

In its more garish manifestations, the trends can be seen in Valentino's restaurant inhabiting Dunedin's gracious railway station, and Burger King in full neon radiance beaming out of stately bank chambers in Wellington's Manners Street. But it is probably fair to say that contributors to this volume see such uses as jarring but the price to be paid for preservation and certainly a more tolerable vulgarity than the re-making of historic sites in 'unauthentic' ways (in which the 1940s restoration of 'Pompallier House' is the example most decried by current heritage orthodoxy).

Looking at the cultural landscape in a broader sweep, Ian Barber sets out archaeological investigation for a wider audience and also takes a critical look at the selective outcomes of much recent preservation practice. He has a good swipe at Wellington's waterfront ('a masonry freak show'), and tries to make the case for Oamaru's Sumpter Wharf (1884) alongside the town's historic success stories in its handsome white-stone edifices. In both cases the problem is identified as one of over-selection where preservation of a whole cultural landscape, complete with ordinary buildings and everyday surfaces, would have been preferable. The historian in most of us sees the point, but the desperate struggle needed to save *and maintain* historic buildings, sites and places should not be underestimated.

The legislative and administrative context of New Zealand's historic management is traced in several chapters, notably in McLean's brief history of the heritage movement and in Greg Vossler's charting of legislation. Knowing where the issues and battles have been before is useful to set alongside what remains a highly volatile area. The 1950s emerge again as anything but the dull grey conformity some would have us believe. The cultural nexus out of which the first Historic Places Trust was established (through the Historic Places Act of 1954) was one of liveliness and initiative. And for all of the late modernity of the 1960s and 1970s, it was in this era that the Trust acquired much of its historic register (a key role being played by Ruth Ross), and its visitor properties (the scale of which became something of a problem in the 1980s).

There is a tasting quality to *Common Ground?* but they are bar snacks rather than the main repast. The chapters are rather short, important issues and questions are raised and often left in an undeveloped state — including the significance of the title, the meanings of heritage versus history. Inaccuracies in titles of reference works and names of people are unfortunate errors in a book that seeks to establish its professional credentials. Nonetheless, with other recent publications including Bronwyn Dalley and Jock Phillips, eds, *Going Public* (2001), Janelle Warren-Findley's major report on historical conservation from her 2000 tenure as Axford Fellow (available from Fulbright New Zealand) and David Hamer's posthumous *The Making of Urban New Zealand* (forthcoming, Victoria University Press), *Common Ground?* is a useful addition to New Zealand's lively discussion of public history.

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*Politics in the Playground: The World of Early Childhood in Postwar New Zealand.* By Helen May. Bridget Williams Books with the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Wellington, 2001. 320 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-877242-18-7.

I WAS ONE of the disadvantaged children of the 1960s; instead of attending kindergarten, playcentre or some other early childhood facility, I stayed at home, looked after by my

brother when my mother was out at work. In the 1950s, I would have been considered as 'unfortunate', in the 1970s and 1980s 'disenfranchized', and by the end of the twentieth century, I would have been designated an 'at risk' child. Such changing perceptions of the place of early childhood care and education — and of 'working mothers' — are examined in Helen May's *Politics in the Playground: The World of Early Childhood in Postwar New Zealand*.

May traces the campaign for state support of early childhood care and education over a half century that saw the proportion of three- and four-year-olds at preschool rise from 3.4% in 1944 to over 95% in 1999. The number and type of early childhood facilities expanded enormously from the kindergartens and few playcentres and crèches of the 1940s, to parent co-operative centres, family play groups, kōhanga reo, centres run by church and charity groups, local versions of American chain childcare centres, Montessori centres, Pacific Islands language centres. Despite its vital role in social life, early childhood has long been considered the Cinderella of the education system, and May details the seemingly endless efforts of the sector to obtain adequate government funding and recognition, and to have its social role properly respected. A theme of this book is unsatisfied expectations. So often the sector has appeared to be on the threshold of suitable funding only to find the reality falling short: the 1973 capital works and means-tested fee subsidy which depended on the capacity — not always achieved — of voluntary organizations to deliver the subsidy to childcare centres; or the new funding scheme introduced in 1990 and stopped under the National government.

The issue of whether early childhood care and education was a welfare or education service underlay many of the difficulties facing the sector, and it was not until 1986 that responsibility for childcare services was finally transferred from the Department of Social Welfare to the Department of Education. May outlines the issue clearly, showing that it goes to the heart of social attitudes towards early childhood and the relationships between the state and families, and specifically between mothers and children. This book inevitably examines changing attitudes towards 'working' mothers and the needs of young children, and she shows how women's organizations have positioned their demands for early childhood care in the contexts of women's rights, and, later, the educational needs of children. Add to this the ongoing debates about the type of education and care available in early childhood centres and it is not surprising that the entire field has been politicized for so long. The politics have not occurred in the playground, despite the title of the book, but in the boardrooms and conference halls of early childhood organizations, and around the tables of government agencies.

Like most policies concerning children, it is adult expectations and attitudes that count. May points out early on that the material environment of early childhood has undergone very few changes in 50 years. Paint, paper, sandpits, stories, dough, water and climbing equipment are the staples of environments that emphasize learning through play. How 'play' has been interpreted has undergone modification as children have been subject to different 'gazes' over time. By tracing the different gazes, May also gives a potted history of childhood since the Second World War.

This is a richly detailed work, and at times the detail threatens to overwhelm the narrative flow. I found some parts difficult to follow and the chronology not always easy to unravel. May is generous in her use of quotations as she pays due respect to some pivotal leaders: we hear from Sonja Davies, Rosslyn Noonan, Anne Smith, Geraldine McDonald, Beverly Morris and others. But we also hear the voices of mothers who used the facilities offered by playcentre or kōhanga reo, giving us an appreciation of what early childhood care meant on the ground. The quotations from participants and specialists certainly add colour, but I found that at times there were rather too many saying similar things.

This book is the natural sequel to May's other two works that have focused on the 'discovery' of early childhood, and the family lives of Pakeha women in the post-war years. The themes raised there have come together in *Politics in the Playground*, a book that will be of value to those interested in education, and the contentious issues surrounding women, families and the state.

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'*Unfortunate Folk*': *Essays on Mental Health Treatment 1863–1992*. Edited by Barbara Brookes and Jane Thomson. University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 2001, 302 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-877276-09-X.

POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS from New Zealand's university history departments over the years have produced much outstanding work that has never been accessible to the wider community. The Otago University history department, and in particular Barbara Brookes and her co-editor Jane Thomson, are to be congratulated for bringing together in a single attractive volume the work and ideas of 15 such students, who produced dissertations over the last 30 years, mostly during the past decade. As Brookes explains in her introduction, not only was the excellent research in danger of being lost, but so too were the experiences of those they were writing about, the mentally ill or 'unfortunate folk' of the past. The students of Otago were uniquely placed to undertake this research owing to the rich records of local mental health institutions, as well as being on the site of New Zealand's only medical school before the 1960s. Much of the research relates to Seacliff Mental Asylum, New Zealand's largest and arguably — under the medical superintendence of Sir Frederic Truby King — most innovative mental hospital in the early twentieth century. Another focal point is Ashburn Hall, also located in Otago. Founded in 1882, this has particular significance as New Zealand's only private mental asylum.

The volume is divided into three sections, the first dealing with mental health provision in nineteenth-century Otago, the second with twentieth-century developments, and the third with national issues in the history of psychiatry. Because of the centrality of Otago to mental health developments in New Zealand, some of the themes developed in the third section have already been explored, leading to repetition, especially in relation to legislation, methods of treatment, and specialization. Yet the final chapter by Susannah Grant, exploring the separate worlds of madness and reason, and drawing extensively on Janet Frame's work, provides a powerful ending to the book. None of the essays are narrow institutional accounts, but are reflective of modern trends in the historiography of mental health care and social history. One of the book's strengths is the primacy given to patients' experiences. While none of the authors chose to engage in any depth with, or pursue the methodology of Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilisation*, Judith Holloway does take issue, in her chapter on admissions to Seacliff in the 1930s, with social control models as being overly simplistic and ignoring the realities of mental illness.

In her chapter, Cheryl Caldwell describes the innovative regime Truby King inaugurated at Seacliff. She nevertheless concludes from the statistics on recoveries that the results at Seacliff were no better than elsewhere, so that 'environmental engineering could not, in fact, cure deep-seated psychological problems' (p.48). Another author, Alan Somerville, cites British mental health historian, Anne Digby, who queried whether the criterion of recovery was an accurate guide to the work of an asylum. Digby argued