

○ MEETING ACHSAH ON ACHSAH'S LAND

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The brief and apparently simple tale of Achsah's request for watered land, found in both Judges 1:12-15 and Joshua 15:15-19, is read differently according to the questions asked and the critical reading adopted. In this paper not only is a gendered and postcolonial approach taken, but an imaginary conversation is initiated between Achsah and the reader, allowing sharper contextual connections.

Who remembers Achsah, the woman whose tale is told twice among the famed and celebrated Conquest accounts (Judg 1:12-15; Josh 15:15-19), the lucky woman, who got both land and a good husband in Othniel?¹ Admittedly, she may have been given away as the victor's prize, but a warrior capable of overcoming a cultured city has to be good, doesn't he?² Besides which, Othniel is so faithful that he becomes God's answer to prayer (Judg 3:9), a deliverer who both judges Israel and wages war successfully, under the guidance of the Spirit of Israel's mighty God. Clearly, then, this marriage of Othniel and Achsah is all good. And land watered by both Upper and Lower Pools sounds a nicely polite literary way of suggesting they would be a fertile couple! But was it all luck? There seems to have been some good woman's work involved here, for Caleb apparently tried to palm them off with a piece of dry land; it was only through Achsah playing the winsome daughter that they managed to get this fertile watered land. It may not be quite the romantic meeting at a well, that sparked Moses and some others, but, no matter: they presumably lived happily ever after on good Israelite soil.³ For after Israel's initial skirmishes, the land had rest for forty years, thanks to Othniel (Judg 3:11). So, yes, this is both a lucky and a plucky Achsah.

And, moreover, an Achsah with initiative, quickly on the job, urging her bridegroom, *when she came to him*, to ask her father, Caleb, for land. *When she came to him*: this is an ambiguous verb with sexual overtones. So was this pillow talk? If so, it was purposeful pillow talk, for there is a ring of determination in the verb of urging, *tesitehu*, although one has to read the Hebrew here, and not the versions.⁴ And yet, assuming with the MT that it is Achsah who is prodding her new husband to ask for land, what happens next? No response, no words from Othniel at all, and certainly no action. Does Othniel stay at home in bed? For it is Achsah who goes on to ask Caleb for a blessing, a *beraka*, and she is quite explicit: her father has not treated her well, setting her on this dry land. *Give me also the twin (the upper and lower) springs of water.*⁵ And these are for herself. It is she who now leaves Othniel out of the picture. Caleb gives in immediately! As Daniel Hawk expresses it, 'Achsah acquires, Caleb acquiesces' (1991: 105). This may be an assertive woman, but if her demand for watered land assumes planting seed, and if that, in turn, symbolizes going forth and multiplying, then surely she is none other than the very model of ideal womanhood, at least for Israel (Klein 1993: 58; 1988: 26). And clearly a woman who knows the practicalities of living on the land, who knows that if she is to live here, then the land needs to be productive, and for that water is a must. This is indeed a true pioneering woman! My settler ancestors would have given her their nod of approval.

But do I? Do you, as you read this brief, and even cryptic, tale? Do we agree with those who describe this assertive initiative as 'extraordinary' (Younger 2002: 67)? Daniel Block may note that, 'she remains gracious and respectful', as she 'seizes the opportunity to achieve something

neither her father nor her husband contemplated', and that she does so 'without over stepping the bounds of female propriety' (Block 1999: 96), but what determines the definition of ideal womanhood and female propriety? I read the tale again and begin to have my doubts. Set Achsah under the full glare of a feminist lens and troubling gender facets begin to appear. I begin to be suspicious, remembering how often, in the words of Esther Fuchs, 'the biblical narrative creates women in the image of patriarchal desire' (1985: 130). I return to its beginning: Caleb's offer of his daughter to whoever captures the city seems almost as rash as Jephthah's infamous vow (Judg 11:30). Or did Caleb have such faith in all his men that he was happy for his daughter to go to any one of them? Did he somehow know the winner would be Othniel? Did he even care? Or was this a ploy to whip up the warriors' zeal for the fight? If so, was there some doubt that YHWH was on their side? Achsah was then the needed pawn, the incitement in Caleb's strategic planning: she was the trophy (Ackerman 1998: 290).⁶ As so often in the biblical narratives, there is no mention of the mother. Was she dead or was she, as in Genesis 22, simply left out, as being of no consequence in this story?

And was Achsah really so assertive? Perhaps the Septuagint was right, preserving an earlier tradition, that when she came, it was Othniel who persuaded her to ask for land. Rather than this being her own initiative, it was Othniel who set her up to plead with her father for this extra blessing.⁷ With this possibility in mind, I watch her more carefully, as she 'drops down' dutifully before her father, if this is what the verb signifies.⁸ She does not seem quite so assertive now, as she asks for this blessing of the twin pools, but rather more the respectful daughter, coming to plead for more productive land on her husband's behalf. If Caleb thinks that he has done all that was required by giving her to Othniel, he may indeed be puzzled by her unexpected appearance, even though 'dropping down' from her donkey so respectfully. His cryptic question (v.14) may rather be asking, *what is the matter with you* (Klein 1988: 26) than simply *what do you wish* (NRSV)? But she is his daughter, and equally her husband is his favoured conqueror, and so Caleb complies. Had she been Caleb's son, of course, the situation would have been entirely different (Fuchs 1985a: 139–140). Then, too, the narrative would most likely have had a sequence; as it is now, Achsah appears just this once, albeit inserted twice in the Dtr History, simply as Caleb's daughter and Othniel's wife, organizing land with an eye to its fertility. As I am now reading, it seems that there is gender trouble afoot here. I sense this is, quite simply, a tale told in a patriarchal world. And this is troubling; there is no flag waving here to say, watch out, there is a gendered ideology hiding in this text.

The fact that here a woman is gaining the land should not be altogether a matter of surprise. For the female body has long been used as a marker 'of national, racial, religious and ethnic communities in dominant discourses of identity', with 'Woman' representing 'place' in the sense of the pure space of 'home'. (Gedalof 2003: 91, 95).⁹ That Achsah immediately sets about acquiring the life-giving pools of water implies this will be fertile space, that she will be the mother of descendents living here. Yet what remains clear is that while this is a narrative identity tale it is told by a conquering community. And that is the point here: the land that she has gained is land taken in conquest. This is other peoples' land. In Danna Fewell's words, Achsah is not simply the assertive woman with initiative: 'she is the collateral for a piece of Canaanite real estate' (1995: 134). But it is more complicated again than this, for these are words written long after the event to justify a long-held possession and ownership. The language is carefully chosen. Land,

for Israel, is not just soil to be worked, or simply a place in which to live, but is understood as God's blessing, to be prized as a gift of grace, neither to be sold nor lost. I now hear the word *beraka* implying that this gift of Caleb's is a gift that comes with divine assent.

And yet, these people are Kenizzites, not Israelites, one of the peoples whose land is to be given to the descendants of Abram, according to the covenant promise in Genesis 15:19. Caleb's father, Jephunneh, is described as Kenizzite in both Numbers 32:12 and Joshua 14:6, 14. A little confusingly, Othniel's father is named as Kenaz in Judges 1:13. If so, Othniel is presumably an Edomite, for, according to Genesis 36:11, 15, 42, Kenaz was an Edomite descendant of Esau. Yet to the writer this ancestry seems to be no problem. Caleb, of course, is the survivor of the wilderness wanderings, along with Joshua, and recognized by Moses as *having unreservedly followed YHWH* (Num 32:12). Promised land (Josh 14:9b; Deut 1:36) in words that echo the promise made to Israel through Joshua (Josh 1:3), he is, in Daniel Hawk's words, 'thus a metaphor for Israel' (1991: 103). Othniel, raised up as deliverer and empowered by the Spirit of YHWH to become Israel's first judge, is no less than the very paradigm of Israelite leadership (Brettler 2002: 25–28). Yet, while these Kenizzites may function as key figures in Israel's founding story, losing all traces of Otherness in their faithful exploits, the fact remains that it is Achsah, a Kenizzite woman, who, in this passage, is the marker for Israel's occupation and possession of the land. It is Achsah and Othniel, a Kenizzite/Edomite pair, who will pass this land on to their descendants. It remains a disturbing hybridity. As John Gray asks, 'Does this story suggest that foreigners did what Judah was unable to do; ... Does it applaud or does it mock Israel's attempt to take the land' (1986: 234, 237)? Or does it imply an assimilation, that these are now Israelites, despite their ancestry, and therefore worthy of Israel's highest honours?¹⁰ Achsah's marriage certainly contrasts with those of the unlucky Israelite daughters in Judges 3:5-6, married by their fathers to inhabitants of the land, people of other gods. Theirs is an ethnic boundary crossing not to be countenanced.

That brief episode in Judges 3 is a reminder that there are *tangata whenua* (indigenous people) still living in the land. This is not *terra nullius*. Of course both Joshua and Judges have left me in no doubt about this, with the conquest accounts listing the dispossessed, people after people. That very first chapter of Judges, in which Achsah appears, makes it clear that not all attempts at conquest were successful (1:19, 21, 27-33) and that some continued to live as exiles in their own land (1:35-36). Do I ask what happened to the inhabitants of Debir? It was their loss that was Achsah's gain. Am I reading her giftedness over lines that cannot be told of the taking of the women of Debir? I am well aware of what happens to women in wars of conquest. I hesitate and read the text again. I now note and wonder about that added detail: this marriage came about through the conquest not of Debir but of Kiriath-Sepher. Danna Fewell suggests the name change is deliberately glossing over the fact that this was a cultured place, a city of writing, a city of books, and yet the name remains there, inscribed on the scroll (1995: 131–132). Could these later scribes not bring themselves to erase the memory of those Other scribal forerunners? But Debir it is now, a name with its resonances of holiness, but also carrying the whiff of death, the scourge of plague. Is this an ominous sign of what the newcomers are bringing in their wake? I have already detected gender trouble in this tale. I now wish to qualify that. As an imperial tale of conquest, it is also, in contemporary terms, a gender narrative 'cross-hatched' by race, and a race narrative 'cross-hatched' by gender.¹¹ It is, in short, a disturbing text, twice over.

I decide to confront Achsah herself. And yet I find myself wondering: did this really happen? Was there ever an Achsah or will I find myself addressing a phantom? And if there was once an Achsah, did she really persuade Caleb, her supposed father, to give her that doubly well-watered land? Admittedly it is there in both texts, but, to quote Marc Brettler, '[t]here is no form-critical marker ... that says: 'I am a text that is attempting to accurately depict the past' (2002: 2). Besides, I have read the literature, I know that scholars debate the sources, the number of editors and even the concept of a Deuteronomistic History, in which both Joshua and Judges are to be found. So I look at her again, seeing her now pivoting, shifting her stance on what seems a deceptive and uneven textual ground. But then another question arises: which Achsah do I address? Should it be Joshua's Achsah or Judges' Achsah? Admittedly her narrative appears almost word for word in both books, but I am aware that contexts do make a difference.

I make my decision and open the book of Joshua, and say to Achsah, I suppose you think you were there when God told Joshua to *cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites*. I suppose you think you heard those words, *every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses* (Josh 1:2-3).

She reminds me that the book of Joshua states that he did just that, *took all the land according to all that God had spoken to Moses and gave it to Israel as an inheritance* (11:23).

That's all very well, I reply, but the book of Joshua is not wholly convincing. You are given to Othniel as his prize for capturing the city of Debir, but hadn't Joshua already taken it in ch.10 (vv. 38-39)? Then there is that long litany of defeated kings in chapter 12, just before God reminds Joshua that *very much of the land still remains to be possessed* (13:1), and once again commands him to *allot the land to Israel for an inheritance* (13:6). Then, near the end of the book, there is that striking contradiction: after naming the peoples who are undefeated, it states, *not one of their enemies had withstood Israel* (21:44). I say to Achsah, I can't work out what this writer wants me to believe. I also can't work out why you appear in the midst of all this, when you are a Kenizzite and not an Israelite at all. Didn't Joshua specifically warn Israel against being *mixed with these nations left here among you* (23:7)?

You've got it wrong she says, we entered the land with Israel, and that passage you've quoted continues, with the call to *hold fast to YHWH your God, as you have done to this day* (23:8). That's exactly what Caleb and my family have done. Didn't you read the chapter before I appear? Moses specifically promises Caleb *the land on which your foot has trodden ... because you have wholeheartedly followed YHWH my God* (14:9). The historian even has it echoing God's own words to Joshua (1:3). Joshua, of course, had to be reminded, but he did give Caleb Hebron *for an inheritance* (14:13). So naturally I gained a portion of land, as his daughter, although admittedly I had to undertake some sweet-talking father/daughter negotiation to get productive plots, but I asked for this as a *beraka* for I understand, as well as any Israelite, that land is always and only a blessing given by God, Israel's God. Besides - she looks at me inquiringly - haven't I forgotten Rahab? She was a Canaanite permitted to remain in the land - albeit now Israel's. Besides, she asks accusingly, don't I appreciate the mercy of God to all who believe? Don't I understand this is the very essence of Israel, that believing outsiders can become insiders, just as Israel itself was once the outsider?

I remain silent, considering Robert Polzin's statement that '[w]hat was brought inside Israel became an embodied reference to how much of the outside had been within them from the be-

ginning’, and that ‘these elements’ were to be ‘a constant *internal* reminder of Israel’s own deficiencies, just as the powerful Jebusites and Canaanites were a constant *external* reminder of them’ (1980: 133–134). Interpretations differ, as well as contexts.

I turn and reread the Joshua text and recognize how carefully this scene of gaining peaceful well-watered land has been written as a *mise-en-abyme*, an idyll, a utopian depiction of Israel’s settlement in the land. And yet I cannot overlook or forget those words of Danna Fewell: ‘all [Achsah’s] talk of gifts and giving ... merely dress up the fact that ... she is the collateral for a piece of Canaanite real estate’ (1995: 134). That has a ring of reality. As for the book of Joshua, it is clearly double-voiced: it promises much, states much has been fulfilled and yet in Joshua’s farewell speech predicts Israel’s disobedience, with dire consequences (23:15-16). Sadly, Achsah’s idyllic scene seems not so much a mirror image as a mirage.

What then of Judges? Achsah now gains her land in the very first chapter – after that overtly polemical, pro-Judean introit. *Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them? YHWH said, ‘Judah shall go up. I hereby give the land into his hand’* (Judg 1:1-2)? Her entry here seems just another detail in a listing of battles and Judean victories, a victory prize for the successful warrior. And that imagined scene of Achsah and Othniel living peacefully on their doubly-watered land? It does not hold for long, too many Canaanites holding fast to their land, Israelites turning from their own God, so by chapter three there is a new generation with covenant amnesia. In place of Canaanites and Perizzites falling by their thousands, there are Philistines and Canaanites, Sidonians, Hivites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites and Jebusites all living in the land *for the testing of Israel* (3:4), and, in a reversal of Caleb’s ploy, there are those Israelite men giving away their daughters to worshippers of Baals and Asherahs. No more talk of blessing; this is apostasy. No more talk of Achsah: this is the cue for Othniel to become Israel’s first judge, and more importantly, a good Judean judge. A different polemic.

I turn again to Achsah. Don’t you realize, I say to her, how you’re being used? You may be a clever opportunist but don’t you realize how you’re being used here, as a pawn of Judean politics? That this is a rhetoric tying successful conquest to living in covenant relationship with Israel’s God?¹² You’re even a pawn of that other polemic, that violence escalates when there is no king, i.e. no Judean king, i.e. no David. This is no innocent text nor is your place in it. That chilling narrative of the Levite’s woman even takes details of your tale and re-uses them to horrific effect. Where you mount your ass in your quest for life-giving water, it is a woman’s lifeless body set on an ass in that later chapter, to be butchered and distributed throughout Israel, piece by piece (Gunn and Fewell 1993: 120).

Achsah is silent. Is it any use pressing her for details of those responsible for such editorial polemic?¹³ How could she know? I wonder again if she ever existed, or whether she, like Othniel, is just an added fictional detail? For, as Marc Brettler states (2002: 111), the Othniel of chapter three, that ‘unambiguously positive Judean leader’, empowered by the spirit of their God, able even to ‘defeat an enemy of double-wickedness’, is just too good to be true.¹⁴ Apart from the puzzling historical details, the jingly rhyme of the enemy, Cushan-rishathaim of Aram-naharaim itself triggers suspicion. Certainly 1 Chron 2:49 attests an Achsah, daughter of Caleb, but did the Chronicler simply copy the detail from Judges, as Judges in all likelihood copied it from Joshua? Maybe Robert Boling is right: Othniel and Caleb may originally have been two tribes that formed an alliance (1992: 5:51-52), in which case Achsah is its symbolic marker. I realize

afresh I am engaging with an Achsah, mythologized and remythologized, a textual pawn, moved by different players to different places on Israel's chessboard of origins.

Does this have to curtail my conversation? I decide it does not, remembering that texts and readers are dialogic partners in the task of wresting meaning, and I am determined to wrestle with this disturbing text, in which Achsah is a pivotal figure. I turn to her again, and decide to explain my own standpoint. I tell her that I, too, am a descendent of outsiders who came to settle on others' land, here in Aotearoa. Admittedly, it was land bought from the Crown, but a Crown that had bought it from its indigenous owners. Histories of my family's settlement give little consideration as to why the original owners sold their land, although my grandfather writes that, 'if Sir George Grey had remained in New Zealand he would have expedited the purchase, for he had great influence with the Maoris' (McKenzie 1942: 57). Much, I suspect, hangs on that word 'influence'.

I take the risk of using the term 'myths of origin', and remind Achsah that we share a language, that early writers in this country also wrote of *The Land of Promise* and *An Earthly Paradise*.¹⁵ She quotes Deuteronomy, insisting that Israel was already the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Deut 34:4). I quote Maria Richmond, writing in 1853 of 'the feeling of coming home ... to a country wanting you, asking for people to enjoy and use it' (Porter and Macdonald 1996: 90). I say to Achsah, colonizers have a need to feel they belong, that they are indigenous to the land they have colonized. In Israel's case, which was also your case, it had to be their land, it had to be Israelite; in this land of Aotearoa, it had to be British. Your Deuteronomistic writers would have fully agreed with James Busby, the British Resident in New Zealand, that failure would mean 'the evil ascendancy of its own unprincipled subjects' (Belich 1996: 187). Schooled in postcolonial theory, I know that as the voice of Empire. Naturally there were land wars. Those in Aotearoa were called, in my childhood, the Maori Wars. The winners, of course, were the British: after all, '[i]t was unEuropean to be beaten by savages' (Belich 1996: 126). And, as winners, they controlled the land settlements. The Canaanites who owned your land before the arrival of Joshua and Caleb and their forces may have been silenced, but letters have survived from some who suffered loss of land in Aotearoa. There is Takiora Dalton's letter, for example, written in 1878. She had worked as a guide and interpreter for the British military forces during the land wars, and had, in fact, continued working for the government afterwards. Her letter is addressed to William Fox, the Government representative for the area:

I have a request to make about my land which has been confiscated by the Government. My tribe has received compensation (*takoha*) but I have received nothing. Therefore I wish you to look into my claim for a piece of land on which I can live with my children. ... I have not had any lands returned to me for having assisted the Govt. I now request you to give me a piece of land, however small, for my relatives to live on ... (Porter and Macdonald 1996: 134).¹⁶

There are several letters from Ruta Te Manuahura, writing three years later to the Under-Secretary in the Native Office in Wellington, regarding

my land in Waikato that was confiscated by the Government ... I have had much land taken from me for no reason whatever, for neither I nor my husband committed any wrong against the Crown.

One month later, having been refused 'my application for a re-investigation into my claim', she writes requesting an allotment of land, 'as I and my children are many in number and the land that I have lost is of great quantity' (Porter and Macdonald: 138). A full four years later she is offered a piece of land, but where Achsah's land was dry, in the centre of hers there is a swamp as well as a deep gully. So she too, like Achsah, requests more: 'I consider that the Government should give five more acres in lieu of the bad portion that cannot be made use of'. The difference, of course, is that she is pleading for her own land. Sixty eight acres were finally selected, although the correspondence continues for some months. A letter from the Native Office survives, with the comment that '[t]his Native woman is not only the most difficult to satisfy but is very vexatious in respect of her land claim which has been before the office for years' (Porter and Macdonald: 139). How unlike Caleb.

Such taking of land must always seem justified. To this political end further myths follow. I turn back to Achsah: your Deuteronomistic theologians assumed a divine warrant to justify both the conquest and the denigration of Canaanites. Here in Aotearoa, the 'fatal impact' myth developed, the belief that 'the Maori would crumble, collapse and ultimately die as a result of European contact' (Belich 1996: 126). For the Moravian missionary, writing in 1870, it, too, came with divine warrant:

God, in His all-wise government, has ordered it so that a Christian race shall arrive, at the time appointed by Him, in the land of the savages, when the latter have outlived themselves.¹⁷

The task set the Christian race is, as he sees it, 'to soothe their dying hours by civilized comforts and Christian consolation', although this clashes notably with that other myth of the 'Civilising Mission.' For 'barbarous nations need to be enlightened and elevated, before they can be brought to recognize and act according to the rules by which civilized communities can be regulated ... The Gospel is the only means for accomplishing this important object'. Philip Temple, who quotes this statement, adds that "such sentiments did not disguise the moral imperialism of [the missionaries'] wish to eradicate those abhorrent heathen practices that did not concur with British social values' (Temple 2002: 194).¹⁸

Then, as the land is either taken or bought, often dubiously, to become the property of the settler, there is another turn of the conquest myth: the takers become the pioneers, famed for being able to bring apparently 'under-utilized' land into productivity.¹⁹ You know this myth well, I tell Achsah; this is where you fit in.

But I am looking at her afresh, and wondering: where was she as Debir was taken? Did she know about her father's bribe? Was she waiting nervously for the result, her stomach turning with anxiety? Did she spare any thought for the women of Debir? She was about to become a bride; had she thought at all, during the earlier onslaughts, of the women about to be left as widows? Or of the plight of the people living, working and eating off the land she was so soon to regard as hers? Did she wonder at all about the rightness of gaining Israelite spoils when she

herself was Kenizzite? I watch her again as she asks Caleb for that further blessing and wonder: is she as heavily implicated in the colonizing process as the men? She may not be a conquering hero but she is certainly assertive in claiming plots of well-watered land, which clearly were not theirs or hers to possess.

I decide to confront her again, reminding her of the question which all settler peoples have to answer:

by what authority and on what grounds can they justify to themselves either their own moves or those of their parents, grandparents or great-grandparents to gain and preserve authority over land and the people of the land (Fleras and Spoonley 1999: 14).

Answering this is one of the functions of settler master narratives, I tell her, and you are a significant figure in just such a narrative. She, however, remains silent.

Oh yes, I say, I know about silences too. There are notable silences in our histories; what is well remembered in Maori oral tradition frequently remains a silence for those of us who are Pakeha, just as you have a voice but not those Canaanites enslaved as forced labour (Judg 1:28, 30, 33, 35). I may hear Sisera's mother lamenting, briefly, in a window of the Judges text, but, for the most part, Canaanites are to be remembered silently as a people defeated, their ways an abomination. The fact that the Israelites most likely came from Canaanite stock must not be remembered. I quote Homi Bhabha, that 'forgetting ... constitutes the *beginning* of the nation's narrative' (1994: 160). That's the world in which you are embedded I tell her. I know it too. As Patrick Evans has recently reminded us here in Aotearoa, such forgetting is an inevitable feature of colonization, part of '[t]he need to get history wrong to get nation right' (2007: 40–41).²⁰ Why was Kiriath-sepher renamed? Why did Tamaki-makau-rau become Auckland, Otepoti become Dunedin? The list goes on. Names that remain. This is the reality of empire: these renamings, these myths of settlements, these gaping silences. We are both embedded in these myths of Empire, I tell her. This our reality, yours and mine, for empire, with its myths, is 'an omnipresent, inescapable, and overwhelming reality in the world: the world of antiquity ... and the world of today', to quote Fernando Segovia (1998: 56).

My initial enthusiasm for this conversation has now faded. This is indeed a troubling text, for Achsah is a pawn, thrice over. She is the trophy pawn, used by Caleb within the story plot. She is the disturbing Kenizzite, colluding with the Israelite imperium, used by Israel's Deuteronomistic writers. Forever located in Scripture, she is the pawn of an imperial hegemony, in the sense that 'it-goes-without-saying ... there is no question raised or any inquisition made. In sum, it is given in consent' (Liew 2002: 222 n.97). I close the book, but in reality there is no closure. Achsah, a movable pawn of Israel's myths of empire, will live on, whenever and wherever she is read, just as I, the descendent of colonial settlers, live my life enmeshed in the realities that the myths of Empire have left here, in Aotearoa, where we are still living with issues of land taken and land claimed.²¹ For myths are potent, lingering and leaving traces in the minds of generations to come. I will need to open this book again.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Either Caleb's younger brother or nephew, depending whether 'brother' refers to Caleb, or to Kenaz. See Lindars 1995: 28–29 for a fuller discussion.
- 2 Block 1999: 94, responding to the possibility that 'modern readers may find Caleb's treatment of his daughter offensive, as if she is mere property', suggests that she probably felt honored to be given in marriage to a military hero like Othniel'. On the next page, Block takes this a stage further, seeing Caleb's offer of his daughter not only 'express[ing] his commitment to the agenda but also ensur[ing] a noble husband for her'.
- 3 Younger, 2002: 78–79, shows how close the account is to Rebekah's meeting with Isaac in Gen 24: 61–67. 'Both accounts also involve an inheritance of the blessing ('land') that God had promised Abraham'.
- 4 If the Septuagint and Vulgate are preserving an earlier reading, in which he persuaded her to ask, then the initiative is, of course, all Othniel's.
- 5 Block (1999: 95, n.74) suggests that 'upper and lower' may be a 'merism granting full rights to all the water in the area'. See Bronner (1993: 74–75), who suggests that pools of water represent the bridal gift which her father had not yet provided, and notes that there is no criticism expressed by the narrator for this request. Others, with Lindars (1995: 31), understand the captured city of Debir as the dowry.
- 6 Fewell (1995: 133–134) points to the clue in her name, meaning a bangle or anklet, that might suggest that she is merely 'a trinket'. She also notes, however, the more sinister meaning of the Arabic cognate, which means 'to tether' or 'hobble'. Pace Klein (1993: 56), who suggests that Caleb 'seems to place great value on his daughter' in offering her, although she concedes that the winner 'is merely the man who does the job'.
- 7 Moore (1895: 28) states that, 'it was her suggestion, and the execution of the plan naturally devolved upon her, but it was with his full knowledge and consent'. This, however, is Moore's explanation and not the author's. He then adds that 'we hardly see, however, why the author should take pains to tell us that'.
- 8 The etymology of this verb is uncertain. Most scholars assume a root meaning of 'descend', with Tg. Pesh. taking it as 'sliding down'. The LXX translates as "she cried", and an alternative root suggests 'clapping her hands'. See Koehler and Baumgartner 2001. Vol. II: 1038.
- 9 See, for example, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1989) and McClintock (1995).
- 10 See Block (1999: 97), 'They are Kenizzite proselytes, who have been so thoroughly integrated into the faith and culture of the nation that Caleb could represent the tribe of Judah in reconnaissance missions, and all model the life of Yahwistic faith in the face of the Canaanite enemy'.
- 11 See McClintock (1995: 5), 'race is not just a question of skin color but also a question of labor power, cross-hatched by gender'.
- 12 Klein (1988: 27–28) expresses this as 'covenant-oriented versus human-oriented occupation of the land'.
- 13 See, for a recent proposal, Guillaume (2004), who argues in chapter two that it was Manasseh who needed an pro-Judean introduction and the Othniel section, when he brought the Book of Saviours from Bethel to Jerusalem.
- 14 Brettler also argues (2002: 26) that 'the fact that it was written for the book is especially clear from its highly formulaic nature, which exactly matches the paradigm offered in 2:11-19 ... this story is one of the most stereotypic passages in the entire Hebrew Bible'. So too, Soggin (1982: 47), *et al.*
- 15 Belich (1996: 299), quoting titles of books published between the 1850s and 1880s.

16 The letter has a note appended stating that Takiōra, also known as Lucy or Louisa Dalton, had received
two sections of land. Further letters from Takiōra continue the land correspondence.

17 Johann Wohlers, prefacing this with the words, ‘should it not be said’, in *The Evangelist* 2/6 (August
1870), 234. I am indebted to my colleague Susan Jones for this quote.

18 Quoting John Beecham, General Secretary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, from a paper written
in 1838.

19 As Fleras and Spoonley (1999: 14) note, ‘Traditionally, three explanations were used to justify the
settlement and appropriation of indigenous lands: (a) the doctrine of terra nullius (empty or under-
utilised lands) ... (b) conquests ... and (c) voluntary consent through treaty or legislation’.

20 ‘... a complex process by which the white settler culture managed and continues to manage its sense
of belonging’.

21 In recent years some significant land settlement claims have been processed. In one of the most recent
the Hon. Michael Cullen stated in his presentation of the Te Roroa Claims Settlement Bill (25
September, 2008) ‘that in this Bill the Crown acknowledges it breached the Treaty in respect of Te
Roroa. The breaches related to the cession of land at Te Kopuru in 1842, Crown land purchases from
1876 and the operation and impact of the native land laws.’ At the same time he acknowledged that
‘Treaty settlements do not fully compensate Maori for the losses they have suffered, either in economic
or cultural terms.’ Cited at www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA0809/S00565.htm 17th November, 2008.

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