

Mission to the South Seas: The Voyage of the Duff 1796-1799. By M. Cathcart, T. Griffiths, G. Houghton, V. Anceschi, L. Watts and D. Goodman. Department of History, University of Melbourne, Parkville, 1990. ix, 172 pp. Price: £6.00/\$US11.00.

IN 1796, the newly-formed London Missionary Society sent out its first missionaries to the South Pacific. The *Duff's* voyage to Tahiti, Tonga and the Marquesas was documented in the ship's journal and in the diaries and letters of participants.

This somewhat idiosyncratic book provides both a record and an analysis of this voyage. It was originally written in 1978 by its six authors in lieu of honours theses at the University of Melbourne. Their professor, Greg Dening, proposed they jointly edit and analyse the papers relating to the *Duff's* voyage held in the Mitchell Library in Sydney. The fruit of their labours now appears here in the Melbourne University History Monographs series.

The book's structure reflects both stages of the voyage and the number of authors. Each section is further subdivided into three: narrative, telling that portion of the story; document, containing a relevant edited document; and analysis, reflecting on key issues which emerge. This structure gives authorial equality and access to documentary material, and forces thought beyond simple narrative. However, it has disadvantages. The various stages are each assigned some 20 pages, regardless of differing importance or complexity. The tripartite subdivision results in the same material often being reworked three times, but destroys narrative or analytical continuity. The five to seven pages of each sub-division results in some issues being relatively over-analyzed and others under-done.

Cathcart's discussion of the foundation of the mission, while providing an elegant sketch of the English Evangelical leadership, and analyzing the tensions between piety and worldly wisdom, skims explanation of the missionary impulse and is silent about individual missionaries. For Griffiths, the highlight of the voyage was the trial and excommunication of two Arminian missionaries by their Calvinist colleagues, leading to reflection on the emergence and resolution of divisions in closed societies. Watts surveys the problems of the community's increasingly defensive rigidity and of maintaining religious enthusiasm and purity in a hostile environment. The dismal fortunes of the group who disembarked in Tonga are Anceschi's subject, and she isolates the theme of conflict, especially that with the shiftless European beachcombers. Houghton follows the fortunes of one missionary to the Marquesas who remained an outsider, returning home as an apparent failure. Goodman concludes the sequence with the mission's final breakup in Tahiti. His final analysis, 'On Contradictions', probes both the Tahitians' surface receptiveness combined with ultimate resistance, and the Europeans' inability to deal constructively with any challenge to unity of thought or action.

Though hardly a comprehensive introduction to either the general missionary movement or even to the LMS's Pacific activities, this remains a very useful book, providing primary material and stimulating introduction to selected issues and encouragement for innovative teaching practices. Similar problems would soon surface for these missionaries' New Zealand counterparts.

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