action'. Rose's concern with temporality is also evident in Paul Carter's essay, which reflects upon his participation in the design of a 'site narrative' for the Museum of Sydney, *Mythologies, Almanacs, Portents*. Carter describes the adventurous process of conceptualizing the chronology, of proffering new, impish, unexpected configurations of time and destabilizing assumptions through 'an act of reanimation'.

Other contributions in the book identify different bases for re-imagining foundational histories. Three essays, by Jonathan Lamb, Paul McHugh, and Julian Thomas, are unified in their concern to investigate settler baggage and its influence. Lamb addresses ideas of utopianism in New Zealand, arguing persuasively that utopian or millenarian attitudes to the land have proved to be strongest under conditions of

conflict, when consciousness of statehood has been most pronounced. In a pessimistic conclusion he sees the renewed importance placed on the Treaty of Waitangi in recent years not as a sign of a more benign national condition but of renewed conflict. Following different avenues, McHugh's chapter explores narratives of constitutional development in the two societies, while Thomas provides a reading of Australian historical writing in the 1930s. Also stimulating are the contributions of Nigel Clark, Geoff Park, and John Morton and Nicholas Smith, which together examine what the editors term 'Myths of Nature'. Clark's engaging exploration of the changing notion of 'feral', in particular, suggests a new and challenging basis for future scholarship.

Contributions to the volume by Tim Rowse and Judith Binney focus on listening and meaning. Rowse examines the 1981 hearings of the Senate Standing Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs on the proposal for a makarrata between the Commonwealth and indigenous Australians. He shows how the multiple meanings afforded to the term by indigenous Australians and politicians alike rendered the proposal politically impossible. Binney, too, is concerned with shifts in meanings, demonstrating the processes by which Maori narratives are constantly reworked and renewed through past and present to future significance.

The publication of this book, bringing together such high-quality contributions from both sides of the Tasman, is welcome indeed. At the same time, it is a reminder of how rarely and usually inadequately the closely related histories and historiographies of the two societies have been studied. Even in this collection, direct parallels and contrasts between the two nations are intermittent. Only McHugh, Rowse and the authors of the chapters dealing with nature and environment attempt to transcend national boundaries in any sustained way. When questions of national difference do arise, they are not always pursued as rigorously or fruitfully as they might have been. This was particularly evident in the contrasting chapters of Ross Gibson and Stephen Turner. Gibson's study of North Queensland emphasizes the persistence of memory among the region's settlers, and their deep disturbance at the violence of the dispossession of the indigenes — in photographs, he writes, 'their expressions [are] god-fearful and soul-dark with inarticulate malaise'. Stephen Turner's New Zealanders, however, are legatees of a culture that is forgetful, morose bearers of a 'melancholy of dislocation [that is] particularly acute'. Pakeha, he believes, are a people who 'do not know how to weep for themselves or their past'. Such divergent analyses of the two colonial experiences made me wish for a greater dialogue between the two authors, and a consideration of the shared colonial foundation of the two societies. Instead, a tone of New Zealand exceptionalism ran through Turner's chapter, exemplified in his assertion that '[i]n New Zealand . . . sport is unusually central to the individual awareness of being part of a larger culture'. Such a claim could, and has, been made equally for Australia, and no doubt for many other societies as well. Overall, though, this is a most impressive book. It contains much to delight and challenge those readers game enough to walk on the unstable terrain where the quicksands lie.

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*An Unsettled History: Treaty Claims in New Zealand Today.* By Alan Ward. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1999. 211 pp. NZ price: \$34.95. ISBN 0-908-912-97-8.

NEW ZEALAND, more than most nations, lives with an awareness of its past. For the last two decades, the country's efforts first to acknowledge and then to address its mishandling and wilful ignorance of the Treaty of Waitangi have been near the