

Whakatane and Walker is Whakatohea from Opotiki — their approach differs. Walker is very much the urban intellectual, while Mead seems to draw more upon an older Maori tradition of prophetic eldership. The very title of his book, *Landmarks, Bridges and Visions*, indicates a more mystical approach.

There are no less than 26 essays in Mead's book, divided into sections on education, te reo Maori, the meeting of cultures and problems of communication, sovereignty, aspects of culture, and being Maori today. The essays range in date from 1977 to 1995, with a majority belonging to the 1990s. Some of the earlier essays have been rather overtaken by events but remain interesting because they capture the state of Maori debate at that point in time.

I found the essay 'New Initiatives for Maori at Tertiary Level Institutions' particularly interesting. It basically charts the progress of the *whare wananga*, which the 1990 Education Act authorized. By 1995 there were three *whare wananga* with 693 equivalent full-time students (EFTS). The association of *whare wananga* has projected that by the year 2000 they will have 3500 EFTS. The change in the face of Maori education has been one of the unsung success stories of the education reforms. *Kohanga reo* were put on a properly funded basis and though they have lost some autonomy, because they are subject to the Education Review Office, they have flourished in the new environment. There are also steadily increasing numbers of *kura kaupapa* Maori and at the tertiary level there has been the success of the independent *whare wananga*. There is in effect a Maori school system.

The fact of these great changes is the reason I find both of these books unsatisfactory. There has been a revolution in Maori society between 1981 and the present. However Walker and Mead only give us bits and pieces of what is happening. There needs to be a book that gives a systematic picture. At the moment we are left unsatisfied because what we have is only a taste.

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*To Tara via Holyhead: Irish Catholic Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century Christchurch.* By Lyndon Fraser. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1997. 208 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-86940-163-8.

THE MANUSCRIPT for this book won the inaugural Keith Sinclair History Prize in 1994. It is not hard to see why. It is at once a narrowly focused empirical study of a discrete group at the lower levels of colonial society, deploying a wide range of sophisticated analytical tools to 'recover' aspects of historical existence largely lost to conventional historical study, and a wide-ranging review of comparable studies elsewhere, drawing particularly on the rich North American literature on migration and ethnicity. Fraser's ability to marry these two approaches infuses his work with a depth of analysis and a breadth of vision which seem unusual in such a particularized study. He demonstrates fulsomely the advantages of an inter-disciplinary research background and the usefulness of a comparative approach in assessing the ethnic experience of Christchurch's nineteenth-century Irish Catholic migrants.

Writing 'against the weight of New Zealand historiography', Fraser explicitly eschews the 'nation' as the focus of his study: indeed Christchurch is treated in such splendid isolation that the rest of the country scarcely rates a mention in the book. This is entirely appropriate to the nature of the enquiry, which finds in studies of Boston and Michigan, Glasgow and Liverpool, more useful points of reference. That no useful comparisons could be made with the Irish (or other ethnic groups) in Dunedin or Wellington or Auckland merely highlights a blindspot in our historiography, which has 'foreclosed the possibility that ethnic groupings might have emerged in a colonial environment'. As a consequence, 'Irish immigrants, their institutions, identities and values have been marginalised'. In pushing out into the margins of colonial society, Fraser has also left behind the conventional preoccupation with the elites of wealth and power. It is refreshing to read a history in which the rich and famous are conspicuous by their absence (save for the occasional bishop). In their place, people like Mary Nolan and Patrick Henley, and dozens more like them, take centre stage as the historical actors in this account of 'the "thick territory" of the social world where humans are to be found "waist deep in daily routine"'.

The book examines the complex processes by which Irish migrants from diverse regional, familial and social origins coalesced in nineteenth-century Christchurch into a collectivity with a shared sense of identity, creatively fusing 'Irishness' and 'Catholicity'. This development is not, however, assumed: Fraser takes issue with the North American tendency to see ethnic identity as a 'primordial given'. The Christchurch Irish migrants were not 'cultural dupes' but agents of their own destiny, actively choosing Canterbury as one destination among many and 'becoming' ethnic as part of an adaptive strategy to mould their new environment to meet social, economic and spiritual goals largely consistent with their Irish origins. Despite the tensions and strains of colonial adaptation, Christchurch's Irish Catholic migrants remained firmly attached to familial obligations and responsibilities and forged durable social networks based on ethnicities.

Fraser examines this interplay of 'Old World' and 'New' in six succinct chapters, each of which adopts a different tack to probe the migrant experience: migration itself; settling in to the new colonial environment; developing community structures and identities; building up an Irish Catholic institutional complex centred on the parish church; the achievement of economic goals in 'getting on'; the clustered settlement patterns discernible in the 'street block structure'; and finally the revelations afforded by the testamentary activity of a selection of Irish migrants. Quoting anthropologist Clifford Geertz, he outlines his research approach: 'The aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts; to support broad assertions about the role of culture in the construction of collective life by engaging them exactly with complex specifics'. The resulting 'fine-grained' analysis of one ethnic group in Christchurch over the lifespan of its foundational generation is offered as a building block for regional, national and global interpretations. It invites similar studies of the experience of ethnic groups in other parts of the colony and offers innovative examples of how to dig down to the micro-level and make sense of the fragmentary evidence extant for marginal colonial groups like the Irish.

My one regret is that the results of this ground-breaking study will be largely impenetrable to most of the descendants of its subjects. Though the writing is often elegant and lucid, it is also cluttered by the precise but awkward language of the social sciences. To my mind this sets an unfortunate barrier before the general reader, for whom this book otherwise offers so much. It contains, for example, an excellent description of

the nineteenth-century migration process, drawing together the concrete detail of individual experience and the big picture of the world-wide Irish diaspora. There is a significant audience for this information but I doubt that many will find their way to it here. This may seem an unfair criticism of an academic history but it is surely ironic that in 'recovering' an historical identity 'confiscated' by mainstream historiography, the fruits of that work are locked away in the specialist language of the academic.

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*Otago Settlers Museum*

*God's Farthest Outpost: A History of Catholics in New Zealand.* By Michael King. Penguin, Auckland, 1997. 208 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-140-26719-0.

COMMISSIONED a long time ago, this work was supposed to fill the gap of the one major denomination in New Zealand without any solid historical account of its development right through to the modern era. Somewhere along the line the commission evidently changed, and the result is a stylish and popular book rather than a contribution to learning. Michael King has written better works in the past, but he has not lost his flair.

Characterized by a light but enjoyable text and fine photographs, the book seems designed to evoke images and memories more than to analyse. This is evident from the 'Memoir', which serves as a preface, describing King's experiences of Catholicism, which obviously came to an end about the time of the Vatican reforms. The young Michael King knew a great deal about the tone of religion, its moral exhortations, its liturgy, its treatment of childhood fears and joys. But not much about it interests him now, so he virtually neglects the profound changes in the church in the post-Vatican period.

The acknowledgements of *God's Farthest Outpost* explain a great deal. Originally commissioned by Catholic publishers and then taken over by Penguin, its scale and character seem to have been curtailed by a publisher which wanted a book which would sell — this perhaps explains the lurid cover — and an author who had taken a very long time, and yet faced 'circumstances' which 'did not permit extensive research from primary resources'. Consequently, heavy dependence on Ernie Simmons's work and on Michael O'Meehan for the Christchurch diocese mark this book, which is, as the author explains, 'an extended and illustrated essay: one person's overview of the New Zealand Catholic community drawn largely from secondary sources'. The best parts, at least for the academic, are therefore those parts when King draws on and develops his own previous work on Maori Catholicism.

Still there is much to appreciate in the brief but lively pen portraits of bishops, and a few others besides. King has had good mentors and they have guarded him from serious errors. Moreover, although this is not a text which draws one into intense reflection, its phrases could well be the starting point for further research. The book's two central chapters, 'A French Church?' and 'An Irish Church' offer one such starting point. The unexplained question mark in the first title suggests that King is not altogether sure of his description, and it raises the question, which his text acknowledges, that the French never had the field to themselves as they established Catholic Maori missions. The case for