



*Pacific Journeys. Essays in Honour of John Dunmore*, eds Glynnis M Cropp, Noel R Watts, Roger DJ Collins & KR Howe, Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2005. 232pp. ISBN 0-86473-507-3 (pb) \$NZD 39.95

The fifteen essays in this volume (four of which are in French) honour historian and former banker John Dunmore, whose contribution to Pacific history began in the 1960s with a study of *French Explorers in the Pacific*. While there is no general overview of the contributions, the editors' foreword identifies many of the contributors as Dunmore's students and colleagues.

Journeys into the Pacific, and to New Zealand, by mainly French explorers, whalers, missionaries and a gardener in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries provide much of the common ground. Alan Frost's fascinating examination of the moral economy of rationing in the British navy of the eighteenth century and his assessment of the part this played in the infamous *Bounty* mutiny stands out above the other contributions. Christine Hemming provides a descriptive essay on the sketches produced by Philibert Commerson during Bougainville's voyage to Tahiti, pointing to the increasingly important and professional role of artwork in this and other voyages to the Pacific. Christian Huetz de Lempis discusses (in French) the return of French voyagers, scientists, whalers and missionaries to the Pacific during the period of the French restoration (1815–1830), stressing the importance of this period for the foundations of the French presence in the Pacific.

Several essays focus on European relations with Maori in nineteenth-century New Zealand. Jessie Munro relates the story of the ministry of a Catholic priest, Jean-Marie Grange, to Maori in the 1860s and 1870s. JMR Owens's essay on 'Maori as Missionary' examines the vital role of Maori leadership in the acceptance of Christianity in the Whanganui River area. Peter Tremewan details transactions between French whalers and Maori, including those who joined whaling crews and travelled to France, while Ian Church provides a history of French whalers at Otago from 1838 to 1853.

A further two contributions have a botanical theme. Edward Duyker offers a biographical note on Félix Delahaye, the gardener to Bruny d'Entrecasteaux's expedition, who in 1792 established the garden



recently discovered at Recherche Bay in Tasmania. John Dawson outlines the exceptional botanical history of New Caledonia and his own research on the genus *Metrosideros*.

The generation and dissemination of scientific knowledge about the Pacific forms another general strand. Glynnis Cropp's 6-page introduction provides a biographical sketch of Dunmore, overviewing his achievements as an historian and promoter of the French language and culture in New Zealand. (This is followed by a 4-page listing of his scholarly publications dealing with the Pacific.) In addition, Hugh Laracy provides a welcome biographical note on the esteemed French bibliographer of the Pacific, Father Patrick O'Reilly. The writing and publication of work about the Pacific is further examined in François Moureau's essay (in French) on the edition and publication of maritime voyages in eighteenth-century France. Christiane Mortelier examines (in French) the documentary aspects of Jules Verne's 1901 whaling novel, *Les histoires de Jean-Marie Cabidoulin*, while Rosemary Arnoux considers the ethnographic aspects of narrative writing about Tahiti, including, predictably, in the work of such authors as Bougainville, Moerenhout, Segalen and Loti.

A further two contributions relate to the themes of hybridity and metissage in New Caledonian literature. In the more insightful of the two (notwithstanding a minor error dating the introduction of the indigénat in New Caledonia to 1894 rather than 1887), Raylene Ramsay revisits the early texts of Kanak–French encounter that have become foundational to this emergent literature, as well as the memoirs of Louise Michel and translations of ethnographic texts by Leenhardt and Bensa. She insists upon the transformative influence of the European language and culture and the need to take account of this in any analysis of emergent Kanak identity. Sonia Faessel (in French) provides a rather allusive and celebratory analysis of *Les Dieux sont borgnes* (2002), a play co-authored by Pierre Gope and Nicolas Kurtovitch, based on an imagined encounter involving Cook (as Lono), his sailors and Kanak in a New Caledonia of the past/present/future.

In sum, these essays are best characterised as erudite vignettes, each standing alone but also contributing to a larger oeuvre. With the



exception of two essays (by Frost and Owens), all deal with aspects of the French presence in the Pacific, and Church in particular insists upon the need, in existing scholarship, to overcome the neglect of certain aspects of this presence, however transient it might have been. I rather suspect, though, that the not inconsiderable attention paid to the French as a national or linguistic group scarcely warrants this injunction; what of the Americans or Russians? It is unfortunate, therefore, that the opportunity to reflect on the broader historiographical preoccupation with the French as a European category in the history of New Zealand and the Pacific has been missed, though Laracy's comments on O'Reilly's work go some way to broaching the issue:

In writing on the Pacific, O'Reilly was both reporting on and celebrating the French presence there. After all, that presence was a given, and his particular imperative . . . was to ensure—and to preserve—its knowability, rather than to engage in criticisms or to indulge in misgivings about it. Monocultural his *oeuvre* may have been . . . [b]ut that characteristic did not diminish its empirical value; other dimensions of the subject could be studied by others. O'Reilly's task was to record the French imperial/colonial enterprise in the Pacific, not to review it. (104)

While this collection offers something for everyone (history, literature, botany) one is left to wonder what new questions, themes, lines or areas of inquiry might have been opened up with the perspective provided by just such a review.

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