

Amidst these many triumphs, there are a few quibbles that might be raised. Although the title of the volume suggests a reasonably equal focus on New Zealand and Australia, just two of the chapters discuss the latter country in any significant depth. In addition, the book contains 32 apt and handsomely presented images, but the fact these are clustered in only six of the essays leaves the other nine equally deserving chapters looking somewhat neglected.

However, these two issues do very little to diminish what is an excellent, informative and highly readable volume. As the centenary of the First World War starts to wind down, it would be easy to feel some regret at the opportunities that have been missed, at the continued over-emphasis on the Gallipoli campaign, and at the fact a handful of simplistic narratives still exert such a profound influence on how the conflict is popularly understood. But reading a book such as this provides a powerful reminder of the superb work that has been, and is still being, carried out by academic and public historians to expand and develop our knowledge. The last four years have demonstrated that First World War scholarship in New Zealand is in exceptionally good health. Long may it endure!

DAVID LITTLEWOOD

Massey University

Phoney Wars: New Zealand Society in the Second World War. By Stevan Eldred-Grigg with Hugh Eldred-Grigg. Otago University Press, Dunedin, 2017. 427pp. NZ price: \$49.95. ISBN: 9780947522230.

THE HISTORY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR is, inevitably, more complicated than the bright clarity of Anglosphere mythology. Consequently, beside episodes underwriting conceptions of the ‘finest hour’, ‘the noble crusade’ and ‘the good war’ are more ambiguous aspects and unglamorous realities. Boldly revisionist, *Phoney Wars* focuses on the murkier facets of New Zealand’s relationship with the war. It aspires to ask hard questions, to look at things afresh and to consider possibilities alongside occurrences. These aspirations deserve to be taken seriously; however, the method and manner of the book’s arguments are decidedly sophistic.

Phoney Wars revolves around three specified ambitions. The first is to challenge ‘the assumption that the Axis was “bad” and the Allies “good”’ (p.10). The stated position is that the book ‘does not question the immorality of the Axis powers or the need to defeat them ... [but] does question the morality of the Allies and the character of their victory’ (p.11). Much of this case builds on familiar points of revisionist scholarship; notably the realities of Allied bombing campaigns and charges that Allied claims of defending freedom and democracy were duplicitous given that they possessed empires maintained by illiberal rule and social orders that did not fully realize these ideals. Curiously, this ambition to ask whether New Zealand was ‘really on the side of the angels’ decidedly underplays the realities of Soviet totalitarianism (blurb). Moreover, revising the morality of the war while leaving Axis immorality unquestioned decontextualizes many of the condemned behaviours and effectively

guarantees a skewed account. Indeed noting that New Zealand newspapers were 'eerily silent' about German suffering from Allied bombing reads poorly in a book which is 'eerily silent' about the enormities of Axis conduct (one searches the index for 'Holocaust' or 'Unit 731' in vain) (p.122). This skewing is exacerbated by a moral calculus loaded to direct guilt towards New Zealand. Thus enemy war dead are recorded as victims of New Zealand actions (pp.231, 233, 346), while New Zealand war dead are recorded as victims of ... New Zealand actions. The book's description of the country's losses reads: 'New Zealand killed a higher percentage of its troops than any other country in the British Commonwealth' (p.338).

The second ambition is to argue that New Zealand need not have involved itself in the war or at least not to the extent that it did. The resulting counterfactuals of token or non-military contributions are intriguing but their reasoning is questionable. For starters, they offer further demonstration of the book's selective moralizing. Thus, an isolationist argument that New Zealand should have advanced its interests with a hard-heart to far-away horrors also manages to disapprove of inaction over the rape of Nanking (p.35) and censures a failure to do more to relieve famine in Bengal (p.251). The alternatives being proposed also require imagining away weighty realities to cast the country as detached from the war. For example, the significance of New Zealand's economic, political and cultural links with Britain are covered in some detail but also treated as something that could be readily and unemotionally abandoned. The scenario of splendidly isolated New Zealand reconstituting its economy and indifferently tuning into wireless reports of the blitz rather strains credibility. Many criticisms of New Zealand's war effort display a similar detachment from the perspectives of the time. For example, threats to New Zealand's security and interests are repudiated, wartime measures are denounced as unnecessary, an Allied victory is stated as a guaranteed outcome and New Zealand's efforts are pronounced as inconsequential. Such, arguable, assertions are judgements underwritten by more than seven decades of hindsight unavailable to those not approaching the war in retrospect.

The third ambition calls to reassess the nature of wartime society, and it is argued that '[t]he war, contrary to the propaganda of the time and to subsequent memory, did not unite New Zealanders: it divided them' (p.13). Points on this front cover episodes that have been standard fare in the historiography for decades: grumbling over rationing and government controls, spats between political parties, points of frictions with stationed American troops, the 'furlough mutiny', etc. That these are presented as revealing burgeoning social divisions begs the, unaddressed, question of what a society would have to look like to achieve a 'not divided' status.

The book's arguments are conveyed in Eldred-Grigg's customary polemical style, a tone that might be sampled by the presence of 'scare quotes' around such, apparently relative or ironic, concepts as 'enemy' and 'victory'. Of greater concern, however, are instances where unfortunate phrasing distorts historical realities. For example, coverage of the 1939 partition of Poland under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact implicitly expunges the Soviet invasion and mass executions that followed (the Katyn Massacre constitutes another unmentioned atrocity). Instead, the text misleadingly states '[Moscow] stood aside after signing a non-aggression pact with Berlin' (p.61, emphasis added).

In a final sense, *Phoney Wars* has a contrarian eagerness to review orthodox interpretations and an ability to marshal some interesting material towards that cause; the striking and abundant images accompanying the text and the sharp-witted

foreword written by Hugh Eldred-Grigg deserve mention. Such revision can be a welcome means to re-examine our perspectives, whether to adjust or re-affirm them. However, *Phoney Wars*'s numerous idiosyncrasies, beyond the means to fully dissect here, furnish a lasting impression of a book more invested in cultivating controversy than serious scholarship.

STEVEN LOVERIDGE

Victoria University of Wellington

Farming, Fascism and Ecology: A Life of Jorian Jenks. By Philip M. Coupland. Routledge, United Kingdom, 2017. 304 pp. NZ price: \$72.99. ISBN: 9781138688629.

THE CONVERGENCE OF AGRICULTURE, modernity, politics and the nascent organic movement would be fertile ground for any historian, so it was with considerable pleasure that I took the opportunity to read and review Phillip Coupland's volume on Jorian Jenks, the British journalist, fascist and founding editor of the Soil Association's journal, *Mother Earth*. Born in 1899 into a middle-class academic household, Jenks, who as a small boy loved horses, longed to farm, an ambition he achieved in short bursts and with only mixed results during the 1930s. Frustration at the poor support and low prices directed at local farmers while the nation dined on cheap and often substandard imported food led Jenks away from the strongly liberal politics of his family toward the promise of a more rational corporate state offered by Oswald Mosely and the British Union of Fascists (BUF). Drawing on his own experiences of British farming and two short stints as an agricultural advisor and lecturer here in New Zealand, Jenks's vision of a counter-industrial rural modernity, based around traditional yeomanry and low-cost mixed-crop rotation, also found a comfortable home within the organic movement as it emerged after the Second World War. As I said, fertile ground.

This book, however, like Jenks's farming, brings mixed results. While undoubtedly an impeccably researched volume, a lack of context provided by Coupland largely fails to connect Jenks and his work to the broader political and economic world in which he campaigned. As part of a series on Fascism and the Far Right, the volume may make a valuable reference text to students already familiar with fascism, but it will offer little to those coming from agriculture or ecology who seek to broaden their understanding of this aspect of the era. Mosely and the BUF, for example, are included without introduction, and Jenks has been aligned in the narrative with the union for more than two years before an explanation is provided in the volume of its basic manifesto. But more puzzling still is the almost complete lack of reference to the agrarian reforms being undertaken by European fascist states, concurrent with Jenks's writing, which could not have failed to have influenced his work and its reception. Preference instead goes to a continuous stream of lesser characters and minor publications only a very few of which appear to have had any significant or enduring impact on the political transformation they sought to achieve. One is left with the feeling that fewer facts within the volume in favour of a less detailed but more contextualized and cohesive