

to movements and ideals originating from beyond the church, such as feminism and ecological awareness.

There were never enough sisters to staff all the schools they were asked to run, and the lifestyle increasingly lost its appeal from the 1960s. Not only did far fewer young women join up, but even a number of professed sisters left, so the church moved from employing a few lay assistants to depending entirely on lay staff to manage its schools. In the 1980s, the schools were integrated into the government system and the teachers received state salaries — but had to retire at 65. Meanwhile, like all Catholic religions, the sisters were required by the Vatican Council to reassess their lifestyle and ministry in the light of their founder's charisma — the spiritual gift equipping her for a particular kind of service and subsequently embodied by the religious congregation itself.

In consequence of these developments, in recent decades very few sisters have been full-time school teachers; they have served in numerous other ministries including catechetics, educational administration, social and pastoral work, care of the elderly (not just members of the congregation) and chaplaincy. Sisters recruited in Ireland have been permitted to return to their native country, where they have undertaken similarly varied ministries, while a few have volunteered for work in Peru and Samoa. By 2007, the New Zealand province was reduced to 81 sisters, only ten of them aged under 60 years. However, the development of various forms of lay association has broadened the 'Josephite Movement' beyond the vowed sisters themselves.

Stevens draws on letters and other archival sources, and, for more recent times, the story is enriched by first-hand accounts collected by the author. It is illustrated throughout with many photographs of the sisters and their work. The Josephites' story is placed in the wider frameworks of Catholic, educational, women's and more general New Zealand social history. It contributes to all of them.

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History Boy: A Memoir. By Nicholas Tarling. Dunmore Publishing, Wellington, 2009. 277pp. NZ price: \$29.95. ISBN 978-1-877399-45-9.

SEVERAL NEW ZEALAND-BASED HISTORIANS have penned their memoirs. In addition to G.H. Scholefield's manuscript account (in the Alexander Turnbull Library) are the published autobiographies of W.P. Morrell, Michael King, Keith Sinclair, W.H. Oliver and now Nicholas Tarling's *History Boy*. Most of Tarling's career was spent at The University of Auckland, where he arrived as Associate Professor in 1965, rapidly rising to full professor (on his 37th birthday). His autobiography holds much promise, which is partly realized. Tarling was never an academic *pur et simple* but was involved in opera, repertory and arts administration as well as being a humane university administrator and doughty upholder of academic freedom. In 1974, at an interview for one of the two deputy vice-chancellorships at the University of Adelaide, Tarling stated 'that people in such posts were there to make it possible for staff to give of their best' (p.238).

The various autobiographies have distinctive authorial 'voices'. Tarling comes closest to Morrell in his dry wit. With ironic understatement, he relates a life and career that spans hemispheres as well as decades, beginning with an English upbringing and his undergraduate years at Cambridge, which he largely disliked. A switch to South-east Asian history for his PhD, duly awarded, was followed by the familiar enough pattern of struggling to find gainful employment, and this despite the patronage of J.H. Plumb, whose reputation for mentorship emerges unimpaired. With nothing suitable on the English horizon, Tarling took a leap in the dark and in 1957, as a 26-year-old, took up a

lectureship at the University of Queensland. Eight years later he took another seemingly retrograde step, despite promotion, by going to Auckland.

The studious, non-sporting schoolboy of the first two chapters emerges as an openly ambitious academic who worked hard for what he got and was fortunate enough to get the breaks when he needed them. Temperamentally, Tarling is a radical conservative who sees no point in change for the sake of change. It is abundantly clear that noisy neighbours upset his equanimity. And while he took the treadmill of teaching and meetings in his stride, his distaste for marking undergraduate essays and exam scripts is un concealed; the latter is described as ‘an agony’. *History Boy* is personally revealing in other ways, not least in disclosing a tendency to depression, which was counteracted by ‘filling my time with a range of activities, so, perhaps, fending off depression, though at the risk of incurring it when I stopped or when I was really exhausted’ (p.137).

As the title might suggest, *History Boy*’s major audience will be other historians, who may well feel disappointed that it is not more a historiographical autobiography. What comes through clearly enough is the steady progression of a fruitful and varied career. Tarling has been, and remains, an enormously productive writer who has authored or edited some 40 monographs and edited collections, on tertiary education and the arts in New Zealand as well as South-east Asian history (a full listing of his books would have been a useful appendix). What is lacking is a sense of his intellectual development and his perception of how his *oeuvre* has fitted into the changing field of South-east Asian historiography — in *History Boy*, his books’ titles are the only clue to their contents. There is a brief statement on the state of the specialization in the early 1950s (p.67), but little else is said on the theme thereafter (pp.145–6). It is somewhat ironic to have to mention all this in view of Tarling’s own regret that Keith Sinclair’s autobiography did not say more (by implication) about how Sinclair wrote his books. He said this in a small book called *Historians and Southeast Asian History*, which is actually about historiography generally, except for the final autobiographical chapter (‘Self and Discipline’), where he elaborates on how ‘The making of my history-writing turned out, like the making of history itself, to be a compound of trend and chance, of will and circumstance’.¹ In those few pages, Tarling is more revealing about the larger issues than in his autobiography.

In *History Boy*, for example, Tarling mentions the importance of conferences, not least as a means of making contacts. These gatherings were ‘essential for the professionalisation and internationalisation of a “new” subject like South-east Asian history’ and ‘a regular feature of my academic existence’ (pp.120, 151). The discussion, however, centres not on substantive issues but is more a listing of who he met, with whom he dined and sometimes even what they ate, rather than indicating how these gatherings contributed to the changing map of Southeast Asian historiography.

The superfluous and often unexplained detail is a feature of the book as a whole — do we need to know that it was ‘unexpectedly difficult to get a cup of coffee in Rio de Janeiro’ (p.243)? Names are thick on the ground (the book does not have an index), but in the main they are names only, except to the initiated (who knows Emily Sadka these days, outside her specialization?). There are listings of the concerts and plays attended, without much indication of what all this added up to. The artistic side was, and remains, integral to Tarling’s life, but there is little indication in *History Boy* of the interplay between this side of his existence and his role as historian. Many a year ago Tarling wrote about the relationship between the historian on the one hand and playwrights and actors on the other — on their common goal of creation and re-creation (p.136).² It struck a chord at the time and one yearns for more of this in the present case. Perhaps the problems that I perceive are a function of one of the book’s strengths: Tarling has not so much relied on the unreliability and selectivity of memory but on correspondence and more particularly his diaries. That seems to have imposed a severely chronological approach where the themes get mixed and the detail takes over. Rather than the themes

being disentangled, the book at many points reads as though the diaries have been tidied up for publication.

That said, there is much to enjoy in *History Boy*. Once the labyrinth has been cleared, the endearing wit and the understatement are palpable. As with the generality of historians' autobiographies, Tarling does not dump on colleagues but he does mention his duties within the Auckland history department, in fighting against trendy change for the sake of student numbers, and as an academic administrator when he stood up to be counted for his belief in not tinkering or overturning a system that was working satisfactorily — the radical conservative who staunchly upheld Cardinal Newman's vision of what a university ought to be about. There is a lovely passage on satire (p.173). There is also his prescient statement, when asked to give a lecture on whether Australia was an outpost: 'asking that kind of question made you an outpost' (p.124). The detail sometimes overwhelms the discussion, yet there is ample bounty in *History Boy* for those who care to look.

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NOTES

1 Nicholas Tarling, *Historians and Southeast Asian History*, Auckland, 2000, pp.112–20.

2 Nicholas Tarling, 'History and Histrionics', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 11, 2 (1977), 105–11.

Sailors and Traders: A Maritime History of the Pacific Peoples. By Alastair Couper. University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 2009. xiii, 262pp. NZ price: \$150.99. ISBN 978-0-824832-39-1.

IN EARLY APRIL 2009 Somali pirates boarded a German cargo ship off the Horn of Africa. Amongst the crew taken hostage were 11 men from Tuvalu and one from Fiji. The pirates demanded a NZ\$24 million ransom. This as yet unresolved incident is an extreme example of the contemporary hazards of work at sea. Yet it is not particularly surprising that the recent spike in seaborne terrorism in the Gulf of Aden should be felt so keenly by Tuvalu, a group of atolls in the Pacific with a total land area of 26 square kilometres, given that connections between Pacific seafaring and the global maritime environment have deep historical roots. The continuity in maritime work and trade in the history of the Pacific peoples is the subject of Alastair Couper's new book.

It always seems quite strange to reflect that the maritime dimensions of Pacific history do not have a richer scholarly tradition. Couper cites only three books which have made dedicated or sustained examinations of the world of indigenous seafarers: Paul D'Arcy's *The People of the Sea* (2006), David Chappell's *Double Ghosts* (1997) and Richard Feinberg's edited collection *Seafaring in the Contemporary Pacific Islands* (1995). In this context Couper's historical survey, spanning from first human settlement of the Pacific through to the contemporary challenges of the decentralized maritime world, is a very welcome and timely addition to the field.

A visiting professor of maritime history at the Greenwich Maritime Institute, Couper draws on decades of experience and knowledge in Pacific maritime affairs, as well as a broader command of maritime history from global perspectives. *Sailors and Traders* is a clearly written, highly accessible and balanced survey which summons wide-ranging evidence, including published voyaging accounts, colonial records, statistical data, shipping registers, port surveys, ethnographies and personal experience, as well as numerous articles and books on Pacific history.