

are men.¹ Appendix 1 offers additional biographical notes on 43 of these notables, only one of whom is a woman. Arnold even includes an appendix listing the main office-holders in the community's institutions.

Arnold is aware of the very male-focused, public nature of his work, and tries to remedy this by including a section on 'Women and Girls in Edwardian Kaponga'. It seems a shame that their presence in Victorian Kaponga remains hidden, and curious that when they do appear it is as 'emancipated' women, who built on the franchise to bring about change in their lives and the lives of those around them. I remain unconvinced that women's greater role in running the local horticultural show is evidence of emancipation. Instead, Arnold's rather odd conclusion to the book, his 'confession of ignorance' regarding the lack of discussion of midwives and childbirth in the area (p.346), seems to me to say more about the place of women in the area and in this book than the few women who made it onto a local committee.

In his critique of local history writing, Gibbons argues that the 'writing-out of one people and the writing-in of another is a textual re-enactment as well as recapitulation of colonization'.² Few Maori appear in *Settler Kaponga* save for a brief discussion of Parihaka in the Epilogue. Maori, women and children have been colonized by Pakeha men here. Given that Arnold is writing about the area as a fragment of the wider world, perhaps this is appropriate, although there is little recognition by Arnold that this is what is occurring here.

In the absence of census manuscripts and extensive personal papers, to write such a detailed study of one small community is an impressive feat. Arnold, with the able assistance of his wife, Betty, must be commended. It is a pity, though, that the central idea behind the book, Arnold's notion of the 'village world', too often is swamped by a mass of detail.

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1 Peter Gibbons, 'Non-fiction', in Terry Sturm, ed., *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, Auckland, 1991, p.73.

2 *ibid.*, p.74.

To Bed at Noon. The Life and Art of Maurice Duggan. By Ian Richards. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1997. 476 pp. NZ price: \$49.95. ISBN 1-86940-159-X.

WHEN KEITH SINCLAIR surveyed 'New Zealand Literary History' in 1978, six of the seven publications reviewed were biographical.¹ Keith Ovenden's biography of Dan Davin, *A Fighting Withdrawal* (1996), Michael King's *Frank Sargeson* (1995), King's forthcoming biography of Janet Frame and Ian Richards' *To Bed at Noon* confirm that 20 years later New Zealand's literary history continues to be written through biography. It seems the biographical approach is the means through which such a history has been made

1 Keith Sinclair, 'Review Article: New Zealand Literary History', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 12, 1 (1978), pp.69-74.

manageable. In *To Bed at Noon*, Richards tells the story of a tortured and tragic figure. Maurice Duggan, sometimes writer, advertising executive and alcoholic, but always a mind and body afflicted with pain, is located in what Richards calls the 'Auckland literary community' and, in particular, the 'literary crowd on the North Shore'.

In locating Duggan in this context, Richards challenges assumptions which are central to New Zealand's literary history. It is clear that the 'Auckland literary community' saw themselves as bohemian and radical. They sometimes drank wine, they cooked and ate strange food, and they talked literature. They felt they were outside mainstream New Zealand society and they defined themselves on this basis. In joining the 'Auckland literary community' Duggan was forced to 'change' himself and in doing so began a 'new life'. He now found himself 'among people who could hold the values of the ordinary "good bloke" in distinct disregard', which 'confirmed everything he wanted'. However, this literary identity, derived from the view that New Zealand society has traditionally resisted creativity, imagination and the life of the mind by requiring conformity, has been accepted uncritically by Richards. It assumes that the only way creative people can express themselves is by leaving New Zealand society altogether, or by living on its margins.

From my comfortable and affluent east Auckland suburb, it is difficult to imagine the North Shore was anything other than comfortable and affluent: small-c conservative and certainly not bohemian. Although we must assess the past on its own terms, *To Bed at Noon* similarly raises questions about the bohemianism of the 'Auckland literary community'. This is because while its members rejected the values of urban middle-class New Zealand — often the values of their childhood — they adopted a lifestyle which was in many ways mainstream.

Alcohol most clearly illustrates the point. Even before Duggan's drinking became destructive, it was excessive and the examples are numerous. The parties held by the literary community were also 'legendary'. They were held regularly and a lot of alcohol was consumed. Apparently Bob and Irene Lowry's house on the slopes of One Tree Hill was '[t]he most famous party venue'. They 'were to become synonymous with Auckland Bohemian depravity'.

Moreover, the parties illustrate the role of women in this community. At parties women prepared food and took 'inebriated spouses home'. Men drank, talked art and literature and occasionally engaged in violence. Despite the fact that women have probably made the most important contributions to New Zealand's literature, the literary community Richards describes marginalized women and was dominated by men. Duggan's treatment of his wife Barbara reflects this feature of the community. Despite being financially dependent on her several times during his writing career, like any good keen man Duggan went bush occasionally to escape North Shore suburban life. He took off to Dunedin, Wellington, Grafton and Point Chevalier to escape what he considered harsh domestic arrangements. Later, the alcohol itself became an escape. He always came back to Barbara, the consistent and stable character in his life. She was expected to keep her job, maintain a household, and care for a young son and Duggan.

Another characteristic of this literary community was its antipathy to the university. Although some of its members were academics, including Keith Sinclair, Kendrick Smithyman and Karl Stead, they were tolerated by the others who resisted the university. Duggan attended Auckland University College briefly in the late 1940s, but withdrew part way through his second year. Instead, these writers preferred hard physical work. The

cultivation of large vegetable gardens was a central part of their lives. According to Richards, members of the literary community found 'the mental repose of menial work had its attractions'. Duggan also enjoyed the outdoors and holidays at the beach. *To Bed at Noon* tells of a way of life where blokes were mates who drank and yarned and did hard physical work. This community was for the boys. Women could stay in the kitchen. The book suggests that far from being outside the mainstream of New Zealand society, the literary community reflected many of the values of kiwi blokedom.

To Bed at Noon indicates that there are problems with a biographical approach to literary history. Often biography becomes less about developing a picture of a person, and more about cramming in as much detail as possible. The book suffers from this and the result is that Duggan's writing in particular is lost in a mass of detail. Duggan the writer is obscured by Duggan the alcoholic who suffers persistent physical and mental health problems. Although Sinclair claimed in 1978 'that the obvious book that is not yet written is on Maurice Duggan', there are questions as to whether Duggan was an important enough figure in the literary world to warrant such a large and detailed book. Biography fails to provide the balance between individual writers that would be possible in a more synthetic history. However, Richards' book is carefully researched, based on published writing, interviews, and especially correspondence between leading characters. Its approach and its subject raise some fundamental questions about New Zealand's literary history.

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In Stormy Seas: The Post-War New Zealand Economy. By Brian Easton. Otago University Press, Dunedin, 1997. 343 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-877133-08-6.

THIS BOOK has had a bad press from economists and a business newspaper. The question that remains is whether it has any relevance for historians. With such a title one might expect enlightenment on the causes of the last 30 years of economic under-achievement. Unfortunately, after ploughing through 16 chapters, an epilogue and several lengthy appendices, a student of history is unlikely to be much wiser about New Zealand's comparatively poor economic performance in the last half of the twentieth century.

What is the purpose of the book? The general answer seems to be that it is another in a long line of books from Easton arguing that the last 14 years of New Zealand's economic and political history need not have happened. In a series of lengthy ruminations about life which give an appearance of being the texts from a not well-thought-out lecture series, Easton goes through a wide range of factors — declining terms of trade, excessive protection, unreal exchange rates, an over-rigid labour market, excessive inflation, rising debt levels, and an over-active government — and concludes that, all in all, things were not too bad by 1984. Robert Muldoon had the essentials under control: 'History may well judge Muldoon more generously than his contemporaries'. Muldoon carried out 'spectacular external restructuring', and he 'left office with annual consumer inflation at 4.6%,