

Edward Eyre, Race and Colonial Governance. By Julie Evans. University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 2005. 195 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-87737-207-2.

THE REVITALIZATION OF 'IMPERIAL HISTORY' over the past two decades has been driven by a rapid methodological diversification. In the early 1980s, most scholarship on the British Empire continued to be produced out of the analytical framework of what we might now term the 'old imperial history' as championed by John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson. The work of Gallagher and Robinson suggested that the key to understanding the empire lay in charting the relationships between economics and policy-making and in the careful reconstruction of the forces that drew Britain into various conflicts and crises at the empire's ever-expanding frontiers. In the wake of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, the burgeoning of feminist scholarship on gender and empire, and the growth of historical research that draws heavily from literary theory and anthropology, this old orthodoxy has been challenged and largely supplanted. The 'new imperial history', which prioritizes the domain of 'culture' over high politics or economics, has greatly enlarged our sense of what the empire was and multiplied the analytical sites where we might access the imperial past. Important insights into the history of British imperialism have been, for example, gleaned from the history of gardens, the construction of cultural difference in popular novels, critical readings of the 'commodity racism' produced by advertisements for Pears soap and Bovril, and deconstructing the jingoistic depiction of imperial scenes on biscuit tins.

It is striking, however, that while the 'new imperial history' has reimagined hospitals, asylums, prisons, nurseries, schools and sports fields as power-saturated sites where the cultural struggles of colonialism played out, it has offered few new perspectives on colonial governors. Julie Evans's study of Edward Eyre is of great value because she is able to harness many of the concerns of the 'new imperial history' — such as the interweaving of multiple forms of cultural difference in colonial cultural formations — to the analysis of Eyre's imperial career. Eyre, of course, was Lieutenant Governor during his sojourn in New Zealand between 1847 and 1853. Prior to this, he had served as a Resident Magistrate and Protector of Aborigines in South Australia and after his New Zealand appointment he held senior posts in St Vincent, Antigua and, most famously, in Jamaica, where he oversaw the brutal repression of the Morant Bay rebellion in 1865.

Evans reconstructs Eyre's trajectory across the empire, examining the ways in which he exercised authority and responded to the racialized configurations of power in three markedly colonial contexts. After a brief introduction that sketches the rationale for the monograph, chapters one and two trace the shift from Eyre's early advocacy of Aboriginal sovereignty to his insistence on the need for the colonial state to exercise its authority over indigenous communities, by 'protecting' them on reserves and advancing the 'civilising process' by separating children from their parents. Chapters three and four focus on Eyre's time in New Zealand, framing his career against both the broad imperatives of settler colonialism and the particular contests over sovereignty that played out in this colony in the 1840s and early 1850s. Chapters five to eight focus on Eyre's Caribbean career and the aftermath of the Morant Bay rebellion, and the volume closes with a one-page afterword that addresses the relationships between colonialism, rebellions against imperial rule and the use of coercive means to repress resistance.

In sum, Evans has crafted a short and punchy volume that retains a strong narrative momentum as it reconstructs Eyre's career. Narrative, however, need not come at the expense of historiography and the value of the volume would have been further enhanced by a stronger historiographical sensibility. There is no doubt that Evans is confident in her control of the relevant 'national' historiographies relating to her various analytical sites and that she capably interweaves some historiographical reflections into each chapter. But I was struck by the lack of any explicit engagement throughout the work as

a whole with the broader historiographical questions posed by recent work on empire. This is particularly telling with regard to the short introduction that opens the volume. Here Evans briefly notes previous work on Eyre — including the biographical treatment offered by Geoffrey Dutton and the more recent work of Catherine Hall — before quickly sketching the outlines of her ‘new perspective’. The brevity of Evans’s treatment of Hall’s work — a short two-sentence thumbnail sketch — is striking given the centrality of Eyre in Hall’s influential reassessments of the relationships between gender, race and class in British imperial culture. A fuller introduction would have allowed Evans to spell out the ways in which she has drawn upon and diverged from Hall’s treatment of Eyre, but would have also enabled her to address one other important analytical issue in greater length: the question of space. In tracing Eyre’s complex trajectory across three distinctive colonial locations, this work can be fruitfully read within new imperial history’s exploration of the empire as a spatial formation. Yet Evans does not address the significant body of recent work that has rematerialized the ‘pathways’, ‘networks’, ‘circuits’ and ‘webs’ of connection that knitted the empire together. Here again Hall’s essays on Eyre’s transnational career as well as her lengthy treatment of him in *Civilising Subjects* would have been an obvious starting point for Evans to provide the reader with a more explicit and powerful statement of the historiographical framing of her own project.

Despite its thin treatment of this recent scholarship on empire, *Edward Eyre, Race and Colonial Governance* is an important work and it will hopefully shift understandings of nineteenth-century New Zealand. The particular strength of the volume is that Evans consistently embeds Eyre within the structures and culture of imperial governance. Unlike many biographies of influential imperial figures, which tend to abstract the biographical subject, whether they are James Cook or George Grey, from the institutions and deep dynamics of empire-building to focus on questions of ‘character’ and ‘motivation’, Evans highlights both the pressures and constraints that moulded Eyre’s actions. Most importantly, this means that Evans is less concerned with how Eyre personally understood ‘race’ than with tracing the ideological power of race within the multiple cultural and political configurations of empire. As she observes at the outset of the volume, ‘race was not simply a discourse arising from Enlightenment taxonomies and imposed from abroad, but also was produced through local historical conditions, and took distinctive forms in different colonial formations’ (p.14). This is a powerful argument that challenges some of the dominant tendencies within New Zealand historiography, where historians have been at pains to trace the development of racist representation and have focused much effort on tracing how European understandings of race were applied to Maori. This study of Eyre reminds us that race was never simply a discursive import from Europe, but that it was produced out of the particular tensions and conflicts born out of the specific configurations of power in each colony.

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The Long Slow Death of White Australia. By Gwenda Tavan. Scribe, Melbourne, 2005. 298 pp. Australian price: \$32.95. ISBN 1-907-6946-3.

THE LONG SLOW DEATH OF WHITE AUSTRALIA is the first book by Gwenda Tavan, a lecturer in politics at Latrobe University. Deriving from a PhD thesis, which has already generated a number of journal articles, the book is a bold attempt to explain the demise of the White Australia policy in the decades following World War II. The work is a much-needed contribution to the history of the White Australia policy, especially