

Going Up Going Down: The Rise and Fall of the Department Store. By Helen B. Laurenson. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2005. 165 pp. NZ price: \$34.99. ISBN 1-86940-341-X.

THE SECOND WONDERFULLY ILLUSTRATED BOOK in the AUP Cultural and Social History series, *Going Up Going Down* has been successfully positioned as both a fabulous nostalgia kick and a serious study of a surprisingly overlooked aspect of this country's past. While various postgraduate theses have canvassed aspects of department store shopping and individual store histories have appeared over the years, some of them notable in their own right, this is the first book to focus on these institutions in their heyday from the 1920s to the 1960s. Based on an MA thesis, this account packs a lot of information into its small number of pages, as it takes the reader on a journey in the lift from ground floor up to the tearooms over four chapters. This device is a useful way to focus on each area of the stores in turn. It ensures that, unlike many other studies of department stores and shopping, the habits and experiences of women, men and children all get due space and that eating and children's playgrounds are as much a part of the story as shopping is, as customers experienced it at the time. This study adds much valuable material and insights to all of these topics and more, based as it is on detailed research, including store archives, oral histories and literary reminiscences. Although all the key stores in the main centres are mentioned, the book betrays its origins as an Auckland study.

The analysis is framed through the themes of consumption and modernity. Each of these concepts, as Helen Laurenson acknowledges carefully, is difficult to define satisfactorily, let alone explain historically. Yet she ends up settling for vague and ultimately unsatisfying designations. Brushing aside materialist analyses in a sentence, she chooses the idea of 'consumer democracy' as a 'pragmatic' notion best suited to the New Zealand experience: 'a fluid and changing process, actively made by the shifting allegiances, formations and agencies of people themselves, and not imposed upon them from without' (p.10). Without much evidence provided, and having identified the 'pecking order' of stores in each city, from the grandest to the working-class Farmers' stores, she claims that customers from a range of classes shopped in all these stores and appreciated the services they offered. Having also dismissed international interpretations of department stores as trading in manipulation, emulation and amelioration or that women's experiences were based in narratives of temptation, seduction and desire (p.53), she is left with a very benign and nostalgic view.

I also found her use of 'modernity' to be ambiguous and too capacious. Everything, in the end, is put down to it. The study encompasses much of the twentieth century, and while Laurenson acknowledges that what was modern in the 1920s is not necessarily consistent with what was modern 40 years later, the changes and inconsistencies are not discussed. The fact, for example, that the first tearoom in Auckland's new Milne & Choyce store (1924) and the one at Beath's in Christchurch were both called the Tudor Room, because of its historical and literary associations and its affirmation of a colonial link with English heritage, complicates this argument.

This book argues that the story of department stores in New Zealand is no different from histories elsewhere, following the current idea of de-centring New Zealand history to focus less on national exceptionalism and more on global trends. The local story is only a question of smaller scale — of buildings and of markets — and the tyranny of distance. Her evidence can be read another way. The rich pictorial legacy of the Queen's 1953 visit, including her lunches and civic dinners at department stores, is used very effectively. Yet the decorations on top of James Smith's Corner include a Maori warrior in amongst native plants and 'Nau Mai' emblazoned above the store name, resplendent with a kiwi frieze, carvings and rafter patterns. The local inflections of taste, demand and supply, in terms of clothing, other goods and food, also tell a more complicated story of

simultaneously following international trends, adapting to local conditions and mores, and other influences such as post-war immigration from Europe.

The useful conclusion explains why department stores lost their central place in consumption in New Zealand. Different aesthetic and commercial values of a new generation of consumers did not find that department stores held the same 'magic promises' for them any longer as they took their cars to suburban shopping malls. Economic, demographic and cultural changes all contributed to this decline and to the rise of our current shopping habits and desires.

For those interested in the history of clothing, fashion, food, store architecture and window displays, there is much to delight and ponder over. The individual experiences are nicely integrated into the general accounts, so that a clear sense of shopping in and working in a department store is conveyed with well-chosen tales and vignettes. The level of detail was sometimes overwhelming and often several examples were given where one would do. The desire to be comprehensive is clear but misguided in a short book. Nevertheless, the publishers and editors are to be congratulated for bringing postgraduate work to a wider audience and for focusing on crucial subjects that are still too often sidelined in favour of supposedly more important themes in our past.

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Anthony Wilding: A Sporting Life. By Len and Shelley Richardson. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 2005. 451 pp. NZ price: \$49.95. ISBN 1-877257-01-X.

ANTHONY WILDING WAS AN EXCEPTIONAL SPORTSMAN from Canterbury who excelled in the first decade of the twentieth century along with Bob Deans in rugby and Richard Arnst in sculling. Wilding won four consecutive Wimbledon titles from 1910 to 1913 (and reached the final in the following year), a feat that was only bettered by Bjorn Borg, who won this event five times in a row from 1976 to 1980. No New Zealand tennis player has won a Wimbledon title since. Wilding and the Australian Norman Brookes formed a formidable partnership which enabled Australasia to dominate the Davis Cup from 1907 to 1914, though oddly Wilding was absent when the defence of the cup took place in his home town of Christchurch in 1912. Wilding also won a bronze medal in the men's singles at the 1912 Stockholm Olympic Games. Although he had some ambivalence to soldiering, Wilding quickly enlisted in the First World War and was killed at the battle of Aubers Ridge near Neuve Chapelle in 1915. His death at the age of only 31 enhanced his reputation as an ideal sportsman-soldier.

Wilding was a key figure in the change of tennis from gentle pastime — 'a soft game for curates' as he put it — to a more strenuous mass spectator sport. He enhanced the appeal of tennis: 'his youthful vigour, athleticism and strenuous lifestyle were held to be representative of what the New World had to offer to the Old' (p.353). Wilding played in an era when tennis was becoming more international and he and Brookes both contributed to its global spread. Wilding was a superbly fit athlete who benefited from gym training from an early age, his father having introduced Anthony to the weight training program of Eugen Sandow. Wilding brought a professional approach to tennis with his 'persistent and at times relentless pursuit of excellence' (p.389).

Wilding was an ambiguous sporting figure because most of his success occurred in Europe and there were no triumphant returns to New Zealand after his greatest international successes. His achievements were considered even in New Zealand in imperial terms. A writer in the Christchurch *Press* made the following comment on his 1910 Wimbledon victory: 'Anthony Wilding unites in his single individuality the interests