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REVIEWS

Ballantyne, Tony: *Entanglements of Empire: Missionaries, Maori, and the Question of the Body*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2015. xii + 360 pp. NZ\$39.99.

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There is always a danger, when reviewing a book, to review the book you wish had been written rather than the one in front of you. With Tony Ballantyne's new work there is an additional danger—expecting the title to reflect the book's contents. "The body" is sexy; it figures in the subtitle of *Entanglements of Empire*. The Introduction also promises a tome that will "examine the cross-cultural debates and entanglements set in motion by the establishment of Protestant missions in New Zealand in 1814, especially those arguments and engagements that turned on the ways in which the human body was understood and organized" (p. 2). The promise is reiterated a few pages later: "My particular concern in this book is the place of the body in the exchanges between Protestant missionaries and Maori" (p. 6). Ballantyne does not want to restrict this to a discussion of sexuality, nor does he want to read imperial history through Foucault. Rather, he is offering a "reading of the struggles over the body that developed as missionaries sought to transform Maori culture" (p. 13).

Entanglements is a good word to use when your focus is the body; it conjures up liaisons and entrapment, affairs and intrigue. It also echoes Ballantyne's earlier work on imperial webs. It is a more active word than "meeting", which some have used when writing about missionaries and Māori, and is less abrasive than "encounter", which has also been employed by others.

However, anyone who picks up *Entanglements of Empire* expecting a book about missionary attempts to "tame the savage body", or Māori attempts to transform the bodies of the evangelicals, will be puzzled. Ballantyne does touch on some of the areas of bodies in contact that the reader might expect: *tā moko* (tattooing), interpersonal violence, self-harming after the death of a *rangatira* (chief). He even devotes a chapter to sex, where "poor Mr Yate" is, once again, the subject of historical investigation. But although Ballantyne asserts that "the body was mobile and polysemic" (p. 6), there is a very real risk here that in "thinking through the body" (p. 9) we have left the corporeal behind. The body does, of course, have more than one meaning (although the book's subtitle does not ask questions of the body, let alone bodies), but too often in *Entanglements of Empire* the body is immaterial to the discussions about exploration, place, space, time, the organisation of work, commerce and the economy. That is, in large parts of the book, the material body is nowhere to be found. Instead, the reader is left with a more traditional history of New Zealand, 1814–1840, than they might have expected.

Ballantyne's strength lies in the archive. Many of the overarching ideas in this book are not new—Marsden and the first generation of missionaries thought "civilisation"

had to precede Christianity; by the 1830s there were growing tensions between the missionaries who wanted to protect Māori from colonisation and save them, and those who wanted to exploit New Zealand as a land for settlers. But Ballantyne's deft handling of the archival sources means that he fleshes out the story. Marsden, for example, becomes more than the flogging parson of Parramatta. We see how he used the Governor of New South Wales to further his missionary endeavours, how entwined he was in imperial webs, how important his relationship with Kawiti Tiitua was to the establishment of the New Zealand mission. The underlying story is familiar but Ballantyne has given us new layers.

Māori figure in Ballantyne's archive, but they had very little control over how missionaries and others represented them in letters, publications and official communiqués. So although Ballantyne reads the archive with great skill, the archive tells us far more about missionary desires than Māori realities. In the conclusion to the chapter on cultures of death, for example, we are reminded that three points have been made therein—sometimes the book reads like a lecture. All of these points centre on the missionaries' understandings of death and burial practices. Māori are present as subjects for the missionaries to study and as a force that prevented missionaries staking out cemeteries where they wished. But the archive's silences means the reader is often left knowing far less about Māori beliefs and practices than about those of the missionaries. The net result of this is that missionaries seem far more entangled in the Empire and in the particular imperial outpost that was New Zealand than Māori do. This is reflected in the final sentence of the book, where Ballantyne muses on the missionaries' legacies and concludes that "the figure of the missionary remains ambiguous two hundred years after that first sermon at Rangihoua" (p. 259). The figure of the Māori is invisible.

Duke University Press first published *Entanglements of Empire*. This AUP imprint bears some of the marks of that American history: labor, color and program might be a small price to pay, but the numerous copy-editing oversights in the text and bibliography are an irritant. For a local audience, familiar with the work of James Belich, Judith Binney, Anne Salmond, Keith Sinclair *et al.*, there is little here that will surprise. For others there is probably not enough historiographical discussion to make it clear when Ballantyne is building on the works of others and when he is putting forward a new interpretation. Others still, on reading the book's title, will think it is not for them, given their interest in 19th-century economics or notions of time. They would be wrong. There is much to admire in *Entanglements of Empire* but it is hard to know who its audience is. If the individual chapters had been published as journal articles this would be much clearer. It is striking that, in a book about entanglements, there is very little direct connection between the chapters. They stand alone rather than together, which is perhaps a reflection of the book's long gestation.

Entanglements of Empire was not the book I expected to read. Its scope is much bigger than its subtitle allows. Ballantyne's archival prowess and mastery of imperial historiography mean that this important period in New Zealand's history has been brought before a new audience, even if the missionary and the Māori remain ambiguous figures.

Petrie, Hazel: *Outcasts of the Gods: The Struggle over Slavery in Māori New Zealand*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2015. 384 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index. NZ\$45.00 (soft cover).

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This book explores the topic of slavery from the late-18th and throughout 19th-century Māori society. Petrie correctly identifies that there are problems with defining what exactly constituted slavery in the Māori context. Essentially, slavery involved involuntary confinement and removal from one's own native home (p. 329). But common modern day perceptions of slavery, derived from its practice in the southern states of the United States before the American Civil War, are out of place in the New Zealand setting.

Throughout the book, it becomes apparent that Māori slavery involved war captives or prisoners of war. It also included Māori outcasts or exiles from their own communities and therefore subject to bondage when living within other tribal communities. Petrie's argument is most convincing when she compares Māori slaves to French, British and American captives during the American Revolutionary War and Napoleonic Wars. These European and American war captives were subject to forced manual labour and harsh confinement, but their actual conditions depended upon their rank and usefulness to their captors.

Petrie provides example upon example of war captives, including young children and the aged, and their treatment within the Māori communities in which they were captive. Her coverage is comprehensive, citing instances from all around the North and South Islands, and including the Chatham Islands. Petrie emphasises that the treatment of slaves depended on their social status as well as their economic worth. Of particular interest is her explanation that the elite in Māori communities were freed from activities, such as manual labour and food preparation, as that would compromise their sacredness (*tapu*). The common slaves were ones that could perform those types of activities.

The sources for information in the book involved an impressive search of primary 19th-century sources from the usual recorders—missionaries, travellers and other observers. Petrie acknowledges that European commentators would have found it difficult to identify whether people were the aged, infirmed or indeed war captives, and that commonly the term “slave” was used by all these observers. Of note, is Petrie's acknowledgement that even Māori sources used language that changed over time such as *taurekareka*, *pononga* or *mokai*, all of which have primary dictionary definitions ‘slave, captive’ (H.W. Williams 1971), and consequently she is very cautious about labelling and carefully distinguishes between captives and slaves or servants. Nonetheless, Petrie makes a compelling argument that, whether war captive or slave or whatever term is used, their hold on human dignity was very tenuous. They could be killed, eaten, treated quite cruelly or subjected to other indignities at the whim of their captors (despite there being some general rules of conduct regarding the treatment of captives or slaves). However, it is axiomatic that what happens in

practice is often different from the stated principle; there was “no one reality” (p. 77) in the treatment of captives or slaves. There were, indeed, cases of benevolence as well as utmost cruelty.

Petrie's book is organised into 11 chapters. Chapter 1 addresses the issue of skin colour in considerations about slavery. It makes the reader ponder whether certain basic colours such as red, black and white are influential in racial perspectives. Chapter 2 examines Māori society concepts of *mana* and *tapu* and their role in defining slavery. In Chapter 3, Petrie addresses an important idea for the whole book. This is whether Māori “slaves” should rightly be viewed as Māori war captives instead of slaves. Chapters 4 and 5 develop the idea of slaves as important economic units. This is in terms of them being manual workers or involved with other entrepreneurial ventures such as travel guides or the sex trade. The general themes of Chapters 6 to 8 examine such issues as the abolition of slave practices, British ideas of liberty and freedom, the missionaries' role in encouraging the emancipation of slaves, as well as what was to happen to slaves once they were released. Chapters 9 to 11 cover such diverse topics as the offensiveness of the institution of slavery to the English, whether Māori were enslaved by the British, and the changing vocabulary of slavery.

In considering the structure of the book, it seemed odd to me that the topic of Chapter 11, “The Language of Slavery”, was not an earlier chapter of the book, given that the terms used in referring to “slaves” is such a central issue of Petrie's thesis. Also the book takes a different direction in Chapter 10. The theme of that chapter is the argument that all Māori became slaves of the British as colonisation progressed from 1840. This chapter seemed out of place in the book, in which the other chapters fully focussed on Māori slaves or war captives or whatever they actually were.

The most challenging part of the book is Chapter 8. It addressed the big historical question of why slaves were eventually emancipated from their captors circa 1830s. This is the finest chapter of them all. Petrie argues her point well in debunking the old general impression in New Zealand historiography that missionary conversions among Māori led them to free their slaves. Petrie points out that, to the contrary, Māori were freeing their slaves before Christianity had any influence.

The increased and increasing large numbers of Māori slaves/war captives was making the whole institution untenable anyway. The increasing numbers were brought about by the acquisition of muskets and burgeoning musket warfare, and by the economic benefits that could be gained by the use of slave labour through trading with Europeans. Forced labour among Māori in bringing land into production was initially economically advantageous for some tribal groups. But boom and bust cycles are characteristic of most economies. Once the initial early 19th-century European demand for food and other raw materials, such as flax and timber, was met, an increased or sustained forced labour made no economic sense. Slaves needed to be managed and it was easier to let them go free rather than to maintain them during economic depressed periods throughout the 1820s and 1830s.

But then, there was the irony of this action. Once slaves were freed, they could not necessarily go back to their original homes. Some had been placed in servitude from a young age and therefore knew no other existence. Some wanted to stay with

their captors, some turned to missionary work, while others did return to their original kin. It is obvious that these emancipated Māori slaves experienced what international slave scholar Orlando Patterson (1982) coined “social death”, a concept that scholars might explore and examine further.

All in all, it was about time a scholar examined this unsavoury subject in New Zealand history. Petrie’s solid work on the subject will stand the test of time, and it will serve as the first reference for any scholar further pursuing the topic of slavery in Māori New Zealand.