

Secret Writers in Foreign Lands

JOHN WHITE AND WILLIAM WYATT GILL¹



RAYMOND WILLIAMS'S *BORDER COUNTRY* describes a young historian called Matthew Price standing atop the Kestrel mountain looking at the different Welsh histories lying upon the land. As he descends he reflects upon 'History from the Kestrel, where you sit and watch memory move, across a wide valley. That was the sense of it: to watch, to interpret, to try to get clear. Only the wind narrowing your eyes, and so much living in you, deciding what you will see and how you will see it. Never above, watching. You'll find what you're watching is yourself.'² Here, in this reflection, is the beginning of my essay: journeying to different places in the Pacific; watching how memories are collected, recorded and interpreted; finding that history-making shares in the ambiguities experienced by both colonizer and colonized.

Travel, as the saying goes, broadens the mind: we meet new people, experience new ways of living and, if we are broad-minded enough, we may come to see ourselves and our own world differently. According to James Clifford: "Travel" . . . is an inclusive term embracing a range of more or less voluntarist practices of leaving "home" to go to some "other" place. The displacement takes place for the purpose of gain — material, spiritual, scientific. It involves obtaining knowledge and/or having an "experience" (exciting, edifying, pleasurable, estranging, broadening).³ Edward Said stressed the manifest inequalities which inhere within such passages, especially when travellers, as was the case with nineteenth-century Europeans, presumed their superiority to the people amongst whom they journeyed. When these travellers resided in a foreign land, they lived there not as ordinary citizens but as representative Europeans of empires whose cultural, economic and military arms embraced the peoples they dwelt amongst. Even where a European engaged in the give and take of conversation with local friends, his or her writings betrayed

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2 Raymond Williams, *Border Country*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1964, pp.280–1 (originally published 1960).

3 James Clifford, 'Spatial Practices: Fieldwork, Travel, and the Disciplining of Anthropology', in Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997, p.66.

the one-sidedness of the exchange: 'as *they* spoke and behaved, *he* observed and wrote down. His power was to have existed among them as a native speaker, as it were, and also as a secret writer. And what he wrote was intended as useful knowledge, not for them, but for Europe and its various disseminative institutions.'⁴

In the following essay I want to explore the unevenness Said described in the relationships between European ethnographers and Pacific Islanders, using the selected texts of two scholars: John White, a settler in the Hokianga district of Aotearoa (New Zealand), and William Wyatt Gill, a missionary in Mangaia, in the Cook Islands. These texts describe various journeys each man took in order to amass the ethnographic collections upon which they built their learned reputations as experts in Pacific Islands knowledge. In contrast to Said, I argue that the secret writings of Pacific ethnographers often became well known to the locals; the texts themselves frequently breaking down under the weight of local circumstances, rendering them hybrid texts filled with the ambiguities of the writer's colonial relationships; no longer Said's one-sided exchange. In critiquing the work of White and Gill and locating them beside Said's polemic against 'Orientalism', I cannot stand above and outside their scholarship, as if I am simply an innocent bystander, unaware of the arguments being developed around me. In my own efforts to understand their texts I have found myself retracing their journeys and remembering their histories. Like Matthew Price, I realize that I have unwittingly become a part of the history I am interpreting. In seeking to understand the writing of White and Gill I have embarked upon my own uneasy passages to other as yet undetermined places.

If readers of White's collection of ethnographic information desire to learn more about its collector, they must soon turn to one of his earliest sustained pieces of writing, entitled, 'A Private Journal'.⁵ As its name suggests, it is an autobiographical work produced between 1846 and 1850, when White was aged 20 to 24. Written while he still lived in the Hokianga, the journal served as a confidant, 'my hearts reservoir', to which his secret thoughts could be committed.⁶ Perhaps, like another Pacific ethnographer, Bronislaw Malinowski, White wrote his confidential diary in order to achieve a sense of "'control'" and to "'consolidate'" his life and thoughts.⁷

A major feature of White's journal is his recording of ethnographic information, often in the course of his journeys around the Hokianga. A selection of journeys illustrate the typical patterns. On travelling 'up Waima', White and others passed 'a tabooed place'. Seeing 'some tawharas [flower bracts of kiekie]', White wished to obtain them: 'but having a Native boy [probably the youth, Te Aho] in the boat he protested about it, as he said he would die if we got them, we

4 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, London, 1978, pp.11, 156, 160. Emphasis in the original.

5 John White 'Private Journal', qMS, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (ATL) (hereafter PJ). I am grateful to Donella Bellett, a former research assistant, who transcribed much of this journal as part of my long-term project to edit the text. Funding for her work was provided by an Otago University Humanities Research Grant.

6 24 July, 9 September 1846, PJ.

7 Bronislaw Malinowski, *Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*, N. Guterman, trans., London, 1967, p.175 cit. Paul Carter, 'Living in a New Country: Reflections on Travelling Theory', in Carter, *Living in a New Country: History, travelling and language*, London, 1992, p.104.

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were forigners [sic] and it would not kill us but it would kill him, through our eating them'. He explained that a woman was buried aloft in the trees. White asked if the tapu arose from the rottenness of the corpse: 'he said "no but the gods would kill him"'. White's father asked how many gods there were; the boy described them as innumerable. In the same trip, their boat was nearly upset by a 'whirlwind in the water'. The boy thought it was caused by a 'god'. When White asked, 'what god', the boy reckoned, 'the whistling god', at which White's father laughed.⁸

On another occasion White travelled with the missionary, John Hobbs, to visit an ailing chief. White went off to question 'a young chief' about a nearby pā. This man, whom White estimated as 28 years old, related an attack upon the pā some years before by a party of Te Rarawa: 'they laid in ambush, behind some puriri trees, untill the Poople [sic] of the Pa went to ngaki [cultivate] kumara, they then rushed out and killed about half of those who were at work, the rest escaped to the Pa and defended themselves [sic] bravely from the enemy, so as to repulse every attempt made on their fortification'. Another pā at Rawhia was attacked around the same time and its occupants killed. One of the attackers sought to take a piece of an old chieftainess's hair as 'a trophy of his valor', and went to get a pipi shell from the beach. While he was away, this 'old chieftess' who, according to White's narrative, 'was pregnant', recovered and ran off.⁹ White identified her son as 'John King father of the young chief who bit my whiskers the other day'.¹⁰

White and some others travelled 'up Waima' by canoe, along with a chief 'who is so sacred so that he must not carry any thing'. The chief told White how he had been set aside at his birth 'to eat nga kai popoa [sacred food reserved for ariki]'. They passed 28 pā on the way upriver and the chief told White about the wars for each of them. He also told White about a 100-year-old man whose body had vanished 'when they went to hahu [disinter] him'. The chief believed that the man 'had descended into the earth and turned into a god'.¹¹

As these journal entries show, Māori travelled about the Hokianga as much as recent Pākehā settlers. White reported several Māori coming to visit him at his home at Te Mata. Some of them, such as the youthful Te Aho, stayed for lengthy periods. There were many opportunities for night-time conversations: on his visit, the chief, 'Adam Clark' (Arama Karaka), slept on the floor of White's bedroom.¹² From White's point of view, one of the reasons for encouraging these visits was the chance to obtain further ethnographic material.¹³ One evening he recorded that a young tohunga, later identified as Te Takurua,¹⁴ had arrived

8 13 November 1846, PJ.

9 The apparently incongruous reference to an old and pregnant chiefly woman probably results from White's summary translation of the Māori story he was told. As the subsequent reference to her son and grandson suggests, White must have known the woman. Presumably he used the description of her as the 'old chieftess' as a form of shorthand, when reporting her earlier escape from death. In his journal White frequently described Māori by age and rank, rather than by personal name, despite the fact he must have known a number of them personally.

10 8 August 1847, PJ.

11 15 February 1848, PJ.

12 24 September 1846, PJ.

13 A good example is Te Aho's story, recorded 12 December 1847, PJ.

14 See 17 September 1849, PJ.

'according to promise'. Te Takurua had already provided much information of a tapu nature, especially about mākutu (sorcery). On this occasion he told White about the significance of sneezing during war. He also said he was being accused by his male kin of having divulged 'secret' information on mākutu to White.¹⁵

This selection of entries suggests the rich detail White was privy to in his numerous dialogues, often in the form of question and answer, with his varied Māori associates. Here he played Said's 'native speaker', entering into conversation with the local people, some of them, like Te Aho, described as good friends, only to betray these relationships in his secret writings. Yet, unlike the hegemonic Orientalist's work, White's journal also highlights the ambiguities of life on the colonial frontier. Most dramatically, the familiarity of friendship allowed Māori like Te Aho to expose White's secret writing. During a long stay at Te Mata Te Aho refused to relate another 'tale' to White, asserting that the latter was not only composing his own narratives but 'writing all you hear from every person'; White observed, apparently without any rancour, 'he is a sharp little fellow'.¹⁶ White himself was beginning to admit to certain of his Māori associates that he might publish the knowledge they were providing him.¹⁷ One associate, a slave, Himiona, who had narrated a three-hour-long account of Heke's late war, even assumed this was White's intention from the outset and only asked that he not put Himiona's name to the 'korero'.¹⁸ It was as if Said's silenced Orientals had acquired the capacity to overwhelm the West's secret writing and force it out into the open.

If the autobiographical nature of White's journal highlights the give and take found in relationships between colonizer and colonized, it also stresses the hybrid state within which both had to live. This was a colonial society neither wholly English or European, nor exclusively Māori.¹⁹ Māori in the Hokianga were painfully aware that the world about them was changing, not always for the better. White recorded complaints about the changing environment in which foreign plants and new diseases were establishing themselves.²⁰ For some of these complainants, such changes were part of a larger European plan; in today's terminology, they were describing what they saw to be a strategy of genocide: "Europeans not finding the NZ so easy to conquer by the sword, so they brought all sorts of mate to kill us" (the influenza being now prevalent) caused this remark'.²¹ Even literacy, perhaps one of the few introductions which made a positive contribution to Māori society, as evidenced by journal references to Māori letter writing,²² was perceived as a double-edged sword: 'The Aho said today that he thought Europeans taught them to figure and write so as to give

15 19 June 1847, PJ.

16 8 December 1847, PJ.

17 E.g. speaking with the young tohunga, 1 July 1847, PJ.

18 8 July 1847, PJ.

19 My reading of hybridity here and elsewhere in this essay is informed by Homi Bhabha's suggestive essays: e.g. 'Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817' and 'The Commitment to Theory', in H.K. Bhabha, ed., *The Location of Culture*, London, 1994. A useful discussion of hybridity and post-colonial theory can be found in Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A critical introduction*, Sydney, 1998.

20 E.g. 24 November 1847, PJ.

21 13 December 1847, PJ.

22 16 April, 13 May, 17 June 1847, PJ.

them a desire to go to England, and when they got there they would kill them to get the land, this is what he has heard from the old chiefs'.²³

European knowledge and literacy especially interested White's Māori associates.²⁴ Some saw literacy as a means to acquire other knowledge. When White narrated the destruction of Jerusalem as told by the Jewish historian Josephus, the 'Natives' 'were delighted with it, and said "What a pity but some European would translate and print such things as those"'.²⁵ The journal also contains occasions when White's stories were relayed by his Māori auditors to other apparently enthusiastic audiences;²⁶ were they integrated into some hybrid domain of Māori knowledge? Other Māori sought to go further and speak English.²⁷ Te Aho, although intrigued, however, seems to have voiced a more ambivalent position. Watching White transcribe words from 'Mr William's [sic] Dictionary' into his own, he wondered out loud 'how Europeans could print the NZ language, not knowing any of it, but what the Natives taught them'.²⁸ Te Aho appears to have sensed that the original source of this knowledge was somehow being diminished in the process of intertextual transcription. He redressed the balance by asking White to read the words over to him, thereby turning the work back into an oral recitation.²⁹ When he learnt that White's sister could make tarts expertly, not through observation, a traditional Polynesian way of acquiring knowledge, but from a book, he was astonished that grown men might write on such 'childish' topics.³⁰ Te Aho, along with Te Takurua and Himiona, all linked this urge to write on any imaginable topic with what they saw as the extraordinary inquisitiveness (perhaps, sometimes intrusiveness) of Europeans with respect to their own knowledge. They saw these associated processes of questioning, recording and publishing as a combined practice which resulted in the most distinctive English or European product: namely, the book, with its hitherto unimagined capacity to record and disseminate without discrimination all forms of human knowledge.³¹ If it had the potential to make new information available to Māori, Te Aho and others also sensed how this new technology could diminish the orally based authority of their own knowledge.

White too experienced the hybrid nature of the colonial society, where the English persona sometimes slipped and was replaced by another, not quite 'native'. After an arduous hunt one day, he and his brothers preferred to take off their clothes, wrap themselves in blankets and sit around a fire; some chiefs, he reported, laughed at them for sitting there dressed like Māori.³² A more significant slip can be observed in White's usage of Māori words and phrases

23 3 February 1848, PJ.

24 As an aside, Māori response to the new reading 'technology' of books has striking parallels to the responses felt by some towards the new information technologies of today.

25 27 October 1846, PJ.

26 E.g. 21 June 1847, PJ.

27 E.g. 12 April 1847, 24 January, 28 February 1848, PJ. In one case, the Māori concerned had learnt the language in England and wished to maintain his fluency.

28 26 May, 31 May 1847, PJ.

29 26 May 1847, PJ.

30 12 June 1847, PJ.

31 See 12 June, 1 July, 8 July 1847, PJ.

32 15 April 1847, PJ.

throughout his journal. This was not an uncommon colonial practice, for White recorded reading a friend's journal which had Māori words on every line, intended so its writer claimed, "to puzzle my friends at home".³³ Such use of another language, unknown to correspondents in England, marked the colonial journalists off from their English peers; the former were no longer exactly like their friends in the 'home' country.

Another slip reflects the complexity of White's interest in Māori knowledge. During the time of his journal-keeping he began to describe himself as a *tohunga*. The first reference suggests that a Māori observed White carrying his belongings over his shoulder and related this to the practice of 'a "sacred man"' such as a chief.³⁴ Later, Te Aho's father, himself a *tohunga*, interrogated White on the extent of his knowledge of *mākutu*. Satisfied with his answers, the *tohunga* reportedly, 'talked to me as he would to a priest of his own country'. White's own explanation of his *mākutu* knowledge suggests he viewed himself as a hybrid expert for he claimed to know both 'New Zealand bewitching, also many of the English and of other nations'.³⁵ Later he denied possessing *mākutu* powers, suggesting only godless Māori could believe that.³⁶ However, White's last journal entry, describing a visit to Whangape, unequivocally stated, 'I am a *tohunga*'. The local people's actions appeared to him to corroborate this self-image: because of the rain they 'took me to a new house in the midst of a new set *kumara mara* [a cultivated plot of *kūmara*] else a *tangata noa* [common person], would have caused the *kumara* to die in this hut they brought cooked food for me which would not on any other account be allowed in this hut'.³⁷ A similar cross-identification is found in White's Māori-language newspaper contributions where he used Māori *noms de plume*: "'E rangatira no Nga Puhi" "a chief of the northern tribes", or "'Uto Keho Kekeno" [a chiefly revenge?].³⁸ In these representations of himself as a Māori, White would seem to have resolved the hybrid experiences of colonizers by incorporating, within his Pākehā person, the distinctive beliefs and practices of Māori. Such acts of encompassment could be seen as a fulfillment of what the journal's Māori critics had feared; namely, that European settlement threatened to diminish or erase the indigenous culture.

Such declarations of a Māori identity were not as complete or confident as White pretended. His literary personae were intended to keep his real identity secret.³⁹ Others realized that the language was that of a Pākehā.⁴⁰ Arama Karaka made a perceptive remark about the language in one of White's Māori pieces, which presented a series of chiefly speeches: "they are what . . . Pakehas would say if they were to speechify".⁴¹ More significantly, White's journal betrays an underlying anxiety about his colonial situation. He longed to return to England

33 1 July 1847, PJ.

34 2 February 1847, PJ.

35 15 March 1847, PJ.

36 10 June 1850, PJ.

37 22 December 1850, PJ.

38 20, 23 December 1848, PJ.

39 *ibid.*

40 23 December 1848, PJ.

41 24 September 1846, PJ.

and travel about, meet poets and get his work published.⁴² Such a desire to return 'home' was linked to dreams of marrying an English girl.⁴³ By contrast, White's attitude towards Māori women was decidedly ambivalent: they were attractive, even desirable, but not marriageable. In 1846 a party, including White, celebrated Christmas with a holiday where White met a 'pretty' and high-ranking Māori woman, Mihirangi. After several days she declared her love for him in a waiata which White affected not to understand, though transcribing a complete translation in his journal. On learning that she had later fallen ill, he fell into a complicated explanation-cum-justification of his position. It is filled with double words and qualifications: 'but, but, she is yet, a New Zealander'. In the end his prose gave way entirely and he completed his defence with a piece of poor verse: 'Cold this heart . . . / No forign [sic] charm shall warm this breast / It asks what is not found in the': the last line ended with this hiatus, emphasizing White's difficulty in commanding his feelings.⁴⁴

The extent of White's ambivalence is revealed in his dreams, that royal road to Freud's unconscious. In one dream he was on a 'tour', perhaps to his beloved England, and on viewing a church saw innumerable 'ghosts', in particular, that of a chief pacing the church porch, as if imitating White's more expansive travelling, and who took hold of his arm.⁴⁵ The reference to ghosts echoes other journal entries which describe White as being 'haunted' by desires to marry or ideas to write.⁴⁶ The confident English traveller could not, it seems, escape being touched by his Māori experiences in which chiefs dominated and waited to take the traveller in hand. White related a second dream, 'which was about being pestered by Kutus [headlice]', to Te Aho who interpreted it to mean his imminent death; an interpretation White laughed off, then abruptly changed the topic.⁴⁷ When White fell seriously ill, in 1848, Māori recommended taking him to a tohunga, believing that he had been 'makutuid, be-witched'.⁴⁸ Quite possibly, the dream had signified some anxiety ('being pestered'). The connection between kutu and White's head might suggest he was uneasy about the influence of his Māori surroundings on his thinking. His Māori identification seems riven by anxieties evoked by encounters with a spectral world.

In Mangaia, William Wyatt Gill set out on a pleasant August afternoon in 1869 to ride from his home in the village of Oneroa, in the district of Kei'a, to Tamarua village, several kilometres away.⁴⁹ He had been living continuously on Mangaia since 1852 when, fresh from theological college and the University of London, he had taken up his first mission posting at Tamarua. Any diffidence about speaking the island's language, with its local forms of intonation and vocabulary,

42 E.g. 12 May, 25 June, 26 June, 9 September, 11 September, 25 December 1847, 17 January 1848, PJ.

43 E.g. 11 September 1846, 7 May, 11 July, 29 December 1847, PJ.

44 See entries for 22, 23, 25, 27 December 1846, 6 February 1847, PJ.

45 6 June 1846, PJ.

46 7 May 1847, 20 December 1848, PJ.

47 26 December 1847, PJ.

48 6 December 1848, PJ.

49 The following information on Gill and Mangaia is derived from my continuing research. See Michael Reilly, 'Reading into the Past: A Historiography of Mangaia in the Cook Islands', PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1991.

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must have long passed by the time of his return. He was as near to being a native speaker as any European representative could hope to be.

His intentions for that August day were not evangelical. Nor since 1865 had there been any heathens to convert. Every chief and every commoner of every tribe now followed the religion of the London Missionary Society. That afternoon he travelled to Tamarua as a missionary-ethnographer, intent on obtaining from the lips of one of the oldest men on the island 'the narrative of his early life, as illustrating the character of the people and the nature of their religious customs ere the light of the Gospel had shone upon him'.⁵⁰ He was particularly interested in hearing about the process of human sacrifice performed during the rituals surrounding the inauguration of the highest political ruler, the *mangaia*, an office which had vanished shortly after the first missionaries, men from the Society Islands, had settled in Mangaia in 1824.⁵¹ His interest in the human sacrifice was not without some appreciation of its religious and cultural importance. Elsewhere in his writings Gill contrasted the sacrifice to that freely given by the Son of God upon the Cross at Calvary. If the former remained embedded in the dark world of heathen practices, Gill did at least understand its crucial sacrificial meaning and how it had also renewed the polity who had participated in it.

About much of his ride that day he was silent. The narrative only begins as Gill diverged from the usual road, to ride inland, into the hilly region of the island, the *maunga*. Off 'the beaten track', alone with his thoughts, he began to imagine the island's sanguinary past. As he passed through a narrow gorge he recalled that it had been 'the scene of a bloody battle'. The memory of that violence now dominated his imagination: 'Musing over the past, the dusky heathen warriors seemed to rise up before me, as I slowly threaded my path through clumps of tall reeds.'⁵² Summoning forth Mangaia's past warriors also brought to his mind the tribe proverbially thought to be the fiercest fighters, the Tongaiti, an *ivi* which had been politically annihilated during the previous century.⁵³ His journey's end at Tamarua would bring him to their ancestral home which, in their heyday, had been 'utterly unapproachable to strangers'.⁵⁴ He was still reflecting upon this sanguinary past when he observed of a deep basin

50 William Wyatt Gill, *Life in the Southern Isles . . .*, London, [1876], p.36.

51 This subject obviously interested Gill for it forms a chapter in his important study of Mangaia's myths and religious practices, *Myths and Songs from the South Pacific*, London, 1876.

52 Gill, *Life*, p.35.

53 Manganian tribal nomenclature appears to parallel Māori usages: there were three interrelated terms, the '*ānau* (=whānau), the *kōpū* (*tangata*) (= hapū), and the *ivi* (*tangata*) (= iwi). An *ivi* simply seems to have indicated *kōpū* related to each other through senior and junior descent lines from the same original ancestor. In that sense an *ivi* was more a symbolic than an actual social category; perhaps, like the Māori iwi. The *kōpū* was the true centre of tribal organization, each one comprising a number of '*ānau*, or families. The elasticity of relationship meant that *kōpū* and '*ānau* could be either deadliest of enemies or closest of kin, depending on the circumstances. To take the example of Tongaiti: this was the name for both the *ivi* and the most senior *kōpū* in that *ivi*. In its later history the *kōpū* was often at war with another Tongaiti *kōpū*, the Tepei (or Teipe), whose chiefs sought to supplant those of the more senior *kōpū*. As often as not they simply succeeded in undermining the entire *ivi*'s hegemony on the island: this contest may explain why the Tongaiti *ivi* later disappeared as a potent political force. The individual pursuit of chiefly *mana* often resulted — as today's neo-liberal capitalism may yet do — in the destruction of an entire polity.

54 Gill, *Life*, p.35.

that it was 'fortified on all sides by precipitous hills'.⁵⁵ He carefully made his way down these hills to his appointed meeting with the local deacon and his uncle, Paitiki, the object of his journey and himself from the Tongaiti priestly line. The men sat together under a giant chestnut tree. Before Paitiki began talking, Gill was given, in a gesture of hospitality, a thirst-quenching coconut; then in his words: 'I listened to the old man narrating his heathen experiences until the deepening shadow from the perpendicular cliffs at our back warned me to return homewards.'⁵⁶

That afternoon Paitiki told a series of stories relating the fate of particular sacrificial victims, or *ika*, with whom he had been involved.⁵⁷ While Gill heard this testimony from Paitiki's own aged lips, we readers are not so fortunate, for it is clear that the published text has been redacted. The most obvious redactions are the rendering of the narratives into Gill's English and the inclusion of stories from other Mangaian authorities.

Three accounts derive from Paitiki himself. However, the order in which they appear seems unusual: the first narrative is the most recent in date. It recounts the speculative killing of a 'beautiful young woman', who had recently married. She was slain by warriors in her mother's tribe, who had, not long before, been defeated in battle.⁵⁸ The warriors, who hoped by this deed to obtain some of their lands back, believed that the victim's paternal descent from Tepei, a *kōpū* (clan) whose members were eligible for sacrifice, justified their actions. Paitiki had conveyed their offer of the young female *ika* to the chiefs and priests of the victorious party but, after consultation, these leaders rejected the offering because this woman had not been selected using the proper ritual procedures.⁵⁹ This story is not only first but takes up more space in Gill's narrative than any of the other incidents he recounted. The reasons, I suspect, were the redactor's, Gill. Gill had explained that the Paitiki text was an attempt — like all his historical writing — to learn about the heathen world in order, ultimately, to emphasize the transformatory effects of the 'Good News', especially significant in a book published by the Religious Tract Society. The story of the rejected victim highlighted, for Gill, the violence and irrationality of the heathen world: the woman was beautiful and recently married, yet was killed by members of her tribe for their own gain, and in dubious circumstances, without appropriate ritual authorization.

By contrast, Gill did not consider a second story about a woman killed for sacrifice to be so instructive. It is more briefly told, only describing the victim

55 *ibid.*

56 *ibid.*, p.36.

57 *ibid.*, pp.36–43.

58 Identification of this tribe is difficult but the subsequent burial of the woman in the Auraka cave used by members of the Ngāriki *ivi* suggests that this was the tribe. As the most prominent Ngāriki leader involved in this battle was also the island's most senior religious figure it is possible that the victim came from his *kōpū*, Ngāriki or Pāpārangi, the senior *kōpū* of the *ivi*.

59 In this account Paitiki is described as 'a member of the victorious tribe', Gill, *Life*, p.39. According to other sources, this was Ngāti Tāne. Yet, Paitiki was descended from the unrelated *kōpū* of Tongaiti and Tepei; presumably he had fought as an ally. Such alliance building by belligerents was apparently common: a well-known example occurred before this battle when the *kōpū*, Ngāti Mana'une, who were probably related to the Ngāriki through female lines, entered an alliance with Ngāti Tāne.

as 'a poor girl'. Such brevity can be explained by the different circumstances of her selection. Unlike the rejected victim, this second young woman had been slain in accordance with the appropriate procedures. In choosing this second *ika* the victorious leaders had also demonstrated a capacity for ratiocination, for Gill reports that they had found her unmarried status 'highly desirable', suggesting that her youthfulness and lack of alliances through marriage to potential warrior supporters influenced them in their decision-making. Gill's narrative emphasizes one particular incident in the killing of this *ika*, when Paitiki acted as a decoy in order to divert the victim's attention away from the approaching warriors and so prevent her making off in time to a refuge.

The last of Paitiki's accounts occurred earliest in time and described his role as a very particular kind of decoy called a *ve'ive'i*. These were young men who had been adopted into their father's *kōpū* at birth and, later, betrayed their mother's brother, usually in exchange for a share in the island's limited supply of irrigated taro plantations, taro being Mangaia's staple crop. In Paitiki's case he lured his uncle (his mother's brother) away from the protection of Paitiki's own father and into the hands of the warriors, deputed by the island's leaders to slay the victim. In this as with other narratives about a *ve'ive'i*'s actions, the *ika* are always portrayed as trusting, never questioning their nephews' actions, suggesting that these relationships were normally close, as might be expected between a mother's son and his closest maternal kin. If this stress upon Paitiki's willing collaboration as a decoy on two separate occasions reflects the original narrative foci then it seems reasonable to assume that he retold the narratives as retrospective criticisms of his younger heathen self.

The final section of Paitiki's text is the first wherein he speaks directly to the reader.⁶⁰ In a move typical of his other historical narratives, Gill allows Paitiki to speak (in English translation) to emphasize to us how 'dark' those times were where 'Life and property were of little value'. It was Christianity which saved Paitiki: 'But for the gospel I should long since have been slain in my turn.' For over 30 years, he explained, he had 'served Christ'. Now as an old man he lived 'without fear' and hoped to bequeath his land to 'my grandchildren'. As he concluded, 'Never, never before was such a long peaceful period known on this island.' Doubtless this was highly gratifying to an English and Protestant reading audience; yet the last sentence suggests that Paitiki did not mean to ingratiate himself either with some distant imperial reader, nor even with his missionary. While Paitiki's reference to his grandchildren evokes the traditionally warm bond between *mokopuna* and their grandparents, the 'long peaceful period' alludes to an even more profoundly Mangaian understanding of the world. Mangaian historical texts of this era which recount the succession of high chiefly *mangaia* conclude with the final defeat of the heathen party (*te pae o te 'ētene*), explaining that the reign or 'au of the victors was the reign of Jesus (*te 'au o Jesu*).⁶¹ For Mangaian society an 'au signified the period during which a *mangaia*

60 Gill, *Life*, pp. 43–44.

61 'Akapapa'anga teia nō te au vai (ngā'i) tamaki i tupu ana i Mangaia', in Atiu, Mauke, Mitiaro, Mangaia, Penrhyn, Pukapuka History and Stephen Savage's ancestry, microfilm number 1084929, Genealogical Society of Utah for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints; List of Battles in folder of William Wyatt Gill Cook Islands notes and correspondence, Polynesian Society records, MS-Papers-1187-059 (microfilm 131, 132), ATL.

held sway over the island and guaranteed the peace necessary to plant and harvest food and to cultivate the other peaceful arts. The longer the reign, the greater the productivity and general prosperity for the people and the land. In Paitiki's view the '*au o Iesu* had succeeded beyond all expectations in providing these conditions. The long and peaceful reign of Jesus, which had allowed Paitiki to retain his lands for his grandchildren, can therefore be read as an indigenous interpretation of Christianity's achievements.

While it is difficult to restore the original talk where Paitiki had been the dominant partner, perhaps, his final comments suggested he was praising Mangaia's leaders who, after all, had made the apparently wise choice to adopt the new *atua*, *Iesu*, and his '*au*. For similar reasons, Gill could not efface Paitiki's testimony, with its indigenous interpretation, from his secret writings without undermining his own objective: namely, praising the success of the 'Good News'. At the moment of Christianity's great triumph in Paitiki's text, it falls apart under the force of local circumstances; it becomes a hybrid text. In its hybridity we experience the mission reality: the Manganian voice overwritten by Gill's English but the latter incapable of dissolving the former without destroying its reason for being written. Nor can Paitiki, a convert, be a pure source of the island's history. His view of the past was already at some distance from it, his historical narration informed by his own self-criticisms directed at his former heathen ways.

On his journey to Tamarua, Gill narrates a similar textual ambivalence against himself. As he rode, alone, along a less frequented path, he had summoned forth Mangaia's 'dusky heathen warriors' from the land about him. Such solitary musing suggests a fascination with the island's past that runs deeper than describing Christianity's transforming powers. We catch a glimpse of Gill's hidden self who, in labouring in a foreign field for Jesus' sake, yields to a desire — for a brief moment — to enter that world, dwell amongst its memories and make them come alive. This desire to encounter the past on such intimate terms remains, I believe, a deep motivation for any historian's otherwise objective-seeming research. Perhaps this almost hidden, fleeting desire explains why so many church-going men like Paitiki recalled for Gill, in such graphic detail, their own half-hidden heathen memories.

The sacrifices which Paitiki helped to obtain were taken around the island to Kei'a, later the locality of Gill's mission residence. The victim was first brought to a ritual site (*marae*) called Akaoro, located inland beside the Kei'a taro plantations: the body was then carried to Orongo, another *marae* situated on the district's western coastline. On a visit to Mangaia to see for myself some of the historic sites described by Gill and others, I was shown these two long-abandoned *marae* by Mataora Harry, the *kavana* or chief of Kei'a. Mataora initiated these and other visits to Mangaia's historic sites so that I would better understand references to them in the traditional histories. One afternoon, I attempted to retrace the likeliest route used to transport the sacrificial victim from the inland site of Akaoro to the coastal Orongo. On this solitary ramble I tried to time the journey, imagining the victim's bearers climbing up and down the narrow, precipitous pathways on either side of the *makatea*, an upraised barrier reef

which circumscribes the island. Later, when I talked over this walk with Mataora I asked him how long he thought such a journey might have taken. Before replying, he spent a while calculating the time it would take a group of men bearing a heavy body to cover the distance: he reckoned about 30 to 45 minutes.

Our visits to Mangaia's *marae* were an outcome of Mataora's own commitment to discovering and mapping these ancient ritual sites. We went for a long tour one day, walking around the taro patches, scrambling up banks and through the tangled, rotting vegetation to visit many of them. I drew sketches of what I could see, took photographs, paced out the length of the remaining stone walls and contemplated the spatial relationships between *marae* sites and the nearby taro plantations. In the course of this tour Mataora showed me one *marae* he had managed to excavate before the government funding ran out. His enthusiastic uncovering of its past, he told me, led one church minister to accuse him of attempting to revive heathenism. The underlying anxiety this reveals about the island's earlier history suggests, again, how the triumphal edifice of Christianity seems to sway; as if its foundations are not so firmly planted in the land as the Church might wish: the distantly remembered world of the ancestors still, perhaps, half inhabited by their descendants. But undermining the '*au o Iesu* was not how Mataora described his project to me; instead, it came closer to that image we catch of Gill musing about warriors on his ride to Tamarua. In Mataora's desire to learn more about his ancestors and his land, and my enthusiastic measurement and reflection upon distances and journeys, we seem to enter that ambivalent imagining of the past experienced by Gill and Paitiki that pleasant August afternoon in 1869.

All journeys come to an end but making meanings from them continues long after the traveller has come to a rest. For Williams's Matthew Price the Kestrel provided a perspective from which he could see the histories of the Welsh border country remembered in the land: the decaying Norman castles upon the English border, or the pits and slag-heaps of the ironmasters. In describing the violence of the Norman lords or the industrial dominance of the ironmasters, Price reads the signs of their presence upon the landscape in the light of what is remembered about them. Not coincidentally, Price is an academic historian struggling to write about the complexities of population movements in Wales during the Industrial Revolution.⁶² The land and people of his birthplace at once inform his choice of work and are interpreted in the light of his archival research.

Whereas Price reflects upon history-making in his own land, the nineteenth-century collectors of ethnographic information I have written about participated as local European residents in the processes of British colonization and the production of anthropological knowledge about the Pacific. John White went on to become a colonial Native official intimately associated with the destruction of Māori society through his work as an interpreter in the Native Land Courts and as a Land Purchase Commissioner. At the end of his life he largely achieved his ambition to become recognized as a writer when he published his collection of Māori traditions under government imprint; he had become the official expert

62 Williams, pp. 272–3.

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on Māori historical knowledge.⁶³ William Wyatt Gill wrote several books based on his conversations with Māngaians such as Paitiki, which became important ethnographic texts much praised by his contemporaries.⁶⁴ Said's criticisms of Orientalism's assumption — that only it could properly represent the Orient — emphasize how the authority of White and Gill participated in similar hegemonic relationships, which were demonstrated by their ability to write about the native other for Europe's learned institutions, both in the metropolis and in its colonial periphery.

In my own history-making of their journeys and their secret writing I have emphasized the complexities and ambiguities experienced by White, Gill and their indigenous associates, such as Te Aho and Paitiki, during the collection of ethnographic knowledge. Positioned within the academic subject of Māori Studies I am conscious of the other ways history can be recollected and remade. In this particular academic location the activities of missionaries, colonial officials and their indigenous collaborators are not infrequently subjected to one-sided interpretations, becoming demonized in an unconscious parodying of the colonizer's own writings about the Native. If motivated by a particular political struggle to enable the colonized to represent themselves, such interpretations risk turning an understanding of the actions of such colonizers and associates, as Said warns, into a reversed Orientalism.⁶⁵ The postcolonial emphasis upon the ambiguity inherent in colonial relationships acts as a corrective to such limited reconstructions of the past, without ignoring the very real 'structures of domination' which existed within such relationships.⁶⁶

In looking for alternatives to the presumptions of Orientalism, Said emphasizes a need for intellectuals to study human society using 'concrete human history and experience' and not to rely upon 'dennish abstractions'.⁶⁷ The journeys undertaken by White and Gill, from which their authority as ethnographers emerged, show how particular relationships render the face of colonization more individual, more multilayered, more difficult to abstract. Living in an age of even greater mobility, from pleasure-seeking tourists to ravaged, haunted war-refugees, we need to recall Paul Carter's injunction to 'tread [the ground] lightly, circumspectly'⁶⁸ in our journeys; acknowledging other people's many-layered memories as we make our histories, and realizing how far we are engaged within such storytelling, both in the pleasures of remembering the past, and in the unspoken politics of representation.

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63 Michael Reilly, 'White, John', in *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Vol. One, 1769–1869*, Wellington, 1990, pp. 587–9. This publishing venture, the highpoint of White's life, was itself stymied when, partway through, the project was terminated by a government determined upon retrenchment.

64 Niel Gunson, 'Gill, William Wyatt', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. Four, 1851–1890*, Melbourne, 1972, p.249.

65 Said, p.328.

66 Clifford, p.277.

67 Said, pp. 327–8.

68 Paul Carter, *The Lie of the Land*, London, 1996, p.5.