

period. Commendably, the author makes good use of graphs and tables, although a list of these in the table of contents would have been a useful addition. Overall, however, *The Broken Decade* makes a valuable and timely contribution to our understanding of a seminal period in New Zealand's history.

GEOFF WATSON

Massey University

Mothers' Darlings of the South Pacific: The Children of Indigenous Women and US Servicemen, World War II. Edited by Judith A. Bennett and Angela Wanhalla. Otago University Press, Dunedin, 2016. 424pp. NZ price: \$45. ISBN: 9781927322635.

INTIMATE HISTORIES are often affecting, but there is something about this collection that is powerfully more than the sum of its parts. The threads of researchers' journeys, families' quests and searches, and the mobilities of wartime are woven together to draw the reader across the Pacific in the wake of the US forces of the early 1940s. The product of a Marsden Fund project, the book exemplifies what discovery-driven research grants in the humanities can achieve. The research team could never have known at the outset the ways their project would grow and change, the people it would draw in, or the benefits — tangible and intangible — to the communities and individuals with whom they worked.

The book is geographically structured, following the US Navy's path across the Pacific. Some places had been visited for centuries by American whalers and other seafarers, while for others, the war represented mass invasion from the outside. In some Pacific communities, such as those on Tutuila and Manu'a, the numbers of Americans overwhelmed local populations and the military constructed virtually entire towns complete with cinemas and dance-halls, along with airstrips and fuel dumps. The US forces encountered a wide range of cultures starkly and subtly different from each other. One of the strengths of the book is the visibility of the variety of approaches to courtship, sex, marriage, childbirth and family formation across the cultures we speak of as 'the' Pacific. Nuance and dynamism are also clear in the various responses by local authorities to the US occupation, as well as in the massive cultural changes to clothing, diet and health brought by the Americans. By World War II all parts of the Pacific were or had been under some form of colonial control, yet administrative arrangements were by no means uniform. In some places, such as the New Hebrides (Vanuatu), the Americans were very welcome as wealthy and generous occupiers compared to other colonial masters. Some islands benefited materially, with Tonga being especially mentioned in the US naval history. These benefits were integrally tied to social relations with locals and were one of the many ways that intimate and military relationships were intertwined.

The Americans, too, were a surprisingly diverse group, with men of Filipino, African American and Hawaiian ancestry arriving on the islands. The two commonalities of the American experience that stand out in this book, however, are the importance of Hollywood images of the 'South Seas' and its women in shaping responses to locals and, second, what Bennett calls 'the harsh arithmetic of race'

(p.144), which was to shape the outcome of virtually every liaison between a local woman and an American during the war.

It is these intimate encounters that are at the heart of every chapter. Some authors focus on only one person, and others on whole groups, but the common threads of desire, love, separation and racial politics — both on the islands and in the US — are powerfully present. The inevitable departures of American fathers have varying effects in different cultures. In Samoa, Saui'a Louise Mataia-Milo describes separation as 'upsetting the finely tuned reciprocal roles inherent in the formal relationship of marriage' (p.45) and inevitably leading to 'a large vocabulary of scorn' (p.67) directed at illegitimate mixed-race children. Even in heterogeneous societies such as Fiji, the 'extreme emptiness' described by the *Kai Merika* children speaks to the intergenerational pain of the intimate legacy of the American occupation (p.193). In other societies, such as those of the Cook Islands, long histories of mixed-race children meant that family and community structures existed to integrate those children smoothly.

The rare examples of Pasifika women able to marry their American lovers and travel to the US with them, such as New Caledonian *métisse* woman Isabelle Pezron, did not usually end happily. Gaining permission to marry from the US military was the first difficult step and often depended on the racial laws in the man's home state. The book lays out the painful choices women made even as they looked forward to life in America: leaving parents and family, and sometimes older children. And life in 1950s America was not as they hoped, plagued as it was by racial discrimination and cultural isolation.

In addition to the remarkable stories, what will resonate for other researchers is the serendipity and sheer hard graft of this project. There are good reasons for silence on this topic in some cultures and families, and the stories of illegitimate births, separation of lovers, long-held hopes of reunion and the various racial policies that made such reunions virtually impossible, are all difficult histories. It is a major achievement to have brought so many of these histories to light in this project in sensitive and empowering ways that are enriching for the participants and for readers.

KATE HUNTER

Victoria University of Wellington

Real Modern: Everyday New Zealand in the 1950s and 1960s. By Bronwyn Labrum. Te Papa Press, Wellington, 2015. 432pp. NZ price: \$75. ISBN: 9780994104175.

BRONWYN LABRUM'S *Real Modern* has probably been gracing your bookshelves or coffee table for a while now, as it was published in 2015. As well as being an Ockham New Zealand Book Awards finalist in 2016 (for Illustrated Non-Fiction), the book was nominated for several Publishers Association of New Zealand awards for its cover design and typography. It is a gloriously visual book, with more than 500 colour and black-and-white images. The book's colour scheme is very 1950s, with mint, watermelon and golden yellow tones, reminiscent of Crown Lynn colour glaze coffee services.

Labrum describes the book as a 'kind of compendium of daily life through objects', which explores the 'many and varied objects ordinary people had in their