

destruction of supply lines by mid-1943 ensured their isolation. Around Rabaul each soldier cultivated a large vegetable patch. As a source of food, the Japanese also introduced a giant African snail into New Guinea with an enormous and environmentally disastrous capacity both for consumption and reproduction.

During the war, when bans counted for nought, the Allies, the Japanese and indigenous people all fished with the aid of explosives. As they said in the Solomons, ‘Spear too slow. Catch four, maybe five, fish. Hand grenade much quicker. Catch 100’ (p.231). *Natives and Exotics* is replete with similar examples of how an emphasis on immediate need rather than ecological consequence resulted in the squandering not only of marine resources, but also of soil, timber trees, coconut palms and a great deal more. In addition, much of the military hardware brought into the Pacific was later abandoned and wasted.

Bennett dwells on the long-term effects of war, both upon the indigenous environment and peoples, and on the soldiers and their nations. In the Solomons in 1944, when they greatly outnumbered the locals and had ‘dollar bills literally rotting in their pockets, servicemen paid high prices for limited goods and services’ (p.150). This leads to reflection on the changes that a fleeting display of American generosity and wealth must have brought to the self-perceptions and aspirations of Pacific people. For Australians, according to the author, their soldiers’ operations in New Guinea, ‘especially the now almost mythical deeds on the Kokoda Track, are part of their definition of their own identity and manhood’ (p.285).

The chief protagonists in this study are Japanese, Australian and American, while the indigenous people appear as the sufferers (and occasional beneficiaries) of their presence and rivalry. New Zealanders, however, also receive frequent mention. In *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* (2009), Damon Salesa asserts the importance of the Pacific to New Zealand’s history, and his argument could be reinforced by Bennett’s references.

My brother, like Judy Bennett, taught in New Guinea. He died when I was reading her book, deepening my response to later chapters on the significance of mementoes and places of memory, much as the stories and photographs of her relatives, who served in the Australian Imperial Forces during the war, helped to inspire and inform her research. Her uncles feature both in the preface and in the book’s dedication. I mention this to indicate that we have here not just a work of impeccable scholarship, to which the 90 pages of notes bear witness, but the study of a subject with which the author has clearly had a long emotional engagement, written in a way that can, in turn, engage the reader. The book ends, tangentially but movingly, with a call for unity in combating global warming for, ‘Just as the Pacific war proved, we are capable of working together and of sacrificing narrow personal and national interests if the external threat is potentially fatal’ (p.305).

PAUL STAR

Dunedin

The Ivory Tower and Beyond: Participant Historians of the Pacific. By Doug Munro. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2009. xix + 328pp. UK price: £44.99. ISBN 978-1-4438-0534-6.

IN HIS PROLOGUE, Doug Munro quotes Neil Jumonville’s observation: ‘History is, really, the least grateful of the disciplines . . . it is difficult for a historian to be remembered for his history’. Munro strives to prevent five historians of the Pacific from fading from memory and argues that they played significant roles not only in writing history but also in making it — hence their description as ‘participant historians’.

Munro writes of the training, intellectual milieu, personality and works of J.C. Beaglehole, J.W. Davidson, Richard Gilson, Harry Maude and Brij Lal — all but the first linked with Pacific history at the Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National

University (ANU), Canberra. Beaglehole was based at Victoria University, Wellington. He is best known for his magisterial editing of the journals of James Cook and Joseph Banks. While their common interest in Pacific history links them, their respective involvements with the wider society have been very different.

Beaglehole, a champion of civil liberties, was an intellectual contributing to the development of cultural diversity in New Zealand of the 1950s and 1960s. Davidson, who was the foundation professor of Pacific history at ANU in 1951, wrote relatively few histories, but advised on constitutional development in four nascent Pacific states pre-independence, commencing in 1959 with Western Samoa where his involvement had begun in 1947 as the New Zealand prime minister's emissary. Gilson seems almost an anomaly in this group. While he went to the places he studied — fieldwork in the Cook Islands and Samoa — his main participation in 1950 seems, in today's terms, to have been as a 'one month wonder' in the Cooks to write a report for the New Zealand Department of Island Territories, and so obtain permission to enter the dependency as a researcher. This became the basis for his Master's thesis at the University of London. Maude's participation was retrospective, for he entered academia in 1957 at age 50 after a career as a British colonial official, mainly in the Gilbert and Ellice Crown Colony. More recently, Lal's participation in 1995–1996 was as a member of a constitution review committee in Fiji in the wake of the military coups. An expatriate and Australian citizen, Lal continues to be involved in political commentary on the rights of the Indian Fijians in his erstwhile homeland.

Among the five, only Beaglehole and Lal had extensive teaching experience at undergraduate level. Gilson died suddenly soon after he began teaching in California. Both Davidson and Maude had only to supervise doctoral candidates at ANU. Perhaps this explains why the Research School-employed academics of Munro's 'golden age' of Pacific history from c.1950 to 1975 emerge here as little engaged with what their histories might have to say to future undergraduate students in the Pacific Islands. There is a hint, however, in Munro's comments on Maude's *Slavers in Paradise*, which discussed each island group by chapter 'to cater for the parochial Pacific Islander readership' (p.218). Munro does not directly examine the issue of islander audience and historians, other than to deplore more recent 'unwholesome developments' of contesting histories from indigenous scholars in Hawai'i, New Zealand and elsewhere, which he claims have undermined Davidson's ideal of a 'community of scholars' (pp.312–13). Munro perhaps misses the point here. The unorthodox thinker in Davidson may well have enjoyed such contests and been intrigued with the varieties of epistemologies being revealed by indigenous scholars such as Noenoe Silva and Kehualani Kauanui. Davidson donated his consultancy fees to fund scholarships for graduate Pacific Islanders to study their own history, so he expected their intellectual engagement with historical interpretations. Yet, except for Tongan Sione Latukefu, those who came to the ANU in Davidson's lifetime, such as Whetu Tirikatene-Sullivan, went off into politics or administration in their homelands.

Such considerations aside, Munro's biographies are meticulously researched and crafted. Except for his habit of pedantic excursions regarding incidents in other times and places cited as comparable to situations in the five lives (pp.152, 200, 224–25, 269), the prose flows well. He astutely situates his subjects in their academic milieu and intellectual interests. While addressed to some extent, their family lives are less apparent, however, particularly with Beaglehole and Davidson, though Gilson's and Maude's respective wives do emerge as lively 'significant others' and indeed as significant people.

Surprisingly, no woman historian is included in this selection. Certainly, the late Dorothy Shineberg declined. A victim of sexist university discrimination in life, Norma MacArthur in death again appears to suffer relegation, for she worked closely with island governments to uncover both contemporary population patterns as well as their demographic history.

Despite this hiatus, Doug Munro's assessments are even handed, but others who were close observers of these men may find points to quibble over. One imagines the gentle

Harry Maude would not have wanted his very private thoughts on the apprentice work of students, such as Caroline Ralston, publicized, but biographers sometimes do not share the sensibilities of their subjects.

Munro's selection includes one living historian — Lal. This seems incongruous. The dead cannot quarrel with their biographers; the dead cannot write references and recommendations for academic preference and position. The living have still potential for good or ill, for success or failure — the jury is still out on the significance and longevity of their contribution. It is not a little ironic that Davidson, whom Munro considers foundational to the establishment and development of Pacific history, merits a mere 32 pages, while Lal, who presumably has still time on this earth, takes up 53 pages. Any candidate for biography has more control of representation when he has provided exhaustive interviews for a biographer. Davidson, on the other hand, was too busy with events, such as challenging university hierarchies and the Australian government about academic freedom, to engage in prolonged retrospection before his death at age 57.

Overall, this book will appeal to those interested in Pacific history's origins and the intellectual environment of the humanities at leading universities in Australia and New Zealand of the mid to late twentieth century. Regarding its subjects, Jumonville was correct. To their families, friends and staunch colleagues, what will be remembered most is what sort of a human being the historian was, with less regard to what they wrote or failed to write. In a short generation or two this will fade with those who hold the memory. To posterity — to potential students of and from the Pacific Islands, 'parochial' or not, and other interested readers — what these five historians wrote will be far more important. Unless their works continue to be read, their 'large gesture against the sky' (p.296) will merely be a wave goodbye.

JUDITH A. BENNETT

University of Otago

A Sadly Troubled History: The Meanings of Suicide in the Modern Age. By John Weaver. McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal & Kingston, 2009. 447pp. NZ price: \$70.00. ISBN 978-0-7735-513-8.

THIS IS A BRILLIANT, INSTRUCTIVE AND ABSORBING BOOK. John Weaver brings 'authentic events from common lives' out of the archives and transports 'the tearful realities of the human condition into social history' (p.15). Read out of context, Weaver's claim perhaps seems grandiose, but this book achieves its ambitions in that it deals with simply terrible stories of loss, grief, madness, wilful self-destruction, and worse, by finding ways to explain these within a carefully constructed framework for understanding social and cultural histories of suicide in the 'modern' age. His aim is to provide a way into suicide studies — historically the province of sociologists and psychologists and 'suicidologists' — and to create a multi-faceted history of the phenomenon of suicide. Supported through a careful crafting of statistical data and qualitative analysis of 'cases', the end result of Weaver's work provides historians with both a solid history of the problem of suicide, and an excellent model of social and cultural history.

Far from being an obscure history topic, the history of suicide requires deep understanding and analysis, and is relevant through its sheer statistical reputation: estimated at around one million a year globally, suicide is the cause of more deaths than homicide, war and conflict. Weaver bases his study on cases from New Zealand and Queensland between the late nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth century. He chose these sites both for their relevance within the modern Western history of suicide, and because the records in both places are comprehensive. His research draws upon nearly 7000 cases from coroners'