

Ngā Pepa a Ranginui: The Walker Papers. By Ranginui Walker. Penguin, Auckland, 1996. 215 pp. NZ price: \$24.95. ISBN 0-140-25676-8.

Landmarks, Bridges and Visions: Aspects of Maori Culture. By Sidney Moko Mead. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1997. 266 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-86473-317-8.

THESE TWO BOOKS were difficult to review because they do not fall within the normal category of academic books. They are technically collections of essays, but they are not usual academic essays. Rather they are in the tradition of William Cobbett's *Rural Rides*, strongly opinionated pieces written to propagate a Maori point of viewpoint. As would be expected from two men who hold the title of professor, there is some attempt to back up their views with a citation of other works, even to the point of creating a scholarly apparatus. Ranginui Walker provides endnotes for his papers and a general bibliography. Sidney Moko Mead provides, for some articles, a bibliography and endnotes. Both books lack an index, though the use of sub-headings to some degree compensates for this.

Walker, through his *Listener* and *Metro* columns, has been an important spokesman for his particular strand of Maori opinion. His early *Listener* columns, with their harsh and unrelenting condemnation of Pakeha colonialism, were very much a new voice. Over the years his tone has mellowed and the essays have become more scholarly. In his introduction he states his commitment to good writing and his rejection of the 'publish or perish' philosophy of academe. Certainly his writing is clear and vigorous and is well ballasted with information. Indeed, much of his writing presents a synthesis of the existing literature.

Ngā Pepa is divided into 11 sections. The first two, 'Being Maori' and 'The Meeting House', are long essays apparently written for scholarly audiences. Other essays seem to be compilations of original writing with *Metro* columns added on. This could lead to fragmentation but skilful editing has welded them together effectively. For instance his general essay, 'Tradition and Change in Maori Leadership', is given extra point by his *Metro* columns on Sir Graham Latimer and the late Sir Hepi Te Heu Heu. Even where the essays are pastiches of his *Listener* and *Metro* articles, such as 'Fighting over Fish', they still read coherently.

Some of Walker's historical narrative though, is plain wrong. For example, in 'Young Turks and the Old Guard' he offers a faulty analysis of Ngata's fall. Ngata did not fail because the public servants at the Native Department 'turned against him'. I have interviewed a number of old department hands and all admired Ngata; they thought he did what had to be done. What started the process of his fall was the Auditor-General's refusal to pass the Development Schemes' Accounts. This set in train a chain of events which led to the royal commission that castigated his administration of the Native Department and made it impossible for him to stay as minister.

Walker is not afraid to draw an unpalatable conclusion. In the opening section of the essay, 'Science, Intellectual Property and Cultural Safety', he argues that the main focus of Maori medical practice was psychosomatic and spiritual healing: 'In a cross-cultural analysis, Maori medicine has a place as a branch of psychiatry. To elevate it beyond that is to indulge in myth-making.'

Interestingly, given that tribally the two men are close — Mead is Ngati Awa from

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.