

## Korero: A Reflection on the Work of Judith Binney



If we who live in the present in Aotearoa can discuss our shared history in the 19th and 20th centuries, then we may gain from the past. If we cannot do this, then we will have learnt nothing from the past and we will have exchanged nothing with each other. In the representations of the past in the late 20th century the dialogue must be between each other: that is, it must transcend both self-representation and those European notions of claiming uniquely to possess the historical language which establishes an analytical truth.<sup>1</sup>

Judith Binney

I REMEMBER the first time I heard Judith Binney lecture. The lecture was about Rua Kenana, and I was a second-year undergraduate. I still, to my own surprise, have the course materials — it was my first-ever university course in New Zealand history. The lecture itself was not a moment of pyrotechnics or apotheosis, for Binney is not a demonstrative, nor melodramatic, lecturer. What I remember most, apart from the intense — I want also to say dashing, if she will forgive me — figure she cut behind the lectern, are the stories she told of Rua. It seems simple now, and perhaps obvious, but Judith understands the power of stories.

Call them narratives, call them stories, Judith wields them with enviable capacity. I remember sharing a coffee with Judith and Keith Sorrenson several years later, as a master's student, and being treated to an impromptu discussion about horses. Judith and Keith to and fro-ed about horses in nineteenth-century New Zealand, their place in Maori communities and lives. If I'd been smart enough to take notes, as I've more than once wished I had, those horses and their stories would not be so lost to me. Still, they changed the way I imagined the past, and 'made it new'.

Horses canter and gallop on occasion through Binney's work, as yet another proof of her eye for the critical detail, and her sense of the powerful symbol. The one I usually remember is Pokai Whenua, always 'the image of freedom', the white horse oral traditions see carrying Te Kooti from Nga Tapa, down the steep rocky precipice to the north. Some accounts don't name him, others say that he escaped on a rainbow. Pokai Whenua was the white horse with spiritual powers, 'te hāiho mā wairua'.<sup>2</sup> There are other horses besides, even here in this small sampling of Judith's writing. There is Rua's white horse, Te Ia, which carried him to Rongopai, and the tragic figure of the missionary horse shot for his master's sins.

Stories were gifts and treasures she was given, and Judith nourished, respected and shared them. Perhaps we could do worse than to begin — if only to begin — by thinking of these stories like horses, with different breeding and character, each of them incomparable, irreducible, at times striding, at other times nestling up, on the page.

### Foundations

Although Judith Binney is most noted for her ‘unanticipated trilogy’ — *Mihāia*, *Nga Morehu*, and *Redemption Songs* — her work is more diverse and complex even than these.<sup>3</sup> As both a teacher and an author she helped shape a generation of New Zealand historians, and her innovative research and writing changed the landscape of New Zealand history. Binney was a critical innovator within the historiography, most obviously in her use of photographs in history production and research, and in the use of oral interviewing.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps more powerfully, Binney was amongst the first academic historians to explore the operations of gender amongst Maori, and to attempt to find new modes of telling history, ones which could negotiate or express complex, conflicting, multiple narratives.

Judith Binney was a student of Keith Sinclair, something evident in her early choice of subject (and the choice of her first book title!). Sinclair had taken over as professor following the death of James Rutherford, and the small history department at Auckland was becoming a vibrant intellectual community increasingly concerned with New Zealand’s past. Sinclair introduced an honours seminar in New Zealand history, and during the late 1960s and early 1970s the department at Auckland acquired the core faculty who would shape the department well into the 1990s.

Binney began writing in an academic context that was only starting to take New Zealand (and other colonial histories) seriously. That the profession now looks very different is attributable not simply to ‘changing times’, but to the scholarship and work of Binney and her contemporaries. Aside from the explosion in the size of the university, most striking are the changes in the gender balance in the academy, and the (if all too gradual) fruition of a cadre of indigenous academic historians. She began lecturing in 1966 in a department that had just said farewell to Willis Airey and James Rutherford; she leaves one where the study of cultural history — Pacific, Maori and Pakeha — is well established. The group of young New Zealand historians about her when she joined the department — Michael and Judith Bassett, Hugh Laracy, Russell Stone, Keith Sorrenson, Marcia Stenson, and later, Raewyn Dalziel — all went on to have distinguished careers. Then, she was ‘Mrs Binney’; now she is Professor Emeritus.

Binney was amongst the last generation of teachers in New Zealand universities who did not have to hold doctorates. Her master’s thesis (finished in 1964) was a masterwork, and resulted in her book on Thomas Kendall (*A Legacy of Guilt*). As John Owens aptly put it, ‘Mrs Binney . . . once wrote a brilliant doctoral thesis on Thomas Kendall and absent-mindedly submitted it for an MA degree’.<sup>5</sup>

As it stands at the moment, Binney’s reputation centres on her most recent book, *Redemption Songs*. This is understandable. That hefty tome is by far her most ambitious effort, one which brought together a massive amount of research in oral, photographic, carved and written archives, and which yet remained humble. The book is some 600 pages long, and yet seems larger than even those pages. Indeed, when I first read Binney’s comment — ‘I do not intend to close discussion [on Te Kooti]; quite the reverse, I should like this

biography to open dialogues and enable further understandings to come forth' — I wondered if she were being too modest.<sup>6</sup> I imagined it would be a brave, or foolhardy, soul who ventured another biography of Te Kooti anytime soon. But it was quickly evident in reviews, debates and discussions following the appearance of the book that what she anticipated was precisely the case.

The almost unfathomable amount of research that enabled Binney to write *Redemption Songs* was only made possible due to dozens of people of mana, from the land of the Tuhoe to the Wellington committee which awarded Stout fellowships. Their decisions were wise ones, for what Binney produced was a text that was, as she hoped, profoundly enabling. Ringatu elders made available to Judith many of the religion's and their own archives; in return she interlocuted and repatriated much of the knowledge in colonial, personal and public archives. The book itself was a kind of repatriation, a returning of knowledge in an accessible form. Together, in a cooperative work which most peoples can only envy, Binney led the construction of an archive which facilitates; young Maori will, someday soon, tell other histories, as well as retelling and reading these. They are already in oral circulation. The photographs she found, or brought back, were met by descendants' eyes, and their eyes could see this was important work. Generations will be moved by these works, books which bristle with the rich vicissitudes of human life.

Yet if *Redemption Songs* is in some way the *locus classicus* of Binney's work, it certainly does not encapsulate her oeuvre. The preceding essays, chosen for their continued relevance as well as for their demonstration of Binney's evolution as an historian, show just how complex her body of work and thought is. Striking as her 'unanticipated trilogy' may be, the books are only a part of what Binney attempted or accomplished as an historian.

Indeed, the 'unanticipated trilogy' has meant that Binney has largely been appreciated as an historian of Maori. Clearly that is justified, but it is also limiting. All of Binney's work concerns itself, at least partially and at times more so, with Pakeha, often bringing an incisive critical insight into settlers and settler society. Binney's work is characterized by attention to topics which show Maori and Pakeha entangled in disparate and different ways.

Take, for instance, Binney's first book, *A Legacy of Guilt*. A biography of the missionary Thomas Kendall, it was a work about not one 'foreign' culture — Maori — but of at least two: the evangelical missionary culture in early nineteenth-century New Zealand, as well as the cultures of northern Maori. Striking as the *tangata whenua* are, to many of us the missionaries are perhaps as different. Certainly they are the most precarious — a group of strangers and outsiders both from where they came, and where they arrived. The small band of white missionaries were, it seems, only too often complaining, fighting, bickering and personally tormented — forging a culture on the fringes of the *tangata whenua* that drew from the interstices of England and the spirituality of eighteenth-century evangelicalism, while dependent upon and shaped by the sufferance of local communities and leaders.

In *Legacy of Guilt* Binney produced one of a handful of outstanding works in the literature on missionaries in Polynesia. It is a book that has aged very well, and Kendall remains as intriguing a figure now as he was then. Charged

with investigating indigenous language and culture, Kendall struggled to put the language on paper, to keep Maori belief out of his mind and desire from his heart. He ‘fell’.

The first essay we reprint is ‘The Heritage of Isaiah: Thomas Kendall and Maori Religion’. The essay was published in the second number of the *New Zealand Journal of History*, then in its very first year, and Binney has been connected with the *Journal* ever since. It was drawn from Binney’s MA thesis which was reworked as *A Legacy of Guilt*; in substance and title it is largely an abridged chapter of *A Legacy of Guilt* (ch.7). Though the article summarizes the fall of Kendall, mostly it examines his attempts to come to terms with Maori ‘religion’ — a body of thought, spirituality, practices and histories which eventually overwhelmed him. Charged with recording Maori language and religion Kendall was ill-equipped to do so, and could not write systematically about either. He could find no words capable of expressing, he wrote, the ‘true signification of a word or sound in the Native Tongue’.

Kendall was convinced of the historical truth of the Bible, and so tried to interpret the Maori world through his knowledge of the Old Testament and a rudimentary classical education. Maori became for him the sons of Egypt, the children of Ham, and the prophecies of Isaiah became points of departure for Kendall’s interpretations. Numbers with biblical significance, such as three and seven, were conjoined with Pythagorean theories. ‘It is almost impossible’, Binney observed, ‘to penetrate behind the heavy mask which he has . . . drawn over his material’. This sense of Kendall’s interpretative sensibilities was refined a decade later by Binney, after a drawing by Kendall of Nukutawhiti was identified at the Turnbull. In ‘The Heritage of Isaiah’ Binney was deeply suspicious of the three ‘states of existence’ that Kendall described, particularly in his attempts to fashion them into a trinity. In her 1980 article, ‘The Lost Drawing of Nukutawhiti’, Binney revisited these three states, and to some degree stepped back from her initial observation that Kendall’s emphasis was ‘clearly artificial’. The newly discovered drawing by Kendall, she wrote in 1980, ‘hints at a coherent symbolic structure for the universe’, and Kendall’s three stages of existence had support from the work of John White (with informants including Hone Mohi Tawhai and Aperehama Taonui) and Catherin Servant.

In other respects this early writing proved seminal, not only for Binney, but for others. Several writers concerned with Maori religion, including Bronwyn Elsmore and Jean Elizabeth Rosenfeld, have returned to these themes.<sup>7</sup> Keith Sorrenson went on to consider further the attempts of missionaries to understand Maori historical and religious discourse within biblical models.<sup>8</sup> Most recently Tony Ballantyne has reconsidered this emphasis on biblical interpretations of Maori — what Sorrenson called ‘the Semitic Maori’ — to argue for greater appreciation of the use by missionaries and others in New Zealand, of interpretations owing to contemporary understandings of Indian and Sanskritic origins.<sup>9</sup>

The appearance of Ngarara and Nakahi in ‘The Heritage of Isaiah’ was significant. These serpents, one the Maori term for the serpent of Genesis (Nakahi), and the other a ‘reptile, monster, or more literally, a gliding creature’

(Ngarara) were complex symbols in Maori religion, and were to become themes of Binney's work, revisited time and again. Indeed, Nakahi, which had become central to a cult at Rangihoua by the 1830s, was to be a point of particular interest for Binney.<sup>10</sup> Nakahi was linked by Binney to Papahurihia, a 'cult' under the guidance of Te Atua Wera. Binney was to write most fully about this in her wonderful chapter in the *Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand* — still the best primer for Maori religious change in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>11</sup> But this identification was one Binney came to question.

Kendrick Smithyman, a friend of Binney's, a co-worker and fellow historian, as well as one of New Zealand's leading poets, came to a different conclusion about Papahurihia. In his history in poetry, *Atua Wera*, Smithyman argued that the two were different; that Te Nakahi and Papahurihia were not the same person, although at some point the followers of Te Nakahi joined Papahurihia.<sup>12</sup> This view, which initially Binney had misgivings about, and which the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* would not countenance, she later softened to and found intriguing.<sup>13</sup> Smithyman was a poet of place and detail, who made larger philosophical points from what the less observant considered mundane or limited. A child of the Far North, almost all of his poetry is historical, and in many ways his poetry seems to share many of the qualities of Binney's history. In particular Smithyman's greatest achievement, *Atua Wera*, is, like *Redemption Songs*, an attempt to assemble different and often conflicting narratives and narrative voices into a coherent unity that might still speak different histories. Together Smithyman and Binney contemplated editing and publishing the journals of the Hokianga settler John Webster, and in *Atua Wera* Smithyman turned Webster's prose into poetry. This close relationship, like her choice of title for *A Legacy of Guilt* (from a poem by Keith Sinclair) was to prove typical of Binney's close relationship with literatures, Maori and Pakeha, oral and written.

Binney's early work on the north and its missionaries also occasioned her best known academic debate. In the pages of this journal, the debate between Binney and John Owens over Maori conversion, though nearly 30 years old, remains one of the most lively and enlightening in New Zealand historiography. Unlike most historiographical or interpretative debates, the discussion between Owens and Binney generated more light than heat, was conducted in a thoroughly scholarly spirit, clarified both their different positions and led to considerable improvement in our understanding of the period. Both Owens and Binney were thoughtful, adventurous and well-versed in the archives, so even today their dialogue remains invigorating.

Owens' 'Christianity and the Maoris to 1840' was primarily a response to the work of the American scholar Harrison Wright. In his book on New Zealand Wright argued that conversion followed Maori 'cultural confusion', 'mental disorganization' and 'increasing bewilderment'.<sup>14</sup> Owens took issue with Wright's contention that 'social disintegration' was prerequisite to conversion. Owens countered by arguing 'that at every period there was great variety in the Maori response to Christian ideas, that to a certain extent both ideas and reactions [to Christian ideas] were present even before formal

missionary activity began and certainly before baptisms occurred'.<sup>15</sup> The main difference in conversion rates lay not so much with Maori, argued Owens, but with more effective missionary techniques — especially the development of a written Maori language and the printing of parts of the Bible.

Binney's response to Owens shifted the debate again. She observed that there was a 'noticeable change of attitude' towards the end of 1833, but disagreed that this was due to an accumulation of mission activity not an 'improvement in their techniques'.<sup>16</sup> For her the 'decisive factor in the Bay area was the gradual alteration of the Maori attitudes towards the missionaries' — change initiated by Maori, not Pakeha.<sup>17</sup> By this time Christianity had gained a new relevance for Maori living in and around the Bay of Islands, and also for those Maori beyond who aimed to share in the benefits of having Pakeha. As peacemakers and as traders (rather than objects of patronage as previously) missionaries were becoming increasingly influential and independent so could thus teach more widely. Maori consequently chose to treat missionaries and their teachings differently. Still, religious change was difficult to measure and not limited to only one field. As Binney wrote, 'the Maori response to Christianity would only be partial, and would also be uniquely modified'.<sup>18</sup> Binney's argument was compelling (and remains so), particularly her foregrounding of Maori agency in the processes of 'conversion'.

Neither Binney nor Owen was satisfied with Wright's acceptance of an unchanging pre-contact Maori society, nor with the uncritical aggregation of 'Maori'. Both wanted to complicate understandings of religion and society. Owens wanted to refine 'conversion'; Binney agreed, but suggested Kathleen Shawcross's phrase 'going *mihanere*' was a better measure.<sup>19</sup> If there was any animus, it was extremely well concealed.<sup>20</sup> Owens once chastised a writer who had not come to terms with Binney's 'wide-ranging and meticulous writings on the Maori and Christianity'. Moreover, Owens thought the whole focus on the debate between himself and Binney overwrought:

From Harrison Wright onwards, historians have been aware of the variety of situations in which missionary influence was experienced and the diversity of motives and responses which the Maori people brought to this. Despite this, generations of New Zealand students appear to have been put through a treadmill of analysing the Wright–Owens–Binney theses (so-called) to come up with their own definitive answer concerning 'the Maori motive' for accepting missionary teaching. Alas, it was a false problem, for there never [w]as 'a Maori motive'. Underlying the whole exercise was the assumption that there was a group Maori mentality . . . . I tried to lay this hoary old argument to rest . . . in the *Oxford History of New Zealand*.<sup>21</sup>

Binney's interest in religion, missions and missionaries is evident in almost all her work. Perhaps the most unusual of her missionary writings, included in this volume, is her article 'Whatever happened to Poor Mr Yate?'. William Yate was a Church Missionary Society missionary forced from New Zealand in disgrace after allegations of sexual misconduct with Maori men. Suffering a 'fall' not unlike Kendall's, Yate was in some ways a similar kind of figure. Both Yate and Kendall had to reconcile their behaviour with the strict moral code and the intense emotional experience of the evangelicals.<sup>22</sup> The evangelical



missionaries were, as Binney reminds us, ‘the twice-born’ (a phrase also true, in a different way, of Tawhaki), acutely aware of sin, and emphasizing their personal relationship with God. If Kendall’s behaviour in succumbing to the temptations of Maori belief and a Maori woman, was scandalous, Yate’s activities were beyond this, challenging even the missionaries’ powers of euphemism.

Though Binney cheekily subtitled her Yate essay ‘An Exercise in Voyeurism’, it is evidently more than simply that. Yate allows her to explore some new ground — particular the passion, intensity and eroticism of the missionaries and their beliefs — as well as further exploring missionary sexuality. It is worth noting that ‘Poor Mr Yate’ is a study of missionaries and missionary culture and Maori are not a primary or even secondary concern. This is Binney as historian of Pakeha, and here too she was innovative — there were not many articles in the *New Zealand Journal of History* up until that point that took questions of sexuality, let alone homosexuality, as a central point of inquiry (there have not been that many since). Indeed, only recently have historians begun revisiting this early foray, and for those scholars her clarification of the Yate debacle remains foundational.<sup>23</sup>

In 1999 James Belich remarked that it was probably time that New Zealand historians realized that they sit on a goldmine of complex stories about the ‘great games of myth-making, class, race as gender; war, work, state formation and collective identity’.<sup>24</sup> I doubt that Judith Binney was amongst the historians he had in mind. For those who wish to see the nineteenth century only in black (or brown) and white, Binney’s work in general, and *Redemption Songs* in particular, provided just such a lesson in complexity. On the one hand politics and divisions amongst Maori were traced in ways that make it quite clear — if ever there was any doubt, given the ferocity with which Te Kooti treated some other Maori, and with which he was pursued — that Maori were intimately fractured in ways of kinship and politics. On the other hand, it showed Pakeha and Maori people, ancestry, involvement and activity critically (though far from always) intertwined. Within an historiography that has consistently overlooked these kinds of social, symbolic and historical complexities in favour of the colonial fiction of ‘two races’, this is a salutary and compelling lesson. As Binney reminded us, ‘In 19th-century Aotearoa our ancestors are entwined.’<sup>25</sup>

Here Binney showed one of her strengths; she can understand her material in ways that a local historian, who wields a local knowledge, might — but she does not write or think in the genres of local history. Much of her work, most evidently *Legacy of Guilt* and *Redemption Songs*, might be read by tangata whenua and local Pakeha as speaking to them, as recognizing and validating local knowledge, as comprehending ‘place’. The geography of her writing, so often a weak point for academic historians and a strong point for local historians, is exemplary; her mastery of detail is likewise, almost, as some reviewers suggested regarding *Redemption Songs*, to the point of being overwhelming. But never quite. In the ‘forest of symbols’ Binney does not get lost.

### Colonialisms

Since the inception of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on 1 January 1994, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) had been in rebellion. Throughout 1996 an Indigenous Forum was planned for Mexico City (Tenochtitlan) in mid-October. Poor and indigenous, hunted by the Mexican military as well as paramilitary groups, encircled within the rainforests of Chiapas, there were all sorts of reasons to think that the EZLN would not be able to make it. Checkpoints on the roads increased, the military grew and overflights by warplanes multiplied; still, Subcommandante Marcos, the spokesman for the EZLN, insisted they would be going.

The Mexican government finally made a concession: the EZLN could send ten delegates, as long as there were no warrants for their arrests. But the EZLN would not accept minor concessions. 'We have decided to send a delegation that represents our most aggressive side, our most belligerent and intransigent part, and our greatest symbol of war', Subcommandante Marcos told the press. He left the press conference momentarily and returned with the EZLN delegation. Wearing the trademark woollen ski-mask was a frail tiny woman, not five feet tall, small even amongst her compatriots. Her name was Commandante Ramona, '*la más pequeña*'. The EZLN was going to Tenochtitlan.

To the press it was either a clever ruse or pathetic joke. Commandante Ramona was ill, in desperate need of medical care — she was dying. She was simply a tiny woman. Just an Indian. But to those who could see past misogyny and racism, who could see Ramona as the Commandante she was, there was a woman determined to speak to other Indians, a leader of vision and courage — and a person that the public would not allow to be touched or harmed. When she flew to Tenochtitlan it was the first time in nearly three years the Zapatistas had broken the military encirclement of Chiapas.

In Tenochtitlan they had no trouble seeing Ramona the Commandante. At one gathering fifty thousand people were there to hear her speak. The walls read '*Todos Somos Ramona*', we are all Ramona. Students and nuns alike protected her, as on the streets people gathered money to pay for her care. Against expectations, Commandante Ramona represented the Zapatistas at the forming of the National Indigenous Congress.<sup>26</sup>

The Zapatistas are traditional innovators. It seems almost contradictory: Ramona was indigenous and in rebellion, yet nationalist; a Mexican with halting Spanish. Poor and often illiterate, encircled in the 'jungles' of Chiapas, the Zapatistas run an electronic, perhaps even postmodern, revolution on the internet. Like Ramona's trip to Tenochtitlan, the Zapatistas confound expectations.

What might this have to do with Binney? On the one hand the parallels between this story and the stories of oppression in New Zealand with which Binney has long been concerned, are suggestive. On the other, and perhaps less well known to those who have not known her as a teacher, is Binney's interest in the worlds of Latin America. Though Binney published little about Latin America, her reading and knowledge of the area was a repeated source of inspiration for her work on Aotearoa/New Zealand.<sup>27</sup> In her early years at Auckland there were no opportunities to teach unadulterated New Zealand



history; Binney, using her Spanish, taught classes on Latin America. Until her retirement she continued to teach very popular courses on the Mexican Revolution and colonialism in Latin America — in one notable course teaching comparatively about Peru and New Zealand. This was no mere hobby.

Binney's knowledge about colonialism in Latin America helped fuel and guide some of her critical observations about colonialism in New Zealand. A subtle example was her use of the neo-Marxist notion of 'underdevelopment', one inspired by Latin American (and perhaps African) works rarely read by most historians of New Zealand. In her 1983 essay on Maungapohatu Binney used these insights to generate a powerful and innovative portrait of government policy, both local and national, towards Rua Kenana and his community. The essay sharply illustrated how Rua was neither reactionary nor isolationist, but an innovator who saw for Maori a 'developed', traditional (and Biblical) future; and that his inability to realize this stemmed from government decisions to keep his community impoverished, isolated and excluded from the benefits of the colonial state — underdeveloped. It revealed not a government doing harm through ineptitude, misguidance or ignorance (though each of these elements was also present) but one operating with purpose and strategy, self-serving and deliberately oppressive.

Other specific Latin American works proved formative. Amongst these were the incomparable Las Casas, whom Binney knew well, and the more recent influence of Paulo Freire.<sup>28</sup> His work about (and amongst) the oppressed of Latin America served to buttress and nuance Binney's understandings about the discovery and spread of literacy amongst Maori. It is most apparent in her incisive but generally overlooked review of D.F. McKenzie's *Orality and Literacy*.<sup>29</sup> There, she argued that McKenzie had underestimated the number of literate Maori present at Waitangi in February 1840. This was partly inspired by Freire's demonstration that adults could become functionally literate in their own language in a very short time, 'a matter of weeks, as the missionaries observed, if the individuals were motivated'. Indeed, that review remains an essential caveat in the reading of McKenzie.

The influence of Binney's study of Latin America is perhaps most explicit in 'Songlines from Aotearoa'. In that essay Binney takes a well-chosen moment to point to similarities between Te Kooti, Hamiora and Ihaka Whaanga on the one hand, and indigenous leaders in the northern Andes, using the work of Joanne Rappaport, on the other.<sup>30</sup> This was no simple equation of New Zealand with the Andes, but rather an insight, by juxtaposition, into strategies of narrativizing and resisting colonialism.

This very broad range of reading was perhaps more typical of Binney's generation than the generation of New Zealand historians that followed — though Binney was unusual in reading beyond the British empire. One suspects that this kind of intellectual engagement, coupled with Binney's very focused early work — biographical, small in scale, detailed and psychological — helped shape the kind of historical method and vision that became a hallmark of her work.

Certainly Binney is not the kind of historian who issues large, general statements about colonialism or imperialism. It is actually surprising how little

she uses either of these ‘-isms’, a point that would comfort the number of historians who have been cautious about the use of these terms (for divergent reasons).<sup>31</sup> Her work operates almost as a counteragent to universalist or vague generalism. This is not to suggest that she has nothing to say about colonialism, but rather that her comments are measured and grounded. This is apparent in all her work, though perhaps never more so than in ‘Maungapohatu Revisited’. Indeed, to some extent her arguments might strike us as more limited than they need to be; but this degree of caution was always balanced by other kinds of ambition. Still, the insight so clear in ‘Maungapohatu Revisited’ was apparent in other places in her work. ‘The prosperous days of the early nineteenth century were long gone’, Binney later observed of the decades after the New Zealand Wars. ‘Rather, Māori poverty had been manufactured; it was the cumulative effect of the laws since 1864. A dual economy was being developed in New Zealand. While the Pakehā farmers were encouraged with development loans . . . Māori farming it was assumed . . . would be subsistence agriculture.’<sup>32</sup>

In some respects the particularity and grounding of Binney’s work seems, in retrospect, a matter of tactics. It is not as if she offers no analysis of colonial operations. Rather, the differences in her writing stem in part from an approach to the indigenous past which was unlike most of her contemporaries. Binney did not begin with questions of ‘policy’ or ‘government’, like A.H. McLintock or Ian Wards (or even Keith Sinclair). Rather she began with people themselves, both Maori and non-Maori, their experiences and narratives. This choice of tactics was likely influenced by any number of contexts swirling in the late 1960s and 1970s: from the removal of restrictions on the archives of Maori Affairs, through developments in ‘social history’ and ‘women’s history’, to contemporary political developments which occasioned new expressions of indigenous knowledge and politics. It was a strategy that was to mean that the innovations in historical practice she was to help pioneer were especially relevant.

It is a measure of the relevance and success of her chosen tactics that several of Binney’s writings have become essential reading, although, at least ostensibly, their subjects are quite limited. Hers are not the key general histories of Maori, of policy towards Maori, even of a particular Maori region. The outstanding work of general history on nineteenth-century indigenous/colonial history was (and is) surely Alan Ward’s *A Show of Justice*, a work of nuance and learning only recently matched by Angela Ballara’s two-volume sequence *Iwi* and *Taua*.<sup>33</sup> Though Binney’s contribution matches these in terms of sophistication and learning, her works, including those reprinted here, have smaller purviews. Her books and most of her articles revolve around a central figure or a handful of figures, whether it is Thomas Kendall, Yate, Rua Kenana, Te Kooti, Heni Brown, Maaka Jones or Te Akakura Rua. Still, it would seem inappropriate to call Binney a biographer. Binney herself deliberately avoided the word ‘biography’ in the titles of both *A Legacy of Guilt* and *Redemption Songs* in favour of ‘a life of’, and that subtle term seems both more elegant and appropriate.

Binney is always at pains to say that there is no one way to ‘do’ history and certainly never suggests that her way is the only or even necessarily the

best. Still, there is something both distinctive and promising in her approach. For one thing Binney's work suggests that colonialism and imperialism are best grasped locally. Her choice of phrase in person and lecture was 'on the ground', an expression which seems to capture both the immediacy and the specificity which for her is so valuable, but which also reverberated with other senses: 'grounded', whenua. If one might be tempted to see her works as being of a kind with the very parochial and narrowly nationalist histories of New Zealand that were common in the later 1970s and 1980s, it is easy enough to make the case that they were more subtle, ambitious and engaged than this.

James Boon once suggested the task of the ethnographer was almost impossibly conflicted; fieldworking on the ground while hovering over terrain from prescient heights — 'Icarus with dirty feet'.<sup>34</sup> This is a concern that should occupy historians as well and one that Binney has taken seriously. The thematic unity from *A Legacy of Guilt* through to *Redemption Songs* has made this easy in one sense, though in a more generalist way, Binney has also shown considerable commitment to thinking across larger chunks of time and space. Often these thoughts appear as gems, moments of wisdom to put local developments in relief. Broader insights seem to emerge almost organically from her particular studies.

In the jointly authored *The People and The Land*, Binney made her most concerted effort to write about New Zealand past in a wider way. Her chapters are in some respects standard, a distillation of the work of many scholars, but there is much about them that is unique. Though centering her arguments around core events and pieces of legislation, her material and interpretations are consistently innovative. Whether it was adding the 'Dog Tax War' to the New Zealand historical canon, or connecting Alan Ward's arguments about amalgamation more strongly to a focus on the Treaty, there is much to be admired in these chapters.<sup>35</sup>

An outstanding example of Binney summarizing and commenting on a broader chunk of history is 'Tuki's Universe'. Ostensibly about the relations Maori had with Australia prior to the Treaty, it becomes a much larger and more thorough piece of writing and thought. Using the map drawn by Tuki Tahuna, in his own cosmo-geographical projection, of what would become known as New Zealand, Binney explores the kinds of cosmological, cultural, and political, social and economic changes that occurred. The elegance of the piece is striking, and I confess it is perhaps my favorite piece of her work. It contains a wealth of detail and a precision and concision which makes it notable in the historiography of the north. It deserves to be more widely read than it has been, and represents a distillation of a career of study of the area and its people. One might also add that it gave Binney a chance to re-connect with Australia, the land of her birth (a point she has done well to minimize, or perhaps, to rise above!) At any rate, if one compares 'Tuki's Universe' to the writings on the New Zealand north or the British empire that Binney read as a young academic, the difference in substance, technique and style is only too apparent.

## Histories

The historiography of the British empire is scarcely recognizable from what it was when Binney published her first writings. In 1968 the standard works on New Zealand and the empire that Binney cited were authors like John Ward, Frederick Madden, E.J. Tapp, Robert McNab and Harrison Wright. On Britain Binney read Ford K. Brown and the (already elderly) work of Élie Halévy. None of these authors is read now as an ‘authority’, few of them are read even as ‘secondary sources’, but rather for their interest historiographically. More recent literature has almost entirely displaced these works, not only due to greater familiarity with the archive, but sea changes in the way the empire is thought and written about. Just as topics have been left to recede on the shelves of libraries, entire new species have arisen. Gender (an historical concept then unheard of), race, class and the indigenous are utilized in ways that seem to embody not just a different historical corpus, but a different historical praxis.

In many respects missionaries and religion are no longer what they once were. In particular, the writings of Catherine Hall, Boyd Hilton and the Comaroffs (amongst others) have made missionaries and the British empire look very different to how they once did.<sup>36</sup> These writers have also ensured that missionaries, who were for a decade or so somewhat out of fashion in the study of empire, have made a strong return — particularly for historians whose concerns have emanated from the metropole. Particular subjects with which Binney’s early work was concerned, such as the codification of language and the missionaries who ‘went native’, have retained and even renewed interest. Binney’s early work has consequently kept a steady relevance.

Indigenous religions during colonialism have, since the 1960s, also come to be taken far more seriously as subjects for historical study. No longer mainly the province of anthropology (though that discipline still dominates the study of much of these religions in Oceania and Africa), New Zealand historians have increasingly turned to these religions. If the milestones in this were Binney’s *Mihaiia* and Paul Clark’s history of Pai Marire, such concerns were longstanding outside of history departments (not least in the Polynesian Society and amongst its constituents).<sup>37</sup> The anthropological literature was one that Binney was acutely aware of, as is apparent in her early writings on Papahurihia; but important works about the ‘new’ Maori religions have continued to come from various points of the compass, including indigenous ones: anthropologists, ‘amateurs’, theologians as well as historians in the academy.<sup>38</sup>

By and large most of these writings have retained a local or national cast. Though these new religions were hardly restricted to New Zealand, few have turned their eyes towards other examples, even within the British empire. Binney’s awareness of Latin American histories is unusual. These broader contexts have great potential, and not merely for comparisons or theoretical interest. At times there are connections than might not at first be suspected. Take, for example, the Xhosa cattle killings which occurred in Southern Africa in 1856–1857 (a widely written about development in South African historiography). Inspired by the visions of a young Xhosa woman, Nongkawuse, the majority of Xhosa destroyed their crops and killed what cattle they had

in order to express their commitment to and readiness for a new pure state — through an appeal to ancestral spirits. Opposed by local and central colonial officials, the movement occurred on a massive scale. Perhaps 40–60,000 people died as a result. The governor of Cape Colony at the time, George Grey (yes, that Grey), treated these developments as an opportunity to dispossess further the Xhosa, and induct them as workers into the colonial economy. The prophecies of Nongkawuse in southern Africa and religions such as Ringatu and Pai Marire in New Zealand are thoroughly different, yet Grey was not the only thing which brings the two together. One of the many weapons in Grey's imperial arsenal was a Maori convert charged with convincing Xhosa to convert to Christianity.<sup>39</sup> These religions occurred in an imperial world, with circuitries that brought traffic and cargo in new, but interconnected, ways. These new religions were often cosmopolitan or omnivorous, which suggests historians could well be rewarded by following suit.

Many of the reasons that have kept New Zealand historians from reading as broadly across the empire as they would like, have also kept Binney's work from being as widely appreciated as it deserves.<sup>40</sup> In particular, it is surprising that *Redemption Songs* has not received the kind of attention internationally that it merits. There are few works of comparable importance, ability and energy in the historiographies of the British empire or its individual colonies. In Australasia the recent work that most invites comparison is Roger Milliss' *Waterloo Creek*, a tome comparable with *Redemption Songs* in a number of ways.<sup>41</sup> A history of two massacres and their aftermaths, the Australia Day massacre of 300 aborigines at Waterloo Creek on 26 February 1838, and 28 aborigines on 10 June 1838 at Myall Creek, Milliss narrates those painful events and the cultural and political dramas that resulted in Australian settler society. In detail and mastery of subject there are great similarities with Binney, though in content and style the contrasts are marked. Milliss's volume is a critical, synthetic, reconstruction of events; it is almost solely about the culture and politics of settler Australia. Milliss is not the ethnographer that Binney is; he is respectful and informed about the Kamilaroi and Weraera people who were massacred, but the crux of his work is not about them. Yet in three key respects these works are reminiscent of each other. Both are politicized histories, histories which do not retreat into a blissful and falsely imagined 'neutrality', but rather embrace and engage with the complex political actualities of their chosen histories. Similarly, both histories are aware of the parallelisms and engagements between present and past, that they are never separable, and that history and the present help articulate each other. Lastly, and connected with these former two, is the sheer narrative power that both these works possess. Reading *Waterloo Creek* or *Redemption Songs* gives one much to think about, teaches one much, makes old things new and new things relevant, but undergirding all this is that both are very powerful, emotional, reads.

The other work that I think also bears comparison to Binney's, and enriches the ways in which it might be read, is Charles Van Onselen's *The Seed is Mine*.<sup>42</sup> This work has had a very different career from either Binney's or Milliss' work, having been read comparatively widely by historians interested in the British empire, or in Africa more generally. *The Seed is Mine* follows

the life of Kas Maine (1894–1985), a sharecropper in years when the South African government targeted the independence of sharecroppers and attempted to reduce them to labourers for white landlords and during which apartheid was established. Yet, as Van Onselen reminds us, Maine worked for no man.

Van Onselen's method was similar to Binney's in key respects. He produced an enormous oral archive, in addition to thoroughly combing the colonial archive. *The Seed is Mine* is an impressively grounded history that captures time — like Milliss and Binney — as if in a fine net, following Maine through the cropper's cycles of years, a kind of time redolent of the circular time often perceived by Maori. Maine was a practical man, as well as a spiritual one, and if in Van Onselen's formulation it is the former that gets the focus, the latter is not neglected. There is an enormous heteroglot cast of characters reminiscent in many ways of the East Coast cast met with in *Redemption Songs*. Like Binney's descriptions of Te Kooti there is in Van Onselen's work a set of stories not simply evocative, but emotional, and powerful. 'Even at ninety-one there was always just one more season', Van Onselen observes, 'just one more plan, just one more way of cheating adversity'.<sup>43</sup>

*The Seed is Mine*, *Waterloo Creek*, and *Redemption Songs* are a triptych of works that open up the empire and its historiography in profound ways. Perhaps, in one light, this might seem surprising. On the face of it, although each of these tomes is enormous (all over 600 pages, with Milliss' almost a thousand) these works are ostensibly quite limited: a leader of a relatively small group of Maori; a black sharecropper in the western Transvaal; two days of massacre in New South Wales. I am not sure if Binney has read each of these works, but I am sure she would admire them, and see in them a loosely shared or kindred project. However particular the events or persons these books concern themselves with, however localized, they are never blinkered. They chart both local and imperial topographies. Each is an ambitious work, yet the authors know their subject intimately, the time, the people and the places. Perhaps, most powerfully, each of these works is politically aware. These are writers who know that the ivory in the ivory tower came from somewhere; and that, as Roland Barthes reminded us of the Eiffel Tower, as good as the view might be it is not omniscient — the structure of the ivory tower is perfectly visible to all but those inside it.

It seems to me that the kinds of histories Van Onselen and Milliss have given us are good company for Binney, the appropriate imperial writings with which to *juxtapose* her work (a word central to understanding Binney). It may seem that the five-volume *Oxford History of the British Empire*, the most substantial series for decades, ought to provide these kind of measures, but they are works of a different kind.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, though New Zealand was well served in the *Oxford History*, with the essays by Raewyn Dalziel and James Belich, that series as a whole was stubbornly blinkered and conservative. The concerns central to the work of Binney and, indeed, probably the larger part of the historians now working on the British empire, are mostly absent in the *Oxford History*. There is, amazingly, almost no discussion of gender, no attempt to systematically consider the formations of race or racial discourse, and perhaps most powerfully, there is precious little sense that there might be alternative



ways of writing or thinking about history.<sup>45</sup> Still, as Belich acknowledged by including *Redemption Songs* on his shortlist of recommended reading, there is a place for Binney's work in that corpus too. But it remains that the dimensions best seen as the hallmarks of Binney's writings and her praxis as an historian, can hardly be appreciated within the confines suggested by the likes of the *Oxford History of the British Empire*.

Take, for instance, one of the ways in which we might consider the approaches that Binney has made towards oral history amongst Maori. Her efforts amongst the women of 'nga morehu', in particular, echo the approaches advocated by Michel Foucault towards what he called 'subjugated knowledge'. Foucault meant two things by 'subjugated knowledge'. First, he meant 'the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemisation'. Second, by subjugated knowledge Foucault meant something quite different, 'a whole set of knowledges which have been disqualified as inadequate to their task'.<sup>46</sup> In both of his senses, Foucault argued, subjugated knowledges were not simply gone forever but could be dug up, or 'reactivated'. Binney's histories of Ringatu, of the Iharaira, and most vitally, of 'Nga Morehu' are near classical examples not just of oral history, sensitively and evocatively written, but of the reactivation of subjugated knowledge.

That there was a 'disqualification' of entire domains of (indigenous) knowledge should be obvious to all who have even a passing acquaintance with New Zealand history. Equally, it is perhaps as apparent that indigenous knowledge has been 'buried and disguised' in the functional coherencies and systems of colonial discourses — whether in Elsdon Best's *Tuhoe*, Grey's *Polynesian Mythology*, the Native Land Court, or any of hundreds of other instances. Binney's researches and writings since the mid-1970s have been largely addressed concerns of subjugated knowledge (though she herself has never used this term). In the first instance, there have been her efforts to read and recover knowledge of the Ringatu 'buried and disguised' in both the colonial archives and New Zealand historiography. Secondly, in what I consider a far more powerful endeavour, Binney began exploring and excavating 'whole sets of knowledges' that had been disqualified in colonial New Zealand.

That these knowledges had been disqualified was not simply an effect of colonial encounter. Clearly, as Binney shows, it derived from other things as well, which were not restricted to power relations between Maori and the colonial state or its officials and agents, or even with settlers more generally. Binney's work points to a complex of issues, including literacy, control of the archives by government and government aims, gendered differences amongst Maori, conversion to Christianity, the secularization of history and knowledge, changes in Maori beliefs around tapu (and other central beliefs), dispossession of land and resources, poverty, poor health, public education, ethnographic research and so on. It was a phalanx that had many destructive effects, not least the subjugation of many sets of indigenous knowledge. The Bible, bureaucracy, science and warfare combined with these developments to delegitimize what Maori knew about their past, their future, the world around them and the worlds that were not visible.

Binney's publications can justifiably be seen as efforts to reactivate subjugated knowledge. In her works such knowledge is iterated as truthful, competent and powerful: legitimized. Binney's relationship to these histories is therefore not just of editor, collector, sponsor of the tellings, patron and client, but of reactivator. As a result, once again many histories of the Iharaira are in circulation, when for a time they were not, and are again carrying the full import of their mana. This is knowledge with which Binney has been entrusted, and also, which she has unearthed, and by means of her book and the critical conduit of conversation (interview gives a misleading singularity to the direction of knowledge flow) has contributed, perhaps in some sense even led, the reactivation of these knowledges.

I suspect that many who took issue with what they regarded as Binney's characterization of Te Kooti were, at root, often taking issue with her commitment to reactivating these knowledges. Words such as 'balance', 'objectivity', and 'real history' are not, as many of those who wield them pretend (or mistakenly think), transcendental units of cosmic analysis. As Binney knows only too well, often what has been regarded as balance and objectivity has worked consistently to subjugate and disqualify Maori (and other indigenous) historical knowledge. At any rate it remains unclear how what has been understood as balance and objectivity can cope with the kinds of violence and incommensurabilities that any complex history — such as we now see in Aotearoa/New Zealand — confronts.<sup>47</sup> Just as we now appreciate that William Hobson's 1840 words or the Treaty of Waitangi did not make all in this land one people, neither will there ever be simply one history — and these two matters in part explain each other.

One of the most innovative and searching techniques Binney has used in her work, particularly in conjunction with Gillian Chaplin, has been the medium of photography. Binney would return to people and communities with photographs and these proved to be powerful entries into people's lives and memories: the use of photos 'gave us a way of talking across language difficulties, and across time — and also about "representation" . . . . By coming with some new photos — unmediated by a reporter's slant, or patronizing captions, we could begin again — and a different history emerged.'<sup>48</sup> This has proven to be a powerful way of reactivating subjugated knowledge — one that has also occasioned rich accounts elsewhere.<sup>49</sup> Another insightful description can be found in *Nga Morehu*. Binney describes how photographs shaped her encounters with Putiputi Onekawa: 'we arrived out of the blue, with a bundle of old photographs of her father and the community at Maungapohatu, to ask if she could help us identify the people. We spent the day looking at the faces and recalling them out of the dead past into living memory. It was the beginning of a friendship which has continued to grow.'<sup>50</sup>

The narratives with which Binney has worked, the processes of conversation and memory, have all been cast in gendered ways. In the course of Binney's career one can see quite clearly an increased awareness of gender and its centrality in colonialism, both in the telling and the structuring of histories. It is a trajectory that is not unexpected, as Binney's career in many ways coincided with (and in certain ways helped to lead) the development of critical gender

histories in New Zealand. Her early work, typified in *A Legacy of Guilt*, is in this sense a universe away from her later work, particularly *Nga Morehu* — which recounts the life stories and some of the knowledge of a group of Maori women connected with Rua Kenana.

Along with critical studies of race, gender has provided the impetus for much of the innovative historiography produced about the British empire.<sup>51</sup> In Binney's oeuvre it has worked in a similar fashion. Through the matrix of gender Binney has combined much of what is innovative about her work, connecting her concerns with narrative, colonialism, the religious and 'subjugated knowledge'. The sustained encounters which Binney had with 'nga morehu' while researching *Mihaia* crystallized an historical project in which gender was not merely thematic, but absolutely central. The differences between the narratives of these women, and those of the colonial archive, or even of their menfolk, quickly became apparent — and 'The Status of Maori Women' is a reflection on gender and the processes of researching and writing *Nga Morehu*. Maori women's historical knowledge, and not only as a part of the larger set of Maori historical discourse, had been subjugated. But that subjugation was neither absolute, nor predictable. 'I know that mountain is a woman', Materoa Roberts told Binney and Chaplin. 'I saw this mountain in my dream. Nobody has told me what I saw. I know what I saw.'<sup>52</sup>

Postcolonial history, as much as poststructuralist history, has insisted on the ways in which race, gender and class are mutually articulated axes of difference. One consistent problem, however, has been showing these connections clearly at work, let alone in nuanced and diachronic ways. One of the strengths of Binney's work with gender has been that she has considered this problem directly. As is evident below, Binney demonstrates that the histories of the women and narratives with which she works can only be comprehended if one is sensitive to rank, as well as to 'race' and gender.<sup>53</sup> Again, in a familiar analytical move, Binney disaggregates the crude entity of Maori women to draw attention to the contradictions and differences within. Here Binney was particularly addressing those who thought that it was 'axiomatic that indigenous women living in a [colonized] society . . . based on male gender dominance, will inevitably form the most oppressed stratum in that society'.<sup>54</sup> The problem was that these were not simply poor, oppressed victims but women of mana who held in their minds, words, hands and bodies, not just the past, but the future.

Again, the research methodology of Binney, from her use of privately held Maori archives, through the use of photographs, to her extensive use of waiata and oral interviewing both enabled and occasioned her history-making. It is quite clear from *Nga Morehu* that 'interviewing' is almost inappropriate, and that her work with the women of 'nga morehu' was trusting, dialogic and discursive in ways better described as korero or conversation. It was the women who were mostly at home when Binney first visited; she and Chaplin were themselves women, and they would often be passed from family to family by women. One might suggest that the relationship between Binney's research and her innovations in history-telling were organic, if that did not elide the hard intellectual work and creativity that originated with both Binney and her

interlocutors. As Binney commented regarding the historical discourse of Tihei, Rua's great granddaughter (Hei Ariki Algie): 'Family stories such as [Tihei's] open up quite other understandings . . . in writing history, the previously "dominant" versions have shut out other "truths", and made us blind to others' experiences. *Redemption Songs* was constructed with the intention of exposing — and juxtaposing — different understandings of the same sets of events.'<sup>55</sup> If Binney drew the inspiration and the material from her research, her own abilities and knowledge remained equally essential.

One of the literatures which helped to shape Binney's work, and is worth drawing attention to, was her reading of 'Pacific History'. This was crucial in the shaping of *A Legacy of Guilt*: Binney corresponded with Niel Gunson and read his brilliant doctoral thesis on evangelical missionaries in Polynesia, which later became the central work on the topic.<sup>56</sup> Gunson was one of the first historians brought to the Australian National University in Canberra by the New Zealander James W. Davidson who set up the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies (and whose influential thesis Binney had also read).<sup>57</sup> Binney's ideas were also shaped by the seminal work of Bernard Smith which foreshadowed much of the scholarship of the late 1970s and 1980s.<sup>58</sup> Davidson clearly considered New Zealand to be amongst the Pacific Islands, and this strain of thought can be seen at various moments in Binney's work as well. Many of the principles of 'Pacific History' championed by Davidson — especially the learning of indigenous languages, fieldworking or 'participant observation' and attempts to deal seriously with indigenous knowledge — were ones Binney embraced at a time when the New Zealand historical profession generally did not. In some senses it is still struggling to. Indeed, that Alan Ward's work came out of the Australian National University and not a New Zealand (or British) university is not surprising. Since Ward this trend has continued and several of the most ambitious or interesting historians of New Zealand have come out of the Davidson school, from Ward through Kerry Howe to Michael Reilly.

The significance of this Pacific link is most apparent in 'Maori Oral Narratives, Pakeha Written Texts'. Binney begins by quoting Albert Wendt (the Samoan historian/novelist) and later Malama Meleisea, the leading historian of Samoa. It was a relief, as a master's student, to come across Binney's use in that article of Meleisea's *The Making of Modern Samoa*. Meleisea's volume is a masterpiece of indigenous and colonial history, and is certainly one of the best things ever written on New Zealand colonialism. Yet it seems almost no New Zealand historians had read it (still very few cite it) — due to its concern with New Zealand colonialism in Samoa rather than in New Zealand. Meleisea offers theoretical and historical insights specifically about New Zealand, and even more powerfully demonstrates a number of approaches to indigenous oral traditions and politics within Polynesia. Yet it seemed the only senior New Zealand historian to take it seriously was Binney. While it may be an overstatement to call it a studied ignorance, it is consistently surprising how few New Zealand historians have read the key works in Pacific history, even though (for all their problems) the Davidson school offered a complexity of works and ideas that specifically included New Zealand. I fancied that Binney might spark others to read Meleisea, yet even now the few who do read it do so only to learn about Samoa.

Just as Binney remained a committed reader of Pacific history, she continued to be a consumer of anthropology. Perhaps most significant of the many connections she has with anthropologists has been with Jeff Sissons. In several respects Binney and Sissons have parallel paths. He began in the north (at least in publication) working on a ground-breaking political history of Ngā Puhī (in 1987), and then published his reflection on Tuhoe history in 1991 (which actually stemmed from research dating back to 1977–1979 — during which time Binney published *Mihaia*). Sissons' and Binney's work and informants overlapped, they have shared sources and stories, and no serious student would now read *Mihaia* or Binney's other writings on Rua without also reading *Te Waimana*.<sup>59</sup>

The close, symbiotic relationship between Binney and Sissons contrasts with the work of Peter Webster. Though the writing of Webster's work on Rua was occurring contemporaneously with Binney's and Chaplin's, he did not share his work with them. At any rate his work was very different in purpose and outcome. This was not so much a disciplinary difference — Webster is like Sissons an anthropologist — but stems from a different theoretical and discursive orientation. Strongly inflected with 'structural functionalism' and structuralism, with recourse also to psychoanalysis, as well as Kenelm Burridge, Neil Smelser and Norman Cohn's ideas, Webster was concerned with explaining Rua's millennialism by employing models adapted or derived from other situations he regarded as parallel. Webster consequently produced something very different to either Binney or Sissons. Webster was concerned with 'the problem of explaining millenarian movements', and for him Rua was merely 'a specific example'.<sup>60</sup> As a result he was inclined towards explanatory frameworks quite foreign to the understandings present in Binney's work, ranging from 'relative deprivation' to the way in which 'hope transforms maladaptive anxiety into purposeful action'.<sup>61</sup>

Sissons has, I think, alluded to some of these key differences between Binney's *Mihaia* and Webster's *Rua and the Maori Millennium*. It is worth making these allusions more concrete as they help us appreciate Binney's own trajectory. On the one hand, *Mihaia* was an attempt to integrate the historical discourses of the Iharaira into those of academic history. Webster's book, on the other hand, is a different kind of effort: one that subordinates those views of the Iharaira to other kinds of explanation — what I will call 'models'. Binney's approach in *Mihaia* was one that she came later to problematize and her efforts to try and locate more multi-vocal ways of approaching the indigenous past unfold in the latter works of her 'unanticipated trilogy'. In *Nga Morehu* and then *Redemption Songs*, the largely 'integrationist' approach of *Mihaia* gives way to more complex ways of reading, describing and encountering indigenous historical discourses. Greg Dening offers us a way of talking about Binney's work which draws out the contrast between hers and Webster's. He contrasts 'models' with 'metaphors'.

Both model and metaphor are transpositions, readings of experience, products of consciousness. Their distinction lies in the fact that metaphors are understood and models are imposed. Metaphors enlarge within a closed system; models belong to an

observer's perceptions . . . . Metaphor is an instrument of daily understanding within a closed system. Like myth, it is always true to that system, always objective, always expressive of known and seen realities. But models are always schizoid: they belong to two systems, the one they describe and the one that constructs them. They are always true and untrue, objective and relative, expressive of an unseen reality in one system and of a seen reality in another.<sup>62</sup>

If Binney had begun with questions of models, perhaps she might have simply sought after new or 'better' ones, and certainly her trilogy would not have unfolded as it did, perhaps not at all. But because her approach began with the classical techniques of integrative history, and was quickly troubled by what Sissons has aptly called 'the distinctiveness of Tuhoe historical discourse', her later works no longer simply accept history-writing as a solely, nor even primarily, integrationist task.

Metaphor is not the term that Binney uses most of the time; rather, she more often talks of 'narrative'. From the mid-1980s onward Binney was less concerned with integrating these narratives into a singular or braided historical narrative, but rather to tell them in ways that maintained their integrity. These are stories with meanings much larger than themselves; in Binney's use of the term narrative we see something that merges with the accretions of metaphor that Denning writes of. In many respects Binney's use of narrative parallels the incisive use of metaphor by Lilikalā Kame'eiehiwa in her history of Hawaii, *Native Lands and Foreign Desires*. Kame'eiehiwa shows how metaphors and narratives emerge from, structure, draw meaning from, and give meaning to, narrative. She describes central metaphors of eighteenth/nineteenth century Hawaii coming from and returning to narratives of Wakea and Papa.<sup>63</sup> These metaphors, such as *mālama 'āina* (caring for the land), *'aikapu* (male and female separateness), *'imihaku* (a searching for mana) and *ni'aupi'o* (incestuous mating), are critical for comprehending the Hawaiian past in terms concordant with Hawaiian historical discourse. It is not that these metaphors determine the past or the future, but that they were central to the way both were experienced and understood by Hawaiians. As Binney puts it in 'Songlines', in a turn of phrase that shows how her own thoughts are consonant with those of historians such as Kame'eiehiwa and Denning, 'oral narratives and metaphors, while sustaining historical memory, allow for an infinite variety of meaning and active response'.

Sissons structured *Te Waimana* around what he called four 'domains of Tuhoe history'. For him it was critical to keep a separation between oral narrative and narrative based on (primarily colonial) documentary sources — and also to differentiate and keep independent domains of iwi and hapu relations, whanau relations, the Messiah and reminiscence. This was an approach through which he hoped to preserve the autonomy (sovereignty?) of indigenous understandings, and enable these 'Iharaira historical understandings to more fully confront and challenge those of Binney, Webster and [Sissons].'<sup>64</sup> This, as we will remember, very much accords with Binney's approach in *Redemption Songs*, which for her represented a significant development in purpose and practice from *Mihaia*. The ground for this change was first laid out in 'Maori Oral



Narratives, Pakeha Written Texts'. Binney's phrasing is, however, importantly different from Sissons', and she chooses to call what she attempts 'juxtaposing different narratives'.

'The contradictions in what constitutes history — oral and written — cannot be resolved', Binney continued in the same essay. 'We cannot translate other histories into our own. We can merely juxtapose them.' Juxtaposition has become central to Binney's approach to writing her histories, her response to what she came to recognize as perennially vexatious.<sup>65</sup> How do we go about constructing histories which stem from radically different experiences of the past, and which are expressed in forms not only fundamentally different, but incompatible or contradictory? Binney's choice was not to attempt to simply convert or synthesize a narrative and this has characterized her work since *Mihaia*.

At the crux of Binney's commitment to juxtaposition we might see two central concerns. The first is an observation about incommensurabilities. Most obviously there are incommensurate narratives, but similarly one sees in her work an appreciation of incommensurate beliefs, languages, actions and understandings which articulate and articulated in these narratives. Second is an observation about the problems of reduction, especially as it concerns narrative. Narratives, Binney argues, are not simply vessels for content, so one cannot simply extract content from them: the forms themselves sustain 'historical memory', which is why she insists that 'the integrity of the various oral narratives has to be retained when they are transmitted in a written form'.

Binney's acknowledgement of incommensurability is not, however, any kind of argument for undifferentiated equality. It is quite evident, in all of Binney's work, that she treats the narratives with which she works with a rigour and discernment that is both robust and nuanced. On the one hand, this kind of critical work is established practice, not only in academic circles, but in Maori historical discourse. On the other hand, however, this highlights the very real authorial power and presence possessed by historians when they act, not only in established ways as 'historians', but as editors and compilers. Binney, (like Sissons also), mediates or controls the kinds of juxtaposition and autonomies represented. In this different role the historian still transcribes, unearths, assembles, paraphrases, quotes — writes, and their editorial and writerly conduct governs the texts they produce. If the task for Binney is no longer predominantly synthetic or integrative, it has remained critical and become ethical. Working with people and their narratives, and an 'awareness of the structuring of the oral narratives also makes one very aware of the responsibilities engendered in recording oral history. The primary responsibility must be to those with whom you have talked. It is *their* history.'

Binney does not see any magical technology in juxtaposition, apart from its commitment to keeping the integrity and multivalence of narratives, to letting stories speak in their own ways. In her formulation, juxtaposition is not a solution, nor is it any kind of fix. There can be no closure with the past, as people as different as Karl Marx, Walter Benjamin, Hei Ariki Algie as well as Binney remind us, not even in the temporary and fragile act of forgetting.<sup>66</sup> Juxtaposition serves the purpose, then, of visibly problematizing

the representation of the past. Such an approach makes it clear that the past, and the problems of representing it are not simply puzzles to be solved, but rather contradictions to be entered into ethically, carefully and critically. It is by these lights we might see juxtaposition as a potent step, an approach that allows us to represent and appreciate difference without fetishizing it, to talk about different pasts without disavowing their connections, to see in the land more than one history, and more than one way of telling or thinking about history. Most powerfully, in juxtaposition there is something that I have argued is akin to reactivation; colonial histories are faced with histories of the colonized, which is also 'a necessary step', as Binney describes it, 'so that the dominant culture changes its attitudes about its possession of "truth"'.

Several of my own students have posed an intriguing question after reading Binney on juxtaposition. Is that really the final play they ask? Cannot we go further? They were troubled by the lack of closure; there was no single story to grasp, no one truth to beat down all comers. I think only later could they thoroughly grasp the significance of what had been left open ('as open as experience', as Smithyman once bitinglly put it). Which is not to say that all is completely open, but simply to point to the last critical step which, in its way, comes after juxtaposition: reading and reciting. It is the reader or hearer who ultimately ponders juxtaposition, and puts these different narratives into dialogue (or does not). The death of the author, I remind them (hopefully ironically), is the birth of the reader. Juxtaposition confronts the reader with an unusually broad, and well marked, set of choices. The written text, at least potentially, moves beyond the page.

Clearly there are alternatives to juxtaposition. Binney might have produced a singular synthetic narrative, or selected between one or other of the narratives, or fashioned a 'pure' facticity and imagined it to stand independent. These are all pretty standard modalities for history and each of them has tended, in the past, to exclude or erase indigenous histories. There were good reasons for choosing otherwise. One might have suggested other innovative alternatives, and there are possibilities, such as the pastiche. Efforts at writing history as pastiche, most strikingly that by Klaus Neumann, have proven interesting but never entirely successful.<sup>67</sup> The choice of this kind of narrativization was not one driven by indigenous sources and indeed there is a sense that this form was better suited as a critique of European historical discourse, than as a way of better engaging with indigenous histories. The pursuit of ethnographic history may cover the most interesting possibilities. This is what historians such as Denning and Kame'eleihiwa have begun, but clearly there are many ways and directions in which this might progress. What is needed is not a manual or dictionary for the translation of Maori histories into English, which seems a dubious project, but perhaps something both more incisive and more challenging. It seems what might be most valuable is less a mechanism, but rather a poetics and an ethics. If this work should be continued, it is not solely a question of by whom. Nor can it ever be a question of searching for pure or old ways. History will always be a transposition of the past but how this might happen is wide open. This is the work that scholars such as Aroha Harris, Danny Keenan, Charles Royal, Te Maire Tau and Ranginui Walker have undertaken. The task is no easier for

them than it was for Binney, as the strictures of the academy and tapu work upon them in different ways.<sup>68</sup> Nor is it any less urgent as the Treaty continues to speak and we remember the dead ‘woven into our flesh like the music of bone flutes’.<sup>69</sup>

One of the most concentrated reflections by Binney on narrative, metaphor and the making of history is below in ‘Songlines in Aotearoa’. ‘Songlines’ was a term made prominent by Bruce Chatwin as he attempted to explore the connections between aboriginal people and place in Australia: ‘wherever men [sic] have trodden they have left a trail of song (of which we may, now and then, catch an echo)’.<sup>70</sup> Several prominent scholars have taken up the idea of the songlines, in order to continue exploring the meanings and practices of narratives.

Binney’s focus in ‘Songlines’ is on relational narratives, those charged with mana, the legitimizing ‘succession narratives’. This revisits and extends the themes evident in ‘Maori Oral Narratives’. In ‘Songlines’ she begins to relate these narratives to the larger cultural and cosmological narratives told by Maori. This was a logical development, as these are the larger contexts in which these narratives are told. As a result in ‘Songlines’ we also see Binney’s typically quiet re-entry into the controversy over how to read and regard not only Maori but Polynesian thinking and practices regarding myth. Central in this controversy is the work of Marshall Sahlins. Binney reviewed Sahlins’ most important book, *Islands of History*, after it came out in 1985. She gave the book a generally positive review, but highlighted some concerns on which later critics were to focus.<sup>71</sup> In particular, she pointed out that Sahlins was not aware that an account of the war in the north on which he relied heavily — by an ‘old chief’ — was actually authored by F.E. Maning. She also was skeptical of the way in which Sahlins has myths relate to Polynesian cognition, particularly in his contention that Hone Heke cut down the flagstaff at Kororareka not as a political act directed at a symbol of sovereignty so much as a ‘mytho-practical’ act directed at what he interpreted as a tuahu.<sup>72</sup>

Though not entirely convinced by Sahlins, it is quite clear that Binney agrees with his broader arguments that cosmological belief infuses Maori action and understandings. This is apparent in most of her work. Binney’s discomfort with Sahlins begins with the degree to which he argues myth is determinative, ‘which comes dangerously close’, as she puts it, ‘to arguing that Polynesians could perceive events only ritualistically’.<sup>73</sup> That debate is far too large to touch upon here, but in ‘Songlines From Aotearoa’ we can see Binney’s own attempts to try and understand some of the myriad ways in which this cosmological infusion occurs.<sup>74</sup> It is an interesting moment to ponder how Binney’s concept of ‘myth templates’ differs from Sahlins’ ‘mytho-praxis’ (which it certainly does), and how her own work on ‘predictive histories’ factors into these differences.<sup>75</sup> It is my feeling that these are paths that will prove rewarding in continuing the historical project now known as Aotearoa. What Denig has called ‘ethnographic history’ has a close relationship with the ‘historical metaphors and mythical realities’ of Sahlins and Binney’s myth templates and redemption songs.

Binney was, and is, an extremely careful reader, an alert listener. These capacities are the cornerstones of her work. Much of her critical practice stems directly from this. Binney was never of an overtly theoretical persuasion and has never cited Foucault, Fanon or Spivak. But then, it seems she never cited Edward Said either, who is clearly a central figure in the development of her approach, both to her subject and to the understanding of the politics of the past and the present more generally. Nonetheless, Binney certainly read ‘theory’ (as those of recent years have come to call it). The theoretically inclined anthropologists she read, and was sympathetic to, such as Clifford Geertz and Nick Thomas, can be seen as consonant with her own work. Equally, literary theorists such as Frank Kermode and George Steiner appear to have subtly shaped her thinking on narrative and language. If Binney makes no claims that she is pioneering any particular path or developing a certain ‘school’, this is because for her such purposes are secondary. She does not pursue a mish-mash of post-structuralist, post-colonial, post-modern and feminist ‘theory’. This would hardly be in keeping with her processes of reading, or her approach to history on the ground.

Perhaps Binney’s critical intervention in the historiography of the empire, as well as the historiographies of New Zealand, and of Maori, has been the seriousness with which she has always approached the ‘organic intellectuals’ she encountered in histories or in the telling of history. This is also part of what makes her work so compelling and has allowed it to age gracefully, to find readers amongst audiences she hardly envisaged. She has taken narrative seriously, acknowledges its power and has followed approaches and projects which allow her to pursue them. The intellectuals we meet in her work, from Kendall to Rua, from Hongi Hika to Heni Sutherland, to that man who was a mountain, Te Kooti, are each taken seriously in their successes and failures, their apprehensions and hopes. We know them through their stories, those they told about themselves, and those that have been told of them. Judith understands the ways in which stories mediate the comprehension of life, and the way the present is ordered. Yet her approach begins and ends humbly, with the respect that what we hold in our hands and minds is history and not the past. That there are many things the historian simply cannot grasp, that historians cannot tell. One thinks of some of the words of Te Kooti: ‘A, heoi ano whawhatanga o te ringi ki au.’ ‘And there will be no more laying of hands on me.’<sup>76</sup>

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## NOTES

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- 5 John Owens, 'Review', NZJH, 4, 1 (1970), p.91.
- 6 *Redemption Songs*, p.7.
- 7 Bronwyn Elsmore, *Mana from Heaven: A Century of Maori Prophets in New Zealand*, Tauranga, 1989; Bronwyn Elsmore, *Like Them That Dream: The Maori and the Old Testament*, Tauranga, 1985; Jean E. Rosenfeld, *The Island Broken in Two Halves: Land and Renewal Movements Among the Maori of New Zealand*, University Park, PA, 1999.
- 8 M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Maori Origins and Migration: The Genesis of Some Pakeha Myths and Legends*, Auckland, 1979.
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- 11 Judith Binney, 'Ancestral Voices: Māori Prophet Leaders', in Keith Sinclair, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, Auckland, 1990, pp.153–84.
- 12 Kendrick Smithyman, *Atua Wera*, Auckland, 1997.
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- 16 Judith Binney, 'Christianity and the Maoris to 1840: A Comment', NZJH, 3, 2 (1969), p.144.
- 17 *ibid.*, p.148.
- 18 *ibid.*, p.164.
- 19 *ibid.*, p.159.
- 20 Judith Binney, 'Review Article: *Prophets in the Wilderness*', NZJH, 10, 1 (1976), p.76.
- 21 J.M.R. Owens, "'Interpreting Maori History" — A Comment', JPS, 97, 4 (1988), pp.441–2.
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- 25 *Redemption Songs*, p.5.
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and Erik Olssen, *The People and The Land: Te Tangata me Te Whenua: An Illustrated History of New Zealand, 1820–1920*, Wellington, 1993, p.214.

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42 Charles Van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper, 1894–1985*, New York, 1996.

43 *ibid.*, p.528.

44 Wm. Roger Lewis, editor-in-chief, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Oxford, 5 vols, 1998–1999.

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49 One thinks most directly of Bob Connolly and Robin Anderson's film about the New Guinea Highlands, *First Contact* (1984).

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54 *ibid.*, p.24.

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- 60 Peter Webster, *Rua and the Maori Millennium*, Wellington, 1979, p.279.
- 61 *ibid.*, pp.55–58, 270.
- 62 Greg Denning, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land: Marquesas, 1774–1880*, Carlton, Vic., 1980, pp.86–87.
- 63 Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires: Pehea La e Pono Ai? How Shall We Live in Harmony?*, Honolulu, 1992, pp.19–49.
- 64 Denning, *Islands and Beaches*, p.181.
- 65 One might, *prima facie*, see some similarity with the work of Anne Salmond in her two books on the early years of encounter in New Zealand. However, Salmond's work exclusively takes the form of a traditional synthetic narrative, though with large tracts of quotation. Perhaps the closest academic inspiration for Binney may have been Edward Said who long advocated for what he called 'contrapuntal history'.
- 66 Binney and Chaplin, *Nga Morehu*, pp.93–94.
- 67 Klaus Neumann, *Not the Way it Really Was: Constructing the Tolai Past*, Honolulu, 1992.
- 68 See, for instance, the comments of Witi Ihimaera, 'Te Kooti Power', *New Zealand Listener*, 16 December 1995, pp.44–45.
- 69 Albert Wendt, 'Inside Us the Dead', *Inside Us the Dead: Poems 1961–1974*, Auckland, 1976.
- 70 Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines*, New York, 1988, p.282.
- 71 Judith Binney, 'Review: *Islands of History*', *JPS*, 95, 4 (1986), pp.527–30.
- 72 Marshall David Sahlins, *Islands of History*, Chicago, 1985, pp.60–71. Binney's problems with this argument are succinctly stated in Smithyman, *Atua Wera*, p.32.
- 73 'Songlines in Aotearoa', fn.50. This is not an uncommon reading of Sahlins, though is one that he has taken issue with. See Marshall David Sahlins, *How 'Natives' Think: About Captain Cook, For Example*, Chicago, 1995. His forthcoming work addresses this concern directly and makes it clear that this was not his intention.
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