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THE SOCIAL THESIS AND PROSE FICTION

OF RODERICK FINLAYSON

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirement for the degree of Master
of Arts in English at Massey University.

JOHN MUIRHEAD

1971

- To My Parents -

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PREFACE

This essay is a study of the inter-relationship of the social thesis and prose fiction of Roderick Finlayson. It will examine the themes which persist in his polemical articles, short stories and novels, the effect of his ethical stance on the aesthetics of his craft, and the degree to which that stance represents, in Allen Curnow's words, "some common problem of the imagination" in New Zealand literature and thought.

Because much of the material used in this essay is rather inaccessible, I have felt it necessary to treat the articles and fiction in some detail, quoting extensively in the endeavour to convey the full range of Finlayson's thought and craft. Since they are of peripheral, rather than central importance to the arguments proposed in this account of Finlayson's work, I have not included discussion of his numerous writings for the School Publications Branch of the Department of Education.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

THE UNLICENSED CONSCIENCE OF SOCIETY

Katherine Mansfield, writing in 1921, said of the short story writer's craft:

"If a thing has really come off it seems to me there mustn't be a single word out of place, or one word that could be taken out."¹

Hers is a criterion of organic completeness, a demand that each story should render a 'moment', perfect and total in its expression of encapsuled experience—and it is a standard which subsequent writers in the genre have converted into dogma. It is not, however, a definitive approach. H. Winston Rhodes has supplied an equally fruitful view which essentially modifies the Mansfield position, and which accommodates the didactic interest that is fundamental to the New Zealand literary sensibility:

"No short story is an island, and no author of a short story is a short story writer until by slow accumulation he has shown that the perspective from which he views human experience is at least as valuable as the perceptiveness with which he renders a fragment of life itself."²

Rhodes' is a justifiable qualification, adding dimension to any

1. Katherine Mansfield, letter to Richard Murry, January 17, 1921. J. Middleton Murry (ed.), The Letters of Katherine Mansfield, Vol.II, Constable & Co.Ltd., London, 1934, p.89.

2. H.Winston Rhodes, "Two Views: the short story in New Zealand", Landfall 81, Vol.21, No.1, March 1967, p.84.

critical study of the work of Roderick Finlayson, whose prose fiction derives from a vision of New Zealand civilization in the 1930s, when the adoption of a perspective, a moral climate, became the dominant theme in art as well as in life.

Mansfield and Rhodes, perception and perspective—these, then, provide a backdrop against which this evaluation of Finlayson's prose fiction will be made. How far has Finlayson been able to unite the two values in a coherent blend where aesthetic judgement tempers ethical viewpoint; and to what extent is such a blend desirable? If, in Finlayson, the tendency is to a polarity of these criteria, what are the hazards of the separation, and just as important, what might be the advantages?

To pursue these considerations is to concentrate attention on the short stories—to see Finlayson's creativity at its most effective in the collections Brown Man's Burden and Sweet Beulah Land, in the uncollected stories published in Australian and New Zealand journals and 'little magazines', and in the set of vignettes and sketches given loose narrative form in the 'novel' Tidal Creek.³ So dominant in Finlayson's perception and perspective are the devices of the genre, that his more serious attempt at the novel form in The Schooner Came to Atia founders on his inability to exploit the opportunities provided by the more expansive medium.

3. Letters Magazine, no. 8, April 1945, p.5, reported Finlayson at work on his first "full-length novel", Tidal Creek.

If the major emphasis of this study will be, then, on Finlayson, the writer of short stories, the use of the critical standards proclaimed by Mansfield and Rhodes becomes more pertinent. It will be seen that Finlayson's allegiance lies more with the analyst than the artist. Only rarely do the stories approach the perfection of craft which Mansfield propounds—more typically, Finlayson's vatic intention forces the stories into overstatement, even abrasive polemic, foregoing the "particular possibilities of brevity"⁴ which Professor Stevens has aptly discerned as one First Principle in the short story writer's technique. This is an abdication, however, which Finlayson is content to make—even in the preface of Brown Man's Burden, written in March, 1938, he announces an overtly didactic approach to his work:

"There is no place in art for the artificial or the imitative....Others have written romantically of the old-time Maori culture. These stories deal chiefly with the annihilation of that culture by our scientific barbarism, and the something, pathetic or humorous, that yet remains."⁵

His stories will be, not moments of perception, devoid of commitment, but contes à thèse—and because of the nature of the thesis, and the "massive integrity"⁶ behind it, Finlayson assumes a significance which the Mansfield school of criticism might be

4. Joan Stevens, New Zealand Short Stories, Price Milburn, Wellington, 1968, p.1.

5. Roderick Finlayson, preface to Brown Man's Burden, Unicorn Press, Auckland, 1938, p.ii.

6. E.H. McCormick, New Zealand Literature: A Survey, Oxford University Press, London, 1959, p.132.

reluctant to concede. In the tendency to use his work as a form of literary pamphleteering, he reveals a social vision, and a sense of messianic purpose, which characterized his generation of New Zealand intellectuals and artists.

Landfall, the journal which was a product of the aesthetic and ethical drives of that milieu, expressed as late as 1960 the typically romantic obsession with the artist as vates—prophet-seer, appointed and inspired to lead men to a higher awareness:

"In every society that is not enslaved or fossilized, men are looking all the time for writers and other artists to speak for them and to them, to enlarge their lives imaginatively, to show them an image—critical, flattering, diverting—of the body social, to offer them alternative purposes, beliefs, standards of behaviour, above all to keep them alert and responsive. Writers alone can do this because in the oceanic pressure of society, which grinds so many people down into units like pebbles, they remain stubbornly personal; social pressure, together with the growth of their powers, merely defines and sharpens each one's nature, the vehicle of his gift. Remaining close to the sources of life, they become the spokesmen and guardians of that potential virtue which is the endowment of every human being; they form the unlicensed conscience of society."⁷

With such a credo of commitment, Finlayson is in full sympathy: his is habitually the voice in the wilderness, calling New Zealand back from its slide to the inferno, to regain the virtues

7. Unsigned (presumably Charles Brasch—editor), "Writers in New Zealand: A Questionnaire", Landfall 53, vol.14, no.1, March 1960, p.36.

of an ideal (and idealized) past. A letter to Tomorrow in April, 1938, rejected H. Winston Rhodes' call for artists to "take sides" on political issues, declaring:

"An artist is not concerned with propaganda for these conflicting ideals [of left and right], but only with truth to the ideal which he tries to interpret to men, and by which he shows to men their unity and wholeness as opposed to faction and disruption."⁸

In this respect, then, Finlayson emerges as an archetype of the New Zealand artist of the 1930s, one example of the romantic alienation and didactic commitment which has been a consistent theme in the literature produced since that time. One purpose of this essay will be to observe the process of estrangement from the majority cultural pattern and the expression of a sense of artistic responsibility as these became evident in Finlayson's prose throughout the succeeding decades—to see the author as both apostate from the materialist tendencies of contemporary living, and apostle for the alternatives which the Landfall litany suggests might realize "that potential virtue which is the endowment of every human being."⁹ In Finlayson, the impulse to reform offered two ideals for a fallen New Zealand to aspire to—that of the simple pieties of an idealized pioneering era, and that of the similarly idealized communal virtues of New Zealand's Maori counterculture. And if in the evocation of these alternatives Finlayson's concern to proselytize

8. Roderick Finlayson, letter to Tomorrow, vol.14, no.12, April 13, 1938, p.384.

9. Landfall 53, loc.cit.

often tends to disqualify him from the attainment of the aesthetic perfection demanded by Katherine Mansfield's formula, nevertheless the comparative modesty of his purely literary success is at least partly compensated by the strength of his social engagement, and by his concomitant involvement in the creation of a New Zealand mythology of rural yeoman and primitive ideals, adding archetypes to the emergent nation's cultural fund.

This is at once a process of enrichment and of impoverishment. Anton Vogt, discussing the reception of New Zealand authors overseas, observed: "The social sciences are a part of the flora of this country, on which most of the fauna is actively or passively engaged."¹⁰ The result is a level of national introspection whose excesses may lead to the ennui felt by a reviewer in a Times Literary Supplement survey of antipodean writing. Perceiving that dominant myths can easily become "a straitjacket", he chided: "The fiddle, the upright piano and the concertina are all right in their own way. They cater for a city-pent populace looking back sentimentally to a past which may never have existed but has in any case gone. What is needed now is the full orchestra."¹¹ Finlayson's orchestration is sometimes in need of this diversification—but in his defence it should be acknowledged that his work and vision derive essentially from the depression era, that with

10. Anton Vogt, "The Distant View", New Zealand Listener, June 8, 1962, p.37.

11. Unsigned, "Myths in Antipodean Writing", Times Literary Supplement, June 14, 1963, p.420.

Frank Sargeson and D'Arcy Cresswell he belongs to the seminal years of the 'thirties and 'forties when the developing diversity of New Zealand society was curbed by economic crisis and war, and when the creative and critical sensibility was necessarily addressed to the problems of New Zealand living, and remedies for its tensions. In this period of instability, Robert Chapman has observed, each writer was "driven to be his own sociologist, patiently observing the unrecognized majority pattern as well as the minor variations of which there will be all too few."¹² Finlayson was deeply involved in this initial phase of commentary—and it is that focus, at once critical and visionary, which makes him a significant figure. Although one might sympathize with Isobel Andrews' complaint against those alienated writers who "go on beating the same fool's head with the same bladder year after year", it must still be acknowledged that "We have to be thankful that they did so revolt, that they did start to write about conditions and people which, to them, at that time, spelt reality... They were both the prophets and the pioneers of contemporary New Zealand literature."¹³ In any study of Finlayson, the appreciation of the vision of reality, the moral perspective and the prophetic tone of the stories, must be of primary interest.

12. Robert Chapman, "Fiction and the Social Pattern", Landfall 25, vol.7, no.1, March 1953, p.30.

13. Isobel Andrews, "Short story writers in a one-way street", New Zealand Listener, June 23, 1950, p.8.

CHAPTER 2

THE SOCIAL OUTLOOK: THE COPERNICAN UNIVERSE, CHEMICO-TRACTOR MONOCULTURE, AND THE NEW EDEN

To develop "that potential virtue which is the endowment of every human being"¹ was the mission that obsessively concerned the New Zealand artist who had served his apprenticeship in the hard times of the 'thirties and 'forties. Its implicit assumption of the perfectibility of man—and especially of New Zealand man—was a first premise essential to the social perspective of those writers who had committed themselves to reform, an optimistic vision which frequently belied the despair endemic in the realist style they adopted. For all that Sargeson's is often a tone of wry bitterness, even black nihilism ("A Great Day" and "Sale Day" are examples), the total impression of his oeuvre is of a qualified celebration of all that he considers worthy in humanity. Bill Pearson says: "It is [the] core of beauty in his characters that Mr. Sargeson is interested in, a core so vulnerable to attacks of the worm".² Sargeson's vision is "of man as the little man, kindly, fumbling, stoic and

1. Landfall 53, loc.cit.

2. Bill Pearson, introduction to Frank Sargeson's Collected Stories 1935-63, Blackwood and Janet Paul, Auckland, 1964, p.11.

resourceful, submissive but independent; with feelings of his own though without the words to express them or the will to enforce them if the pressure against them is too great; compliant but indestructible."³

Man bowed by social pressure—bowed, but persevering—this was Sargeson's outlook; its corollary was the perspective which proclaimed a means of relieving that pressure, an unum necessarium, by which that "core of beauty" might become the social norm. Even in D'Arcy Cresswell, whose sensibility made him an exile in New Zealand, acknowledging England alone as "my spirit's true parent on earth"⁴, there developed a cognition that underneath the crassness of the nation's cultural pattern, the habit of deference in its politics, there existed an energy and strength which, properly utilised, would make possible its salvage and salvation. In the opening pages of Present Without Leave—a title itself epigrammatic of a sense of alienation—Cresswell's pointed if eccentric survey of the "Pig Island" temperament ends in a by no means grudging acknowledgement of the sustaining virtues "whereby they show themselves the remnant of a truly great people. In short, their failings are such as enlightenment may remove, while their virtues another people might long in vain to acquire".⁵ Only show New Zealand the cause of its enslavement, and the means whereby it might be free of the shackle of dull conformity, and those virtues would flourish. The prophet of the

3. ibid., p.17.

4. D'Arcy Cresswell, The Poet's Progress, Faber and Faber, London, 1930, p.152.

5. D'Arcy Cresswell, Present Without Leave, Cassell, London, 1939, p.5.

new order would of course be D'Arcy Cresswell—but more significant, it was to fall to Roderick Finlayson to be his most enduring disciple.

Finlayson locates his first meeting with Cresswell in the last months of 1935⁶—a year of political upheaval in which the public mood opted for the programme of social and economic change announced by the new Labour Government. New Zealand had reached a nadir in the depression when social polarization was curbed and levelled by a common experience of deprivation and hardship, and if, with the upswing of the mid-'thirties, the time seemed auspicious for a radical political restructuring of New Zealand, so too did it augur well for a change in the quality of life. Robert Chapman observes in "Fiction and the Social Pattern":

"The overturn in social conditions broke up the crust of complacency, allowing artists to see what lay beneath. At the same time the disturbed conditions upset the pattern of normal lives and made some men, who might otherwise have taken a more usual course, into artists or apprentice artists forced to look below the broken crust."⁷

In this area of social dynamics, then, the initiative fell to the creative mind, to the artists and intellectuals who felt themselves to be the guardians of civilization, assuming the role which F.R. Leavis, writing for another culture, decreed as the artist's right and responsibility: "Upon them depend the implicit standards that order the finer living of the age."⁸

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6. Roderick Finlayson, "A Meeting with D'Arcy Cresswell", Mate no.5, June 1960, pp.38-40. Mr. Finlayson has subsequently commented: "My first meeting with D'Arcy Cresswell: I simply cannot name the year with certainty. It might have been spring 1935, but many factors point to the early spring of 1934". Letter to J. Muirhead, March 5, 1971.
 7. Robert Chapman, "Fiction and the Social Pattern", p.28.
 8. F.R. Leavis, Mass Civilization and Minority Culture, quoted by Raymond Williams, Culture and Society, Chatto and Windus, London, 1959, p.253.

Finer living seemed, in 1935, to be a quality which had been divorced from the realities of the nation's existence—and typically, the artist's response was a cri de coeur of alienation from a capitalist technocracy in which wealth seemed to replace commonwealth, and social justice was sacrificed to the expediency of an economy built on the exploitation of the poor and the dispossessed. It was a world in which humanity was forfeited to the ethos of material gain—its price a deepening spiritual impoverishment. Chapman's "Fiction and the Social Pattern" has provided a carefully documented study of New Zealand life in the interwar years, revealing a puritanical society, repressive in its matriarchal family structure, its frustration of sexuality, its grim insensitivity to the feelings. The xenophobia which discriminated against intruders⁹ extended into the national consciousness, bringing automatic rejection of alien ideas and impulses, forcing the individualistic and eccentric into the isolation of the "man alone", whose most positive gesture was nihilistic rebellion.¹⁰ For the majority, a dull mediocrity insinuated itself into all spheres of life. Pearson evokes the period with skill:

"It needs little imagination to reconstruct the uniform crudity of popular sensibility which ran through all classes of pakeha New Zealanders from the beginning of the century to the thirties, a spiritual insensitivity disturbed not at all by the first world war but only by the depression; a crudity incarnated in the solid

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9. An unpublished paper by G.V. Butterworth, "Spuds, Sex, and the Yellow Peril" (Massey University, 1969) attests to the public antipathy directed at Chinese market gardeners in the period. Frank Sargeson's "The Making of a New Zealander", and John A. Lee's Children of the Poor give contemporary literary documentation to the tendency.
 10. The affair of Stan Graham in October 1941 shows this trend at its most poignant.

unimaginative flesh of Bill Massey, Prime Minister from 1912 to 1925, and continued in the solemn bumbling figure of George Forbes, Prime Minister from 1931 to 1935. It was the ethos of the hard-working small farmer impatient of all behaviour that did not self-evidently contribute to material gain or public decorum....It was a cultural climate in which reading was a waste of time, imagination an impractical self-indulgence, morality a programme of self-denial and the masking of personal passions except, perhaps, those of righteous envy and anger...."¹¹

Pearson, the social commentator, of course, is not to be distinguished from Pearson the romantic who has said: "if New Zealand weren't the home of the Maori people, it wouldn't be mine for long either"¹²—and it is even more pertinent to this study that the detachment of Pearson's view of life in the 'thirties is made pungent by its participation in the orthodoxies of artistic estrangement from the mass cultural pattern in that time.

It was to such a pattern—and to the same orthodoxies—that D'Arcy Cresswell returned from England in 1932, confessing: "I am sometimes required to descend to that Antipodean Hades of darkness where I was born, to hear the commands of its exiled deities."¹³ The peregrination was made at an important time—for as Cresswell arrived in Lyttelton, Denis Glover's Caxton Club Press was about to commence publishing; Phoenix was being produced by Bob Lowry and James Bertram, its printer and first editor, at Auckland University College, and Tomorrow was soon to

11. Bill Pearson, introduction to Frank Sargeson's Collected Stories, p.9.

12. Bill Pearson, "New Zealand Since the War. 7. The Maori People", Landfall 62, vol.16, no.2, June 1962, p.180.

13. D'Arcy Cresswell, Present Without Leave, CLVI, p.159.

emerge at the vanguard of the dissenting intelligentsia.

Cresswell's contributions to the cause—the articles published in J.H.E. Schroder's weekly literary supplement to the

Christchurch Press¹⁴—established him firmly in that context.

Later to form the opening sections of Present Without Leave, these essays expressed an alienation from New Zealand society that so enraged the citizens of Christchurch that Oliver Duff, then editor of the Press, was obliged to discontinue the series.

The theses expounded in these articles—amended, expanded, and expressed as a metaphysic that blended Coleridgean intuition with Carlylean pomp—were to be the dominant emphasis in

Cresswell's subsequent work at Castor Bay, Auckland, where his circle of friends came to include, in 1935, "a young artist and writer of remarkable promise, who helped me more than in prudence he ought, and on two occasions paid all my debts for me; for which, in return, I gave him all the advice and assistance I could in his work."¹⁵ —Roderick Finlayson, who at 31 years old, was eight years Cresswell's junior.

The first meeting, recorded by Finlayson in Mate,¹⁶ began a friendship that was to continue until Cresswell's death. The very durability of the relationship is an indication of its foundation. Frank Sargeson has observed of Cresswell: "What I think he really required of a friend was that he should also be a disciple, and I could never see myself as quite fulfilling the

14. These appeared as "The Poet's Progress II" in instalments on February 13, February 27, March 12, March 26, April 9, 1932.

15. D'Arcy Cresswell, Present Without Leave, CCXVI, p.226.

16. Roderick Finlayson, "A Meeting with D'Arcy Cresswell", Mate, no.5, June 1960, pp.38-40.

requirement."¹⁷ Sargeson's judgement is partially supported by the strongly egocentric tone of Cresswell's autobiographies—but perhaps in Finlayson's case, the implied analogy of messiah and apostle would be better, more accurately, replaced by a metaphor of symbiosis. Finlayson has explained his intellectual debt to Cresswell in terms which suggest the example of Engels and Marx: "I held those views concerning farming and Maori life etc. long before I met Cresswell...what Cresswell gave me was a deeper more comprehensive and logical analysis of modern science and technology in relation to culture."¹⁸ After the initial impact of that analysis, Finlayson has recently recalled,¹⁹ Cresswell's influence was largely literary, rather than ideological—a fundamental agreement precluded the necessity of any deep probing or dialectical argument. What did emerge from the relationship, it seems, was the marriage, in Finlayson's thought and work, of an expansive theory of western cultural history to an exclusively local variant. Cresswell's eclecticism, his insistent self-rationalization, and the acute, if occasional, insights which transformed both into meaningful argument were complemented by an outlook built on Finlayson's observation of life in the Auckland and Bay of Plenty country districts. In the union, the cry of an exiled sensibility which would remain, despite Robin Hyde, "forever England", was informed by the authentic voice of New Zealand experience. The fruits of this dialogue were Roderick Finlayson's polemical writings, and the

17. Frank Sargeson, "D'Arcy Cresswell. By his friends", Landfall 56, vol.14, no.4, December 1960, p.349.

18. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, February 1, 1971.

19. Mr. Finlayson, interview with J. Muirhead, February 23, 1971.

stories and novels in which they took literary form.

Finlayson was first attracted to Cresswell, ironically enough, through the agency of a machine—the radio, which was for that generation, as television is for this, a central symbol and mystery of technological modernity. The irony was not at the time apparent to Cresswell. Finlayson recalls the poet's broadcast discussion of Ulysses:

"Ulysses, of course, is the poetic spirit and the Sirens the voices of the modern world and science trying to seduce the poet....But the people who organize the world and science are so stupid a poet can make any of them look perfectly silly any time he cares to open his mouth...."²⁰

A strong disgust with a world perverted by science, a recognition of the need for a reassertion of a "poetic ideal", and the sense of poetic mission that accompanied it—this was the initial consensus.

For both writers, the hatred of a mechanistic world was a primary stimulus to their adoption of a stance outside of the mainstream of society. Cresswell's first experience of the Machine was his job as a greaser on a voyage to England in 1929, when the vagaries of the ship's engines—"these foolish and decrepit-looking things", "these unprincipled inventions"—impressed him as the manifestation of a perverse, malicious force:

20. Paraphrased by Roderick Finlayson, "A Meeting with D'Arcy Cresswell", p.38.

"...as I rushed up to see, they started off again, spitting oil and hot water at me as if they defied me to touch them."²¹

It was a typically romantic reaction, a feeling of blank incomprehension developing into the perception of a principle of malevolence which made the machine the enemy of civilized life, and more particularly, the Whale to Cresswell's Ahab:

"ever since that almost fatal encounter, Ahab had cherished a wild vindictiveness against the whale, all the more fell for that in his frantic morbidness he at last came to identify with him, not only all his bodily woes, but all his intellectual and spiritual exasperations. The White Whale swam before him as the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them, till they are left living on with half a heart and half a lung."²²

The sequel to Cresswell's response was the formulation of a theory of the machine, which in his analysis "may not be used except to Man's downfall."²³ Since engines work by explosion—the combustion of fuels "in a way which provokes them to violence by preventing their free dispersal"—they "thwart natural disintegration when in process of becoming integration or harmony and oneness again."²⁴ This process of hampered combustion extends into the society of men where the provocation to disharmony works at two levels; in the substitution of an individualistic,

21. D'Arcy Cresswell, Present Without Leave, XLIII, p.36.

22. Herman Melville, Moby Dick, Signet, New York, 1961, p.185.

23. D'Arcy Cresswell, Present Without Leave, LIX, p.54.

24. ibid.

mechanistic world-view for the synthesising, collective impulse of the "poetic ideal", and in the corruption of men by the violent power with which the machine tempts them. And if the latter invites the ultimate self-annihilation of humanity, the former just as effectively taints its life-blood, insinuating materialistic values which render life sterile and dull, reducing relationships to the savagery of competitive acquisition, and making impotent the life-sustaining land. Thus of the inhabitants of Auckland province, Cresswell declares:

"...by their avarice and madness for experiment and contempt for Nature (to which their urgent need for money compels them more and more) those parts they have settled are becoming more and more a prey to strange and unexpected pests and diseases...."²⁵

This observation occurs in a passage of social commentary unusual to Cresswell, whose objection to contemporaneity was more commonly phrased in a metaphysic that was peculiarly his own. For him, materialism and mechanism were not only contributory to the downfall of western civilization—they were also symptomatic of its collapse. This process Cresswell located in a cyclical theory of cultural history which had for its upward phase the civilizations of pagan antiquity and medieval christendom, with correspondent downward swings in the decadence of imperial Rome, and the lapse from a "poetic ideal" in post-Reformation Europe.²⁶

25. ibid., LI, pp.44-5.

26. This summary of Cresswell is in general indebted to Dr. W.S. Broughton's analysis in W.D'Arcy Cresswell, A.R.D. Fairburn, R.A.K. Mason: An Examination of Certain Aspects of their lives and works, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Auckland University, 1968, pp.115-158, 390-431.

To distinguish between the ideal and its contradiction, Cresswell employs the values of "public" and "private". The former, that which makes one, transforming men from parts (selves) to a unity (society), is a quality common to all, and is called, in man, "soul". "Private" is therefore that which diverts man from realizing the primacy of the soul, and in a society which has so strayed from the ideal,

"nothing is credited but things only profane and material ...nothing is so much discredited by the many at large as all things of the soul....The State is no longer God's, nor even the people's, but pledged to the owners of power and wealth for a dole of comfort and material gain."²⁷

Such a fall from harmony, from the wholeness which is the ideal state of civilization was, in Cresswell's analysis—and here he follows a tradition which includes Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot—the result of a dissociation of sensibility, by which the faculties were divided, sensitivity numbed and perception dulled. In the collapse of Hellenic civilization, this was caused by a divorce of reason from sense, with a consequent decline into mere sensation; in the fall of medieval christendom, the opposite process occurred. Sense was divorced from reason—and man's intellect, losing its anchorage in the concrete world of the senses, went flying after the false abstraction which for Cresswell was summed up in the derisive epithet "the Copernican Universe"—a world in which Science was Antichrist, the machine the new altar, and materialism the creed by which man worshipped.²⁸

27. D'Arcy Cresswell, Present Without Leave, CXII, pp.107-8.

28. There are obvious parallels to Arnold's Culture and Anarchy in this vision, particularly his derision of "idolatry of machinery", and his lament for the dissociation of "Hebraism" and "Hellenism" in mankind.

The result must be faction and disruption, and a final act of disharmony which would lead mankind to the brink²⁹—but not to final dissolution. For from the ashes of a universe now purged of machines, and now cognisant of the failure of abstract reason, would arise the new phoenix—a civilization once more founded on an harmonious integration of intellect and intuition, whose apostles and high priests would be the poets and writers, those worthy of the title vates. Cresswell confesses in Present Without Leave:

"I was more and more in my labours becoming convinced that what afflicted this World and must overthrow it was a deep and organized cleavage between concrete and abstract in our faculties, whose harmony was poetic and the labour of poets, and the only refuge before Mankind".³⁰

This then, was the "more comprehensive and logical analysis of modern science and technology in relation to culture"³¹ which was Cresswell's legacy to Finlayson, and it was to fall to Finlayson to reinterpret it in terms anchored in the reality of living in New Zealand, there and then. As with Cresswell, Finlayson's disaffection begins with a rejection of mechanized and materialistic society, but unlike Cresswell his denial is grounded in the tangibilities of taste, and in an act of empathy

29. Cresswell conceived of Hitler as the agent of the "final Armageddon"—vide W.S. Broughton, op. cit., p.75.

30. D'Arcy Cresswell, Present Without Leave, CXCVIII, p.206.

31. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, February 1, 1971.

with the victims of the industrial wasteland. Unlike Cresswell, too, the visionary tendency is expressed more concretely in a strongly visualised evocation of what New Zealand's annus mirabilis might be—and it is on the life of the rural pakeha and Maori, idealized, but based in authentic experience, that his hope and expectation settles.³²

The pamphlet Our Life in this Land, dated apocalyptically enough "Easter Monday, 1940", lays the opening charge against the "chaos and utter profanity of recklessly erring modern industrial plutocracy".³³ The essay is infused throughout with a strong distaste for encapsuled urban living, with its routine of sterile work in an oppressive factory atmosphere, its abdication from all that is fresh and vital; and an equally strong feeling for the land, on which only may beauty and spontaneity flourish. Alan Mulgan has appropriately discerned this latter tendency to be as much a part of the New Zealand psyche as it is of the romantic temperament:

"Landscape is not something apart: it is woven into the stuff of our being, it may influence our thought and behaviour without our being conscious of the process."³⁴

32. The difference in outlook is amusingly demonstrated by an anecdote recorded in Finlayson's contribution to the Landfall tribute "D'Arcy Cresswell. By his friends". Working with Finlayson in the hayfields around Auckland, shortly before his departure for England, Cresswell was impossibly romantic in approach: "he clung to the idea that haymaking was a particularly poetic leisurely task, with wooden hayrakes and maybe he even expected garlanded haywains." The farmer who wrought Cresswell's disillusionment suffered a well-directed pitchfork for his pains. Landfall 56, vol.14, no.4, December 1960, p.352.

33. R. Finlayson, Our Life in this Land, Griffin Press, Auckland, 1940, preface (no pagination).

34. Alan Mulgan, Literature and Landscape in New Zealand, New Zealand Geographical Society. Reprint series no.2. Reprint from the New Zealand Geographer, vol.2, no.1, April 1946, p.16.

And of Finlayson it might be observed that he blends both attitudes—that of the New Zealander coming to terms with the land, as Mulgan implies he must, and that of the romantic looking to the land because he cannot come to terms with the city. The combination of impulses is expressed in an intense anger at the despoliation of the land. The lino-cuts with which Finlayson illustrated Brown Man's Burden and Our Life in this Land show a country denuded and infertile, its charred tree stumps a dominant and suggestive symbol of his antipathy to the profit motive which urges men to exploit the land without reciprocation or replenishment. In this response, and in his recurrent polemic against pollution, Finlayson reveals a sympathy with the mystical environmentalism of the English journal Trees and the New Earth (published by the Men of the Trees), to which he contributed in the early 'fifties—mystical, because in Finlayson's work allegiance to the land is seen as a religious impulse (the story "Pray to God" in Sweet Beulah Land is the obvious example), and because the corollary to his alarm at humanity's fouling of its environment is a general statement against the choking of civilization itself by the "terrible puerilities of technological materialism—the looking to matter for salvation instead of listening to the voice of the spirit."³⁵

The revulsion against technological materialism—and an

35. Roderick Finlayson, letter to New Zealand Tablet, September 10, 1969, p.39.

awakening to the "voice of the spirit"—stemmed from an apocalyptic vision experienced during Finlayson's early manhood, when his study of science led him to a contemplation of the nature of Matter. The result was a revelatory cognition which made Finlayson apostate from the discipline for which he had formerly had both aptitude and enthusiasm³⁶—so much so that he came to relate the advance of science with the downfall of contemporary civilization. The proof of that downfall, of course, came with the onset of the slump which began in the late 'twenties and quickly deepened into depression, when capitalism seemed to founder on the contradictions which Marx had anticipated. Finlayson was freed from his job as an architect's draughtsman, and propelled into the world of the depressed pakeha and Maori, a world which he had known as a child, but was now experiencing from the perspective of the alienated romantic, rejecting and rejected by a materialistic and acquisitive society. In classic fulfilment of Chapman's definition, Finlayson was serving his apprenticeship as an artist, "forced to look below the broken crust" of social complacency.³⁷

He was also serving his apprenticeship as a social analyst, moved to contrast the simple pieties of life on the land—the peasant ideal—with the increasing pressures of urban industrial living, and the materialist ethic which was its justification. Our Life in this Land focusses on that ethic, declaring New Zealand a "tinsel paradise", "where work is neither hardship nor

36. Mr. Finlayson, interview with J. Muirhead, February 23, 1971.

37. Robert Chapman, "Fiction and the Social Pattern", p.28.

pleasure but merely a bore, and where culture is merely a more sugary bore to distract us 'till death ends all."³⁸ In a society without spiritual strength—and with neither the means nor the inclination for enrichment—all is harnessed to the satisfaction of man's unrestrained acquisitive drive, so that social intercourse is conducted in the idiom of the stock exchange, and the salesman becomes a new cultural spokesman. Finlayson's vision is here not so far removed from Sinclair Lewis' evocation of the twentieth-century hero, "the great sales-manager...whose title of nobility was 'Go-getter', and who devoted himself and his young samurai to the cosmic purpose of selling—not of selling anything in particular, for or to anybody in particular, but pure Selling".³⁹ The Bulletin story "Mr. Stoke Had No Complaints" (The Bulletin, November 5, 1947) gives fictional treatment to the theme, but the author's "friend Jones" in the iconoclastic commentary "In Defence of Illiteracy" is Finlayson's wry polemical example of the inseparability, in a materialist world, of culture and the profit-motive:

"You've got to have education. Just imagine if only one in a thousand could read the advertising."⁴⁰

In a society thus oriented to commerce, Finlayson urges, men cease to have intrinsic worth, and are treated not in accord with any human values, but consistent only with criteria of utility and productivity. In his examination of the industrialism founded on the precepts of Adam Smith, Finlayson's tone is at its

38. Roderick Finlayson, Our Life in this Land, Auckland, 1940, p.13.

39. Sinclair Lewis, Babbitt, Jonathan Cape, London, 1960, p.143.

40. Roderick Finlayson, "In Defence of Illiteracy", Auckland Star, Weekend Pictorial, March 12, 1938, p.3.

most condemnatory, and it is in revulsion at the excesses of capitalism that his vocabulary borrows from Marxist terminology. Of this influence he has commented: "The Marxist analysis will have impressed...as factual and necessary, though the Marxist remedy may have been rejected".⁴¹ Although he has had no formal affiliations with the left, it is apparent that Finlayson's sympathies—and his radical conception of the responsibilities of a practising Roman Catholic—dispose him to an acceptance of Marxist thought.

Marxist analysis is at its most influential in Finlayson's depiction of the neo-Victorian workhouses which oppress the proletariat, the factories in which the worker is tied to his machine, alienated from the product he is making, and from the social system which demands its manufacture. Such work is drudgery, a soulless and predictable routine which confers on its victim no pleasure and no true reward, not even the enrichment which should be the result of any act of creativity—for it is the machine which makes, the worker only operates. And for enrichment, the factory system substitutes material payment, beguiling the worker with the illusion of reward, yet at the same time enslaving him more irrevocably to the materialist system which is his master. "It comes to this", says Finlayson, "that making good things is living, making money is an opiate for the masses."⁴²

41. Roderick Finlayson, "War, Communism and Catholics", Zealandia, April 11, 1968, p.19.

42. Roderick Finlayson, "Bread, Butter and Good Taste: some thoughts for patriots", New Zealand Tablet, July 14, 1943, p.8.

The obvious allusion here is evidence of a wider debt to Marx's theory of alienation:

"In what does this alienation of labour consist? First that the work is external to the worker, that it is not a part of his nature, that consequently he does not fulfil himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery, not of well-being, does not develop freely a physical and mental energy, but is physically exhausted and mentally debased."⁴³

—and Marx's concomitant analysis of the cash nexus which becomes, in capitalist economies, the alien intermediary between man and man fits well with Finlayson's perception of a society which dessicates the feelings, and which may be transformed only by the restoration of the communal awareness which characterized simpler peasant societies.

But in a New Zealand lapsed from that state, all is tainted by the triumph of materialism. Education is denied its role in preserving the cultural tradition of New Zealand's English and western heritage, and falls to the service of a popular culture of "'reel' love and snappy experience"⁴⁴ which reflects the propensity for sensation and sensationalism inevitable in a people without spiritual resources or values. Industry follows the decline of taste with the production of manufactured goods geared to a crudity and conformity of sensibility which denies adherence to any aesthetic standard. Primary products simply lack flavour:

⁴³. Karl Marx, extract in T.B. Bottomore, and Maximilien Rubel (ed.), Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1967, p.177.

⁴⁴. Roderick Finlayson, "In Defence of Illiteracy", p.3.

"Made by machines and designed for machine-like lives instead of being formed by intelligent human hands for decent human living, such stuff will always be harmful to flesh-and-blood human beings and tolerable only to the race of semi-automatons our society threatens to perpetuate."⁴⁵

Ruskin's comment on mechanization and the proletarian is pertinent:

"You must either make a tool of the creature or a man of him. You cannot make both."⁴⁶

Such was Finlayson's evaluation of life in the modern industrial city, and if this outcry betrays a particularly romantic aversion to contemporaneity, it should also be seen in the context of a tradition which began in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution, and which includes with Marx, Engels, and the major Victorian moralists, the Progressive movement in the United States, and certainly Cresswell—perhaps the first such indigenous voice in New Zealand. Cresswell's debt to the Victorians, particularly Arnold, has been noted, but in Finlayson, the tendency to eclecticism is moderated by the strength of his emotional involvement, and by the local detail included in the analysis. While he acknowledges Carlyle's Heroes and Hero-Worship, some Marxist writing (although not Marx himself), Thoreau, Emerson, and William Morris as possible influences,⁴⁷ it is generally more true of Finlayson to observe

45. Roderick Finlayson, "Bread, Butter, and Good Taste", p.8.

46. John Ruskin, "The Nature of Gothic", in Frederick W. Roe (ed.), Selections and Essays, Scribners, New York, 1946, p.222.

47. Mr. Finlayson, interview with J. Muirhead, February 23, 1971.

his share in the tradition, rather than to emphasize borrowings from it. He is not its pupil, but its colonial extension. The uniquely New Zealand flavour of his social criticism becomes apparent as he shifts the focus of his analysis from city and town to the country.

If the latter is flawed, then habitually, Finlayson cites the "power of the modern industrial city over the free and wise use of the land"⁴⁸ as the basis of the fault. There is more than romanticism or a feeling for landscape in this association; for it reflects a dichotomy basic to New Zealand life—a local analogy of the American rift between hayseed and city-slicker. William Pember Reeves noted the antipathy of country for town as early as 1902:

"So fashionable has the agrarian cult been that, at times, to be a townsman has almost been to wear a badge of inferiority. Manufactures have been classed as artificialities, professional men as parasites, and artisans roundly termed a race of loafers...."⁴⁹

While Finlayson's position is not as vitriolic as the view cited by Reeves, he does participate in the agrarian myth of which that attitude is an integral, if rather populist, aspect. For him, the city squats parasitically on the land, insinuating its values of export and import, of investment, profit, and productivity to trap the country in the materialist heresy. In Finlayson's historical perspective, this process began in New Zealand with

48. Roderick Finlayson, "People and the Land: further thoughts for patriots", New Zealand Tablet, July 21, 1943, p.5.

49. W. Pember Reeves, State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand, vol.1, Grant Richards, London, 1902, p.361.

the invention of refrigeration, and the consequent pressure on farmers to let the ideal of self-sufficient, diversified farming lapse in favour of a strictly commercial enterprise, which makes the man on the land "a mass-producer of butterfat or meat or wool for the centralised factory system."⁵⁰ The result is divorce from the land and from Nature—and thus from the influences which are the tutors of humanity's moral sensitivity. The farmer is "denatured", like the foodstuffs he produces. No longer a cultivator, he is the rural foil to the urban industrialist, subservient to the machines and technology of the "chemico-tractor monoculture"⁵¹ in which he is engaged.

The abdication from an harmonious and exalted union with Nature was, in Finlayson's thesis, one consequence of the idolatry of machines and matter. Another was the rejection of the example of New Zealand's Maoris, a rejection which extended beyond a refusal to acknowledge the felicities of the peasant life, to an insistence that it becomes part of the pakeha norm, sharing the complexities of technological capitalism. For Finlayson it was a coercion that profited neither party. If, for the pakeha, there was a loss of the "poetic ideal"—"a life dependent on the forces and powers of Nature"⁵²—which the Maori rural community offered, then for the Maori, there was the schizophrenia deriving from the destruction of the old ways, and their replacement by a set of values quite contrary to the

50. Roderick Finlayson, "Bread, Butter and Good Taste", p.8.

51. Roderick Finlayson, "The Prospect Before Us", New Zealand Tablet, May 23, 1951, p.28.

52. Roderick Finlayson, preface to Brown Man's Burden, p.i.

orthodoxies of Maori communal living. This was the brown man's burden—and the explicit purpose of that first collection of stories was to depict responses to the dilemma.

Finlayson's own response was a spate of polemic against the pakeha conquest. "Hangis and hash-houses", a topical piece from Here and Now, develops beyond its 'occasional' aspect to present a satirical comparison of Maori and materialist pakeha customs, ending with a bitterly ironic capitulation to the latter:

"We must mould our accents and our ideas to conform with the fashions best-calculated to profit our loyal agents of the dollar or sterling. Let the motto be: Our Master's Choice—Or Silence!"⁵³

Subsequent articles—"Peace—or a Sword?" and "The Maori and his Land"⁵⁴—sketch in the consequences of that capitulation, concentrating attention on the land-grab which forced the Maoris—the tangata whenua—to individualize the ownership of communal land, coercing them into the acquisitive pattern only as a prelude to the systematic alienation of their land to pakeha interests. The result was a loss of social cohesion and racial identity, a grim fulfilment of the fear voiced by Wiremu Kingi a century ago:

"These lands will not be given by us into the Governor's and your hands, lest we resemble the sea birds which perch upon a rock: when the tide flows

53. Roderick Finlayson, "Hangis and Hash-Houses", Here and Now, vol.1, no.1, October 1949, p.13.

54. Roderick Finlayson, "Peace—or a Sword", author's MS.; "The Maori and his Land", Viva, September 1969, p.3.

the rock is covered by the sea, and the birds take flight, for they have no resting place."⁵⁵

Is it any wonder, says Finlayson, that New Zealand now has a "Maori problem", that young Maoris, forced from the land and jettisoned in the cities for which they are socially and psychologically ill-equipped, are deracinated and alienated? "Is there some connection," he asks in a review of the Mansons' Tides of Hokianga, "between this lack of land, this lack of work, this broken communal integrity, and the so-called crime-wave around Hokianga's shores?"⁵⁶

In this reaction to his times, Finlayson's thesis was unabashedly romantic, but it was also a very personal response to what seemed to the author and his contemporaries a fallen New Zealand, lapsed from the virtues of its polynesian and pioneering past. It was in the evolution of a social philosophy explaining that decline that Finlayson was more heavily indebted to D'Arcy Cresswell, and his isolation of a First Cause in the folly of the "Copernican Universe". In Finlayson's treatment of the theory—mostly in articles for the Roman Catholic papers The Tablet and Zealandia—Cresswell's hypotheses are interpreted in terms of his own preoccupations, adding to his exegesis of the dogma of Present Without Leave and Eena Deena Dynamo a distinctive concern with the land. In "Two Trees and their fruit: a

55. Wiremu Kingi, quoted by Keith Sinclair, Origins of the Maori Wars, New Zealand University Press, Auckland, 1961, p.67.

56. Roderick Finlayson, review of C. and C. Manson, Tides of Hokianga, New Zealand Listener, January 25, 1957, p.12.

meditation for passiontide", Finlayson's Catholicism and environmentalism are blended with Cresswell's shibboleths in a discussion of the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life. What was the fateful fruit of Eden, asks Finlayson, which robbed man of his chance of perfection? The answer is, of course, the unfettered intellect:

"The fruit of the knowledge of good and evil we are told. You see it was nothing like grapes or figs or real red-cheeked apples; nothing good and satisfying to the senses, but a vast error of abstractedness that began in the guise of fine solid fruit and ended by outlawing man from all that was wholly good."⁵⁷

The fatal flaw became apparent in the Reformation when men exalted reason—the abstract faculty—above the senses, and destroyed the harmonious interplay of intellect and sensitivity which was, for Finlayson, the source of the vitality and health of medieval catholicism. The rationalist fallacy, voiced pre-eminently by Descartes' maxim: Cogito ergo sum, led to the abstraction of protestantism and the hubris of the modern mind which proclaims its individuality and makes life "an affair of departments—all antagonistic".⁵⁸ This relinquishing of the medieval preoccupation with the totality of life, its indivisibility, followed the triumph of inductive reasoning over the senses, which habitually search for wholeness. Men sought to know matter, and to know it by its parts, attempting to discard the intuitions of

57. Roderick Finlayson, "Two Trees and their fruit", Trees and the New Earth, vol.15, no.1, Summer 1951, p.35.

58. Roderick Finlayson, "The Sun Still Rises. Finding the basis of a truthful science", New Zealand Tablet, August 1, 1951, p.3.

the common senses. Life was fragmented as the obsession with matter lured humanity from the land to the new materialism, and the lust for knowledge—science—led to "Copernican innovations",⁵⁹ the machines which rationalized labour, but which were founded on no true awareness of human needs. The result for modern man is schizoid confusion as he gropes in a world where the perception of his Senses is refuted by the dictates of Reason. Finlayson laments: "We have become people with split personalities in a mad barren world, in a universe that is a mathematical delusion."⁶⁰

With Cresswell, Finlayson's analysis ends in an apocalyptic vision of the final disintegration. In the wartime writings Our Life in this Land and "Problems Facing Us", the war is seen as an act of divine ordination, a nihilistic horror which destroys so that man can build anew:

"...we cannot save civilisation by war. War can only destroy decadent society. Our society is decadent, and we shall never know civilization until we are purged."⁶¹

The idea of purgation is the key to this passage, for by it Finlayson qualifies the despondency of his vision, implying his hope that mankind might yet regain Eden. His apocalypse is not the endgame of Samuel Becket, but rather a cultural emetic which convulses society only to reconstitute it. The influences which unite in Finlayson—the teleological impulse of Marx, the

59. ibid.

60. Roderick Finlayson, "The Mirage of Modern Science", Trees and the New Earth, vol.15, no.3, Winter 1951-2, p.102.

61. Roderick Finlayson, Our Life in this Land, p.26.

humanist emphasis of the Church, the didactic and idealistic tone of the moralists, and the messianic purpose transmitted by Cresswell—all produce an outlook that is fundamentally optimistic and utopian. The preface to Our Life in this Land expressed a faith in the regenerative potential of both the land and the people, and the thought pervades his subsequent essays. For in a crisis, men will always opt for life and vitality: "In spite of all that the modern city can do to destroy it, the instinct to love the good things of life is still strong in every one of us".⁶²

What then, is Finlayson's unum necessarium, the key to the restoration of social and personal harmony? The first major statement of Finlayson's philosophy—the preface to Brown Man's Burden—expresses his belief in the "poetic ideal":

"By 'poetic' one doesn't mean a sentimental enthusing about flowers and moonlight, but rather a life dependent on the forces and powers of Nature—a life governed by poetic justice (which in the end is God's justice) rather than by convention and more formal justice, which can be no more than man's substitute."⁶³

It is that ideal which he offers an errant world as its only means of salvation. To retrieve Eden, men must undo the bonds which tie them in the morass of city and industrial society—they must become again as peasants, taking Nature as their tutor and the integrator of all facets of life—work, culture,

62. Roderick Finlayson, "People and the land", p.5.

63. Roderick Finlayson, preface to Brown Man's Burden, p.i.

and worship.

To establish this peasant ideal in the tangibilities of New Zealand life, Finlayson draws on his own experiences, his own escape from the pressures of urban Auckland to the simple 'yeoman' life on farms worked by his Uncle Arthur,⁶⁴ and to the communal virtues and spontaneity of his Maori neighbours. Of these alternatives, Finlayson associated the former with the pioneering life—seeing the early pakeha settlement of New Zealand as an act of self-imposed exile from the corrupt and decadent life of the Old World. The settlers arrived in a new environment which made survival dependent on obedience to Nature and her laws. The result was subsistence farming carried out in a decentralized society whose units were mutually co-operative yet independent, and which encouraged only the wholesome and the unaffected. Man's first duty was to the earth, the source of sustenance—to abuse it, was to threaten life itself. The whole conception is similar to the agrarian myth of the United States, whose terms the historian-sociologist Richard Hofstadter has explained in The Age of Reform:

"the earth was characteristically a mother, trade a harlot, and desertion of ancestral ways a betrayal that invited Providential punishment".⁶⁵

The applicability to Finlayson of these elements suggests a shared stance, a romantic affinity, in America and New Zealand that is distinctively colonial or New World in character.

64. He was to become the Uncle Ted of the Tidal Creek stories. He managed farms in the Whakatane Valley and at Pangaroa on the East Coast, where Finlayson became a regular visitor from 1914, when he was ten. Mr. Finlayson, interview with J. Muirhead, February 23, 1971.

65. R. Hofstadter, The Age of Reform, Vintage Books, New York, 1955, p.33.

An idealized vision of the small farmer—the backbone of his country—is thus one form of Finlayson's peasant alternative; the other is based on his recollection of life with the Arawa Maoris of the Bay of Plenty. The Maoris, Finlayson argues, may yet retain the simplicity and spontaneity of a people still free from the cash nexus, and in their communal rural life lies an alternative which could lead men back from the schizophrenia inherent in a world which worships mechanized gadgetry, to spiritual wholeness and physical health. In an impassioned argument for biculturalism, Finlayson asserts the virtues of the Maori life, seeing in wai-ora a Tane the possibility of sustenance for those "who look to the heavenly presences in nature to guide and nourish a communal family life here on earth."⁶⁶ But his is a bicultural argument—and Finlayson wishes to enrich the peasant life with the "divine harmony" of pre-Reformation Europe, to borrow selectively from the Old World a cultural heritage not yet made discordant by the dissociation of sense and reason. In a conclusion which makes apparent the religiosity of his social philosophy, he suggests:

"Surely the Resurrection hope is for the eternal damming of the polluted pakeha waters; and for a mingling of the two old ever fresh streams of living water of ancient Europe and today's maoritanga to wash us of our sin, the worship of filthy matter. This is the baptism promised by Jesus Christ, of Water and Spirit. Only in this way will salvation come to our land now fouled by an alien worship of matter. There is no other hope."⁶⁷

66. Roderick Finlayson, "Wai Ora - E Rua", Viva, April 1970, p.3.

67. ibid.

If this is the ideal, then Finlayson has some suggestions for its attainment. Immigration—one effect, he felt in the wartime essay "Problems Facing Us", of the European holocaust of "divine ordination"—could bring people to the land, offsetting the demographic imbalance of our city-pent populace. The importation of members of a peasant culture would be preferable—but even townsmen, confronted by the realities of country life, would learn to live according to Nature's laws: "For let there be no doubt; Nature will subdue man in the end."⁶⁸ And if immigration—preferably from Asia, the ancestral cradle of the Maori—is one answer, the other is a rigorous self-examination by all Christians and men of goodwill. Finlayson's exhortations to fellow catholics in The Tablet, Zealandia, and Dialectic, recommend an Augustinian ideal of the frugal life, emancipated from the acquisitive instinct, and eschewing meaningless political affiliations, practising the ideals of Christianity in decentralized communities which may act, like Winthrop's Massachusetts, as a "city on the hill", beacons to a wayward world.

Such is the romantic thesis developed in the polemical essays of Roderick Finlayson, and it must be immediately observed of the thesis that its key points are frequently anachronistic. The author's devil's advocate, "old Turtletop",

68. Roderick Finlayson, "Problems Facing Us", Progress, May 25, 1940, p.6.

challenges Finlayson's peasant ideal in terms that a post-Depression and post-rural New Zealand might instantly identify with:

"If you mean anything at all you mean we all ought to be serfs—medieval slaves on the land hoeing spuds and messing about with homemade butter all our lives—worse still, eating the wretched stuff!"⁶⁹

While Turtletop is a dialectical device—set up only to be demolished—Finlayson has elsewhere discarded the persona to acknowledge that "There is no going back to some former happier age. We must use our mental and spiritual resources to surmount the problems of our own age, using its resources in a new way."⁷⁰ Yet in his nostalgic romanticism, his embracing of the yeoman ideal and the expression of the aroa whakamuri, "that passionate recalling of times past" which he acknowledges in the Landfall autobiography "Beginnings",⁷¹ he does tend to the romantic fallacy of using the depiction of a Golden Age, now gone, as an example with which to berate the present.

And as with all evocations of a Golden Age—Carlyle's twelfth century idyll is a parallel—there is much in Finlayson's nostalgia that is unhistorical. To blame the Reformation for capitalism and the triumph of the city over the country—and to dissociate both from the "divine harmony" of high Renaissance culture—is to surrender objectivity to polemical intention.

69. Roderick Finlayson, "People and the Land", p.5.

70. Roderick Finlayson, "The Sun Still Rises: new approaches need to be investigated", New Zealand Tablet, August 8, 1951, p.3.

71. Roderick Finlayson, "Beginnings", Landfall 77, vol.20, no.1, March 1966, p.79.

Finlayson's "belief à la Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in the simple life of the soil",⁷² too, shares many of the preconceptions of Romantic thinking which might blur analysis. Although the preface to Brown Man's Burden specifically rejects the idealization of the Maori, it is true of the essays, if not of the fiction, that Finlayson is a descendant of the primitivist strain of eighteenth century romanticism. His evocation of the virtues of pioneering life, too, habitually overlooks the values of market-place and profit-motive endemic in any New World situation. Hofstadter has aptly discerned in the United States the hard-headed dynamic of settlement, a process which went on even as the agrarian myth, its antithesis, was being formulated: "What developed in America was an agricultural society whose real attachment was not to the land, but to land values".⁷³ That acute observer Samuel Butler, writing in 1863, gives the lie to the New Zealand myth:

"New Zealand seems far better adapted to develop and maintain in health the physical than the intellectual nature. The fact is, people here are busy making money; that is the inducement which led them to come in the first instance, and they show their sense by devoting their energies to the work".⁷⁴

Yet if these caveats moderate some aspects of Finlayson's philosophy, they do not, in all, invalidate its broad principles nor the integrity behind them. W.S. Broughton's pertinent

72. Robert Chapman, "Fiction and the Social Pattern", p.57.

73. Richard Hofstadter, Age of Reform, p.41.

74. Samuel Butler, A First Year in Canterbury Settlement, quoted by E.H. McCormick, Letters and Art in New Zealand, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1940, p.59.

evaluation of the Cresswell thesis, that it "arrives at a conclusion quite similar to those of more orthodox thinkers who see in the Twentieth Century a situation where man's scientific knowledge has apparently outstripped his moral ability to use it...."⁷⁵ might be justly applied to Finlayson. It is a truism of post-Industrial Revolution society that there has developed a cultural lag as technology alters the pitch of life—indeed, the consistent alienation of Cresswell and Finlayson from that society is itself unwitting, although eloquent, testimony of the gap between the equipment of modernity and man's mental and spiritual resources to accommodate it. In his perception of the schizophrenic character of our life in this land, the fragmentation of faculties and responses and of society itself, Finlayson's is a fitting tract for our times. And if one objects to the utopianism which persists in his vision of the alternatives that might restore to man the totality, the wholeness which is vital to spiritual health, Finlayson is able to counter:

"And if they call us unrealistic? Listen to the words of Pope Paul:

'Some would consider such hopes utopian. It may be that these persons are not realistic enough, and that they have not perceived the dynamism of a world which desires to love more fraternally...at stake are the peace of the world and the future of civilization. It is time for all men and all peoples to face up to their responsibilities....'"⁷⁶

75. W.S. Broughton, p.152.

76. Roderick Finlayson, "One Year after Pope Paul's Letter", Zealandia, April 11, 1968, p.19.

In a world wracked by faction and disruption, for Finlayson utopianism is the only realism, and it is the duty of all men of goodwill to be, in James K. Baxter's words, "as a cell of good living in a corrupt society",⁷⁷ an example and admonition to the fallen.

77. James K. Baxter, Recent Trends in New Zealand Poetry, Caxton, Christchurch, 1951, p.18.

CHAPTER 3

PRIMITIVES: THERE'S A GREAT DAY COMING FOR ABYSSINIA

The tone of admonition was a dominant one in Finlayson's early prose writing—in the satirical pieces, letters to editors, and topical discussions recalled in "Beginnings". The suppression of the Mau in Samoa, the British domination of Ireland, and injustices perpetrated by the pakeha against the Maori were causes which enlisted Finlayson's sympathy and pen,¹ but it was his disillusionment with contemporary life, the linking of science with the decline of civilization, which prompted the first flourishing of his creativity. The messianic purpose which derived from that disillusionment, the didacticism which it encouraged, and the irony which pervades Finlayson's subsequent work, directed him first to a satirical mode. He wrote several satirical pieces of short-story length—one of them, entitled the Tchee-trees of Sayso, was an attack on New Zealand colonialism in the Pacific, and linked back to his stand on the Samoan controversy. A more ambitious project was almost the length of a novel,

1. The author belonged, for a time, to an Auckland organization which was formally affiliated with the I.R.A. Mr. Finlayson, interview with J. Muirhead, February 23, 1971.

adapting a Faustian motif to embody Finlayson's criticisms of contemporary life.²

The desire to find a publisher for this latter work led Finlayson to D'Arcy Cresswell, whose radio broadcasts implied not only a social outlook similar to his own, but also a certain expertise in modern and classic literature which had credibility for the N.Z.B.S., and which might move a publishing-house to accept the work of his protégé. Cresswell's reaction to Finlayson's "savage satire" was discriminating and honest:

"Cresswell was impressed, not greatly by my handling of the satire but by the outlook it implied. He suggested, and I could by then only agree with him, that the satire in its then form was unpublishable".³

It was to the short stories—"The Wedding Gift" and "Rui's Ship", written earlier and rejected by New Zealand editors—that Cresswell redirected him, and with this sanction, the series that was to form Brown Man's Burden was conceived.

Cresswell was to act as literary mentor to Finlayson throughout the remaining years of his stay at Castor Bay, where Finlayson was a constant visitor. With Bob Lowry's Unicorn Press providing an outlet for his work, Finlayson worked consistently at his stories, Cresswell providing critical supervision. Describing this aspect of their relationship, Finlayson has observed that "Maupassant served

2. Mr. Finlayson, interview with J. Muirhead, February 23, 1971; letter to J. Muirhead, March 19, 1971.

3. Roderick Finlayson, "Beginnings", p.80.

just such an apprenticeship to Flaubert",⁴ suggesting a bonding of novice to master which, if it was not as constricting as might be inferred from the analogy, at least produced a refinement of Finlayson's craft. A play offered to Robert McCullum by Finlayson, and cast in the form of a static dialogue, led to a letter by Cresswell on the principles of drama⁵—and Cresswell acted as editor and critic for most of the stories of Brown Man's Burden. Indeed, the submission of material continued into the writing of Sweet Beulah Land, some first drafts of which were scrutinized by Cresswell in England, and returned with criticisms which were embodied in second or final drafts. The letters containing Cresswell's comments "show Finlayson's indebtedness for his detailed and perceptive analyses"⁶ of the manuscripts. Mr. Finlayson

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4. Mr. Finlayson, interview with J. Muirhead, February 23, 1971.
 5. The play was neither produced nor published. McCullum perceived that it was dialogue, not drama—a judgement endorsed in Cresswell's letter to Mr. Finlayson, which is now lodged (with the other letters to Mr. Finlayson from Cresswell) in the Auckland City Library. The play was entitled On Top of the Hill, and was adapted later to become the story of the same title in Brown Man's Burden. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 19, 1971.
 6. W.S. Broughton, p.72 n. I have not seen this file of letters. It should be observed that Finlayson was of assistance to Cresswell, too. He helped prepare Eena Deena Dynamo for publication by the Caxton Press in June, 1936; agreed, with Sargeson, to proof-read Bob Lowry's Pelorus Press publication of The Forest, 1950-2, and advanced £15 towards costs. The play was dedicated to Roderick and Ruth Finlayson. Finlayson also later sought P.E.N. support for a pension to aid Cresswell in London. vide W.S. Broughton, pp.65, 91, 96, 98.

describes Cresswell's criticism in terms which demonstrate the close connection between the thesis and the art:

"His most constant injunction was that the reader see the action for himself and in the clearest light as through the most translucent medium. And to this end even the finest abstract writing was to be shunned in favour of the concrete which would enable the reader to listen to the characters' actual words, see their every little meaningful action etc. And also to this end detail was to be made sharp and clear—not described, but made visual as it were. In brief: all to be done so that the reader could watch the event, participate, anticipate etc. instead of being bogged down in pages of mere description".⁷

Acting the part of editor and adviser was thus Cresswell's most significant contribution to Finlayson's developing craft —another was the introduction of the apprentice-writer to the literati of the North Shore "group" and to contacts who would make possible, as Finlayson had first anticipated of his meeting with Cresswell, the publication of his work. For it was Cresswell who set up that first contact with Lowry, whose press, continued under Ron Holloway's direction and the Griffin imprint,⁸ was to bring out Brown Man's Burden, Sweet Beulah Land, The Schooner Came to Atia, and the essay Our Life in this Land. And if this initial breakthrough established

7. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 19, 1971. The emphasis is Mr. Finlayson's. The stories from Sweet Beulah Land which Cresswell saw were, Mr. Finlayson thinks, "Poor Ma Pastry", "Old Nix", and "The Farmer and his Horse".

8. The design of Brown Man's Burden was Lowry's last work at the Unicorn Press. The job was completed by Holloway, hence the discrepancy of imprints in the book (Unicorn), and dust-wrapper (Griffin). Ronald Holloway; "Remembering Bob Lowry", Landfall 69, Vol.18, No.1, March 1964, p.57.

Finlayson firmly in the Auckland literary milieu, so similarly did Cresswell introduce him to the Christchurch periodical Tomorrow, heralding Finlayson's material with a commendatory note.⁹ Again it was Cresswell who brought Finlayson to the notice of John Lehmann, editor of the influential Penguin New Writing series. Cresswell made contact with Lehmann in later 1940: "Cresswell was at the time helping Finlayson revise one of his MS [presumably Sweet Beulah Land] and seems to have been instrumental in drawing Lehmann's attention to Finlayson's work".¹⁰

Finally, Cresswell initiated Finlayson into the group of writers and intellectuals which centred on his Castor Bay cottage, and which included Frank Sargeson, A.R.D. Fairburn, Jane Mander, and Robin Hyde. It was a period of ferment, when all were becoming committed to the "cheerful crusade"¹¹ which began with Phoenix and Tomorrow, was carried forward with Here and Now, and lasts still in Landfall. For Frank Sargeson, the most prominent of the circle, the experience of the depression had been "a kind of comradeship into life", a

9. Mr. Finlayson, interview with J. Muirhead, February 23, 1971.

10. W.S. Broughton, p.74. Dr. Broughton cites a letter from Cresswell to Finlayson of January 20, 1941 which records Cresswell's meeting with Lehmann in London. Dr. Broughton has also seen the Cresswell-Lehmann correspondence now deposited in the Academic Centre Library of the University of Texas: "Last year [1970] I located three letters from Cresswell to Lehmann, and their replies, dated 1941 and after, and (purely from memory) I seem to recall that in one of them Cresswell recommended Finlayson to the attention of the editor of New Writing" Dr. W.S. Broughton to J. Muirhead, March 8, 1971.

11. Michael Beveridge, "Conversation with Frank Sargeson", part 2, Landfall 94, vol.24, no.2, June 1970, p.178.

period in which common deprivation induced in men the recognition of a shared experience and the hope of a "new and juster world".¹² It was a hope cherished by them all and the consensus of opinion stimulated, rather than stifled, the cross-fertilization of ideas and literary approaches. Finlayson has acknowledged the impact of that exchange, recalling particularly the excitement felt with the publication of Sargeson's Conversations with my Uncle (Unicorn Press, 1936), and its influence on his own prose in Sweet Beulah Land.¹³

Sargeson found the friendship fruitful, too:

"...he was at a beginning stage, too. He wrote a looser story than I did, and he was in some senses further ahead than I was. I don't think he was perplexed nearly so much by problems as they presented themselves to me".¹⁴

Sargeson had been groping towards the realization of a language which might accurately convey his vision of New Zealand life, "and such was the isolation which at that time one felt in working at that kind of problem, it was far too long unknown to me that other writers were working along parallel lines—writers whose work, when I got to know it, I could thoroughly respect and appreciate. (I must with gratitude mention one of them, Roderick Finlayson....)".¹⁵

12. Frank Sargeson, in Michael Beveridge's "Conversation with Frank Sargeson", part 1, Landfall 93, Vol.24, No.1, March 1970, pp.5-6.

13. Mr. Finlayson, interview with J. Muirhead, February 23, 1971. vide also Roderick Finlayson, "Beginnings", p.81.

14. Frank Sargeson, in Michael Beveridge's "Conversation with Frank Sargeson", part 2, p.156.

15. Frank Sargeson, "Beginnings", Landfall 74, Vol.19, No.2, June 1965, p.127.

Sargeson's perception in these observations is typically acute, for at the time of their first meeting, Finlayson was writing in a vigorous and direct style, which was above all natural to him and without the complexity of Sargeson's burgeoning art. Sargeson had had to learn to simplify, had to experience the depression and its legacy of a "comradeship into life"¹⁶ to learn to speak the language of simple men. And even in the tersely suggestive prose of Conversations with my Uncle, there is a tension born of the discipline which Sargeson had to impose. It is a tension which at once makes the style taut and successful, and yet constricted, of only temporary usefulness for its creator. The "I-form" of narration provided a structural, thematic and stylistic focus for Sargeson, but after That Summer it was being written out of him, so that he could turn to the more discursive, expansive, and literate prose of Memoirs of a Peon, and most notably, of Joy of the Worm. Sargeson's early stories, then, succeeded only by holding back the complexity and erudition intrinsic to his irony and style—he was, like Chaucer's clerk, "ful of hy sentence", but was forced by his intention to convey a particular perspective of time and place, to suppress the natural tendency of his intellect.

His statement of Finlayson's comparative freedom from such problems is therefore an apposite one. Finlayson's formative experience on and around his uncle's farms and his early

16. Frank Sargeson, loc.cit.

enlistment in radical causes, had given him a moral directness, a singleness of vision, which made more easy the location of a form suitable to his purpose. Around 1930 he had found, quite by chance, the Sicilian stories of Giovanni Verga:

"These stories, unlike anything I had read before, were written in a spare style, quite without sentimentality, but strong and vivid in their piercing simplicity. Here was my model".¹⁷

It was a cognition that Cresswell was later to endorse implicitly in his demand for the concrete—but apart from Verga's Cavalleria Rusticana and Little Novels of Sicily (both translated by D.H. Lawrence) and Cresswell's aesthetics, the initial period of creativity was relatively free of literary influences. The style of "The Wedding Gift"—the story first shown and approved by Cresswell in 1934—was continued into the remainder of Brown Man's Burden, written after that date, so that the influence of other Auckland writers, and their American models, did not significantly shape the prose of the first collection, nor indeed, of the later Maori stories. Finlayson was writing with a purpose and with a far more explicit didacticism than Sargeson, so that if the latter's fiction was the more significant for New Zealand letters in its conscious forging of a style for the times, compact in its understatement; then Finlayson's tractarian tone yet remains a more spontaneous expression of

17. Roderick Finlayson, "Beginnings", p.79.

an authentic New Zealand voice, one which Sargeson might well recognize as a forerunner to his own achievement. Sargeson's short stories were the expression of an art, their writer an artificer; Finlayson's were the expression of a craft, and he a craftsman, blending Verga's example, Cresswell's injunctions, and the raw material of his own experience to write a prose which is modest in its purely literary claims, but which enabled Finlayson to come to grips directly and vitally with New Zealand life as he saw it. In the development of this craft, Finlayson's ear for idiom and colloquialism, and the urge to capture experience directly, served him well—providing immediacy and a dramatic impact to the stories. Finlayson sought to record what he saw and knew, in the language of the community which his stories were intended to depict. This latter purpose, however, has been the source of critical controversy. The language of Finlayson's Maoris, the argument goes, is not true to life—does not attain the realism which the author professes. Bill Pearson, particularly, takes exception to the dialogue ascribed to the Maori—especially in the comic tales when Finlayson's attempts to render the workings of the native mind lapse into facile banality. The passage which most rouses his ire occurs as Rua watches Uncle Ted attempting to save a burning hay-stack in an episode from Tidal Creek:

"But the poor old pakeha—golly, he the funny one, eh?
Show him the Maori not the fool, eh?"¹⁸

18. Roderick Finlayson, "Now then Uncle Ted", Tidal Creek, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1948, p.58. Subsequent footnote references to the volume will use the abbreviation TC.

Pearson comments; "No writer today could present a Maori's thoughts in words as naive as these...[Finlayson] is best when he is sympathetically describing; when he enters his characters' minds, the triteness of their thoughts is not convincing".¹⁹ It is a criticism which is supported by E.H. McCormick's New Zealand Literature: A Survey, in which the effect of cliché and convention in the speech of Finlayson's Maoris is deplored as an "acceptance of the ready-made"²⁰ which contributes to a blunting of the force of the stories.

Yet on the whole, the criticisms are too harsh. If Finlayson's treatment of Maori speech occasionally hovers precariously between simplicity and cliché, then more typically it achieves both diversity and authenticity. Reservations about the comic stories—which supply numerous examples like that cited by Pearson—might be qualified by Nancy Wall's reply to McCormick: "I suspect that this is one instance in which the original would create a different effect on paper from real life".²¹ 'Real life' was what concerned Finlayson above all. His purpose was to make the Maoris "seem what they were", and his rebuttal of Pearson—and presumably of McCormick—is a refutation of critical intellectualism which sets up criteria based on an expectation of the articulate and sophisticated.²² Frank Sargeson uses a similar argument to

19. Bill Pearson, "The Maori and Literature, 1938-65" in E.K. Schwimmer (ed.), The Maori People in the 1960s: A Symposium, Blackwood and Janet Paul, Auckland, 1968, pp.217-8.

20. E.H. McCormick, New Zealand Literature: A Survey, p.132.

21. Nancy Wall, Representation of the Maori in New Zealand fiction, a thesis presented as a Fulbright Project, University of Otago, November 1963, p.143.

22. Mr. Finlayson, interview with J. Muirhead, February 23, 1971.

anticipate this sort of critical reaction to his new novel A Game of Hide and Seek. The intellectuals, he asserts, will cry: "Oh, but that is Old Hat" and so on because they will be thinking in terms of Maoris going to university.... What I think is that 'Oh well, bugger all this. To hell with it, in fact. I'm doing a work of art, you see. I'm not falsifying'".²³ Sargeson, like Finlayson, claims the right to render Maori speech as he hears it—and if that rendition tends to the banalities of the "Hori" tales, it must nevertheless be conceded that the tendency has some validity: "It's only that what is the basis of the Hori story is badly used or is a fatigued artistic form, not that it doesn't exist".²⁴ As with all cliché, there is an underlying substance—and it is to that substance, the perception of Maori life as it seemed to him, that Finlayson's narrative style was habitually, and for the most part, successfully, directed.

Indeed, it was for the veracity of Finlayson's vision that contemporary reviewers chiefly commended Brown Man's Burden. Allan Irvine commented:

"These stories are written in a simple lucid style, and bear evidence of an intimate knowledge of the life of the present-day Maori".²⁵

23. Frank Sargeson, in Michael Beveridge's "Conversation with Frank Sargeson", part 2, p.144.

24. ibid.

25. Allan Irvine, review of Brown Man's Burden, Weekly News, September 14, 1938, p.61.

and "Kotare" in the New Zealand Herald declared that:

"For the first time, so far as I know, we have a genuine insight into the minds of the young Maori man and girl formed on civilisation's gift of jazz and gramophone and radio".²⁶

But perhaps the most significant statement of the volume's impact—and certainly the one most valued by Finlayson²⁷—came in a letter from David Ballantyne, reporting his Arawa grandmother's reception of Brown Man's Burden:

"...the combination of my grandmother and your book is little short of remarkable, it's the only book that I've ever shown her that she's accepted. She is 73, had her right leg amputated last year and is in bed in the next room. Her mother, Jane Foley (Heni Pore) was a licensed Maori interpreter in the old days, had quite a lot of histories and writings which James Cowan lifted when she was dying, aged 94. My grandmother ridicules anything that smells phoney, whether Maori or otherwise. At the movies, **she'd** speak right out if she disagreed: similarly, she would tell Maoris that she didn't want them in her boarding house because they were dirty and took Americans to their rooms. She is, of course, proud of her Maori blood and so is my mother; "It's the best part of you," I have been told for some time now. This all stamps your book with an authority that some of the critics could hardly be expected to possess. I like the stories, both for the technique and the skilful comedy and realism. My grandmother likes them because they are true. She doesn't merely feel the truth, she accepts them as she would accept a tale from one of the Maori prostitutes

26. Kotare, review of Brown Man's Burden, New Zealand Herald, Saturday, October 8, 1958 (Supplement), p.1.

27. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 19, 1971.

whom she used to have boarding with her, notwithstanding the threats. Tonight, when I came home, I read 'The Wedding Gift' because the last sentence had her confused a bit; she thought the young bridegroom-to-be had killed his rival. She was very sad when I explained he had killed himself. And she was angry that the others had gone to Taupo. She seemed delighted when she came to any reference about somebody from Rotorua. She is from Rotorua herself; no tribe is the same as the Arawa. All in all, I was pleased at the way she was reading your stories because it confirms...that the ordinary people are capable of appreciating the genuine thing..."²⁸

The desire to record the "genuine thing", to write his stories of the Maori, was the culmination of a period in which Finlayson had become renegade from the world of his Ponsonby upbringing, reacting to the great slump and ^{the} civilization which had wrought it by seeking refuge in the counterculture of the rural Maori, for which he had discovered a natural empathy:

"Due perhaps to some quirk of far and ancient ancestry, but certainly not to any studied attempt at understanding, I found it natural for me to identify with the Maoris. I, a Pakeha, can be Maori when I wish—or perhaps I am mostly Maori and can play Pakeha only when I try hard".²⁹

28. David Ballantyne, letter to Roderick Finlayson, January 11, 1943. Mr. Finlayson kindly made this letter available to me.

29. Roderick Finlayson, "Beginnings", p.77.

Throughout the 'twenties, Finlayson indulged that identification with the Maoris, and when, at the depth of the depression, events led him back from the Bay of Plenty community whose life he had shared, his memories of that time provided the motivation that was to lead to the writing of the first Maori stories.

They were at once **eulogistic** and celebratory, deriving from Finlayson's tragic perception of a race caught between two cultures, from his intense anger at the destruction of ancient Maori social pieties by the encroachments of the pakeha majority pattern, and from his vision of the spontaneity and naivety which sustained the Maori even in defeat. The awareness of the schizophrenic condition of Maori culture is the first premise of Brown Man's Burden,^{and} as Finlayson himself has claimed, the distinctive achievement of the early stories:

"...no one had touched the life of men and women of flesh and blood in that confusing period between two worlds, although William Baucke in some of his sketches had begun to point the way".³⁰

Like Arnold's persona in Stanzas from the Grande Charteuse, Finlayson's Maoris wander "between two worlds, one dead/The other powerless to be born", and the function of the stories is to explore the tragedy, and comedy, potential to that situation.

The tragic interest explains, in part, Finlayson's attraction to the stories of Verga, whose Sicilian peasants

30. ibid., p.81. The Baucke reference is presumably to Where the White Man Treads, Wilson and Horton, Auckland, 1905.

led lives "very much like the lives of the backcountry Maori people as I knew them then—the same poverty, hardship and ill-health, the same up-flaring of passions and sudden violence, the feuds and the festivals. They were enduring people sustained by similar fatalism, dignity, arrogance even. As Lawrence puts it, people who remain purely naive human beings in contrast to the sophisticated",³¹

In Verga, he found the depiction of a society that was volatile, explosive. The stories of Cavalleria Rusticana are full of dark passions and the shadow of death; its protagonists are cuckolds, misanthropists, lovers driven by obsessive compulsions ("La Lupa" is a fine example), and typically they conclude in murder and suicide. Bill Pearson has discerned this influence in Brown Man's Burden, observing of its Maoris:

"Their passions are simple: love, hate, jealousy, revenge; and because they are simple, Mr. Finlayson can only solve their problems by simple expedients".³²

—and he goes on to cite the two suicides, two murders, one death by makutu, one fatal motor accident, and one act of arson which end episodes in the book. Pearson's assumption that this accent on violence is an expedient, however, overlooks the influence of Verga on Finlayson, and the degree to which Finlayson's vision of Maori life agreed with his

31. Roderick Finlayson, "Beginnings", p.80.

32. Bill Pearson, "Attitudes to the Maori in some Pakeha fiction", Journal of the Polynesian Society, Vol.67, No.3, September 1958, p.225.

Italian master's portrayal of Sicilian peasants. The dominance of the motif is not a simplistic response to otherwise insurmountable technical and thematic problems, but an integral part of the author's perspective.

If this aspect of Brown Man's Burden might be traced back to Verga, so also might be the restraint which the author imposes on himself in the tragic stories. In Cavalleria Rusticana—and particularly in the stories "Rosso Malpelo" and "La Lupa"—Verga's tone is essentially amoral, refusing to relate the tragic pattern of events to moral values. Indeed this restraint is the first principle of his realist style, as it is explained in "Gramigna's Lover":

"I'll tell it you just as I picked it up in lanes among the fields, more or less in the same simple and picturesque words of the people who told me...
...(it) will have the effect of real happening, and the work of art will seem to have made itself, to have matured and come forth spontaneously like a natural event, without preserving any point of contact with its author".³³

This was Verga's contribution, then, to those stories in Brown Man's Burden which develop Finlayson's original perception of the Maoris "in that confusing period between two worlds"³⁴ into tragic themes which avoid overt authorial direction and didacticism. The influence of Cavalleria Rusticana—and later the Little Novels of Sicily—is

33. Giovanni Verga, "Gramigna's Lover", Cavalleria Rusticana, Jonathan Cape, London, 1928, p.18. The emphasis is Verga's.

34. Roderick Finlayson, loc.cit.

particularly evident in the early stories, written before the author's introduction to D'Arcy Cresswell, and the Cresswell thesis. "The Wedding Gift" and "Rui's Ship"³⁵ depict a society which is stable only in appearance, and which disrupted, is always potentially tragic. In the former, the marriage of Wiki and Te Kaha, arranged by their fathers, has the sanction of community and tradition, so that neither of the lovers thought to question the match. The society which governs them is not an oppressive one, nor are they mute automatons, responding to influences that are external to their own feelings—they had simply "grown up to think of their marriage as the most natural of events".³⁶

But this harmony of personal and social intention is shown to be without real substance with the arrival of Rua, whose values are individualistic rather than communal, and whose instinctive, almost elemental passion for Wiki is reciprocated to the extent that she is persuaded to surrender custom to impulse, to betray Te Kaha and elope in denial of social expectations. Rua's influence is antisocial, his

35. "Rui's Ship" was not included in Brown Man's Burden, presumably because of Cresswell's reservations about it—vide Roderick Finlayson, "Beginnings", p.80. Mr. Finlayson says it was published in The Bulletin, but I was unable to trace the reference. It will appear in the composite collection of Maori stories which Mr. Finlayson is at present preparing. I have seen the piece in MS. form. Mr. Finlayson, interview with J. Muirhead, February 28, 1971.

36. Roderick Finlayson, "The Wedding Gift", Brown Man's Burden, p.1. Subsequent references in footnotes to this collection will use the abbreviation BMB.

foil is Uncle Kapi, whose fierce defence of tradition sets up the dialectic which gives form to the story. It is a dramatic conception of a conflict of generations, a dialogue of old and new which serves Finlayson well throughout the collection, but most notably in "The Tangi", "On Top of the Hill", and the "Totara Tree". In the collision of opposed social ethics, there is the tragedy of fragmentation, and Te Kaha is its victim and symbol. The omniscient Uncle Kapi has given Te Kaha his musket, the symbol of his mana, in grim warning of the betrayal: "I foresee the need to guard the honour of your home in the days to come".³⁷ But when Kapi's prophecy is fulfilled, Te Kaha's response is not the extraction of utu, revenge, for his humiliation and Rua's offence against the community. The rituals of social organization in Uncle Kapi's day are no longer meaningful in this world, and just as the community lacks a common response to the problem, Te Kaha's suicide is a lonely gesture of nihilistic isolation, an acknowledgement of the despair inevitable in a society which cannot find the forms, the rituals that would give order to a new experience.

In this tragic vision of the disintegration of a culture, Finlayson refuses to identify protagonists and antagonists in the way that other, more didactic stories in Brown Man's Burden do. Uncle Kapi represents old and formerly sustaining ways—but he is also malevolent,

37. ibid., p.5.

"perverse", "sinister"; Rua and Wiki are the agents of disruption, but they are not responsible. They are gripped by intuition and impulse, and in their flight is suggested a theme of romantic escape from the constricting demands of a culture which places social obligation above personal instinct.

This seems to represent a divergence from, and apparent contradiction of Finlayson's perception of the tragic theme of social decay, to make pertinent even to this first story Kendrick Smithyman's rather perplexed observation about The Schooner Came to Atia:

"Mr. Finlayson's agents are involved in matters which hardly become realised as affairs of right or wrong-doing, in spite of the general air of the moral tract for the times which his novel has".³⁸

The observation is valid—but Smithyman's air of perplexity might here be replaced by an appreciation of the complexity of Finlayson's vision. The situation of "The Wedding Gift" is a tragic one, and all of his characters are caught up in the tragedy—and where all are victims, there can be no moralistic identification of protagonist and antagonist. It is Te Kaha who dies, but the defeat is universal. The community is without purpose or direction, and Uncle Kapi is an anachronism in a world where the old pieties are futile; Rua and Wiki escape, but to what? Cut off from the community, they will be deracinated, and their flight to the forestry

38. Kendrick Smithyman, review of The Schooner Came to Atia, Arena, No.37, 1954, p.19.

lands near Taupo will leave them adrift in an alien and potentially hostile land.

The atmosphere of disintegration pervades the tragic stories of Finlayson's first period of writing. Rui, the protagonist of "Rui's Ship", is disenchanted with the land which has sustained his father and wishes only to escape to the sea—and it is that romantic impulse, a negative response quite different from the voyaging of his Hawaikan ancestors, which leads to his death. In "The Tangi"³⁹ that ancestral heritage is in decay, persisting only in the nostalgic reveries of the elders Rewi, Manunui and Taranga, and in the fatalistic meditation of Hone Tawa's widow, whose mind is "filled only with that contemplative spirit dear to the Maoris—a tender yearning for the past".⁴⁰ Hone Tawa is dead, and with him his world, so that Taranga's query: "would the young generation, he wondered, make men such as those mighty ones",⁴¹ is both an ironic commentary on the values of the younger men, and a statement of irrelevant criteria. For the culture which produced the elders is gone, replaced by a kind of limbo in which each follows his individual preoccupation. Eccentric old Jack Taranga tends his horse—"the only creature in the world he loved";⁴² Tu,

39. In the collection now planned by Mr. Finlayson, "The Tangi", "The Storm", and "By the Calm Waters" will be collectively titled "Hemi's Daughter". Mr. Finlayson, interview with J. Muirhead, February 23, 1971.

40. Roderick Finlayson, "The Tangi", BMB, p.51. An interesting analogy between the widow and author is suggested by the latter's own "passionate recalling of times past" recalled in "Beginnings", p.79.

41. Roderick Finlayson, "The Tangi", BMB, p.53.

42. ibid., p.49.

Tawa's grandson, bemoans the use of traditional haangis for cooking, instead of boilers—and falls prey to the heresy that Finlayson attacked in "Hangis and hash-houses". Charlie Patera decries Maori passivity when Government handouts are available; and George Patera, searching disdainfully for a knife and fork, betrays his race and culture. But it is in Hemi, Tawa's eldest son, that the defeat of old pieties is most devastatingly portrayed. He is the manifestation of that crisis of identity, that schizophrenic moroseness (Peta in "On Top of the Hill" is another example) which ensues from the fall of a once stable world. Alienated from the culture of his father, and from the land which is integral to it, he is debased, and base, loyal only to his appetites and jealous of his brother's succession to Hone Tawa's property. The razing of the house which is implied at the conclusion of "The Tangi", is, with Tawa's burial, symbolic of the razing of an old innocence, the sacrifice of communal integrity to a new and malevolent individualism, rootless and without profit.

Even romantic innocence is tainted with tragic violence. In "The Storm" and "By the Calm Waters"—sequels to "The Tangi"—the love of Huia and Ripi incurs a burden of guilt. The burgeoning of their affection seems at first an antidote to the death of Hone Tawa—they lie together as he is laid to rest: "And that was enough, and death was forgotten".⁴³ But over them is the brooding malevolence of

43. Roderick Finlayson, "The Storm", BMB, p.56.

Hemi, omniprescient and overpowering, thwarting their flight and implicating Huia in the pattern of violence between the generations. For Huia's knowledge of Hemi's fall drives him to final annihilation, his death by flame in the abyss. And it is no emancipation for the lovers—Huia's despairing moan locates her in the tragic cycle: "I'll never be all right again. I've killed my own father!"⁴⁴ The cycle is fulfilled in "By the Calm Waters" where the makutu invoked by the half-caste Lucy Baker unites with Huia's sense of blame to bring death to the girl, and suicide to her husband. The affirmation, the romantic positivism of their Rotorua idyll, is shattered by the negative legacy of the past. Romantic love offers no alleviation of Finlayson's sense of tragic irony.

The stories of Hemi's daughter thus develop the themes suggested in "The Wedding Gift"—"Tikitiki", one of the finest **pieces** in the collection, recaptures its peculiarly allusive quality, its use of compressed understatement, although unlike "The Wedding Gift" its dénouement is a satisfaction of poetic justice in the murder of Luke by Tikitiki. But even in this, the sense of triumph is qualified. For if Tikitiki is cast in the "god's fool" tradition, then his god is the god of righteousness, not of mercy. Luke's transgressions are

44. ibid., p.64.

repaid, but negatively, measure for measure, in retribution not admonition. When crime and punishment are the same, there exists no new set of values by which to impose an alternative to dissolution. Tikitiki is an avenger, but by whom is he 'possessed'? Luke may well have been right:

"It's his bad turns...they send him to Patera the Prophet then. He's the only one that can do anything with him. Patera says something about God getting inside him, but most folks think it's the Devil, and by cripes! I guess they're right too!"⁴⁵

Or perhaps it is just that in this tragic depiction, there is no Christ or Antichrist, only a cosmic indifference to a society in convulsive decline.

Indifference is hardly Finlayson's own attitude, and if the tragedies are one thematic interest in Brown Man's Burden, deriving from his initial awareness of the dilemma of Maori life in that "confusing period between two worlds",⁴⁶ another is the isolation of the causes contributing to that problem. This more didactic concern can again be traced back to Verga, as well as to the social philosophy which the stories increasingly bodied forth. Finlayson's irony is directed particularly to the sapping of Maori virtues and vitality by the individualistic, egocentric life-style of the pakeha, the destruction of a rural society by the pressures of an urban

45. Roderick Finlayson, "Tikitiki", BMB, p.77.

46. Roderick Finlayson, loc.cit.

and capitalistic economy. Verga provided some analogies. In "Caprice", the tired ennui of a decadent courtesan is contrasted with the vigour of countryfolk who persevere even though oppressed by hardship; in "Jeli the Herdsman", the protagonist—Verga's archetypal peasant figure—is betrayed into violence through his wife's susceptibility to the felicities of the beau monde.

The preface to Brown Man's Burden concentrates on this theme in its announcement of authorial intention:

"Others have written romantically of the old-time Maori culture. These stories deal chiefly with the annihilation of that culture by our scientific barbarism, and the something, pathetic or humorous, which yet remains".⁴⁷

—and the didactic emphasis implied here suggests perhaps that by March, 1938, when the preface was written, Finlayson's stories were developing into contes à thèse much more openly committed and polemical in purpose than those which sought only to depict, without comment, the tragic fragmentation of Maori life. This tendency in Brown Man's Burden, and beyond it, found expressions in two themes—the pathos of a Maori society unable to withstand the pressures which it then seemed must destroy it, and the comic celebration of those virtues which sustained

47. Roderick Finlayson, preface to BMB, p.ii.

it even in defeat. It was only a short step from this latter recognition to the employment of the Maori as a foil to the pakeha, his society the alternative to a rejected Pakeha social pattern. This is a transition which is, as Bill Pearson has rather waspishly warned, fraught with difficulty:

"There are dangers in the Pakeha writer, with his different traditions, trying to see a Maori from the Maori point of view. He is apt to create a puppet figure of his own; covering his own frustrated aspirations in a brown skin, like a hermit crab".⁴⁸

And Joan Stevens makes a similar point when she observes that Finlayson "succumbs to the modern temptation of using the Maori as a stick to beat the Pakeha".⁴⁹

These criticisms are at least in part substantiated by the strongly alienated tone of Finlayson's preface:

"The author himself belongs to the remnant of a race not defeated in battle, but more surely defeated by an alien and material society which may explain in part, why he loves his brother of the 'Iwi Moori'".⁵⁰

The resultant affirmation of Brown Man's Burden, is a panegyric to the virtues of simplicity and spontaneity, to the droll humour which, most typically in "The Totara Tree",

48. Bill Pearson, "Attitudes to the Maori in some Pakeha fiction", p.233.

49. Joan Stevens, in An Encyclopedia of New Zealand, edited by A.H. McClintock; Government Printer, Wellington, 1966, Vol.2, p.330.

50. Roderick Finlayson, preface to BMB, p.ii.

is the Maori's only defence against the submerging of his culture in a world which had become rationalistic in its social organization, dessicated emotionally, and obsessive in its annihilation of dissentient minority patterns. Finlayson's stories share the perspective of Verga as it is explained by D.H. Lawrence:

"This is the tragedy of tragedies in all times, but particularly in our epoch: the killing off of the naive innocent life in all of us, by which alone we can continue to live, and the ugly triumph of the sophisticated greedy".⁵¹

That triumph was, for Finlayson, the brown man's burden. The epithet was suggested by Bob Lowry⁵² as the title for the first collection of stories, in ironic reversal of that maxim of imperialist paternalism coined by Kipling:

Take up the white Man's burden—
And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better
The hate of those ye guard.

The idea had already been given a sardonic twist by Frank Sargeson in his 1936 story "White Man's Burden", whose naive narrator perceives the generosity of the Maori, but fails to identify pakeha exploitation of that largesse as a broad phenomenon of culture contact. The consequence is the narrator's coda, which is at one level brashly

51. D.H. Lawrence, introduction to Verga's Cavalleria Rusticana, p.18.

52. Roderick Finlayson, "Beginnings", p.81.

ingenuous, but which is also loaded with Sargeson's irony:

"Gosh, there's a great day coming for Abyssinia
when civilisation gets properly going there".⁵³

Finlayson's didactic stories—as distinct from the stories of tragic perception—bring the specific rebuttal of such presumption full cycle.

In "Christmas Day", the element of pathos persists beneath a comic situation—comic since it observes the discrepancy between appearance and reality. Tamarua calls for unity among the tribes, a burying of the old grievances in order to cope with a new world—but even as he speaks the elders continue their petty rivalries and feuds, and the young, caught up in Pakeha ways and values, are indifferent to the plea for a Maori renaissance. Hori Paul's endorsement of Maori ceremony—phrased in the hyperbole of a Concerned Pakeha—is given the lie by Charlie Patera's response to a projected korero on politics and the revival of Maori art:

"Art! —Hell! we've got cow-farms now!"⁵⁴

Tamarua's is a voice in the wilderness in "On Top of the Hill",⁵⁵ too, where his evocation of a golden age in

53. Frank Sargeson, "White Man's Burden", Collected Stories, p.34.

54. Roderick Finlayson, "Christmas Day", BMB, p.13.

55. In his recent editing of the Maori stories, Mr. Finlayson has deleted "On Top of the Hill"—a "rehash of a rehash" (see above, note 5), and has incorporated a paragraph explaining Peta's disillusionment with pakeha life at the beginning of "New Year". Mr. Finlayson, interview with J. Muirhead, February 23, 1971.

which "men may value the fruits of the earth more than gold, and the laughter of children more than empty honours"⁵⁶ contrasts with the fate of his children as it is revealed in "Wi Gets the Gospel" and "New Year". Meri opts for the simple life, but its felicities are not without qualification, and Peta is the embodiment of that schizophrenic confusion which Finlayson's social thesis isolated as the inevitable consequence of alienation from the land. An exile from the community of his father, Peta has been educated to the tastes and expectations of a pakeha—only to find with the onset of the slump that the city cannot, will not, sustain him. In words which echo Finlayson's own antipathy to urban materialism, Peta says: "I've found out just how rotten the Pakeha civilization is. They don't pretend to follow the virtues they preach to the Maori. Religion, government, business—it's all the same—get what you can out of it and to hell with the rest".⁵⁷ But unlike Finlayson, Peta cannot be reconciled to the simple life and he turns to the dissolute life of Pete's Pool Parlour and the companionship of Turi, tough, cynical, and criminal. It is this association which in "New Year" leads to Peta's imprisonment and death, and although his reaction to pakeha law is to be unrepentant "as if he was proud of

56. Roderick Finlayson, "On Top of the Hill", BMB, p.21.

57. ibid., p.18.

acting like a young Maori blood instead of like a law-abiding Pakeha",⁵⁸ his pride is false show, not dignity. He becomes "a sort of Arizona Kid hero",⁵⁹ a comic strip parody—not the stuff of legends.

Yet despite the pessimism of these stories—the dominance of the tragic and pathetic—Brown Man's Burden has a comic resolution, supporting E.H. McCormick's contention that "theory notwithstanding, the final impression was less of corruption than abounding vitality".⁶⁰ In "Christmas Day", a woman feeds her baby as the assembly sings "Glory to the New-born King", and the focus shifts from abstraction to the reality of the flesh as she looks at the child: "'Eh, you big greedy baby!' she says".⁶¹ It is a vivid affirmation of life, and it is sustained throughout the volume. For all that Henare Tinirau is a fool and a rogue (and it is an achievement of Finlayson's irony that one is never sure which), he emerges in "A Man of Good Religion" as a comic archetype whose impulsive zest transcends his defeat by pakeha law, just as Rua in "Now Then, Uncle Ted", an episode from Tidal Creek, overlooks legal niceties to redeem his promise of compensation for Ted's burnt haystack.

58. Roderick Finlayson, "New Year", BMB, p.27.

59. ibid., p.26.

60. E.H. McCormick, New Zealand Literature: A Survey, p.131.

61. Roderick Finlayson, "Christmas Day", BMB, , p.11.

It is the life of the spirit that Finlayson celebrates in these comic stories, the spontaneity and naivety of his Maori communities which reject the dourly singleminded pursuit of wealth and property. This collective vitality is most apparent in Finlayson's vivid descriptive passages, of which "The Everlasting Miracle" provides a typical example. Monday Wiremu, the Maori prophet, will prove his election by walking across the Rapids at the upper reaches of Tidal Creek:

"The people on the beach don't take much notice of him. They make a picnic of it. You would think that walking on the waves is an everyday event. Everywhere you look there are squalling kiddies and goory dogs and grey-headed old men with carved pipes and carved walking-sticks. There are fat women in white blouses and black skirts or red skirts or blue skirts, with scarves over their heads. There are wagonettes and buggies and drays, and horses of all kinds hitched to cabbage-trees. Some families are perched in the empty-shafted wagons or buggies in order to have a better view".⁶²

It is a picture of teeming life, as much an affirmation as Monday's realization of his love for Maggie Peta—a triumph for romantic faith which is Monday's real everlasting miracle.

The triumph of the spirit is applied on the social scale in "The Totara Tree", a story which unites the

62. Roderick Finlayson, "The Everlasting Miracle", TC, p.77.

tragic, pathetic, and humorous strands of Brown Man's Burden in a careful harmony. It was Finlayson's most widely published and applauded story,⁶³ and it is structured, as E.H. McCormick has aptly noted, on a pattern of conflict. There is firstly, the familiar opposition of generations, dramatized in the dialogue of Uncle Tuna and Panapa and Taikehu. The latter have lapsed from the tradition of old Taranga into the debased drunkenness which for Tuna is the sign of their pakeha ways. And yet confronted by a common challenge, the community exercises a collective will which might yet redeem it. When Taranga's sacred birth tree—the symbol of Maori identity—is threatened by the pakeha's demand for progress—symbolized by the electric power pole, the younger men instinctively proclaim their allegiance to past and present even if they lack a comprehension of Taranga's stand:

63. Joan Gries has reported that it shared first place with Frank Sargeson's "The Making of a New Zealander" in the Centennial Literary Competition, short story section, 1940. [Joan Gries, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Auckland University College, 1951, p. 173n.] The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, vol. 2, p. 319 (column a), however, gives first equal to Sargeson and E. Midgeley [sic], and a report in the Manawatu Times of February 21, 1940, p. 8 gives the following placings:

Miss E. Midgley (Point Chevalier, Auckland), "The River", and Frank Sargeson (Takapuna, Auckland) "The Making of a New Zealander", equal 1.

Roderick Finlayson (Weymouth, Auckland), "The Totara Tree", 3. Miss Midgley was also known as Mrs. E.K. Scott.

"Ah, you could laugh your fill at the old woman perched among the branches like an old black crow, but it wasn't for a Pakeha to come talking about pulling her down and destroying her tree".⁶⁴

In the dénouement, Tuna, Panapa, and Taikahu unite to rob Progress of its sacrifice, to register, apparently in the face of defeat, a denial of the coercion of Maori society into the pattern imposed by an urban technocracy. Bill Pearson thinks that the declaration against progress implicit in this victory complicates, and undercuts, the treatment of tensions within the Maori community:

"He [the author] does not ask whether the Maori objection is to offending tapu or to electricity. Yet Te Whiti laid on electricity eighty years ago at Parihaka, and right now I doubt if the people of the East Coast would object to power lines".⁶⁵

But it is a pedantic objection. Finlayson's young Maoris do not articulate an attitude either way—theirs is a naive cohesiveness, a spontaneous and shrewd gesture of rejection rather like the community of "The Everlasting Miracle" which, for all its own irreverence, doesn't like "pakehas slinging off about Maori prophets".⁶⁶ They are not enlisted to a Cause, but experience a common response which modifies the depiction of disintegration in the tragic stories.

These, then, are the thematic divisions of Brown Man's Burden—the initial vision of a society torn between two

64. Roderick Finlayson, "The Totara Tree", BMB, p.45.

65. Bill Pearson, "Attitudes to the Maori in some pakeha fiction", p.226.

66. Roderick Finlayson, "The Everlasting Miracle", TC, p.76.

worlds, and the tragic, pathetic, and comic situations which result from that dilemma. The collection is a summary of all that Finlayson had to say, in fiction, about the Maori, and he has retrospectively stated his belief "that Brown Man's Burden contains some of my best work"⁶⁷. Subsequent stories about the Maori delineate similar themes, although the ideas of dispossession and social disorientation assume an increasing significance.

In "Sweet Beulah Land", the title piece of the second collection, the alienation of tribal land is given ironic comment by the allusion to Isaiah 62, 4:

"Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; rather shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah, for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married".

And in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress the country of Beulah which lies before the Celestial City is a land of perpetual sun, of peace and sweetness—an ideal which Finlayson's Maoris, divorced from their land, will not attain. "Sweet Beulah Land" was inspired, the author has said, by "the hui at which the Gov. (Bledisloe?) opened the renovated Treaty House. Waitangi protests are nothing new!"⁶⁸

67. Roderick Finlayson, in "Writers in New Zealand: A Questionnaire", p.54.

68. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 5, 1971. The Governor-General was Lord Bledisloe. He does not seem to have made an official opening of the Treaty House; the nearest to this would appear to be his inspection of the renovations on February 6, 1934, as part of the hui celebrating Waitangi Day—vide T.L. Buick, Waitangi: Ninety-four years after, Avery, New Plymouth, 1934, p.102.

—and the latter comment indicates the purpose to which Finlayson adapts the meeting, to comment on the sale of tribal land which was an aftermath of the original Waitangi. It is Turi who knows the real business of the occasion, who cuts through the hyperbole of the official speakers:

"These blokes can reel it off by the mile. The real business is done behind the scenes....A wink and a nod, ehoh. The M.Ps. are seeing to it all right".⁶⁹

—and Motiu knows the cost. Holding aloft the evangelical tract about sweet Beulah land which is being distributed to the assembly, but which is being put to a more practical use than its distributor intends, he cries "This is our payment".⁷⁰

The story proceeds to a series of character sketches in which Maori and pakeha attitudes to the land sales are established and, in accordance with the author's didactic intention, assessed. It is a seemingly haphazard collection of vignettes, assembled to give force to the author's moral stance—but there is nevertheless a subtle craft deployed in this story. Strands of action—the Pacific Times reporter's dogged search for evidence of dysentery is one—move along parallel lines; people appear as embodied attitudes, but they have a point of conjunction in their reflection on the unmaking of the Maori. The characters seem to drift through the story, surfacing for comic and

69. Roderick Finlayson, "Sweet Beulah Land", Sweet Beulah Land, Griffin Press, Auckland, 1942, p.13. Subsequent footnote references to Sweet Beulah Land will use the abbreviation SBL.

70. ibid.

ironic effect. They are used to give pungent comment, both direct and indirect, to the one issue which is not acted out—the sale of the land which is the birthright of the tangata whenua, and the source of social and racial identity.

The loss of that identity becomes apparent in "Pakapoo" and "Tara Does a Job", set respectively in the little Chinatown of Grey Street (now Avenue) in Auckland, and the market garden and township of old Panmure.⁷¹ In the former, Penny Watene, who had lamented the business of "Sweet Beulah Land", is now depicted as its victim. He is cut off from his culture, and from its rural base—and thus from life itself. Jettisoned in the city, weak with tuberculosis, he lives parasitically, on what he can borrow or steal from his sister Carrie. And as in Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie, she is dissipated, hiding and betraying her race with white face powder and pink stockings, the trappings of pakeha sophistication.

If she is deracinated, so too is Tara Tamahana, one of the dispossessed who has found work on Chinese land. "Tara Does a Job" has a black irony akin to Sargeson's "Sale Day" and "A Great Day"; its characterization ranges from the grey impotence of Patu and morose brutality of Tara, to the horrible cynicism of Maggie Tia who "wanted rid of

71. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 5, 1971.

her bit of trouble".⁷² The denial of life by Maggie and Tara, the rejection of community implicit in their racism finds its foil in the devotion of Lena to Ah Koo in "They All Go Home to Die"—a loyalty derided by other Maoris, and offered in contrast to the solipsism of Ah Lun. For Lena, Poto and Ah Koo, economic pressure and physical weakness are the levellers and their inter-relationship is the fruit of a mutual dependence, a symbiosis similar to the "mateship" which is one of the few affirmations in Sargeson's early work. The violation of such a relation—ship brings about tragedy in "Two Friends", a story which

72. Roderick Finlayson, "Tara Does a Job", SBL, p.27. The question of Chinese-Maori miscegenation had been a scandal of the 'twenties, resulting in the establishment of a Government-appointed investigative committee. The committee's findings (discussed in G.V. Butterworth's "Sex, Spuds, and the Yellow Peril") and the research of Ernest and Pearl Beaglehole in Some Modern Maoris, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Wellington, 1946, pp.321-323, indicates that the problem was largely an invention of the popular imagination and media. Some Maori-Chinese antipathy did exist however (vide Beaglehole, p.321), and it is at least a contributory factor to the "Maori and Chinese" stories of Sweet Beulah Land. "Sunday Outing", a story published in Arena, No.37, 1954, uses the issue ironically, to expose the salacious hypocrisy of Mr. Dockman who is driving through a market garden area. Incensed by the "shocking immorality of Maori girls and Chinamen in these market garden places", he yet slows down his car to see "all there was to spy of depravity and immorality". (p.21).

may have been anticipated, in theme if not in situation by Sargeson's "A Pair of Socks", published first in Tomorrow, November 11, 1936.

Transient relationships, marred by the sordid and the cruelly violent—this, then, is the legacy of dispossession as it is depicted in Sweet Beulah Land. Cut off from the land which had been both mother and the well-spring of life, the Maoris are interlopers, aliens, strangely apologetic and embarrassed like the two men confronted by Dockman in "Sunday Outing". And if dispossession separates Finlayson's Maoris tragically from the rural community life which was their strength, then it is their final removal into New Zealand's towns which brings full pathos to their plight. For some, the tragedy is of their own making—in "Johnny Wairua's Wonderland", Johnny willingly surrenders the simple life to become a "silly little pothead, a doormat for those damn tourists!",⁷³ welcoming the invasion of pakeha urban values. Similarly the half-caste Harry in "A Little Gift for Harry" has made his act of apostasy—for him rural pleasantries and rituals are something devoid of significance, almost "as good as a movie".⁷⁴

But in "The New House", a comparatively recent piece, the narrator is a victim of economic pressure, forced off the land and into the city. And if the stoical tone of the

73. Roderick Finlayson, "Johnny Wairua's Wonderland", in Don Edwards (ed.) Coast to Coast 1947, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1948, p.81.

74. Roderick Finlayson, "A Little Gift for Harry", Landfall 24, vol.6, no.4, December 1952, p.297.

story offsets the raw edge of Finlayson's sometimes abrasive cry against urban values ("Pakapoo" is an example), the woman's narrative yet reveals the poverty of this new milieu, the decline from the ideal of her North Auckland childhood to the increasing anonymity, the loss of cultural identity, of her new house in a predominantly pakeha suburb of Auckland.

The end of that process is depicted in Blood Ties,⁷⁵ a story which provides a fitting coda to Finlayson's fictional treatment of the Maori. Tom Walker is a half-caste who, like Harry Rose, dissociates himself from the vitality of his Maori ancestry, washing his hands obsessively as if to rid himself of the visible proof of that heritage. His wife Lizzie shares that obsession—hiding her Maoriness, like Carrie Watene, with the camouflage of the beauty parlour. But the city will not sustain them—ironically, their pakeha neighbours will always be suspicious of those with "a touch of the tar-brush",⁷⁶ and when Lizzie falls sick with that morose schizophrenia which Finlayson has diagnosed as the inevitable consequence of cultural displacement, it is the local pa, not her pakeha friends, who come to her aid. And in rejecting that aid, Lizzie condemns herself to the despairing isolation of the deracinated:

75. Mr. Finlayson's clipping of the story (The Bulletin, March 16, 1949, pp.24, 29) amends the title to "Blood Tells".

76. Roderick Finlayson, "Blood Ties", p.24.

"Then at last, as the backfiring of the old Ford grew fainter, Lizzie knew that she'd be left alone, alone and independent till she died".⁷⁷

As Wiremu Kingi prophesied, she will be without succour and without security, in a perpetual limbo where she can "have no resting place".⁷⁸

77. ibid., p.29

78. Wiremu Kingi, quoted by Keith Sinclair, p.67.

CHAPTER 4

PIONEERS AND PILGRIMS: THE PEASANT ALTERNATIVE

The Maori stories were the first—and perhaps most successful—burgeoning of Finlayson's craft, and it was only with difficulty that he turned from that aroa whakamuri, "that passionate reality of times past",¹ to give literary form to his observations of pakeha life. In the first attempts at pakeha themes, there is a tendency to caricature and melodrama, a forced atmosphere which only occasionally occurs in the stories of Brown Man's Burden. It is this uncertainty in craft which E.H. McCormick observes in his evaluation of Sweet Beulah Land:

"...this collection was less of a piece than its predecessor, satire mingling with humour, rural sketches with somewhat contrived demonstrations of the thesis."²

—and the mixture of styles—the contrivance of incident and situation, have been acknowledged by the author as a consequence of his shifting focus:

1. Roderick Finlayson, "Beginnings", p.79.

2. E.H. McCormick, New Zealand Literature: A Survey, p.131.

"...chiefly responsible for the uncertainty of many of the stories or approaches is the simple fact that I found it as difficult to begin to write about Pakehas as it had been easy for me to write about Maoris; and I had to try these various approaches to the problem".³

In addition, too, there was the response to American models which had developed from Finlayson's introduction to Cresswell's circle, and, more particularly, to Frank Sargeson. Sargeson's own aesthetics, and the work of Hemingway, Sherwood Anderson, and Steinbeck all influenced the prose and themes of Sweet Beulah Land,⁴ as an unsigned review in The New Zealand Listener, rather despairingly entitled "Easy to Read but not to Review", was quick to point out:

"It is not very fair to say that Frank Sargeson is written all over it, or Saroyan, or Sherwood Anderson, but short of page-long extracts that is the quickest way of conveying an impression of its contents and style. Mr. Finlayson is more direct and simple than Sargeson, is just funny where Sargeson is humorous, and just sad where Sargeson is tragic. He neither sees so clearly nor probes so deeply, but he either derives from him or has used the same models; a little less successfully".⁵

3. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, February 24, 1971.

4. ibid.

5. Unsigned, "Easy to Read but not to Review", a review of SBL, New Zealand Listener, June 18, 1943, p.7.

The comparison is unnecessarily disparaging, and rather misleading. While the collection is stylistically more eclectic than Brown Man's Burden, its prose often more hesitant, not achieving the subtle irony or suggestive power of "The Totara Tree" or "Tikitiki"—it must nevertheless be acknowledged that the criticism by no means applies to all the stories. If Sherwood Anderson's fluid plotlessness contributed to the creation of "Sweet Beulah Land", then the influence is skilfully absorbed in a story which is a triumph of craft; similarly, Sargeson's wry negativism finds an apt analogy in "Tara Does a Job".⁶ It is more particularly in the pakeha stories that there is a feeling of unease—and it is more the product of Finlayson's previous involvement in Maoritanga than of his borrowings from Sargeson and the Americans. His difficulty in describing pakeha ways with the same perception he brought to the Maori stories results in the caricature and contrivance which mar "The Big Bright City", and "The Army Fell for Little Babelle", and it is his didacticism, not his eclecticism, which compromises the art of, for example, "I Broke the Butterdish". Indeed, it is frequently when other influences are most apparent, that Finlayson's Sweet Beulah Land pieces achieve success, and do so understandably.

6. vide Chapter 3, pp.75-77.

For while the author admits the difficulties of a conscious use of the American authors, there is in their writing much that was akin to Finlayson's earlier work. Anderson's fluid style, "his emphasis on situations...as the proper substitute for a tight plot with a beginning, middle and end"⁷ had already been hinted at in Finlayson's vignettes "The Tangi" and "Christmas Day", and was thus quite naturally employed in Sweet Beulah Land. Similarly the Hemingwayesque ear for language, and eye for detail, were as much a part of Brown Man's Burden as they were of the second collection. Cresswell's early endorsement in Finlayson of the "concrete which would enable the reader to listen to the characters' actual words, see their every meaningful little action"⁸ made Hemingway an entirely appropriate model.

Frank Sargeson seems to have most stimulated innovation in Sweet Beulah Land. The adaptation of the 'I-form' of narrative used so potently by Sargeson, gives "A Farmer and his Horse", and "Uncle Alf Says Good-Bye to the Troops" control and direction, and makes available to Finlayson the subtlety and irony that are potential to the convention. Robert Chapman has commented of the device:

7. John T. Flanagan, "Hemingway's Debt to Sherwood Anderson", Journal of English and Germanic Philology, vol.54, October 1955, p.507.

8. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 19, 1971.

"The writer can select experiences for this 'I' who does not fully understand what affects him and tells us his view from an angle of vision the constriction of which is in itself informative but negatively so. For a New Zealand writer to choose the technique of omniscient narration from outside the action would disperse the emotional force engendered by participation and constriction while letting the writer in for the whole task of drawing the social diagram".⁹

For a writer whose social thesis made him very much concerned with the "social diagram" it was obviously a useful discipline, and if, in "Pray to God", and "Poor Ma Pastry" there was a tendency for the thesis to break through the discipline, the use of the 'I-form' remains one of the chief strengths of Sweet Beulah Land. It was to carry over, too, to the use in Tidal Creek of Jake as a semi-articulate commentator on the manners of his Uncle Ted, a device which serves Finlayson artistically since it makes Jake and Uncle Ted dramatic foils to each other; and dialectically, because in the evaluation of the uncle by the youth there is conducted a town and country debate which allows the author to define, in fiction, his conception of the peasant alternative which was so central to his social philosophy.

The selection of detail through the choice of narrative form was a part of Sargeson's influence in Sweet

9. Robert Chapman, "Fiction and the Social Pattern", p.32.

Beulah Land. But to proceed from this acknowledgement to a direct contrast of the achievement of the two writers, as the Listener reviewer does, is to deny the difference of motivation. Sargeson was concerned to probe deeply, to find beneath the illusion of social well-being a cankered reality full of grim irony and potential tragedy—a vision not unlike parts of Finlayson's evocation of Maori life in Brown Man's Burden and the opening section of Sweet Beulah Land. But Sargeson lacked Finlayson's ultimate positivism, and the specific goals to which Finlayson's teleological impulse directed him. Sargeson saw man caught in suffering—Finlayson shared the perception but offered alternatives. His was a didacticism born of a thesis—and it was increasingly towards fictional treatments of its tenets that he turned with the writing of the first pakeha stories.

The thematic strand which draws together the situations and protagonists of Sweet Beulah Land, is the rejection of the constricting meanness of contemporary living, the shallow culture and self-absorbed individualism of a Utopia built on false values. It is an analysis which parallels A.R.D. Fairburn's outraged cry in Dominion against the futile, claustrophobic mediocrity of the suburbs in which "the variegated hedge encircles life"; and of the countryside where

the land is

The space between the barbed-wire fences,
Mortgaged in bitterness, measured in sweated butterfat.

Like Fairburn, Finlayson attacks materialism and the death of the spirit—first in the city, and then as city heresies are

paralleled in the country, now lapsed from the rapport with Nature that had once sustained it.

In "The Big Bright City"—a story which continues the statement of "Pakapoo"—Finlayson focusses on the victims of the urban wasteland. Old Nix is adrift, a grey man "numb in mind and body",¹⁰ like Fairburn's unemployed a mute witness:

to the constriction of life essential
To the maintenance of the rate of profit
As distinct from the gross increment of wealth.
His name itself a negation; Nix's only achievement is to survive. His refuge lies in his incapacity for thinking, his refusal to buck against the system, and in his stoic acceptance of the depressed tawdriness in which he is enmeshed. For the weak and frail in an aggressive city, to 'make do' as Nix does, is to succeed.

Yet materialism will not let him be, cannot tolerate this example of its injustices. He is exploited by Frazzle Barner, derided by Ma Hawkins ("When a man don't earn more than you do it's time he's dead"¹¹), patronised uncaringly

10. Roderick Finlayson, "The Big Bright City", SBL, p.43. As with much of the author's work, the portrait of Nix derives from personal experience. Mr. Finlayson writes: "I knew poor old 'Nix' (Keith) well. Took him to my uncle's farm for a while, but he hankered for the city. Believe it or not, he was first cousin to the then Archbishop of Canterbury". Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 5, 1971.

11. Roderick Finlayson, "The Big Bright City", SBL, p.43.

by the businessmen who pay their piece of silver and rush off muttering their abrupt incantation: "Well, business is business",¹² and given the coup de grâce by the Marxists whose materialism is as destructive as that of the capitalists they oppose. Even capitalism lets Nix be, ignores him in its selective self-interest, its doctrine of laissez-faire which leaves him to work out his own salvation. Doctrinaire socialism, by contrast, manipulates Nix unfeelingly, with complete disregard for his bewildered protestations. Concerned with an abstract social order, its agents are oblivious to the reality of Nix's situation, and he becomes their sacrifice to a theory which proposes an ideal, but whose pursuit denies all human value. It is perhaps appropriate to observe that the name of the Marxist, Deen, is a reversed anagram of need.

The rejection of Marxism implicit in this story is subsumed by the wider rejection of materialism—of which Marxism and its antithesis are the extremes—and it is that broader theme which dominates in other stories in Sweet Beulah Land, and later. Finlayson's is an attack not just against injustice, but against the mode of life imposed by commercialism. Nix hobbles through Auckland:

"...past all the dazzling window-displays—stores crammed with gold and silver and jewels, or radios

12. ibid., p.44.

and pianos and gleaming washing-machines, or costly gowns and underwear, or scents and lipsticks and drugs and appliances for the hopelessly diseased. A vast metallic-voice bellowed in old Nix's ear, 'Catch 'em young and love 'em once', neon signs flashed before him, For Health Fill Your Veins with Vito, and further up the street, Last Night of Heaven in Your Eyes".¹³

The passage gives ironic counterpoint to Nix's bowed poverty, but it also depicts a society caught in the commercial cycle of production and consumption, its sensitivity dulled by a surfeit of "'real' love and snappy experiences",¹⁴ its spontaneity destroyed. It is a vision similar to that of Maurice Duggan's "Salvation Sunday", whose protagonists, like Nix, are jetsam in a purgatorial consumer world:

"They stared in on a display of brassieres, shining conical breastplates stuffed with cotton wool, in vulgarest pink, small and pointed, deep and full, ranged tier on tier. Papiermaché women gripped in pink corsets, with bare hard shining breasts, without nipples, with long waxen limbs and imperturbable faces advancing on the cold glass".¹⁵

It is a corsetière's inferno, its ethic constraint, its atmosphere dessicated and life-denying—like breasts without nipples; it augurs the death of the spirit.

13. ibid., p.47.

14. Roderick Finlayson, "In Defence of Illiteracy", p.3.

15. Maurice Duggan, "Salvation Sunday", Immanuel's Land, Pilgrim Press, Auckland, 1956, p.116.

Certainly a dearth of spirit is Finlayson's characteristic perception of urban life. The narrator/protagonist of "The Army Fell for Little Isabelle" is shallow, devoid of sensitivity or even awareness. Under her affected and arch coyness, there is the potential for the hard-bitten cynicism of the Bulletin story, "The Girl at the Golden Gate", whose protagonists Bill Judd and Daisy belong to an arid world of mutual exploitation, full of hostility, hypocrisy, and fraud. Bill's shirt—"a real eye-opener design of bathing beauties"¹⁶ and slick hairdo are the badges of a culture that is crass, gaudy and obvious. It is a poverty of taste shared by the protagonists of "Sunday Outing", with their pride in their Airspeed 8 (again a symbol for materialistic obsessions in "Peace on Earth"), their need for speed, and their banal culture:

"...Tom said that what you want for a beach place is one of those names like 'Wai Surri'. Something real Maori, he said, with a bit of humour besides".¹⁷

The imaginative poverty of the civilization which these stories reveal is matched by the breakdown in relationships between man and man, and man and wife. Little Isabelle is hardly concerned with relationship—for her, emotion is the cheap display of a Hollywood melodrama, no lasting commitment. Bill Judd looks outside his marriage for enjoyment—and meets his foil in the gold-digger Daisy, for whom he is an easy gull.

16. Roderick Finlayson, "The Girl at the Golden Gate", The Bulletin, December 29, 1948, p.10.

17. Roderick Finlayson, "Sunday Outing", Arena, p.20.

Old Ned is almost "happy in his certainty"¹⁸ that Bert has robbed him in "The Whole Mean Trick" and in his crusty senility, his derisive sponsorship of Bert, there is no suggestion of the cameraderie that might be inferred from his membership of the Old Folk's Friendship. Ned is a misanthrope, and he reveals a meanness of spirit like that of Mr. Fingle in "Fuel for the Fires of Love", who obdurately, if unwittingly, thwarts Jack's passion for Nola. Even in the Arena story "The Morning for a Bargain", the element of calculation offsets the affirmation of Joe Randle, whose Roman Catholicism increasingly draws him away from Mammon, from obsession with the profit motive to a contented piety. But he is duped by the Polbay townsfolk, who understood Joe's business head but now cannot value his religious heart.

This, then, is the majority social pattern as it is delineated in Finlayson's pakeha stories, and its reaction to the dissident is typically coercive and punitive. Finlayson's urban societies operate by a group morality, which in its denial of finer sensitivity, of individuality, is almost by definition amoral. Historically, that coercive capacity was most active in wartime—and it is in the war themes of Sweet Beulah Land that Finlayson gives it his ironic evaluation.

New Zealand jingoism has always had its ludicrous aspect, a disproportion which Allen Curnow's The Unhistoric Story

18. Roderick Finlayson, "The Whole Mean Trick", New Zealand Listener, October 24, 1952, p.8.

captures in its evocation of "Vogel and Seddon howling empire from an empty coast". Mr. Jackson in "Poor Ma Pastry" parallels that posture, and the ostracism of Gwyn the music-teacher has all the qualities of a farce macabre. The story demonstrates the sheer stupidity of the formulators of mass prejudice and sentiment—and it is entirely appropriate that Jackson, in patriotic rage at Gwyn's lieder (actually a Gregorian chant), is stricken dumb. But there is no affirmation of poetic justice in this—for Gwyn, having suffered so much for his non-involvement in the war, is finally conscripted, and the piece ends with a flourish of black humour which suggests the influence of Sargeson.

That same brand of cynicism characterises "The Army Fell for Little Isabelle", which satirizes quite another sort of jingoism. Isabelle's mind is inconsequential, unable to distinguish between the romantic illusions spawned by Hollywood, and the grim reality of war:

"You sort of remember how all the boys are going off to fight and get blown to pieces for the country. Gosh I was glad I had an extra hanky Pearl".¹⁹

Her bland incomprehension of the sacrifice and pose of false sentiment are refuted in "Uncle Alf Says Goodbye to the Troops", a vehement statement debunking the hearty confidence and swagger of those going off to war, cutting through the euphemism which hides the true horror. Yet Alf's voice is

19. Roderick Finlayson, "The Army Fell for Little Isabelle", SBL, p.20.

unheeded—and his suicide is a lonely gesture against a society oblivious in its demand for conformity of purpose. But war is a freak circumstance, and Finlayson's thematic concern is more usually to depict the perpetual insinuation of the majority pattern into the last pockets of resistance. In accordance with the thesis, "maintenance of the rate of profit" is inseparable from the "constriction of life", and the triumph of a mechanised profit-and-loss social order creates a deepening spiritual void, in which the bonds of community lapse into the condescending social concern of Mrs. Bream in "The Whole Mean Trick":

"It was all very well giving such old men friendly teas in the Public Hall, but to visit them in their fusty homes was a different matter".²⁰

Her's is an abstract commitment, as blankly devoid of empathy as Sinclair Lewis' Verona Babbitt: "I know, but—oh, I want to—contribute—I wish I were working in a settlement house".²¹

Finlayson shares Lewis' symbolism, too. In Babbitt, the towers of Zenith are the new cathedrals of urban industrialism—like the offices of "The Big Bright City", in which "Mr. Splurgis was hurled heavenward in a [sic] express elevator".²² It is in such an edifice—the emporium of Super-Metals Ltd.—that one invasion of the felicities of the simple life is launched, as the protagonist of the Bulletin story "Mr. Stoke

20. Roderick Finlayson, "The Whole Mean Trick", New Zealand Listener, p.8.

21. Sinclair Lewis, Babbitt, p.25.

22. Roderick Finlayson, "The Big Bright City", SBL, p.44.

Had No Complaints" discovers. It is a world of chromium and neon, a new kind of religion whose presiding deity—the general manager—is strangely weary and apologetic, like Mr. Stoke the victim of the gadgetry which is his gospel. His world is arbitrary and impersonal, unrelenting in its demand that the uniformity of mass-production should be matched by the conformity of a mass-society:

"You see, we have to keep the organization functioning....The questions you raise would wreck the whole organization!"²³

—and in the ironic conclusion of the story it is the system that triumphs.

Sweet Beulah Land's "I Broke the Butterdish" forgoes even irony in its statement of the author's social thesis. It is an openly didactic piece, an "act of devotion to the God of all goodness"²⁴ as deliberate as its narrator's breaking of the butterdish. Indeed, author and persona fuse at the conclusion of the story in the plea:

"I hope you understand. I hope you understand because if you don't understand it will be very bad for our country".²⁵

The piece is a pageant representation, a diptych which presents first the yeoman ideal and then its downfall in chemico-

23. Roderick Finlayson, "Mr. Stoke Had No Complaints", The Bulletin, November 5, 1947, p.32.

24. Roderick Finlayson, "I Broke the Butter Dish", SBL, p.77.

25. ibid., p.78.

tractor monoculture. The yeoman Applefords are subsistence farmers, pious, industrious and above all concerned to cultivate the soil. But corruption is always potential—farmer Appleford welcomes progress, but does not live to see the tyranny of the machine which is established by the development of a dairy industry:

"...an affair of pale factory hands, steam pipes, and whirring machinery, belching black smoke. Tons of coal, tons of butterfat going in; tons of tasteless, standardised substance coming out".²⁶

It imposes its own order of farming for profit—a soulless task whose emphasis is on mechanized exploitation, not agriculture; on "concrete-slabbed efficiency"²⁷ and gadgetry, not on simple farmhouse life. Land becomes property, not the source of identity—and the natural religion of the Appleton ideal finds its antithesis in the rootless rural worker, for whom life on the land is a cursed bondage, not a blessing. It is a vision not unlike that of Curnow's The Unhistoric Story, with its lament for a paradise lost:

"The pilgrim dream pricked by a cold dawn died
Among the chemical farmers, the fresh towns; among
Miners, not husbandmen, who piercing the side
Let the land's life..."

The betrayal of the land and that pilgrim dream—and Curnow's use of religious metaphors is entirely apposite to

26. ibid., p.76.

27. ibid.

Finlayson's stance—is dramatically enacted in "Wonky's War". Wonky is able to resist the group morality of a nation at war, the temptation of fast returns during the repatriations swindle and the excesses of boom and slump, to cling to the land which is a part of his identity and creativity:

"I'm making land. He ain't no farmer that sells
his farm for a bit of money that's good for nothing".²⁸

Yet, ironically, that tenacity in his downfall. City salesmen—the new commercial samurai—locate the weakness and parasitically proceed to suck it dry, embroiling Wonky in a cycle of debt and mortgage which ends in forfeit. He is caught by a logic that has nothing to do with reason, the logic of a cold commercialism which brings death to the spirit and to the land:

"Just then Mr. Barber looked up. 'God almighty!' he said. 'Look at him! Don't he just look the picture of a cow-cocky going to his own funeral?'

And he bellowed with laughter at his joke".²⁹

If Barber's derision is to be Wonky's epitaph, then Denis Glover's The Magpies provides an analagous refrain for the land he leaves:

"The farm's still there. Mortgage corporations
Couldn't give it away.
And Quardle oodle ardle wardle doodle
The magpies say."

28. Roderick Finlayson, "Wonky's War", SBL, p.58.

29. ibid., p.61.

"Wonky's War" was based on a reminiscence of Finlayson's Uncle Arthur,³⁰ who was to become in Tidal Creek, a figure of affirmation rather than of defeat. The formative influence of life on his Uncle's farm was profound for Finlayson—and it was mirrored, interestingly, by Frank Sargeson's discovery of his Uncle, who became a seminal influence on Sargeson's creativity:

"...I saw him as the permanent and unchanging symbol of my new world as well as my human companion and guide: and gradually too...my determination to adapt his pattern of life to my own needs was growing stronger and stronger....I can see now that his pattern of death was a worthy one also: refusing to lie down he died as he would have wished standing up—and unless my eyes deceived me there is somewhere on the Mamaku Plateau at least one honeysuckle tree that still stands up, for me standing not for New Zealand as it is, but New Zealand as it might worthily have been".³¹

It is a double focus akin to Finlayson's experience, an acknowledgement of tutelage, and a recognition, in the figure of the uncle, of an ideal archetype which the nation at large had failed to realize, but to which it might yet be

30. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 5, 1971.

31. Frank Sargeson, "Up Onto the Roof and Down Again", part 4, Landfall 20, vol.5, no.4, December 1951, p.250.

directed. This, certainly, was the theme identified by Sargeson in Tidal Creek, the novel in which Finlayson attempted to recreate those early years. In a Listener review entitled "The Colonial Spirit", Sargeson comments that Finlayson, like Lawson in Australia, "attempts to give literary body to what is for him essentially true and vital in the colonial spirit", and does so at a time "when the everyday manifestations of that spirit are becoming more and more rapidly extinguished".³²

A foretaste of Finlayson's preoccupations with these ideas was the Sweet Beulah Land homily "Pray to God", also based on experience with his Uncle.³³ The story ends Sweet Beulah Land with a theme of repossession, moderating the pessimistic vision of the title piece—but it also begins to define, in fiction, Finlayson's proposed remedy for the ailments of a mechanized and acquisitive society. It is a renewal of faith in men and the land similar to that of the preface of Our Life in this Land. The author's ^{observes} ~~persona~~ of the events of the harvest:

32. Frank Sargeson, "The Colonial Spirit", a review of TC, New Zealand Listener, July 22, 1949, p.18.

33. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 5, 1971.

"It just shows, I thought, that God still walks the earth as long as men live. It's a hint, I said to myself, not to look for God in the sky. Mr. Pollen seems to know he is here in the paddock".³⁴

—and:

"The thing to do is to keep your faith in men. To Hell with the Big Machine. The thing to do is to work with men. That's a good way to pray to God".³⁵

The capacity for regeneration is realized in the figure of Uncle Ted, in whose natural religion Finlayson proposes the peasant alternative by which men might regain Eden. It is a life governed by the rhythms of the seasons, and by the laws of natural economy, a return to the animism which James K. Baxter has decreed as "an essential factor in the artist's view of the world....The loss of the animism of the child and the savage is probably the greatest privation we must suffer in a materialist technological civilisation".³⁶ The durability of that impulse despite the pressures of modernity had been a theme central to Fairburn's Dominion, anticipating Finlayson's own certainty that "Nature will subdue man in the end".³⁷

34. Roderick Finlayson, "Pray to God", SBL, p.101.

35. ibid., p.102.

36. James K. Baxter, Recent Trends in New Zealand Poetry, p.7.

37. Roderick Finlayson, "Problems Facing Us", Progress, p.6.

O natal earth,
 the atoms of your children
 are bonded to you for ever:
 though the images of your beauty lie in shadow,
 time nor treachery, nor the regnant evil,
 shall efface from the hearts of your children
 from their eyes and from their fingertips
 the remembrance of good.

("Elements" II, Dominion)

In Uncle Ted, that bond of man to natal earth is restored, and Jake's voyage to Tidal Creek is a pilgrim's progress to the good life, to the sweet Beulah land which lies before the Celestial City. Frank Sargeson has aptly summarized the pieties endorsed by Ted:

"...waste is bad; the ancient rites of hospitality and friendship must be observed; the well-being is in the labour of achieving, not in the leisure of achievement, men should be reconciled to each other, to Nature, and to God; the untidiness of the countryside is a sign of life, the tidiness of the city may be a sign of death".³⁸

It is a romantic creed, and Ted is its embodiment, a symbol for the simplicity and wholeness which are the virtues characteristically recommended in the yeoman myth. Even in comic episodes like "The Return Trip", when Uncle Ted assumes the hayseed guise which is the popular debasement of the myth, those qualities persist, providing thematic coherence to an otherwise uneven collection of vignettes and sketches. He stands, above all, for the land untainted by commercialism,

38. Frank Sargeson, "The Colonial Spirit", review of TC, New Zealand Listener, p. 18.

untouched by the machine. When Jake proposes the purchase of a tractor—because it "pays in speed and work...~~mass~~ production turns them out cheap",³⁹ Ted replies:

"No Jake, give me the beast what feeds and breeds in my own paddocks, what kneels when necessary, and what drops dung. Them's things I know about. But these stinking tractors.....' Uncle Ted's voice trails off in a sniff. 'Talk of the devil', he says....."⁴⁰

For all its apparent simplicity, this passage is a dense statement of Ted's harmonious inclusion in a natural economy whose cycles of life and death are of divine ordination, not to be disrupted by science's speculative curiosity, or the machines which are its invention and instrument.

Ted worships by work, and freed from mechanization and its obsessions with time and cost, his labour is enjoyment, the expression of his vitality and creativity as in "Now, Then, Uncle Ted", and of his skill and craftsmanship in "The Heat-Wave". He values the spontaneous and the unaffected, and derides excess, avoiding the fundamentalism of Mr. Keer's Tidal Creek revival, to practise an unsensational faith based in the land. Uncle Ted's reaction to the texts of the Koll Bible Calendar in "The Cattlelick Man and the Bible Calendar", indicates the integration, the totality of his experience:

"...spelling out one of the remaining texts: 'Feed my flock', Uncle Ted reads. 'The Lord must have known quite a bit about farming', he says. 'Always

39. Roderick Finlayson, "The Chattanooga and the Dead Sheep", TC, p.129.

40. ibid., p.130.

did believe in feeding my creatures. Sign
of a good farmer."⁴¹

As with other pieces of homespun philosophy in Tidal Creek, Finlayson is here asserting, in the guise of Ted's colloquial simplicity, his own belief in the peasant basis of Christianity and the primacy of the earth as the source of spiritual and physical health. In Ted's enactment of those tenets, a philosophy is given the vitality of the flesh, and the novel becomes more than a collection of yarns from a nostalgic raconteur. For finally, "Uncle Ted has not been copied from life, he has been created",⁴² and created as an archetype, a figure central to an emergent national mythology in which man and land finally merge and identify as one:

"'What I do know', says Uncle Ted slowly, 'is that I've dug in my dung here till me and the land sort of belong to each other. And here I live until I die. They can plant me here then.'"⁴³

It is towards that identification that Tidal Creek is directed, and not towards the development of the isolato theme which Robert Chapman is eager to discover. Reviewing the book in 1950, three years before the publication of "Fiction and the Social Pattern", Chapman found in the figure of Uncle Ted a generic type of the New Zealand

41. Roderick Finlayson, "The Cattlelick Man and the Bible Calendar", TC, p.200.

42. Frank Sargeson, "The Colonial Spirit", review of TC, New Zealand Listener, p.18.

43. Roderick Finlayson, "Uncle Ted Shaves Again", TC, p.224.

bachelor, owing the "lonely cranky dignity of his solitary rituals and pursuits"⁴⁴ not finally to Finlayson's pioneer thesis, but to his response to the matriarchal and bourgeois pressures of New Zealand life:

"It would seem we are in reaction not against the spectre of the alien land but against the shadows of John Wesley and James Mill".⁴⁵

And having established that intention in the work, Chapman proceeds to criticize the realization:

"Mr. Finlayson by his creation of Uncle Ted walks simply and honestly towards this complexity and then skirts it. Consequently Ted's life is not in touch with anything deeper than its own events; it has no inevitable shape. Uncle Ted is the symbol manqué."⁴⁶

It is undeniable that the suggestion of an anti-feminist theme may be inferred from Tidal Creek—as it might be from other stories. The Sweet Beulah Land piece "A Farmer and His Horse", based also on the Uncle who provided the figure of Uncle Ted,⁴⁷ is redolent of Sargeson's "The Hole that Jack Dug" with its fierce, if muted struggle between Harker and his wife. Similarly, the Bulletin story "A Nice Little Nest of Eggs", contains a tension born of the clash between a dominant wife and an emotionally frustrated husband,

44. Robert Chapman, review of Tidal Creek, Landfall 13, vol.4, no.1, March 1950, p.90.

45. ibid., p.91.

46. ibid.

47. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 5, 1971.

whose sentiment finds vent **first** in flirtation, then in surrogate fatherhood—just as Harker turns to the horse:

"Do what you damn well like with the horse. Get rid of me too. She's the only thing that loves me....'

But Mrs. Harker looked at him coldly. She was quite calm. 'Not so easy to get rid of you', she said".⁴⁸

Something of this tone is detectable in the Tidal Creek episodes "Uncle Ted's Heart-Throbs" and "The Circus", and in the asocial alienation which results from the latter story and is resolved by the plot expedient of "Uncle Ted's Elevation". And yet the theme is neither consciously nor unconsciously central to the novel. All three episodes were first published in the Bulletin (as were all the more spectacular stories of Tidal Creek⁴⁹), and it is likely that they were in part tailored to the racy, comic style typical of that journal. They are thus a potentially faulty measure of the book's intention, and to see them as an essential part of a complexity to which Finlayson first moves, and from which he then abdicates, is to understate the degree to which a fictional representation of the pioneer thesis does become a major thematic focus. And in terms of that thesis, Ted's life does reflect on events more profound than its own events—it has the

48. Roderick Finlayson, "A Man and his Horse", SBL, p.83.

49. vide my checklist of Finlayson's published work, pp.126-33 of this thesis.

inevitability of the myth for which he is a symbol gagné.

That this is the intention of the novel is indicated too, in the characterization of Jake as a foil to Uncle Ted. For if Tidal Creek is essentially a statement of the peasant alternative, it is also a bildungsroman in the tradition of Dickens' Great Expectations,⁵⁰ tracing the progress of Jake's pilgrimages to his Uncle's farm as a subsidiary but complementary theme. Jake arrives in Tidal Creek ill, overprotected and overindulged by his mother, and subscribing to attitudes which are to be located in Finlayson's social philosophy as heresies. And despite the maturation which the novel traces, Jake leaves fundamentally unchanged—like the protagonist in the Landfall story "The Bulls", he leaves the farm behind him to go out into the world, which for Jake at least is urban, and industrial. He has arrived at Tidal Creek impressed with the Seahawk's engines and dreaming that "he's going to be an engineer some day and live on steel and fire and steam";⁵¹ he leaves with the sarcastic observation that "This isn't quite the place for an up-and-coming live engineer".⁵² Throughout the novel, it is this aspiration

50. The analogy points out the autobiographical elements in Tidal Creek. Like Pip the elder, Finlayson is in part engaged in a reminiscence of his youth; and both narrators reflect on childhood experience in terms of an act of apostasy from the ideal embodied in an older man—in Pip's case, Joe Gargery; in Tidal Creek, Uncle Ted.

51. Roderick Finlayson, "The Voyage", TC, p.13.

52. Roderick Finlayson, "Uncle Ted Shaves Again", TC, p.223.

which has disrupted his moral enlightenment, drawing him from the farm, for example, in "The Digger in the Graveyard". Jake arrives and leaves a "towny", and while his allegiance to progress is used in Tidal Creek as a dramatic device, allowing Finlayson to propose his theme in a dialectical mode, a debate of hayseed and city-slicker,⁵² its ultimate effect is to qualify the novel's affirmation. If Finlayson is here engaged in the creation of a myth, then it is a myth based firmly in the past, and although Finlayson states and restates his faith in the regenerative capacity of man and the earth, Jake rejects the example of his Uncle and the peasant alternative. Thus despite the energy of his perception as it is revealed in "Pray to God" and in the creation of the figure of Uncle Ted, the final impression of Tidal Creek shares the mood of Sargeson's vision of "New Zealand as it might worthily have been",⁵³ not as it will be. As Sargeson again put it: Tidal Creek may well be "a sort of swan song of our country's comparative innocence"⁵⁴—an analysis which is endorsed by the unpublished sequel to the book:

"I would say that the unpublished novel was (at least at one level) a picture of the rural innocence of Tidal Creek and its inhabitants violated by industrial exploitation when minerals were found there".⁵⁵

52. "The Return Trip", "The Chattanooga and the Dead Ship", and "Uncle Ted Shaves Again" work primarily through this device.

53. Frank Sargeson, loc.cit.

54. Frank Sargeson, "The Colonial Spirit", review of TC, New Zealand Listener, p.18.

55. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 5, 1971.

In "At Uncle Ted's—an episode from that novel published separately in Arena—Jim (Jake), now a construction engineer, becomes the harbinger of Progress and the agent of that violation, and it falls to him to phrase an epitaph:

"I was right when I warned you years ago that Tidal Creek wouldn't be allowed to mooch along just like you want it to".⁵⁶

Progress is triumphant.

The mood of Tidal Creek thus falls between the endorsement of a peasant alternative, and the failure of a pilgrimage. That dichotomy, and the metaphor of pilgrimage, carry over into Finlayson's ^{final} set of pakeha themes—those stories which deal with the quest for a utopia, where the constricting pressures of western civilization might be escaped. The Brown Man's Burden story "Standards of Living" was the first suggestion of the

56. Roderick Finlayson, "At Uncle Ted's", Arena, no.20, March 1949, p.25. For further information about the unpublished novel, vide Appendix I. The atmosphere of failure extends in this story even to the figure of Uncle Ted. Of his apparent lapse, Mr. Finlayson writes:

"In this decline Uncle Ted...inevitably shares. Of course age and loneliness too take their toll, but the wider or universal decline that a peasant like Uncle Ted doesn't express through his mind or intellect, he feels in his guts.

Thus the pig-feeding scene can be looked at in two (or more) ways. In one way it's a picture of the decay of civilization—the pig (beast) taking over and devouring the innocent.

But in Uncle Ted's (the universal man of the soil) scheme of things even the slaughter of the calves (the young stock on which he formerly lavished all his love and care) and the feeding of their flesh to the pigs, a lower but still a vigorous form of life, is an affirmation of his indestructibility!

Even the lower beasts are more akin to his spirit of nature's economy than modern technology. But of course Jim didn't see it that way".

—Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 5, 1971.

motif. Its protagonist, Henry Puttle, is a case study in the conversion of a Pakeha, and his former belief in "economic efficiency and the educative value of advertising"⁵⁷ falls with the other shibboleths of suburban life when his Maori friend, rather too aptly named Moses, leads him to an appreciation of new standards of living. It is a facile piece, quite untypical of Finlayson's subsequent treatments of the theme, when more often the questers take the initiative in the search for an idyll.

Almost invariably, they fail. Fairburn's observation in Dominion of New Zealand's pilgrims: "They change the sky but not their hearts who cross the seas" ("Album Leaves. Imperial"), applies equally to Finlayson's idealists and drifters, unable to escape the legacy of past habits and guilts. In "Mr. Hake's Joyous Quest", the theme is treated with a light comic irony; but more often, the failure is expressed in a bitter misanthropy which may even lead to tragic violence. In "Herod", a story from Sweet Beulah Land, John Evans' former utopianism is converted into a twisted evangelism, a monomaniac and obsessive hatred of his neighbours and the land which is eventually released in murder. Mr. Moss, the "unhappy hermit" of Tidal Creek, sublimates the failure of his vision by indulging his propensity for banal abstraction:

"...facial hairs act as filaments to strengthen a man's life-force you know. Well, in time it may all help".⁵⁸

57. Roderick Finlayson, "Standards of Living", BMB, p.36.

58. Roderick Finlayson, "The Unhappy Hermit", TC, p.113.

Both were pilgrims to the land, but neither can make the adjustment that is instinctive in a peasant like Uncle Ted. Both are guilty of an intellectual hubris which seeks to impose an abstract theory on physical reality—and the consequence is alienation from the country, and the projection on to it of all the frustrations and incomprehension of an unrealized vision. The land remains alien and inscrutable, a potentially malicious agency to be pondered, feared and finally damned. The primeval shadow of undisciplined nature felt by Jake:

"There's a loneliness about the bush and something that pulls taut the nerves. It's not just a fear of being lost but something more awful because you cannot name this fear"⁵⁹

and enlarged in M.H. Holcroft's metaphysic:

"Perhaps it is merely an emptiness that reveals itself in the silence of the forest. But even that is something to be feared".⁶⁰

is the lasting fate of the pilgrim theorist who presumes to tutor Nature, rather than be Nature's pupil.

The theme continues into the last major phase of Finlayson's creativity, which was concluded with the publication of The Schooner Came to Atia in 1952. It was a time when a variety of influences began to work in Finlayson's prose and the preoccupations which it treated—his Rarotongan experience,⁶¹

59. ibid., p.106.

60. M.H. Holcroft, Discovered Isles, Caxton, Christchurch, 1950, p.26.

61. vide Roderick Finlayson, Landfall questionnaire, p.54.

his conversion to Roman Catholicism, and his recent discovery of Georges Simenon's novelettes.⁶² The results were the addition of a new dimension to his perception of culture-contact, which he utilized by removing his pilgrims to Pacific settings, and a new concern with the psychology of his characters deriving from Simenon's exploration of the psyche (in, for example, The Man Who Watched the Trains Go By) and from the self-examination which his reception into the Church had inevitably provoked.

The Listener story, "The Secret" incorporates some of that influence in its development of the pilgrim motif. Its questers, the Cottars, arrive at Vaihana to "lead the simple life, away from the big bad world, cut-throat competition and all that".⁶³ But they bring the anxieties of that life, the drive for a modest competence, with them, wearing old values like an insulating and crippling restrictive cloak. Like Tarn, who came to escape his past, their idyll will be tarnished by their dependence on the world they had thought to leave. Since they carry corruption with them, there can be no flight to innocence—only the mutually parasitic existence of interlopers in a strange world which they cannot accept on its own terms, a "hole and a half" hell-hole which is neither solution nor retreat.

62. Mr. Finlayson, interview with J. Muirhead, February 23, 1971.

63. Roderick Finlayson, "The Secret", New Zealand Listener, May 23, 1952, p.9.

The same predicament provides a theme for the novel The Schooner Came to Atia, Finlayson's first serious essay in the genre. Although the stories of Tidal Creek display a thematic consistency, narrative irregularities indicate their prior publication as separate pieces in the Bulletin.⁶⁴ It was distinctively in The Schooner Came to Atia that the author was able to knit theme and narrative structure more tautly in the tragic delineation of Hartman's fall. This was made possible, too, by the example of Simenon, a master of the short novel form and psychological investigation. Certainly, too, the genre of novella had served Frank Sargeson well in the transition from the terse brevity of his short stories to the more discursive style of the later work, and although in Finlayson the break is by no means a clean one, the change did permit him to indulge an increasing interest in the psychology of religious faith, and in the dilemma of flesh and spirit in his passionate pilgrim Hartman.

This interest makes the work distinctive in Finlayson's canon. If it shares the perception of the other pilgrim stories in depicting an "Idyll Inside Out",⁶⁵ it is conceptually of a rather different order. Where other treatments of the theme are overtly didactic, The Schooner Came to Atia in part marks a return to the tragic vision of Brown Man's

64. An unsigned review of J.C. Reid's Creative Writing in New Zealand in the Bulletin, January 8, 1947, p.2, refers to them as individual pieces, announcing that "Loosely woven together to make a novel called Tidal Creek the series has been accepted for publication by Angus and Robertson".

65. David Hall, "Idyll Inside Out", review of The Schooner Came to Atia, New Zealand Listener, March 12, 1954, p.12.

Burden, its moral implications being incidental rather than intrinsic to the main theme. It is this withdrawal of authorial direction which prompted Kendrick Smithyman's remark:

"Mr. Finlayson's agents are involved in matters which hardly become realised as affairs of right or wrong-doing, in spite of the general air of the moral tract for the times which his novel has. It isn't uncommon to find novels where the conception far out-runs the realisation, where the novelist proposes more than he can handle, and 'The Schooner Came to Atia' must be added to the list".⁶⁶

Smithyman's attitude of reservation is an appropriate one; the author's conception does seem to out-run its realization on the novel—but the grounds for his stricture are fallacious. The Schooner Came to Atia is a moral tract only so far as it recognises a moral problem—it does not propose, at least in the figure of Hartman, any facile recognition of right and wrong as a solution. It is a psychomachia, but one that has drawn away from its morality basis to allow a more profound examination of an acute human crisis.

Frank Sargeson, more than Smithyman, perceives the novel's tragic core:

"It is by probing into the vast area of yawning vacancy which somehow manages to support the walking shell called Hartman that Mr. Finlayson fully demonstrates his capacity for dealing in horrors".⁶⁷

66. Kendrick Smithyman, review of The Schooner Came to Atia, Arena, p.19.

67. Frank Sargeson, review of The Schooner Came to Atia, Here and Now, vol.4, no.2, November/December 1953, p.31.

The conception **is** almost allegorical, and in Hartman Finlayson looks into the heart of darkness. A missionary for the New Believers, Hartman has matured in an arid Calvinistic faith which emphasizes the practical rather than the spiritual. He is an ex-mechanic who becomes, as a missionary, not the harbinger of a new joy but a kind of Mechanic for Christ, committed "to show the Maori people how one could usefully apply a knowledge of God's wonders....In brief, Hartman described his scheme as a lesson in applied or practical Christianity".⁶⁸ He is an example of Finlayson's social thesis, a man in whom reason is divorced from the senses and from the acknowledgement of his own sensuality—and the imbalance is fundamentally tragic. Like Measure for Measure's Angelo, Hartman is

...a man whose blood

Is very snow-broth: one who never feels

The wanton strings and motions of the senses⁶⁹

His marriage is a zealots' contract, no consummation of physical attraction; the Hartman children, proof of the flesh, are exiled in Australia. Hartman's "talk" with his congregation cannot treat of love, either of man, or of god. "Fearing and avoiding both human passion and divine possession he was

68. Roderick Finlayson, The Schooner Came to Atia, Griffin Press, Auckland, 1952, p.10. Subsequent footnote references to the novel will use the abbreviation Schooner.

69. The similarity to Measure for Measure is quite marked, particularly in the delineation of the Hartman/Angelo character, the narrative device of a sister pleading for a brother, and the discussion of 'magistracy' for which Chapham is a focus. The argument of Measure for Measure—for a harmony of reason and the senses, the spirit and the flesh—closely parallels the affirmative tenets of Finlayson's social thesis.

merely abstract or sentimental in his teaching".⁷⁰

And yet, like Angelo, Hartman is uneasy in his cold austerity. In his illness he had fallen into doubt, and if his arrival in Atia is a new mission, then one of its beneficiaries will be himself. He is a pilgrim, searching "for some more satisfying food. He was conscious of a desire for good, for some more beautiful, more bountiful harvest than any he had gathered from his rather arid religion...his intense wish was to become spiritually more fruitful".⁷¹ His desire for a spiritual enrichment is, however, linked with an awakening to the flesh—and as he is more repelled by his wife's frigid severity ("...look at those pins bristling from her tightly closed lips. How he hated that habit!"⁷²) he is increasingly attracted to Ina.

But he cannot accommodate the new awareness of his sensuality—so rigid has his religion been that rationalization becomes necessary, and with rationalization, guilt. Using the Song of Solomon as his justification he asserts: "Didn't God himself inspire men to express their conception of divine love by means of the analogy of human physical love?"⁷³ and yet there is the Southern Cross "flaunted as it were, by God himself in his heavens. You couldn't get away from it. It was there like a sign in the sky".⁷⁴ He is like Dimmesdale in

70. Roderick Finlayson, Schooner, p.36.

71. ibid., p.20.

72. ibid., p.12.

73. ibid., p.44.

74. ibid., p.45.

Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter, torn between impulse and guilt; the cross like the scarlet 'A':

"....the symptom of a highly disordered mental state, when a man, rendered morbidly self-contemplative by long, intense, and secret pain, had extended his egotism over the whole expanse of nature, until the firmament itself should appear no more than a fitting page for his soul's history and fate!"⁷⁵

And Angelo, too, is part of the same tradition:

Amen:

For I am that way going to temptation,
Where prayers cross.

At the point of crisis, Finlayson introduces Stock, a refugee from civilization who brings his preconceptions to Atia, and finds the reality wanting:

"I suppose the blight of our civilization worms its way even into places like this and brings its diseases with it too. It seems there's no escape from it".⁷⁶

But for him—unlike Moss and John Evans, his counterparts—there is solace. Stock finds in his growing relationship with Ina a refuge from the inhibiting, restrictive world he has tried to discard. The development of that love brings Stock and Hartman into confrontation and identification. For it is at this stage that the psychomachia aspect of The

75. Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, Signet, New York, 1959, p.150. Mr. Finlayson read The Scarlet Letter before the writing of Schooner and says it may have been an unconscious influence. Crime and Punishment, too, might have provided a stimulus. Mr. Finlayson, interview with J. Muirhead, February 23, 1971.

76. Roderick Finlayson, Schooner, p.62.

Schooner Came to Atia becomes significant, and Stock is both an objectively real protagonist, and an extension of Hartman's psyche. That identification has been carefully prepared in the development of the crisis. On Stock's arrival, the Resident Agent Chapham had observed: "The funny thing is, he somehow reminds me of Hartman's sort. They might get on famously";⁷⁷ both were mechanics; both bear the scars of experience; one "is the old and displaced—and unrealised sensualist", the other "the young, displaced and latently sensualist".⁷⁸ And as Stock's sensuality comes closer to fulfilment, and Hartman's is wracked by a despairing, inhibiting guilt, the older man increasingly objectifies that guilt in the younger. Stock becomes the embodied realization of Hartman's own desire, and in killing him, Hartman kills the awakening which had so confused and pained him:

"Here he saw that enjoyment, that abandonment, he had been tempted to desire. Ah, blot out this sin...his own sin. End this agony!"⁷⁹

But if Stock's death ends the agony, it also ends the impulse for life. In burying Stock, Hartman buries himself, accepting the ensign that blows from the coffin as his own shroud. He is like Dimmesdale, longing to confess, longing to have his "burden lifted; this heavy cold stone crushing his heart lightened by even a little!"⁸⁰—but the legacy of

77. ibid., p.58.

78. Kendrick Smithyman, p.18.

79. Roderick Finlayson, Schooner, p.95.

80. ibid., p.135.

his puritanism prevents participation in "papist rites".⁸¹ Unable, too, to confess directly to his own God: "The mountain of sin, the whole world of sin, between them was too immense",⁸² he resolves to recommence his mission in the Solomons and so condemns himself to death, his one hope for expiation that he will be able to confess to the heathens of "that godless land".⁸³

It is a powerfully tragic theme, basic, as the analogies in Shakespeare and Hawthorne suggest, to modern western experience. And yet the novel is curiously flawed, failing to exploit fully the opportunities of the more expansive form. Sargeson endorses Smithyman's reservations:

"I don't wish however to suggest that the novel convinces me as a whole. It is perhaps some disadvantage that one is held and moved by Hartman to such a degree that the other characters seem a little flat by comparison".⁸⁴

It is a just evaluation, although Sargeson does not extend it as far as he might. The difficulties of The Schooner Came to Atia are more than problems of characterization, and they seem to arise from Finlayson's inability to break completely from the style and thematic tendencies of his earlier work. A propensity for caricature had always been present in his homiletic stories, only there the brevity of the form

81. ibid. Hartman's attitude to the confessional is of relevance to Mr. Finlayson's own acceptance of Roman Catholicism at this time—Mr. Finlayson, interview with J. Muirhead, February 23, 1971.

82. Roderick Finlayson, Schooner, p.135

83. ibid., p.143.

84. Frank Sargeson, review of Schooner, p.31.

sustained the method. In the longer work, and especially in one which explores the psyche of its protagonist at such depth, the hangover of the 'shorthand' used in briefer pieces could only appear incongruous. The Resident Agent and his wife, the corrupt Maoris Ruku and Timi are travesties, types which remain unconvincing by comparison with Hartman.

The focus on Hartman, too, presents physical difficulties which the author does not quite surmount. For all the intensity of Hartman's crisis, the tragedy of his dilemma, there is a poverty of incident in the novel which precipitates it towards the melodramatic. Situations are not allowed to develop organically; the emphasis is on psychology, not action, and the result is imbalance. David Hall did not locate the problem:

"This short novel is as closely knit as a short story. Incident and personality are precisely dovetailed...."⁸⁵

Indeed, the reverse seems true. The novel is carefully constructed, but its focus is on personality and the incident of the shooting is a plot expedient, a deus ex machina contrivance which loses in plausibility what it achieves in facilitating the development of the psychodrama. In incident the novel is very much like a short story—"Herod" is the obvious analogy—but the over-sudden precipitation of crisis is not convincing in the more expansive form.

85. David Hall, review of Schooner, New Zealand Listener, p.12.

And in further refutation of Hall, it should be observed that Finlayson introduces themes that are essentially extraneous to the Hartman tragedy. This is a hangover from the didacticism of the more homiletic stories which complicates, and compromises, the craft of The Schooner Came to Atia. The satire of pakeha colonialism in the delineation of the Chaphams, the contrast of Maata's stoic acceptance of death and Mrs. Hartman's meaningless trite banalities, the corruption depicted in the Ruku - Timi sub-plot, and Ina's tutelage of Stock in the felicities of the simple life—all serve Finlayson's polemical intention, but not his theme. It is typical of the perpetual tension between Finlayson's sense of craft and his polemic purpose, that the concluding focus of The Schooner Came to Atia should rest not on Hartman, but on Ina, and the primitive ideal:

"For her, and those like her, there was still some innocence left, some of the old primitive innocence of those unworldly lands to protect her from the worst blows of the world. Not the innocence of Eden, but not yet the full evil of the sophisticated world".⁸⁶

86. Roderick Finlayson, Schooner, p.144.

CHAPTER 5

SOME COMMON PROBLEM OF THE IMAGINATION

Primitives, peasants, and pilgrims—these were the triple focus of Finlayson's literary sensibility, and of the romantic **credo** which determined his themes and style. In much of Finlayson's canon, the combination was a happy one. His ethical stance was complemented by a sense of craft to mute the didacticism which stemmed from his **social** thesis, while, at the other extreme, that didactic interest enabled him to avoid the preciousness endemic in Art devoid of social commitment. The balance of these criteria, particularly as it was evinced in the Maori stories, was to provide Finlayson with a broad range of modes, and in the best of his stories the opportunity is fully exploited. In "The Wedding Gift", "Tikitiki", and "A Farmer and his Horse", the writer achieves a tragic suggestiveness that is enriched rather than compromised by the moral perception from which his situations are drawn. In "Sweet Beulah Land" there is added a bitter irony which is didactic in intention, but which nevertheless works through suppression and understatement. The irony

becomes more comic and pervasive as the stories more closely represent his social and romantic thesis, yet that apparent paradox gives a tension to "The Totara Tree" to make it a triumph of craft and conception.

And yet Finlayson's achievement is not consistent. With the turning to pakeha themes in Sweet Beulah Land the stories became increasingly polemical in intention, complicating and often compromising their art. E.H. McCormick has noted the unevenness:

"Finlayson's work is often so good, occasionally so profound that one is puzzled by its failure to amount, in the total, to something more impressive(the) acceptance of the ready-made, together with other features of Finlayson's writings—the loose ends, the solecisms, the homespun philosophy—blunt the force of the fiction and weaken the impact of his massive integrity. Artlessness has its own virtues and its own peculiar strength; but in the long run it is no substitute for art".¹

It might be countered, in Finlayson's defence, that the appearance of 'artlessness' is frequently by design—the impact of Verga on the first stories was certainly to that effect; and that there is obviously a keen sense of craftsmanship at work in the major theme of The Schooner Came to Atia. But on the whole, McCormick's reservations are valid. It is undeniable that especially in the pakeha work there is

1. E.H. McCormick, New Zealand Literature: A Survey, p.132.

a lack of tautness, a slackening of style which is matched by conceptual difficulty. Characterization lapses into caricature, for example, in "The Big Bright City"; situation into melodrama in "Herod", and colloquial style into cliché and overstatement in "The Army fell for Little Isabelle" and "I Broke the Butter-Dish". These tendencies—carried on into Tidal Creek and The Schooner Came to Atia—create a recurrent tension in Finlayson's work, disrupting the integration of style and theme. The consequence is frequently a diminution of power, a confusion of intention which dissipates the impact of Finlayson's perception.

These are the characteristic pitfalls of any literature which is designed to proselytize, and Finlayson's messianic impulse leads habitually to a didacticism which often overwhelms the form he has chosen, forcing the authorial voice to break through the discipline of his craft. Finlayson was very much a writer of the 'thirties, reacting against the excesses of a society which then seemed devoid of finer living. He was responding to the persistent call for New Zealand authors to become committed to social change, accepting the title later conferred on the engaged artist by Charles Brasch—"the suspect physician of society"²—and the task which Brasch made concomitant to the investiture:

2. Charles Brasch, "Notes" in Landfall 71, vol.18, no.3, September 1954, p.199.

"Tacitly or explicitly, all art criticizes the social order. The social function of the arts is always to charge that order, whether radically or subtly: never simply to confirm the injustices and banalities of the status quo".³

Like the other writers who accepted that role in the slump and depression, Finlayson became his own sociologist, and the fruit of his study was the sense of mission which informs both his polemical essays and fiction, the impulse which causes him to urge in "I Broke the Butter Dish":

"But I must tell you about it, and try to explain, in the hope that you'll understand, because it is important that you understand. It is very important".⁴

In allowing his art to become subservient to that sort of urgency, Finlayson tends to abdicate from the discipline which blends perception and perspective, ^{from} the careful selectivity which is basic to literary creativity. As Robert Chapman observes:

"However the writer goes about it, if he selects the right phenomena for his hero to experience in the action he will touch the nerve ends of life in this society. Were he to add analysis and explanation, to point out how he sees society and explain what cause and effect he illuminates by emphasizing this or that event, he would be writing sociology or history or both".⁵

3. ibid.

4. Roderick Finlayson, "I Broke the Butter Dish", SBL, p.71.

5. Robert Chapman, "Fiction and the Social Pattern", p.32.

Where Finlayson allows his messianic impulse full influence, it is to that sort of lapse he moves—so much as that in a story like "Pray to God", the boundary between polemic essay and art dissolves.

Finlayson's literary achievement must therefore be measured against the criterion proposed by H. Winston Rhodes for the short story writer—the criterion which stresses the value of perspective against the more precious values embodied in Mansfield's dogma. And for Finlayson, the hazard consequent to that alignment is that his perspective—the social thesis—frequently turns his stories into contes à thèse, tractarian pieces which forgo the "particular possibilities of brevity",⁶ the subtlety and understatement which are the distinctive strengths of the genre.

Thus, in the final evaluation, Finlayson's is a flawed achievement. If Brown Man's Burden conveyed a tragic perception which, as Frank Gadd commented of "Tikitiki", suggested "possibilities of greater power",⁷ the promise has been largely unrealized. Although the sense of tragedy continues throughout the canon, it is too often complicated by the thesis—in McCormick's phrase: "stretched on a Procrustean rack of doctrine".⁸ And yet the doctrine adds a new dimension, even as it mars the purely literary achievement. In his clarity of vision, his insistent endorsement of peasant and primitive ideals, Finlayson was indeed

6. Joan Stevens, New Zealand Short Stories, p.1.

7. F.G. (Frank Gadd), review of BMB, Tomorrow, vol.4, no.25, October 12, 1938, p.798.

8. E.H. McCormick, Letters and Art in New Zealand, p.189.

writing sociology, enforcing basic archetypes on the national consciousness. He was a part of that seminal time in New Zealand literary history which produced, in Sargeson's work, 'type' figures of the destitute, driven by a puritanical, repressive society; and in John Mulgan's "Man alone" the isolato, the fugitive from the mass social pattern. These are motifs of immense power in any New World, immediately post-frontier society (Melville provides an American analogy)—and their establishment in the archetypal patterns of New Zealand literary thought marks a distinctive reappraisal of our colonial heritage. In this revaluation Finlayson takes part, adding to the national mythology the figures of the Yeoman and the Primitive, symbols of a lost innocence, whose transfiguration into myth is unwitting testimony to New Zealand's fall.

The creation of these figures, and the fact that they are so often in eclipse in Finlayson's fiction, denotes a romanticism which finally establishes Finlayson's place in the nation's literary history. In the years of his literary and philosophical maturation, he was involved in the ferment of a New Zealand renaissance. In the analogies drawn between the themes that preoccupied him (and preoccupy him still), and the thinking of other writers in that place, at that time, is suggested a consensus that represents, for New Zealand thought and letters, "some common problem of the imagination",⁹ quite

9. Allen Curnow, introduction to A Book of New Zealand Verse, 1923-1950; Caxton, Christchurch, 1957, p.115.

distinct from the obsessive sense of cultural displacement, of antipodean exile, that characterized an earlier generation. In Glover, Fairburn, Sargeson, Curnow, and later Baxter, there was a common concern with the romantic antitheses of town and country, of individual and mass society, and of commercial and communal values—and Finlayson's shared response indicates that he is to be grouped with those others in the mainstream of the New Zealand, and New World, literary imagination. To it he contributed a distinctively local variant of the rural myth which is so much a part of colonial experience, proposing ideals that are nostalgic, but which are testimony to the integrity which Allen Curnow recognized when he named Finlayson among a small group of writers of the 1930s who "accepted the disciplines of uncompromising fidelity to experience, of an unqualified responsibility to the truths of themselves..."¹⁰

10. Allen Curnow, "New Zealand Literature: The Case for a Working Definition", in M.F. Lloyd Prichard (ed.), The Future of New Zealand, Whitcombe and Tombs, Christchurch 1964, p.97.

CHECKLIST

PUBLISHED WRITINGS OF RODERICK FINLAYSON

Note

Several items in this checklist (asterisked) could not be located for verification in the holdings of the Alexander Turnbull, General Assembly, or National Libraries in Wellington. The citations given for these items have been supplied by Mr. Finlayson.

In the collections of short stories, I have listed the individual pieces in the order published. Details of independent publishings will be given opposite each title.

I. Autobiographical

Response to "Writers in New Zealand: A Questionnaire" Landfall 53, vol.14, no.1, March 1960, pp.53-4.

"A Meeting with D'Arcy Cresswell" Mate, no.5, June 1960, pp.38-40.

Contribution to "D'Arcy Cresswell. By his friends" Landfall 56, vol.14, no.4, December 1960, pp.351-3.

"Beginnings" Landfall 77, vol.20, no.1, March 1966, pp.76-82.

II. Published Volumes

BROWN MAN'S BURDEN

Unicorn Press/Griffin Press,
Auckland, 1938.

The Wedding Gift

Tomorrow vol.4, no.1, November 10,
1937, pp.25-8.

Christmas Day

On Top of the Hill

New Year

Wi Gets the Gospel

Tomorrow vol.3, no.17, June 23, 1937,
pp.533-37.

Standards of Living

Tomorrow vol.4, no.8, February 16,
1938, pp.243-5.

The Totara Tree¹

Folios of New Writing Autumn 1940*

Penguin New Writing November 1941*

Coast to Coast 1942, selected by Beatrice Davis, Angus and Robertson, Sydney 1943, pp.140-7.

The Tracks We Travel, edited by Stephen Murray-Smith, Australasian Book Society, Melbourne, 1953, pp.114-9.

New Zealand Short Stories, edited by Dan Davin [World's Classics Series] Oxford University Press, London, 1966 [first printed 1953], pp.236-43.

The Tangi²

Auckland Star, Weekend Pictorial, November 13, 1937, p.6.

The Storm

By the Calm Waters

Tikitiki

A Man of Good Religion

Tomorrow, vol.3, no.23, September 15, 1937, pp.726-9.

The Kiwi Laughs: an anthology of New Zealand Prose Humour, edited by J.C. Reid, Reed, Wellington, 1961, pp.113-8.

SWEET BEULAH LAND

Griffin Press, Auckland, 1942.

Maori and Chinese³

Sweet Beulah Land

New Zealand New Writing, vol.2, 1943, pp.59-65.

Pakapoo

Tara Does a Job

They All Go Home to Die

Advance

Two friends

Australia, July 1942*

The Big Bright City

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1. Mr. Finlayson writes: "It's my most reprinted story having appeared either in English or in translation in how many countries I cannot readily recall but they range from Russia to Roumania and Israel to Scotland" (letter to J. Muirhead, February 1, 1971). I have not attempted to locate the translations.
 2. The paper judged it as "the prize-winning entry in the short story contest for October".
 3. The sub-titles indicate groups of associated themes.

Guns

Poor Ma Pastry

Wonky's War

Uncle Alf says Goodbye to the Troops Tomorrow, vol.6, no.9,
March 6, 1940, pp.278-80.

The Army Fell for Little Isabelle

—And Butter

I Broke the Butter Dish

A Farmer and his Horse

Folios of New Writing, Autumn 1941*

Herod

Pray to God

TIDAL CREEK

Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1948.

Part I

The Voyage

The First Morning

Arena, no.14, December 1946, pp.10-12,
as "The First Morning at Tidal Creek"

Uncle Ted's Little Red Whiskers

Uncle Ted Cools Off

New Zealand Listener, December 1,
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[I have not attempted to locate the early newspaper writings published prior to 1936, although Mr. Finlayson did refer to these in the interview of February 23, 1971.]

APPENDIX I

NEW WRITINGS

During my interview with Mr. Finlayson on February 23, 1971, he discussed plans for two volumes of fiction. The first is to be a new collection of the Maori stories,¹ including all of the stories from Brown Man's Burden (except for "On Top of the Hill"), the five Maori stories from Sweet Beulah Land, "Blood Tells" and "Johnny Wairua's Wonderland" from the Bulletin, the Arena story "The New House", and "A Little Gift for Harry" from Landfall. The original version of "Rui's Ship" will appear after "The Wedding Gift"—the order in which they were first written. The volume will be concluded by a new story "Another Kind of Life"—"a footnote, as it were, to the rest",² which will be published first in Arena, in June, 1971.

The other project is a short novel—about the length of The Schooner Came to Atia—which is to be the "last chapter" of his Maori work. It will deal with a theme suggested first in "By the Calm Waters" (Brown Man's Burden), and enlarged upon in "Johnny Wairua's Wonderland"—the takeover of Maori customs and land by speculators eager to profit from the tourist trade.

1. vide footnotes to Chapter 3.

2. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 19, 1971.

The book will reuse some of the material from a novel written soon after Tidal Creek, which Angus and Robertson refused to publish, possibly out of disappointment at the low sales of Tidal Creek.³ Two of the episodes of that manuscript appeared separately in Arena—"At Uncle Ted's", and "Sunday Outing". The characters of the latter story will be adapted to the new theme:

"Dockman and his daughter Della and Colonel Stiving and Jim will be included in the new version of the novel. But Dockman will now be an estate agent instead of industrial chemist, and Jim Kern will not be the James of Tidal Creek. In the new novel the locality will be Rocky Bay, and Uncle Ted doesn't come into it at all".⁴

An indication of the intention behind the projected work is perhaps given in the author's account of the earlier, discarded novel:

"I would say that the unpublished novel was (at least at one level) a picture of the rural innocence of Tidal Creek and its inhabitants violated by industrial exploitation when minerals are found there".⁵

The theme is obviously consistent with the outlook of the earliest stories and polemical writings.

3. Mr. Finlayson estimates that of 2,500 copies of Tidal Creek printed, only about 1,300 were sold—a figure which he attributes in part to the presentation and distribution of the book as a juvenile novel.

4. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 5, 1971.

5. ibid.

Mr. Finlayson has also recently completed a study of D'Arcy Cresswell's published works for the Twayne World Authors Series. It is at present being copy-edited for Twayne by Erik Friis.⁶ Mr. Finlayson has been approached by Mr. Tom Newnham of Whitcombe and Tombs to prepare more juvenile literature of the sort collected in The Springing Fern.

6. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 19, 1971.

APPENDIX II

FINANCIAL

With the exception of Tidal Creek, Mr. Finlayson's published volumes have been largely privately financed. The printing of Brown Man's Burden was given initial impetus by a cash donation from the author's aunt¹—presumably the Aunt Winifred Wilson to whom the book is dedicated—and subsequent expenses, it seems, were met by Mr. Finlayson.² The volume was promoted by the Griffin Press, which printed a prospectus containing reviews of advance copies. But it was also circulated privately—the author has recalled that his mother carried copies to sell to acquaintances.³

Sweet Beulah Land has a similar background, although its publication was complicated by the war. Mr. Finlayson has commented:

"As far as I was concerned it was a race to get the book out before the Japs arrived—as I felt almost sure they would. But I was more anxious, most of the time, about the book than about the Japs. Of night, I lay in gun pits out at Kawakawa beach that winter (waiting for the Japs) and days I spent pushing the book over obstacles as the linotypers were called up, the use of paper was banned and at last Ron Holloway [of the

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1. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 19, 1971.
 2. Mr. Finlayson's reply to Landfall's "Writers in New Zealand: A Questionnaire" states of Brown Man's Burden: "It was published at my own expense. Some of the stories earned money as reprints". (p.54).
 3. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 19, 1971.

Griffin Press] himself was called to camp. (I too ended up in Linton for a short spell!)

But I'd worked in the woolstores until I went down with gastro-enteritis (polluted water to drink!) to get the money to launch the project, and I wasn't giving up. Kay, Ron's wife, heroically battled on and found an ancient printer who printed the pages in what seemed little better than an old bike repair shop behind the Rising Sun (how apt!) pub in the slums of Newton. I carried the printed sheets away in suitcases and collated and folded them ready for binding. So excuse the typography that must have wrung poor old Ron's heart".⁴

An interesting footnote to this account comes in the comments of the Listener reviewer who complained of the volume:

"...it is a pity when a writer who is feeling his way goes to a printer engaged in the same occupation. The Griffin Press knows how to print, but knowledge is not sufficient without facilities".⁵

—a criticism which, in the circumstances, warranted the author's reply:

"...it will be time enough to make patronising comment on the Griffin Press when those who have the facilities do one hundredth part as much for the cause of art and letters—in peace time, let alone amid almost insuperable wartime difficulties".⁶

4. Mr. Finlayson, letter to J. Muirhead, March 5, 1971.

5. Unsigned, "Easy to Read but not to Review", a review of Sweet Beulah Land, op. cit., p.7.

6. Roderick Finlayson, letter to the editor, New Zealand Listener, August 20, 1943, p.3.

The editor, Oliver Duff, made the sententious rejoinder:

"But Mr. Findlayson [sic] is too touchy. If we had shot the pianist he would have had reason to complain. Instead, we expressed regret that he had a poor piano."⁷

The same "piano", however, was used in the publication of The Schooner Came to Atia in 1952. Finance was, happily, available from the New Zealand Literary Fund, from which there were two payments: \$500 in 1950-51, "to Griffin Press, to assist the publication of The Schooner Came to Atia, by Roderick Finlayson", and in 1953-54, "\$100 to Roderick Finlayson, to assist the costs of binding his novel The Schooner Came to Atia".⁸ And yet the novel "fizzled"—shops took it only on a "sale and return" basis, and it was poorly distributed and badly displayed.⁹ The result was that it earned less than £25.¹⁰

These difficulties indicate two significant factors in Finlayson's publication history. The willingness of only the Griffin Press to handle the work provides pertinent comment on the degree to which the more established and commercial publishing houses abdicated in favour of the independent

7. Editor, reply to Finlayson, loc. cit.

8. From "The New Zealand Literary Fund 1946-70", Government Printer, Wellington, 1970, pp.8, 10.

9. Mr. Finlayson, interview with J. Muirhead, February 23, 1971.

10. Roderick Finlayson, in response to the Landfall questionnaire, op. cit. p.54.

presses in the promotion of the first fruits of New Zealand's literary "renaissance". It was the writers—and friends like Denis Glover, Bob Lowry, and Ron Holloway—who took the initiative, finding stimulation in shared experience and goals.

Given this lack of interest by the large firms who had the facilities, the successful publication of Finlayson's work demonstrates also the sense of purpose which motivated him, the urgency with which he sought to propose his themes to an audience wider than the literati of the North Shore. Certainly, there was little financial advantage—ironically, the most lucrative venture was the juvenile writing for the School Publications Branch of the Education Department.¹¹ It is little wonder that the author looks on contemporary values with some scorn:

"The irony is that the work of a man helping to produce say cars or radios will be on the junk heap in a few years while even one good novel can enrich life a century hence".¹²

11. ibid.

12. ibid.

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