

find answers in *Being Māori Chinese*. Each family showcased in the book is grounded in its history of arrival, settlement, encounter and the social, economic and familial worlds it created, but it is rare that the author places all the families into the larger historical context. A strong introduction grounding the individual experiences within a historical context was sorely needed.

Despite these problems, *Being Māori Chinese* does add greatly to a growing literature on interracial intimacy and the diverse families formed out of these encounters. The family histories and interviews tell the reader a great deal about the social spaces these families inhabited, how people came into contact, as well as the complications that come with being of mixed heritage, particularly in relation to identity. There is a great deal of detail across these family histories to suggest the possibility of further examination of New Zealand's interracial past and the discrete contours, contradictions and ambiguities involved in interracial intimacy, colonialism and hybridity. Unfortunately, these themes, so prevalent in the international literature, and which now also shape the New Zealand scholarship, were absent in the author's discussion of racial purity movements, racial intolerance, citizenship and its shifting meaning, as well as the difficulties of identity. *Being Māori Chinese* is packed with wonderful raw material for the future historian of such encounters and I hope that the forthcoming edited volume, which will further interrogate the range of relationships formed by Maori and Chinese through a diverse set of methodological approaches, will engage in the international scholarship and more closely interrogate the historically contingent nature of interracial encounter in New Zealand's past.

ANGELA WANHALLA

University of Otago

Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia. By John Fitzgerald. University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2007. 289pp. Australian price: \$44.95. ISBN 978-086840-870-5.

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT BOOK written by one of Australia's leading specialists in Chinese history. Because of his experience, Fitzgerald brings a wide-reaching vision to the discussion of the Chinese in Australia (and, by association, New Zealand). While the author discusses White Australia, this book takes a wider view of the contribution and achievements of the Chinese in Australia.

The book is set against the one-sided and culturally biased discussion of social values that has infected Australian public life over the past decade, ranging from questioning the place of Aboriginal people in modern Australia to some of the ugly debates about the real nature of Australia's vaunted multiculturalism that have arisen in relation to the Muslim community. The early chapters are openly polemical. The recent Australian 'values' topic — I hesitate to say 'debate' because it has largely been one-sided and intellectually bankrupt — was at heart a diversionary political process centred on establishing a subversive rightist ideological dominance in Australian society and politics. For this reason alone the book merits attention, although these chapters will quickly date following the recent change in Australian national politics.

The experiences of the Chinese in Australia and New Zealand were never as ugly as in North America, where an entrenched history of racialism dominates cultural and social history, but they were undeniably marked by humiliating legislation and administration not experienced by other immigrant minorities, although the Pacific Islander 'indentured' labourers (Kanakas) probably suffered as much, and perhaps more. The experience of Australian Aboriginal people stands apart for well-meaning

but ignorant dealings by governments and disinterested toleration of wrongdoing by the population at large.

In acknowledging the challenges that confronted the Chinese, the author provides important insights into the way in which the Chinese responded by using the values and institutions of Australian society effectively and to the full. What emerges is a story that describes, vividly, how the Chinese prospered and enjoyed life in Australia in which they had access to educational, economic and social freedoms beyond those normally experienced by the Asia-Pacific Chinese diaspora.

For people genuinely interested in Australian and New Zealand history, the book does two things extremely well. First, it examines the prejudices and pressures that produced the racially discriminatory immigration policy known as 'White Australia' and puts a sharp knife into many of the conventional arguments that the Chinese were definitively outside the mainstream of Australian 'values'. Secondly, it examines in depth and brings into the public historical record many aspects of Chinese life and achievements in Australia not widely known or discussed within the context of Australian immigration history, which has had a tendency to focus on moralistic issues of principle rather than on practical outcomes. Fitzgerald provides insights into personal and economic relationships between Australia and China during the late nineteenth century, throughout the twentieth century and which no doubt continue within the much larger Chinese-Australian population of today. To learn that Australians were major players in the retail trade in pre-revolutionary Shanghai will come as quite a surprise to many of us who saw, and continue to see, colonial Hong Kong as the focus of Australian economic links with China.

Fitzgerald has produced an invaluable social history of one of the oldest and most successful of all minority immigrant groups in Australia. His account sits well beside the work of Janis Wilton and her colleagues at the University of New England whose work on local and regional Chinese business is a classic effort that, hopefully, will meld with this book into a wider understanding of the success enjoyed by many people of Chinese ethnic origins.¹ The contribution of John See, a Grafton-born Australian, to the nationalist movement led by Sun Yat-sen has passed almost unnoticed in previous discussions. See was the first nationalist 'president' of China during Sun's short-lived 1895 rebellion against the ruling dynasty. Fitzgerald also points to the great success of modern Chinese professionals and sportspeople in Australia and the contribution they continue to make to the wider society.

Fitzgerald has read widely in preparing this work, including the innovative work of Denise Austin on Chinese business links and Kate Bagnall on intermarriage.² He has drawn on the wonderful bank of resources that he, and others, established through the Chinese History at Australian Federation project (CHAF) at La Trobe University to celebrate the Bicentenary of European settlement in Australia, including the contribution of Australians with ethnic Chinese origins during World War I.³

In addition to important and insightful discussions of Chinese organizations within Australia, such as the KMT (Kuomintang) and the Chinese secret society tradition, Fitzgerald draws attention to the impact of Chinese-Australians in the South Pacific, a field long associated with Professor Bill Wilmot in New Zealand but relatively unknown in Australia except as a fringe area of Pacific Studies. Fitzgerald sets these matters within their distinct Australian setting and demonstrates how the management of Chinese groups, businesses and associations reflected values, most notably the idea of a 'fair go', normally associated only with British-Australian settlers.

Fitzgerald is right in querying the balance of the conventional arguments about the extent to which racism influenced Australian immigration discussions during the nineteenth century. The fear of unemployment per se, illustrated by the change of government in 2007 stimulated by discriminatory labour legislation (Work Choices),

is an enduring theme in Australian social history and arguably more important to the majority of people than concepts of race or supposedly egalitarian values.

To sum up, this, along with C.F. Yong's much earlier book,⁴ is an important contribution to Australian social and economic history that should become a prescribed text in all Australian history courses in secondary and higher education. It is certainly a work that should not be missed by Australian (and New Zealand) historians whatever their focus in Australian and/or Asian Studies.

IAN WELCH

La Trobe University

NOTES

1 See Golden Threads website <http://archive.amol.org.au/goldenthreads/>

2 Denise A. Austin, "'Kingdom-minded' People: Christian Identity and the Contributions of Chinese Business Christians", PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 2005; Kate Bagnall, 'Golden Shadows on a White Land: An Exploration of the Lives of White Women who Partnered Chinese Men and Their Children in Southern Australia, 1855–1915', PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2006.

3 See Chinese History at Australian Federation website, <http://www.chaf.lib.latrobe.edu.au/> See also the website of the Chinese Museum, Melbourne, <http://www.chinesemuseum.com.au/>

4 C.F. Yong, *The New Gold Mountain*, Richmond SA, 1977.

Ireland, Australia and New Zealand: History, Politics and Culture. Edited by Laurence M. Geary and Andrew J. McCarthy. Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2008. xviii + 270pp. UK price: £18.95. ISBN 978-0-71652862-3.

SINCE THE FIRST IRISH–AUSTRALIAN CONFERENCE in Canberra in November 1981 there has been a concerted effort to publish a volume of selected papers from each conference, but in recent years it has been increasingly difficult to find publishers willing to produce these valuable, albeit eclectic, collections. Volumes appeared after the first ten conferences, and the papers from the eleventh were published in a special issue of the *Australian Journal of Irish Studies*. The organizers of the fourteenth conference, held in Cork in June 2005, together with Irish Academic Press, are to be congratulated for their achievement in producing this collection. The quality of the production, together with that of the contributions, is a credit to all those involved and a justification for its publication. It highlights the worth and viability of such collections of scholarship.

All of the contributions have a connection to Australia or New Zealand, and — unlike many to be found in the previous volumes — none are specifically on Irish topics. This gives the volume more of a focus, although it maintains great variety. Only two of the contributors are postgraduate students, and there are two whose primary occupations are outside the formal academic arena, both of them practising lawyers. Approximately half the contributors are located in Ireland or Britain, a welcome sign of scholarly interest there in the antipodean dimensions of Irishness. Areas of interest covered include the process and character of migration itself, sectarianism as it translated to the new world, the engagement of the Irish with indigenous peoples, individuals and their trajectories in their new environments, the wider Pacific dimensions of the Irish diaspora, and Irish-derived artistic expression through music, monuments and theatre. Three papers in the final section are particularly illuminating, discussing the contributions of Irish visitors to Australia and of one visitor in the reverse direction. That section also includes commentary on one example of how the Australian press dealt with a particular set of Irish events