

Depression, fascism, war and the centennial celebrations. One of Jones's most valuable contributions is to recapture the importance of the international politics of the 1930s for these writers — a concern that has washed out in the anthologizing process: the poetry of the songless, 'unsettled' land endures, but more 'topical' writing becomes a product of its time. This applies less to the question of the Depression than it does to that of fascism and war: 'While many texts about the Depression have also been expunged [from anthologies and individual authors' selected-works volumes], the standing literary record still contains much to express the responses to that "grey and ghastly visitor to the house" (in John Mulgan's expression) . . . the anti-myth that Curnow and those following him have put forward as the dominant structure of the period was able to absorb and use much of the Depression material. It did not so readily absorb the crisis writings' (p. 333).

Together with earlier books such as Rachel Barrowman's *A Popular Vision* and the accumulating scholarly literature on Robin Hyde, the books reviewed here make the 1930s and the war years the most developed terrain in New Zealand intellectual history. Few aspects of the left-leaning and nationalist cultural circles of the thirties now seem glaringly understudied (one exception is Mason's friend, the photographer, socialist and concrete heir Clifton Firth). If 'the 1930s' have been 'done', there are many other aspects of the literary and cultural history of the decade, minus the quotation marks, that still need examination. The social conservatives, literary populists and women other than Hyde await.

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The Trial of the Cannibal Dog: Captain Cook in the South Seas. By Anne Salmond. Penguin, London, 2003. 506 pp. NZ price: \$59.95. ISBN 0-7139-9661-7.

THIS BOOK EXHIBITS the strengths we have come to expect of Anne Salmond's histories of the South Seas: unrivalled knowledge of Polynesian sources (especially Maori ones) combined with extensive research in European and settler archives. Side by side we can read of the Maori priest Toiroa's prophecy of the coming of the red and white stranger to Aotearoa/New Zealand, and of the enmity boiling up about the same time between James Cook and his lieutenant John Gore. As Salmond observes at the end of her book, the history of Cook's voyages can be understood only by deploying a two-sided ethnography that gives due weight to the pressures shaping events from either side of the encounters. On the Polynesian side was an overarching cosmogony that rendered human relations intelligible in terms of genealogy, while on the European side structures of identity and obligation depended more and more upon the inviolability of private property. Although the mana of a chief might well be mirrored in the self-confidence of a young aristocrat such as Joseph Banks, a broad gulf existed between these two world systems, leading to a series of tensions, misunderstandings, solecisms and violence that culminated in the major crises of Poverty Bay, where Cook, Banks and Solander gunned down defenceless Maori; Grass Cove, where the crew of the *Adventure's* cutter were slain and partly consumed by Maori; and Kealakekua Bay, where Cook was killed by Hawaiians enraged at his attempt to take hostage a senior chief.

But across this divide cross-cultural triumphs were possible. The Raiatean priest Tupaia was an astute observer of European as well as Polynesian customs, some of which he depicted in drawings that have only recently been ascribed to him. In New Zealand he enjoyed huge prestige as a tohunga, and was remembered long after his death. It is clear in the course of Salmond's narrative that the anthropological curiosity evinced by Tupaia, and the veneration he received in places no Raiatean had ever visited, was increasingly

shared by Cook. Cook became successively more engaged in the festivals and rituals he witnessed, until finally he participated in his own installation as Lono-i-ka-Makahiki, and was worshipped as the Hawaiian god of peace and plenty shortly before he died. Indeed, Salmond supposes that one of the destabilizing facts in Cook's command was his over-identification with his role as Toote, the Polynesianized Englishman.

One of the great benefits of this two-sided approach to Cook's career in the Pacific is that it puts to rest the issue that was agitated for some years between Marshall Sahlins and Gananath Obeyesekere as to whether the Hawaiians greeted Cook as a god or a man. Sahlins's unrivalled knowledge of Hawaiian history and Polynesian cosmology has been vindicated, for it was as the akua or god Lono that Cook appeared at Kealakekua. This is not an imperial myth, as Obeyesekere supposed, but how the event was actually perceived from both sides of the beach.

Salmond uses a number of guides in this exercise of bi-focal ethnography. There is Sahlins himself, who understands how centrally copulation and its consequences sit in the belief systems of the South Seas: Lono goes voyaging because his wife has been unfaithful and he has killed her. There is Greg Denning too, whose conception of the beach as a kind of no-man's land, where cultural baggage gets shed and new assumptions are taken up, has dominated cross-cultural accounts of the Pacific for the last two decades. Denning's early cliometric interest in flogging rates on British naval vessels also has a part to play in this narrative, as well as his account of Bligh's misfortunes as owing to a virulent form of bad language. And there is Robert Darnton, who inspires the title of the book as well as its method, which is to treat a practical joke played in the gunroom of the *Discovery* as a symptom of a larger crisis of authority. Darnton it was who, in *The Great Cat Massacre*, observed the build-up of political frustration in ancien regime Paris through the lens of a symbolic act of revenge taken by a group of apprentices who slaughtered the favourite cats of their master's wife. On this occasion Alexander Home, the master's mate, tried, killed and ate a Maori dog belonging to Edward Rieu, saving a portion for the disgruntled owner. Salmond traces several themes in this episode. There was the mimicry of Polynesian customs within the demotic culture of the ship, including not only a taste for cooked dog but also tattooing, a salient element in the mutiny on the *Bounty*, according to Bligh. This went hand-in-hand, as it were, with a powerful curiosity about cannibalism, especially after the Grass Cove massacre. Johann Forster observed a New Zealand dog devour a still-born puppy, and wondered why unreasonable prejudices should hinder the consumption of domestic pets in England. He also speculated that cannibalism among Maori was, contrary to appearances, a sign of the progress towards civilization, since it was a custom prompted by the active passion of revenge, so much more admirable than the apathy of the people of Tierra del Fuego. The trial of the cannibal dog served to release the frustrations of those seamen who felt Cook had been too lenient with Kahura, the chief who perpetrated the feast upon the crew of the *Adventure's* cutter. Also buried in this tale of Rieu's dog is a question of property rights, and how these may be suspended in distant seas where the security of personal possessions can no longer be guaranteed.

These themes are constantly in play in this history of Cook's three voyages. How British seamen take on more than the lineaments and names of their Polynesian taos, and begin directly to experiment with exotic forms of ornament and food, is a question that carries the reader forward to the great enigma of Toote-Lono, and the strange infatuation in which Cook allegedly approached his death. Cannibalism and the ritual pounding or disjuncting of the bodies of dead enemies were topics of abiding interest both to the sailors and their home audience. As for property, its exchange, loss and recovery dominates the latter part of the story. Salmond traces in Cook an increasing intolerance to theft, even though his ethnographic sympathy might have inclined him to patience. After all, it was an art form in Oceania, with its own tutelary divinity called Hiro. She assumes that the

crew itself was partly responsible for Cook's change of heart. Lenient at first, he grew cynical and then exasperated. By the end he was ordering that thieves be punished with savage numbers of lashes and even mutilation, having their ears cut off and their arms slashed to the bone. He was squandering his standing with friendly chiefs by hostage-taking, as well as by these wanton cruelties, and yet he never remedied the problem. The futile effort of reappropriation he was embarked upon on the day of his death was also the cause of it.

The question that remains for the reader, which Salmond glances at but never fully engages, is the compatibility of these themes. Consider Clerke's experimental scene of cannibalism for instance. She suggests that this precipitated the Grass Cove massacre. When Lieutenant Clerke cut some flesh from the cheek of the hapless warrior, he was joining the power of his ancestors to those of the victors. This complicity was not forgotten by the dead man's friends and relations, and Clerke's joke was to have cruel consequences (p.225). There is no evidence, local or otherwise, given for this dark prediction; but there is a good deal of evidence for an alternative account of the cause of Grass Cove. It seems that Kahura went there 'with no intention to quarrel or to kill' (p.314), but was driven to violence by the heedless act of a sailor who snatched an adze from one of his men, provoking a scuffle in which Jack Rowe shot and killed the owner of the adze. So in one version the offence is whangai hau, the ingestion of the spirit of a dead enemy; and in the other it is theft. The reader is presented with a thoroughly Polynesian explanation that is then contradicted by a specifically European one. Even though these two explanations cannot be reconciled in the account of Grass Cove, Salmond suggests that overall a two-sided ethnography will show how an event such as the death of the cannibal dog harmonizes the expression of conflict on both sides of the beach. Cook is the paramount test-case, but a reverse symmetry blocks the asymptotic curve that ought to bring his Polynesianized identity into alignment with a toleration for theft; for it seems to be the case that the more fascinated he is by Polynesian religion, the less forgiving he becomes of crimes against property. Sensitivity on his part to local customs can be calibrated to an insensitive attachment to things.

This may be the final proof of the irrationality of this representative of Enlightenment reason, but it gets us no closer to the unraveling of the mystery of his death. It made no sense then, and the event makes no sense now. The disagreement between Sahlins and Obeyesekere threw it radically into doubt again, and I am not sure that Salmond's narrative restores it to intelligibility. At various points in her story, it is evident that the filter of the cannibal dog is not working. Some things are elided while others get room they do not deserve. Why, for instance, do we need to be told that on 1 August 1774 a piece of bark cloth took fire on the *Resolution*, and was promptly extinguished? (p.267). Possibly the truth yielded by a two-sided ethnography lies in what Theodor Adorno calls the implacable nature of things, measured here in their refusal to fit into the narrative structures we fashion for them. Perhaps it was a sense of this implacability that Cook himself was responding to, desperately and hopelessly.

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