

French and German settlers at Akaroa, but, by contrast, these deeds were used to dispossess the Kai Tahu. For Kai Tahu, the issue has been current ever since 1840, and Tremewan's evidence has been presented before the Waitangi Tribunal.

French Akaroa includes a comprehensive bibliography, some excellent maps, photographs of a number of grim-faced settlers in their latter years, and a generous selection of contemporary or near-contemporary etchings and pencil drawings of Akaroa. The writing throughout is precise and often elegant, and Tremewan enlivens the text by teasing out the paradoxes, as in the case of Belligny's land sale to the British magistrate, C.B. Robinson, 'who then became an interested party in establishing the validity of the French land titles' (p.260). Altogether *French Akaroa* is a model of scholarship, and in its concern to incorporate Maori points of view is a work which illuminates the wider historical horizon as well as its professed subject.

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New Zealand and the French. Two Centuries of Contact. Edited by John Dunmore. The Heritage Press Ltd, Waikanae, 1990. 202pp. NZ price: \$32.50.

HOW WOULD Flaubert or Proust have been welcomed had they ever travelled to rural New Zealand? Maybe not so well, judging from this team account of New Zealand's relations with the French, a product of last year's sesquicentennial. Despite France's status as a once-great power, and its critical role in the European exploration and annexation of New Zealand, it is the surprising lack of two-way influence between the two countries over the last two centuries which comes out most strongly — an ironic conclusion given the aim of this publication. Although the various contributors search valiantly for a significant French connection, their case is ultimately unconvincing. Only ex-diplomat Merwyn Norrish points out that France has, on the whole, failed to project an influence on New Zealand in keeping with its political and cultural status in the rest of the world. Whether in spite of or because of this, New Zealanders' attitudes towards the French seem extraordinarily negative, varying between critical admiration and outright dislike (Norrish diplomatically understates that they 'do not automatically find French people and French attitudes fully congenial', p.156). As opinion polls confirm, the French have what Madison Avenue calls an 'image problem' in New Zealand.

We see this all the more for the gymnastic efforts of these essayists to uncover solid French influence on New Zealand. Strong and undoubted in the exploration period (ably charted by John Dunmore), the French connection seems to have weakened considerably from the mid-nineteenth century until after the post-war period. Roger Collins, for instance, argues (ch. 14) that French influence on New Zealand art (Impressionism, Cubism etc.) dominated in the period 1890s to 1960s, but his evidence of direct links is slim, and he undercuts his own case by admitting that the work of artists most heavily influenced by France — like Frances Hodgkins, Raymond McIntyre and Edith Collier — was shunned at home. As Gillian Boddy's essay on Katherine Mansfield confirms, taste back in New Zealand seems to have been conservative, British-oriented, and on the whole slow to accept French influence. John Dunmore entertainingly chronicles the rise of the image of glamour, taste and fashion which has seen New Zealanders introduced to

croissants, Chanel and Club Med, but given that, for example, French has always been the leading second language taught in schools and universities, even that image seems surprisingly weak. One is tempted to wonder whether Pakeha New Zealand's often-cited Europeanist leaning is not more simply a thoroughly pro-British orientation.

The question of why this should be is, alas, barely posed. It would have been interesting, for example, to see some speculation on how such features of New Zealand society as the pioneer mentality and tall-poppy syndrome might or might not gel with the French cultivation of genius, worship of 'culture' and hard-nosed approach to diplomacy.

Instead the search for New Zealand-France contact has led here to a scatter-gun approach. A number of the essayists seem to veer giddily between discussing French influence on New Zealand and New Zealand influence on the French; others renounce the attempt, contenting themselves with a straightforward chronicling of 'influence' — sometimes little more than obscure and chance connections — without much analysis of any significance it might have had. It is admittedly a difficult task. Boddy on Mansfield and Collins on art, for example, have difficulty making something meaningful out of the sporadic French/New Zealand contacts in their field. At the same time such impressionistic attempts to pick out specific French connections in isolation from the context of the artists' overall work leads to awkwardness and distortion. Chris Pugsley has a particular difficulty with his account of New Zealand and France in World War I, in that most of the important engagements actually took place in Belgium! More seriously, E.R. Simmons' account of the French missionaries in New Zealand is disappointingly short on analysis. The religious influence is probably the most enduring and significant legacy of the French on New Zealanders, but we are told little of, for example, the way that the French background distanced Bishop Pompallier and his priests from the British government and church and created a highly distinctive Maori Catholic faith. Here, as elsewhere, the question: 'how would New Zealand have been different without the French?' is seldom posed. These difficulties are of course endemic to such studies, but Dunmore has not been conspicuously successful in weaving the disparate parts into an even whole.

The good bits are very good indeed. I found Dunmore on New Zealand in French seventeenth-century literature, Jessie Munro on Mother Aubert, and Christiane Mortelier discovering a surprising amount about New Zealand in Jules Verne's writing and (separately) discussing French whaling, particularly fresh and interesting. Merwyn Norrish and Barbu Niculescu on recent political and economic relations are also first-rate, not shirking from criticism of the French, and emphasizing the major constraints (nukes, colonialism in the Pacific, agricultural access) which continue to limit the bilateral relationship. I wonder, however, at Niculescu's remarkably upbeat prognosis for the relationship in general. At this point any progress in reforming the Common Agricultural Policy seems likely to be more than offset by further depredations of the CAP, not just on the traditional dairy and sheepmeat products, but on new products such as kiwifruit. The failure of the Uruguay Round in the most recent (December 1990) Brussels talks does not bode well for the future. Increasingly New Zealand seems likely to be dealing with France as one member of the EC rather than a country of its own. Might this improve things? Maybe not enough to make Madame Bovary required reading down on the farm.

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