

Best of Both Worlds: The Story of Elsdon Best and Tutakangahau. By Jeffrey Paparoa Holman. Penguin Books, Auckland, 2010. 344pp. NZ price: \$40.00. ISBN 978-0-14300-842-2.

IN THIS FASCINATING AND BEAUTIFULLY WRITTEN WORK Jeffrey Paparoa Holman reveals the often ‘ghostly presence’ (p.289) of those Māori leaders and scholars, in particular the Tūhoe leader Tutakangahau, who participated in the ethnographic research of Elsdon Best. Such ghostly presences inhabit the writings of other Pākehā scholars of the Māori world, such as George Grey or John White. This book contributes greatly to our understanding of the complex relationship that existed between Tutakangahau and Best, whose collective labours created arguably the most significant body of scholarly writing about the ancient Māori world. It provides an excellent model for future research into these half-hidden scholarly collaborations, while speaking to current interests in the development of more equitable bi-cultural partnerships between Māori and Pākehā.

Holman creates a dual biography of Tutakangahau and Best, with alternating chapters that locate their varied lives within their historical, cultural and intellectual contexts. Tutakangahau was born into what Holman describes as the closed system of a traditional society. Yet he stresses that very early on Tutakangahau, like other Māori, began to inhabit a changing world — *te ao hurihuri* — with the acquisition of literacy and Christian ideas. Holman argues that Māori society was forever changed by the Gutenberg world of print literacy, ‘a shaping force in Western modernity’ (p.12). Best’s childhood exposure to a rural frontier life with its natural bilingualism and informal interaction between Māori and Pākehā was not unusual; it proved the seedbed for other nineteenth-century Pākehā scholars of Māori, such as White. Holman argues that from his teens Best showed a strong personal reaction against formal Christianity and a preference for science, rationalism and evolution. Like other scholarly Pākehā of his era, Best revealed a deeply contradictory attitude towards Māori, being passionate about discovering “‘the kura huna”, the hidden knowledge of pre-contact Māori society’ (p.10) while also viewing the Māori world as an inferior human society that would ultimately be displaced by modernity.

Holman’s narrative highlights the often contrasting lives of Tutakangahau and Best. For Tutakangahau this included supporting the resistance leader Te Kooti and making efforts as a tribal leader to engage with the Crown and the modern world in order to obtain benefits such as schooling while retaining control of Tūhoe lands. Disillusionment with the implementation of the 1896 Urewera District Native Reserve Act ultimately led him, just before his death in 1907, to support the prophet Rua Kenana and his promise of Māori agency. In essence, Tutakangahau’s life was distinguished by his service as ‘a kaitakawaenga (mediator)’ (p.183) between his people and the Pākehā world. Best enjoyed a classic colonial life focused on outdoor physical work on farms and in the bush on the different frontiers of New Zealand and the United States. He also served as a member of the Armed Constabulary, being present at the invasion of Parihaka in 1881. At an intellectual level, he became part of that group of learned Pākehā who founded the Polynesian Society in 1892 and established a local discourse about the pre-European Māori world which became internationally recognized, especially within the emerging subject of anthropology. By the end of his life in 1931, Best was ‘the principal Pākehā authority on traditional Māori society’ (p.243). As Holman demonstrates, his publications continue to influence what is written about Māori cultural concepts to this day.

When Best appeared amongst the Tūhoe in 1895, he was part of a long-term government strategy to bring that people under the authority of the state. However, for Best and his mentor, Stephenson Percy Smith, leader of the Polynesian Society and Surveyor-General, Best’s primary role was to undertake salvage anthropology, recording ancient Māori knowledge before its holders, like Tutakangahau, died off. Tutakangahau was interested in Best as part of his larger plans to engage with the colonial government, while

deliberately recruiting him to help preserve traditional knowledge for future generations of Tūhoe. While Holman highlights the inequality of such research collaborations given the changes wrought by modernity and its agent, the colonial state, in the Māori world, he draws attention to the unfolding friendship between the two men marked by a series of reciprocal gestures, including Tutakangahau's request that Best care for his grandchildren while attending school. Best called Tutakangahau and other Māori experts his "faculty" of kaumātua' (p.126). When these elders passed away Best felt himself "tutorless" (p.216); his publications became a legacy of these relationships. By analysing a selection of Best's texts Holman demonstrates that 'it is only reasonable to begin viewing Tutakangahau (along with his peers) as the co-author of Best's researches' (p.153). Not surprisingly, Tutakangahau, like many other Māori experts, wrote and published his own knowledge, especially in Māori language newspapers. When we read Best's various publications today we need to understand them as the products of a group of scholars; in Holman's words, 'Tutakangahau mā i roto i a Te Peehi, Te Peehi i roto i a Tutakangahau mā — Tutakangahau and the academy are in Best, and Best is in them' (p.262). The example of Tutakangahau and Best suggests that for a research collaboration to work well, especially between Māori and Pākehā researchers, there needs to exist a strong relationship premised upon trust, mutual affection and respect, equal participation, and a fair attribution of authorship.

The 'subtext' of Holman's impressive study is the change to the oral world of Tutakangahau's closed traditional society caused by modernity's colonizing 'literary cultures' (p. 268). Best thought he was recording knowledge transmitted unchanged from that pure world of orality, whereas what Tutakangahau's generation passed on had already been influenced by a long engagement with colonial New Zealand. While Holman points us towards a lost oral domain, I would stress that cultural knowledge is always in flux, and Tutakangahau's would have been as authoritative and authentic as any before it. Another subtext highlights how Best was affected by his Māori colleagues, identifying more strongly at an emotional level with them than with his own urbanizing world. He also accepted their scholarly authority and put aside any critical evaluation of such ideas as the existence of a supreme spirit power, Io. Although Holman sees Best as adopting this stance in order to appropriate the mantle of authority from his Māori collaborators, his example might also suggest that Pākehā researching within a Māori context should accept that knowledge for what it is rather than subject it to critical analyses derived from Western cultural assumptions. Being open to how others view the world is an essential prerequisite for any cross-cultural research although, as Best's case demonstrates, no researcher ever avoids their own too-human partialities.

MICHAEL REILLY

University of Otago

Hunting: A New Zealand History. By Kate Hunter. Random House, Auckland, 2009. 320pp. NZ price: \$49.99. ISBN 978-1-86979-154-4.

IN 1861, IN HIS BOOK *New Zealand, the 'Britain of the South'*, Charles Hursthouse observed that '[w]e go to the South Seas to create an estate'. Of course, there was an obstacle to realizing this ideal: New Zealand lacked suitable animals to hunt. The colony had no land mammals, apart from a few species of bat. The obvious solution was to import animals; between 1850 and 1900 there were over 200 separate liberations of deer. This 'silly mania' for acclimatizing species for hunting was a corollary of colonization. However, as Kate Hunter reminds us in *Hunting: A New Zealand History*, New Zealand has its own hunting history. This distinctive history has been forged from the intersection between a unique local ecology and the spread of empire; it has evolved from the interplay between nature and culture.