

infrequently — and only then as the consequence of links between particular individuals — he attributes to the failure of the party to reconceptualize its own role as the vanguard of the working class: ‘the party’s role was to lead the working class to revolution. If Maori were not working class, then the CPNZ was not their party’ (p.115).

Turning to the book as a whole, most chapters follow a conventional empirical approach, and there is little evidence of the ‘linguistic turn’ in these pages. Nonetheless, even within these methodological parameters it could be argued that some chapters take a very one-dimensional approach to their subject. Triangulation may have gone out of fashion (has it?), but certainly more interesting questions and answers might have emerged if some authors had looked beyond single collections of archival documents reflecting invariably limited perspectives.

The editors begin their introduction with the assertion that ‘the left in New Zealand has not received the scholarly attention it deserves’ (p.11); the book is an attempt to rectify this neglect. The point is surely debatable: certainly large areas of labour history remain unexplored — for example major trade union histories — but on the whole the left has received far more consideration by historians than the right. While this collection includes some new and interesting case studies of left-wing thought and activism, there is little attempt to integrate or relate these to the broader currents of New Zealand history. Kerry Taylor poses precisely this question in the interview with Erik Olssen. He asks, ‘What place would the socialist movement and socialist tradition have in a general history of New Zealand?’ Olssen replies, ‘It’s not an unreasonable question’ (p.195). Quite right, but the answer is not to be found here.

ANNA GREEN

Auckland University of Technology

The Mediator: A Life of Richard Taylor, 1805–1873. By J.M.R. Owens. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2004. 352 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-86473-464-6.

‘THIS IS AN ADMIRABLE BOOK — the mature product of long and vigilant observation, a clear intellect, and a variously accomplished mind.’ So wrote a reviewer of Richard Taylor’s scholarly work, *Te Ika a Maui*, when it was first published in the 1850s. The same assessment could be made of Owens’s biography of Taylor, the product of exhaustive research among the primary material generated by Taylor, his family and the CMS mission, and also of Owens’s long and deep study of New Zealand history.

The central thesis of this biography is that Taylor was a mediator, a missionary who represented and explained Maori to Pakeha and vice versa. He sought to create a colony in which both peoples would live side by side, under the just execution of the Treaty of Waitangi. Owens also argues, however, that the Treaty was doomed to failure. One of the themes which he develops throughout the book is that missionary political influence and humanitarianism were at their zenith in the production of the Treaty. Once settlers controlled the colony, however, the influence of missionaries like Taylor was gradually eclipsed. Owens gives detail of Taylor’s many attempts to influence governors, ministers and premiers. Like the settlers relegated to the fringes of the Waitangi hui on 5–6 February, though, Owens argues that Pakeha New Zealanders were essentially outside of the Treaty between the Crown and Maori. Taylor tried to get Premier Fox to soften his stance on the confiscation of land from Ngati Ruanui. ‘But Taylor represented those who had persuaded Maori to sign the Treaty of Waitangi, Fox represented those who had been excluded from the treaty. There could be no meeting of minds on Maori issues from these two viewpoints’ (p.280). Neither Owens nor Taylor were as fatalist as this

might imply — both saw signs of hope in the employment of rangatira as assessors, the representation of Maori in Parliament, the flowering of Maori religion and hints of reconciliation between Catholic and Protestant clergy late in Taylor's life.

Indeed, *The Mediator* is at times a delightful book. Owens has a readable style and a way of interweaving narrative, commentary, interpretation and anecdote which is accessible to all. Partly this is the result of the richness of the material available to him. As well as Taylor's enormous (and somewhat daunting) journals, there is a wealth of scientific writing, letters and art. The latter has been reproduced in the biography, with many of Taylor's sketches of places and events. The drawing of the Rev. William Yate snug in his hammock (though without any sign of the sailor who brought scandal on Yate and Taylor's voyage) is a delightful example.

Some missionary biographies succumb to the twin temptations of narrowness (focusing solely on the life and doings of their male subject) and apology (defending the subject from various historical and contemporary criticisms). Owens has avoided both. His account of Taylor's life in New Zealand is located in a wider historical context. As such, it makes a useful contribution to the study of race relations history, religious history and local (mainly Whanganui) history. Similarly, Owens accords a lot of space to Taylor's wife, Caroline, and their daughters and sons. The role and tribulations of a mission family are fully explored. Also, Taylor is presented to the reader with his quirks intact, and no whitewashing of the criticisms made of him. His lifelong dislike of cathedrals and Puseyism, his bitter opposition to 'popery', his troubled relations with some of his missionary colleagues, his failings as a linguist; all are detailed. But Owens steers his way deftly between early twentieth-century hagiography and the later view of missionaries as purely destructive cultural imperialists. The result is a sympathetic portrayal of a rounded human being who saw himself as trapped 'between two fires': settlers and Maori. In later life, Taylor was uncomfortably aware that he no longer fitted very well into the metropolitan society that had sent him and so many others to the antipodes, a theme which Owens also explores.

I am concerned, however, at the treatment of a key issue in New Zealand's culture contact history. Owens gives a very brief and, surprising for such a thorough work, disappointing account of Taylor's pre-1840 land transaction in Muriwhenua. The findings of the Waitangi Tribunal's *Muriwhenua Lands Report* are dismissed as wrong in just a couple of sentences. Owens does not explore the very detailed anthropological and historical evidence presented to the Tribunal on this issue. Later in the book, he makes a brief reference to Taylor's (post-Treaty) 1840 purchase of land from George Clarke, which turned out to have far too few acres when it was finally surveyed in the 1860s. Instead of exploring the meaning of this discrepancy, typical of so many pre-1840 transactions, Owens simply reports Taylor's view that Clarke was a 'swindler'. The Tribunal process has generated a wealth of material on these questions which deserves more serious and scholarly attention. The issues surrounding Taylor's 50,000-acre Muriwhenua 'purchase' are complex and go to the heart of early culture contact history in New Zealand. The reader is not assisted by Owens's treatment of them.

By contrast, Taylor's role in the Wanganui Purchase of 1848, and in the settler-Whanganui Maori relations of the pre-1865 period, is explored in greater depth. Owens wrestles with modern race relations issues when he considers Taylor's conflicting views. 'In our own day', he writes, 'Taylor would probably be considered an advocate of biculturalism and Maori sovereignty' (p.205). The ways in which Taylor adapted his view of Maori after long contact, and advocated for conciliation of the Kingitanga and a type of Maori self-government, were not unusual among the educated missionaries and the Selwyn-Martin circle. One response to the temptations of 'presentism', a concern to some critics of public history in the Treaty sector, is a close study of the views and analysis put forward by men like Taylor to the politicians of the day. What was possible at

the time? Or, to put it another way, what was conceived as possible at the time? Owens's biography of Taylor, with its detailed exposition of Taylor's political advocacy, will be of significant use to public historians in this respect.

Students of mission history, on the other hand, may be disappointed. The day-to-day doings of a missionary, especially the gruelling travel which so damaged Taylor's health and equanimity, are portrayed with gusto. The fundamental issues facing the mission, however, are not considered in depth. Maori Christianity — even missionary Christianity — is not really a focus for the book. At times, the reader is left wanting more interpretation and explanation. Nineteenth-century diseases and medicines, for example, are usually reported as if self-explanatory.

Overall, *The Mediator* is a sound and entertaining account of a missionary family's experiences in New Zealand, and of their contributions to race relations, religious and 'pioneer' histories. It is detailed, humane and accessible to both scholars and the public. Owens has made an important contribution to New Zealand history with this biography. We would be well served if more such modern missionary biographies of similar scope and quality could be produced.

GRANT PHILLIPSON

Waitangi Tribunal

Gilbert Mair: Te Kooti's Nemesis. By Ron Crosby. Reed Books, Auckland, 2004. 352 pp. NZ price: \$49.99. ISBN 0-7900-0969-2.

AS ITS SUBTITLE SUGGESTS, this book began life as amateur military history. It is replete with battlefield deeds of derring-do and considerable misunderstanding of even the institutional (let alone the social, political and ideological) context of colonial warfare. There is scant understanding, for example, of the nature of the Armed Constabulary, despite its centrality to the book. However, to detail the many errors and inadequacies would be to assess *Gilbert Mair: Te Kooti's Nemesis* as if it were posing as 'professional history', which it does not do.

Viewing the book within its own terms, as 'popular history' written by a non-professional, provides an opportunity to begin considering how far the methods and outputs of the various types of 'professional historians' might be influencing non-professional writers (and readers). The author has carried out some background reading, consulted archival sources such as diaries, and taken advice from historians involved in the Treaty of Waitangi claims resolution processes. This combination has enabled him to cover some issues well — the reasons for the war, or how hard colonial life could be even for influential Pakeha. More generally, Crosby's writing reveals an increasing biculturalism in New Zealand society. He employs naturally, for example, many Maori words.

Crosby, unlike many predecessors in the amateur military history genre, appreciates that there are problematic aspects to the life of his dashing hero. This perhaps reflects both historiographical and cultural developments in New Zealand over the last two decades. Some of the ethnocentrism of conventional military histories remains: 'excited' Maori commit 'barbarities', take 'grisly trophies' and commit 'cruel killings' and 'sickening torture'. But Crosby has imbued enough revisionist history to produce a more complex and tempered picture of the conflict: Te Kooti and Titokowaru are seen as 'very able Maori leaders' rather than bloodthirsty savages, the former's exiling is seen as exceedingly 'unjust', and no punches are pulled on the scorched-earth ruthlessness of the Crown in the Urewera.

Crosby is also a 'modern' writer in that he attempts to understand the meaning of the