

and reconstructionist empiricism are, for the most part, unable to unpack the textual and discursive uses of the event in subsequent political, social and cultural worlds. Ryan has given us the first part of this debunking and staked out a territory for the critique of the myth. In doing so he has been for the most part successful in walking the difficult line between minutiae of the demands of rugby-history-anoraks and scholarly critique, but his methodological tools let him down. He set out, according to his introduction, to slay the 1905 Jabberwocky: he has found it, but his weapons allow only a flesh wound. As a result, he has given us a life and death of the 1905 tour, but little of the afterlife: the historical reconstruction is solid; the textual deconstruction is absent. We need him to begin a subsequent volume deconstructing the mythology on the basis of this rigorous and valuable empirical base.

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Climates of War, New Zealand in Conflict 1859–69. By Edmund Bohan. Hazard Press, Christchurch, 2005. 288 pp. NZ price: \$44.99. ISBN 1-877270-96-2.

OF THE SIXTEEN DECADES THAT HAVE PASSED since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, the third was by far the most difficult. Maori fought Pakeha in the central North Island in a series of conflicts, while behind the lines politicians railed against the constraints on their ability to address issues related to Maori and bickered among themselves over the shape of New Zealand constitutional arrangements. It was a time of uncertainty and upheaval in some parts of the country, though in other places, untouched by war, economic development continued bolstered, in the South Island in particular, by the discovery of gold in 1861.

The causes of the inter-racial conflict have been addressed by a succession of historians, including Keith Sinclair, B.J. Dalton and James Belich. Perceiving, however, that there have been ‘few attempts to place the wars in context, either in New Zealand’s developing society or, least of all, within the wider British Empire and world’ (p.10), Edmund Bohan seeks to fill the gap with this study. He focuses on the years 1859–1865, when conflict erupted in Taranaki and the Waikato between forces comprising mainly imperial soldiers and some Maori tribes.

Having published biographies of three of the key players in this drama — Edward Stafford, James Edward FitzGerald and George Grey — Bohan suggests that his purpose is to provide ‘some kind of synthesis’ (p.10) of these works. This is both a strength and a weakness in his approach to the topic. Bohan’s forté is the politics of the period, and he is strong on the political infighting that characterized New Zealand’s fledgling democracy. He brings out well the struggle between those committed to a centralist vision of a New Zealand state and those who defended the provincial structure or favoured separation. In exhaustive detail, he traces the attitudes and intrigues of the colonial political élite as each parliamentary session unfolds. He brings to life the main personalities involved, and often provides little-known details about them or their inter-relationships. His account is a valuable reminder that, despite the distractions of war, much was achieved in the creation of the state during this troubled decade.

The weakness derives from a tendency to over-estimate the capabilities of the colonial politicians, especially Stafford (the premier when the hostilities began), for whom Bohan’s sympathy is patent. Indeed, he begins with an alibi for Stafford: an extensively described overseas tour. The crucial mistakes that led to war, Bohan notes, were made in his absence in the northern hemisphere. Whereas Bohan repeatedly points to Stafford’s admirable qualities, he is much less sympathetic to his successors as premier, William

Fox and Alfred Domett; they are depicted as strident advocates of firmness with Maori and ‘implacably anti-Maori’ (p.126) respectively. In Bohan’s view, the root cause of the troubles that arose in 1860 was Governor Gore Browne’s ‘flawed analysis’ four years earlier which led to the reservation of Maori affairs and land ‘because he presumed that inexperienced, turbulent and constitutionally naïve colonists would remain . . . incapable of maintaining stable governments’ (p.14). The inference is that had the racially tolerant Stafford been in charge of these all-important responsibilities, war would have been averted and he would have been able to pursue his ‘vision of a centralised nation state, free of racial and religious bias and in which Maori and European could co-exist profitably in economic and political partnership’ (p.86). But politicians must respond to the will of those who put them in power, and it is surely open to question whether a colonial government empowered with responsibility for Maori affairs and land could have resisted the settler pressure for land acquisition that led inexorably to confrontation and war.

Although Bohan effectively places the wars of the 1860s in the overall New Zealand context, his attempt to do the same in the wider international context is less satisfactory. To be sure, he relates some of the major events happening in the rest of the world at this time, but in many cases he fails to indicate their significance for New Zealand. New Zealand attitudes to the American Civil War are of interest — most sympathy lay with the separatists, the Confederate States — but do we need an extended description of the Taiping Rebellion?

Bohan provides an account of the 1860s fighting in the central North Island, but it is clear that he has not researched deeply in this area. This does not deter him from indulging in the almost obligatory Belich-bashing over the significance of the Maori fighting pa. Basing his argument on a series of short, unfootnoted articles published by Christopher Pugsley in the now-defunct *New Zealand Defence Quarterly*, which he suggests are ‘more authoritative’ (p.10) than both James Cowan’s and James Belich’s substantial volumes on the subject, Bohan dismisses Belich’s claims of Maori innovation in this area.

Bohan’s entry into this particular debate serves to highlight the relative absence of reference to other historiographical debates in this work. The book’s blurb tells us that he ‘challenges accepted views of the Land Wars and their significance’. But, except in the case of fighting pa, the reader will look in vain for any explicit indication of the nature of these challenges. In places, Bohan suggests that historians have erred on some aspect of the story (for example, in assessing General Pratt’s efforts in the First Taranaki War of 1860–1861), but we are not told which historians or when. This lack of engagement with the historiography of the wars is a serious flaw in this book. While Bohan provides a brief epilogue, a more substantial conclusion would have been helpful in drawing everything together.

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