

The Big Smoke: New Zealand Cities 1840–1920. By Ben Schrader. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2016. 480pp. NZ price: \$59.99. ISBN: 9780947492434 (paperback).

Now that over 80% of all New Zealanders live in a city, it is appropriate that we finally have a history which focuses upon the five main ones in the 80 years to 1920. Ben Schrader's history of state housing and his work as a public historian — for the *Atlas*, the Waitangi Tribunal and then Te Ara — gives him a familiarity with a range of approaches and sources which help to enrich his story. He has also been fortunate in his publisher, for Bridget Williams Books has lavishly illustrated his history and produced it in a handsome but sturdy volume.

The city existed in the European imagination long before the systematic colonizers drew up their plans for introducing to New Zealand a civilization centred on towns. One of the strengths of Schrader's book is that it starts with the dreams of the systematic colonizers (following the obligatory historiographical overview). In Chapter 1 he focuses on 'community building', the New Zealand Company's promotional campaign to sell New Zealand (enlivened by a fascinating account of Samuel Brees's 'Colonial Panorama'), a section on 'Inter-urban migration' (based largely on Phillips and Hearn's *Settlers*), and ending with the argument that these five towns were primary instruments of colonization and racial domination. In his second chapter he looks at 'Towns Becoming Cities'. He starts with 'Town plans' — though oddly overlooking the New Zealand Company's first planned town, Adelaide — and then proceeds to look at the dominant building styles for houses, our 'sprawling urbanism' (p.96) and the long struggle to replace the open drains and sewers that soon threatened the health of the colonists, especially when it poured (a topic he returns to later). In the chapter's final section he looks at the transformation of these 'makeshift' towns into handsome cities, focusing on commercial and public buildings. Surprisingly, he largely ignores ecclesiastical ones.

The next five chapters take the story forward thematically, focusing on the commonalities rather than differences between these towns — 'Social and Cultural Life', (Chapter 3), 'Māori and the City' (Chapter 4), 'City Crowds' (Chapter 5), 'Street People' (Chapter 6) and 'Creating Healthy Cities' (Chapter 7). I especially enjoyed the chapters on Māori and the city and city crowds. Like his first two chapters, they not only contained much fresh and original material, often enlivened by pertinent biographical essays, but deftly introduced the broader socio-cultural context. As each chapter is organized into shorter sections, each with its own title, even those chapters about which I had reservations had much of interest, were well written and skilfully carried the story forwards.

My main criticisms concern the prominence given two books which clearly prompted lively debates at Victoria when Schrader was a student — Jock Phillips's *A Man's Country?* (1987, 1996), and Miles Fairburn's *Ideal Society and its Enemies* (1989). Despite the clear evidence of community-building in the first two chapters, Schrader makes Fairburn's atomization thesis central to Chapter 3, although Fairburn ignored both the 1840s, as Schrader rightly criticizes him for, and the changes occurring in the main towns during the 1880s and 1890s. Although Schrader generously acknowledges the work of David Hamer and Russell Stone, he makes little use of either man's work, although, to my mind, their studies are much more relevant than Fairburn's to his chapters on 'Towns Becoming Cities' and 'Social and Cultural

Life'. Schrader also generously acknowledges me and the Caversham project (which I headed), but I was disconcerted to find that he often made no reference to some of the study's core findings — on changing social structure, residential and social mobility, and gender, for instance — although he discusses these topics at some length. A similar problem arose in his final chapter, which starts with an extended discussion of Jock Phillips's account of Kiwi masculinity in his *A Man's Country?* on the grounds that the style of masculinity spawned on the frontier generated a 'Backlash against the city'. Backlash is far too strong in my view, if not misleading, but given Schrader's argument I expected to see some attention to subsequent research on competing models of masculinity and Phillips's later reflections on his influential book. Despite a passing nod to Chris Brickell's innovative study of homosexuality, *Mates & Lovers* (2008), subsequent work on muscular Christianity is ignored.¹

Such scholarly issues need not detract from the general reader's enjoyment of Schrader's *Big Smoke*, however. We will be fortunate if someone of his skill provides us with an account of the city for the next period, 1920–2015 or thereabouts.

ERIK OLSEN

University of Otago

NOTE

1 See, for instance, John Stenhouse, 'God, the Devil and Gender', in Barbara Brookes, Annabel Cooper and Robin Law, eds, *Sites of Gender: Women, Men and Modernity in Southern Dunedin, 1890–1939*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2003, pp.342–5 and 'Christianity, Gender and the Working Class in Southern Dunedin, 1880–1940,' *Journal of Religious History*, 30, 1 (2006), pp.18–44. See also Ruth Schick and John Dolan, 'Masculinity and *A Man's Country* in 1998: An Interview with Jock Phillips', in Robin Law, Hugh Campbell and John Dolan, eds, *Masculinities in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, 1999, pp.46–64.

Royal Tourists, Colonial Subjects and the Making of a British World. By Charles V. Reed. Manchester University Press, Manchester 2016. 256pp. UK price: £70.00. ISBN: 9780719097010 (hardcover).

New Zealanders have long had a soft spot for the British royal family. Though we may no longer crowd the streets clutching Union Jacks when they arrive on our shores, royal visits still stir the public imagination. Our modern monarchs have carefully cultivated a new, more familiar form of connection with their commonwealth. Royal babies have plebeian playdates, while even stoic Stewart Islanders were charmed by Prince Harry's appearance at the local pub quiz. Likewise, the former Prime Minister John Key appeared at Balmoral like an earnest grandson popping in for a cheery rest home visit with his favourite gran. Such studied informality lends a modernizing touch to the old firm, although as early as 1901, Auckland's *Observer* was warning its readers against 'fawning sycophancy and ill manners' (p.110). Indeed, the royal tours of the twenty-first century still embody many of the ritual elements first concocted in the nineteenth, when the cheering crowds were subjects of empire, not citizens of commonwealth nations.