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# Writing the Environment

## Changing Attitudes to the Aotearoa New Zealand Environment

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirement  
for the degree of Master of Arts in English  
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## Preface

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There is a long-standing and irrational opposing discourse between the sciences and humanities as to which is the most relevant discipline for meeting the environmental needs of modern society. In a business, technological and industrially focused growth economy, there seems on the surface little room for writers, poets, historians and philosophers. However, it is in part due to the growth economy, the consumer, capitalist, scientific and industrial society, that our planet is suffering from overpopulation, pollution, and in many cases irreversible environmental degradation.

In order for human beings to understand what is happening to the environment and why, and before we can begin to restore the ecological balance, a holistic approach must be fostered between the different disciplines that are involved with environmental issues and in writing the environment. As with the medical profession in an age of specialisation, where the ‘bone men’ don’t talk to the ‘muscle men’ and the ‘muscle men’ don’t communicate with the psychologists, we are in danger of becoming increasingly fragmented from the planet’s ecology of which we are a part and which supports us. Those who write the environment are rediscovering the advantages of an ecological, interdisciplinary discourse.

Writers from many disciplines address environmental issues from many points of view. Attitudes to the environment have changed radically in the last two thousand years from a more or less holistic view, a recognition of the interconnectedness of things, to one where we dominate and re-order our environment to suit ourselves, regardless of ecological consequences. The tide, however, is turning and attitudes changing. Part of this change is the growing environmental discussion between literary scholars, ecologists, psychologists,

scientists, historians, environmentalists, writers, photographers painters, film makers and the business sector. This dialogue is producing an ecological discourse, recognising that all disciplines are interconnected, just as we are part of the ecology of our environment.

As landscape architect Simon Bell in *Landscape: Pattern, Perception and Process* writes: “There is a reluctance to consider all the interactions between different facets of the environment and all those who write about it. . . . There is a relationship between every process and facet of activity in the world. If we can understand these relationships, maybe we can achieve a unity of thought and action between the physical, biological, cultural and aesthetic components of the landscape and environment.”<sup>1</sup>

Simon Bell is just one of many who acknowledge this need. Historian Theodore Roszak is another<sup>2</sup>. He emphasises the environmental role of the creative artist and writer in *Where Psyche Meets Gaia*. He writes: “Even though many environmentalists act out of a passionate joy in the magnificence of wild things, few, except the artists - the photographers, the

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<sup>1</sup>Bell, Simon. *Landscape: pattern, perception and process*. New York: E & F.N. Spon. 1999. Introduction, 4.

<sup>2</sup>Theodore Roszak is Professor of History and Director of the Ecopsychology Institute at California State University.

filmmakers, the landscape painters, and the poets - address the public with any conviction that human beings can be trusted to behave as if they were the living planet's children."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Roszak, Theodore. "Where Psyche Meets Gaia" in *Ecopsychology: Healing the Earth Healing the Mind*, ed. Roszak, Theodore et al. San Francisco: Sierra Books, 1995. 2.



## Introduction

# Breaking with the Spirit of the Land

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Each wave of invaders to any land initially undermine their own survival by subduing the land in



Eric LEE-JOHNSON, *The Slain Tree*, 1945. Private Collection

order to shape it to reflect the cultures from which they have come. The New Zealand Europeans are no exception and are still learning to understand the spirit of the land and appreciate it as it is, rather than continue to reshape it entirely within European cultural beliefs and economic land and forest management practices. Only when we are at one with the spirit of the land, will our environment be healed and our lifestyle become sustainable. As an Australian Aboriginal elder said in a recent television documentary, “If you are kind to the land, it will be kind to you; but if you abuse it, it will break you. Let the spirit of the land sink into our spirits and accept it for what it is.” On the same programme, James Belich commented:

Europeans have yet to learn to do this. In the process of settlement, and creating a landscape they could identify with, New Zealand colonists also subdued the Maori and so destroyed their hard-learned system of managing nature, which they are now having to learn for themselves.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>“Wild Australasia” Episode 2 *Nomads of the Wind*. Produced by Natural History for New Zealand, Dunedin. On “Our World” Television NZ One, 18<sup>th</sup> August 2001.



For Aotearoa New Zealand and its people to survive, the occupants of the land need to learn to live with the land, and traditionally, writers and artists by the creative and spiritual nature of their craft, are in a position to foster this awareness by better expressing our relationship with our natural environment; by writing the environment. In this thesis, I explore a range of attitudes to the Aotearoa New Zealand environment as they are expressed in samples of New Zealand texts across two centuries. Many of the ideas presented in this thesis are not new and I am especially indebted to Geoff Park, whose book *Nga Uruora: The Groves of Life*, has been a source of inspiration, and Trudy McNaughton, whose work I have read, although not quoted from.

### **Cultural Mediation and Justification for Selected Texts**

How do texts represent the New Zealand environment and in what ways are they culturally mediated? Because this thesis is particularly interested in how both record and response are culturally mediated, the selected texts are not a complete survey of New Zealand writing, but a selection of material that illustrates a range of European responses towards the New Zealand environment as they perceive it. I will also touch on how the environment was reshaped by the colonists' needs in the light of their historical and cultural background and how the reconstruction of the land is recorded in these writings. I have, therefore, chosen to look at examples of writing typical of different periods, from early exploration to the present day, through which we can observe the changing perspectives towards the New Zealand environment in the light of changing cultural attitudes. For example, I will discuss and analyse ships' journal entries from approximately 1770 to 1820 because they provide some of the earliest European written material about the New Zealand environment that embodies the European world view at the time of Pacific exploration. Early travellers and adventurers to New Zealand wrote accounts

of their voyages and some of their perspectives are included. Some selections are settlement accounts written as novels particularly from 1880, for example Jane Mander's *Story of a New Zealand River*. I have selected poetry and short stories from the nationalist period (1930-1960). From the 1990s and early twenty-first century, I have referred to legislative documents which inscribe in legal discourse some of the attitudes developed by activists in the mid and late twentieth century. These latter are an outcome of the increased environmental awareness of the 1970s, from the establishment of the Values Party through to ratification of the Resource Management Act 1991. Some of the issues examined in relation to New Zealand writing include the following; capitalism and imperialism and environmental destruction, environment as a cultural construct and New Zealand writers' position in relation to Romanticism. In addition, the construction of self in relation to environment and place cannot be ignored because the struggle with identity provides a constant backdrop to "writing the environment" of Aotearoa New Zealand.

For the most part I concentrate on European perspectives although I will also include elements of Maori spiritual relationships with Aotearoa New Zealand. The particular focus is on the Aotearoa New Zealand native forests which have been largely destroyed in the struggle to conquer and control the land in order to make it both economically viable in European terms, and recognisably English.

### **Pre-European Ecological Footprints**

Often in New Zealand writing, the term 'virgin' is used in relation to the native bush or forests and this practice occurs to the present day. I assume an idea of the bush and land as 'virgin' in the sense of unchanged, prior to European habitation but I am aware that pre-European

relationships with the land were not wholly unexploitive, because earlier Polynesian settlers left their own ecological footprint on the New Zealand land and bush. As New Zealand historian James Belich notes, “[Some] scholars had begun to doubt the notion of the Green Savage, at one with nature, exterminating nothing. Instead, it was suggested, some prehistoric peoples cut through the available big-game animals like a knife through butter, causing a rolling wave of extinctions as they went.”<sup>5</sup> Belich suggests that Aotearoa New Zealand was no exception, and that, - “It is now claimed that apart from a dozen species of moa . . . the Maori wiped out another twenty species of birds, and burned off a third of the native forest for good measure,”<sup>6</sup> - the latter before Abel Tasman’s arrival in 1642. He suggests that Maori may only have developed a respect for their environment during their “classical period” in the 15th and 16th centuries, after they had first destroyed the moa and other flora and fauna and realised they were jeopardising their very existence. Perhaps they too suffered an identity crisis in the period between resource exhaustion and the subsequent adoption of sustainable management practices.

However, while I accept that serious environmental damage occurred prior to European settlement in Aotearoa New Zealand, including depletion of both forests and food resources, in this thesis I emphasise the changes Europeans effected, because it is the speed and irreversibility with which the European colonists altered the profile of the land in a space of one hundred and fifty years that is of ecological importance. Secondly, because this destruction and reconstruction of land and forest have been telescoped into a relatively short period of time and because the process was recorded by a wide range of writers and painters, both visitors and settlers, that process is both perceivable and measurable in terms of cause and effect, both physically (the landscape) and psychologically (the people). This subsequent reconstruction of the landscape

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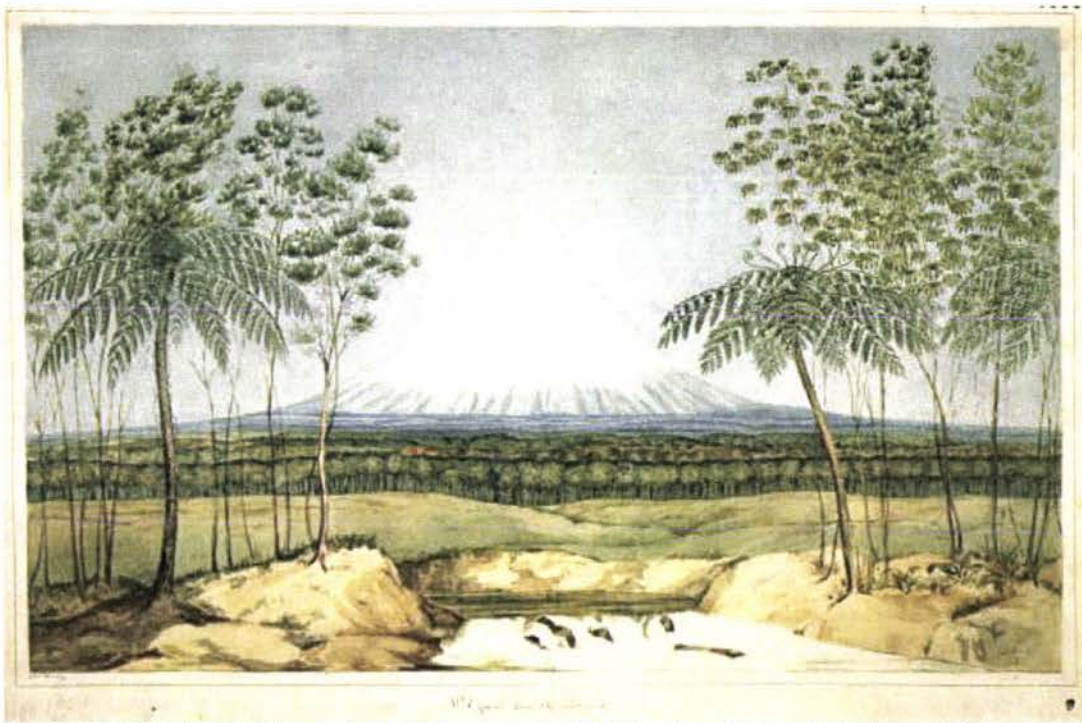
<sup>5</sup>Belich, James. *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century*. Allen Lane. The Penguin Press, 1996. 33.

<sup>6</sup>Belich, James. *Making Peoples*, 33.



and environment embodies a specifically European social, economic and philosophical cultural heritage, one which privileged the destruction of Aotearoa's ancient, native forests in order to replace it with a smiling, English pastoral scene.

During this process of Europeanisation, which continues to the present day, the New Zealand environment - represented primarily in this thesis by the native forests - has been written about by many people from early explorers to twenty-first century scientists, poets, novelists and diarists. Explorers from Europe include Abel Tasman, (1642) James Cook (1769-78) and Marion De Fresne (1772), each of whom cartographically fixed the country's location and identified what it had to offer. For the main part, the first written records about Aotearoa New Zealand



Charles HEAPHY, **Mount Egmont from the Southward**, 1839, The Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

were produced for specific purposes: they were ships' journals, maps, classifications, and quantitative scientific reports with which men such as Cook's shipboard companion, James

Busby, furnished the British Admiralty, Europe and later William Wakefield, with solid evidence of New Zealand as “place”. J. L. Nicholas’s *Narrative of Voyage to New Zealand* in 1814 and 1815, preserves descriptions of the environment. A few early novelists, for example William Satchel and later Jane Mander express some concern for a disappearing Eden, recognising the permanent destruction occurring; while for some short term visitors, for example Lady Barker, New Zealand was a fascinating south sea adventure playground. For a percentage of settlers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was a life of disappointment and bitterness as they pitted their strength and endurance against the bush, and were destroyed by it. However, there were also many others who succeeded. They were proud of carving out some sort of a life in an alien environment firstly in order to survive and secondly to contribute to the birth of a new nation. The founding fathers’ struggle with the Aotearoa environment is recorded in retrospect in district, church and school jubilee publications. Writers such as A. R. D. Fairburn and Frank Sargeson recognised the settlers’ struggle and included aspects of it in their work in the 1930s and 1940s. They were reflecting the feeling of unease that had begun to assert itself, because men such as Frank Sargeson’s uncle were questioning the clearing of the land and beginning to see the legacy of erosion that had resulted. During the early struggle to break in the land, both process and response are therefore recorded in a wide range of texts comprising letters, diaries, memoirs, station records and personal experiences, sometimes even disguised as romantic novels.

Many cultural issues influence a society’s literature and in a settler society there is always the story of progress as well as the story of man’s connection with nature, enabling him to transcend the physical world to a spiritual dimension. The legacy of Jean-Jaques Rousseau’s philosophical views are apparent in some of the early visitors’ descriptions of the country and through many of these texts therefore, also runs the thread of Romanticism - the Romantic ideal of man at one



with nature that is superior to any impulse to shape nature to human needs.<sup>7</sup> From the same romantic ideal also springs the thread of rebellion against the fast developing mechanistic society in New Zealand texts and an example is provided by Samuel Butler.<sup>8</sup> However, from the late eighteenth century, the drive to reshape the land was made more powerful by the developing world of science, technology and capitalist materialism especially throughout the new world, where settler societies took what they needed to construct a new landscape. The process inevitably left environmental destruction in its wake, as well as leaving the settlers in an uneasy relationship with their adopted country's environment, described by the editors of *Quicksands* as, "a settler predicament, namely the unsettlement of settlement."<sup>9</sup> In Aotearoa New Zealand to the present day, there exists a search for identity both individually and as a nation. There is also a continuing tension between use and conservation of land. Increasingly, the founding of a national identity demands a reconciliation of these forces. In the present day this reconciliation is conceptualised as "sustainable management." This is a modern rediscovery of "tribal" land use, the principle of providing for the present without jeopardising the future; a delicate tightrope walk achieved only through working with the spirit of the land.

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<sup>7</sup>Rousseau, "the moralist who attacked the notion that progress results from advances in science and technology; who fathered the romantic sensibility and opposed it to the dominant rationalism."

Bronowski, J. and Mazlich, Bruce. *The Western Intellectual Tradition* (1970) Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1960. 320.

<sup>8</sup>Samuel Butler, in his New Zealand novel *Erewhon* presents a remote utopian society based somewhere in the Southern Alps, where all forms of machinery and "progress" are outlawed as a protest against the ideas of Newton, Descartes and Bacon. The Novel, which bears similarities to *Gullivers Travels* (Jonathan Swift) was based on his experiences in the 1860s.

Butler, Samuel. *Erewhon or Over the Range* (1872) Avondale, Auckland: Golden Press Pty Ltd., 1973.

<sup>9</sup>Neumann, Thomas and Eriksen argue that this anxiety about identity has intensified rather than diminished with time.

*Quicksands: Foundational histories in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand*, Edited by Klaus Neumann, Nicholas Thomas and Hilary Eriksen. UNSW Press: Introduction, xvi.1999.

I will therefore contextualise by addressing the possible reasons for the cultural break between man and nature; I will explore the change from an holistic world view to one where nature became separate from, and dominated by, human activity and how these and philosophical ideological changes which allowed the face of Europe to change were brought to the new world, eventually determining Aotearoa New Zealand's future by making it the object of imperialism and ultimately an independent but post-colonial nation.

### **The Sixteenth Century World View - How it determined attitudes to the Environment of Aotearoa New Zealand**

In order to show the relationship between early explorers' response to the New Zealand bush, and the way they recorded it, it is important to recognise that these men were products of a line of development from the Renaissance, through the philosophical and religious movements of the Reformation and the Age of Enlightenment to the developing Scientific Revolution. Cumulatively these intellectual and cultural movements encouraged the desire for scientific exploration and imperial expansion to possess new, resource rich lands, as well as determining an intellectual shift in attitude towards husbanding resources, which is reflected in their response, both intellectual and written, to the new lands they set about appropriating for themselves.

### **The Spiritual Break with the Land**

Prior to the Reformation and Renaissance, Europeans held a different view of nature. It is widely accepted that in the distant past, some early European societies, such as the pre-reformation



society in Europe or earlier, for example classical Greece,<sup>10</sup> fostered religions in which men were represented as having a more immediate relationship with the environment which reflected man's ever present dependence on the vagaries of nature for their very existence. To the present day, in Western culture a farmer's economic security is dependent on stable weather patterns. Not only were they dependent on nature for food but the woods and fields provided the herbs used for medicines and drugs for their health and well-being. Pre-Christian cultures such as the Norse, Danes and Classical Greeks lived with a system of deities that included gods of thunder, sea, and woods. This can be likened to Aotearoa where the indigenous Polynesians believed that the flora and fauna were linked to them as part of their spiritual Whakapapa or distant ancestral family.

Traditionally, Maori respected and conserved their environment. They observed rituals asking permission of the appropriate god before taking from the environment and ritually returned to the environment some of that which they had removed. Therefore when a tree was felled, to build, for example, a canoe, a small section of the trunk, the life giving stem, was buried in the forest nearby, as a symbol of regeneration. Similarly, a baby's placenta was buried under a tree after the birth. Many traditional Maori legends warn of the disturbing consequences of plundering the forest or sea without first asking permission. This is nicely illustrated in the legend of *Rata and the Totara Tree*, retold by Katarina Mataira.<sup>11</sup> "As long as men performed the proper

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<sup>10</sup> In spite of this, there was more than one attitude flourishing in the classical world. The following quote by Geoff Park from Cicero, Marcus Tullius, 106-43 BC provides an opposite view to "man at one with nature." He asserted "We are the absolute masters of what the earth produces . . . the rivers are ours. . . . We sow the seed and plant the trees. We stop, direct and turn the rivers . . . to make it as it were another nature." (I am reminded of the damming of the Clutha and the destruction of the apricot orchards in the Clutha valley, in the name of progress and in order to satisfy New Zealand's increasing need for electricity.) Park, Geoffrey. *Nga Uruora: The Groves of Life. Ecology and History in a New Zealand Landscape*. Wellington: Victoria University P., 1995.

<sup>11</sup> Mataira, Katarina. *Maori Legends for Young New Zealanders*. Landsdown Press: 1975. Sydney: Weldon Publishing, 1989.

ceremonies and observed the tapu of the bush, the sea and planting, they were rewarded handsomely, but when sometimes they forgot to perform the ceremonies or deliberately broke the tapu, they were punished.”<sup>12</sup>

The lesson in this traditional Polynesian legend bears a remarkable similarity to what little we know of early pre-Christian European cultures where homage was paid to the god or goddess of field and forest before tilling and planting the soil or prior to hunting, and offering back the Earth’s gifts to the gods in thanks. For example, such a ceremony has been incorporated into Christian Liturgy as the Autumn Harvest Festival. Another example is the springtime ritual of “beating the boundaries.”<sup>13</sup> However, these are but small remnants of cultures that understood and worked with the environment, for the survival of both. With the flowering of Christianity, such features of paganism as an idea of a feminine earth mother, provider of nourishment, disappeared. The church was committed to eradicating paganism and associated practices, eventually including the ancient medicinal herbal lore of village wise women who were then in danger of being denounced as witches. This illustrates a subtle shift away from the benevolence of nature with man as an integrated part of a whole, to nature as a threatening entity that needed to be constrained, leading to the desire for man’s control over it.

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<sup>12</sup>Mataira, Katarina. *Maori Legends for Young New Zealanders*. 45.

In this legend, a Totara tree repeatedly felled during the day was restored by the birds and insects of the forest at night. On the third night Rata the canoe carver, waited to witness the restoration and subsequently before successfully felling the tree, he paid homage to Tane. Having learned his lesson, on the following day he was rewarded by finding the tree beautifully hollowed out into a perfect canoe by the forest birds, the hardest part of the task already completed for him, as a reward for his humility.

<sup>13</sup> In the late Spring, the entire congregation of some individual rural English parishes follow the priest or vicar round the outside field boundaries that form the parish. Prayers are said to ensure a successful harvest, the fruits of which are brought to the Harvest Festival in Autumn for thanks and blessing, before being distributed to the parish needy.

In their summing up of the Reformation, Professor Bronowski and historian Bruce Mazlich posit that there were three main consequences of this religious upheaval, all of which I suggest contributed in some way to environmental changes in both the known Western world, and its future colonies. Bronowski and Mazlich suggest that one consequence was - “the encouragement of the rise of the working classes”<sup>14</sup> - these same working classes, dissatisfied with their grinding poverty and lack of opportunity, and for some in the search for religious freedom, would in time form a large percentage of the emigrants to the New World: immigrants who would alter the shape of the new lands to both survive and to reflect their cultural heritage. Secondly, they suggest that “the subordination of religion to the state strengthened the territorial state.” In doing this they developed the blueprint for modern Europe, the nations that would eventually colonise the New World. The third main consequence was that religion, in its Calvinist version, became “a thing of this world and achieved the miracle of identifying good works with the accumulation of riches.”<sup>15</sup> For this reason, as Bronowski puts it, “the shame of profiteering was wiped away and what was formerly lust for wealth became the fulfilment of God’s purpose on Earth.”<sup>16</sup> In other words, the move from need to greed, an ever present, covert moral struggle, now appeared to be actively condoned and was to be preserved as the Protestant work ethic. In New Zealand this would translate, amongst other things, into the destruction of the native forests for profit. The second great movement to influence man’s world view of his relationship with nature was the Renaissance. Stimulated by many different philosophers, it culminated in the scientific revolution and ultimately the industrial revolution, in Europe.

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<sup>14</sup>Bronowski, J. and Mazlich, Bruce. (1970) *The Western Intellectual Tradition*. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1960. 132.

<sup>15</sup>Bronowski, J. and Mazlich, Bruce. 132.

<sup>16</sup>Bronowski, J. and Mazlich, Bruce. 132.



## Man and Nature: The Intellectual Break

Three influential philosophers are Francis Bacon (1561-1626), René Descartes (1596-1650), and John Locke (1632-1704). Each of these men contributed ideas that were to undermine the traditional sense of man being part of an ecological whole, and encouraged Europeans to take intellectual and physical control of the environment, thereby giving them the idea of having dominion over it. Carolyn Merchant in *The Death of Nature* writes: "...disorderly, active nature was soon forced to submit to the questions and experimental techniques for the new science." For New Zealand, this had a number of impacts, one of the most important being clearing the bush and draining the swamps for pasture, actions which completely altered the local ecological system.

Francis Bacon "transformed tendencies already extant in his own society (cf. footnote 10) into a total program advocating the control of nature for human benefit."<sup>17</sup> Nature was to be "put in constraint, moulded, and made as it were new by art and the hand of man; as in things artificial."<sup>18</sup> Using the new scientific method, nature was to be explored, experimented with, recorded and controlled for the benefit of humanity. Merchant suggests that Bacon's programme in his *New Atlantis* (1624) was intended to sanction the manipulation of nature in order to recover man's right over it, lost as he saw it, in the Fall.

Similarly, Descartes, in his *Discourse on Method* (1636) wrote that through knowing the crafts of the artisans, we could "render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature."<sup>19</sup> Descartes' *Discourse on Method* provided an intellectual and philosophical *raison d'être* for the domination

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<sup>17</sup>Merchant, C. *The Death of Nature: Women, ecology and the scientific revolution*. New York: Harper San Francisco, 1990. 164.-190.

<sup>18</sup>Merchant, C. *The Death of Nature*, 188.

<sup>19</sup>Merchant, C. *The Death of Nature*, 188.

and shaping of landscape and environment, which had already been consistently pursued for thousands of years and shaped the climate of intellectual change over the next two hundred years. One of the inevitable conclusions of Descartes' hypothesis of the separateness of mind and matter, and body from spirit, was to be the separation of man from nature and implicit in this, man's dominion over nature. In addition, Descartes' hypothesis of a world machine based on mathematics spawned the Scientific Revolution, of which James Cook and the Admiralty were a legacy. The British Admiralty was the product of a world hungry for scientific information, methodology and classification, one in which the importance of the machine was relentlessly overtaking society.

This is the world view brought to Aotearoa New Zealand at the end of the eighteenth century, and which influenced the country's future development. Taking this cultural background into account it can be seen why Busby, for example, used pragmatic, scientific methodology to categorise and record plants and birds into botanic and zoological groups, why he assessed the forests for their economic worth, and the potential of cleared river flats for farmland, and why he entertained the concept of applying new technology in order to achieve his nation's goals.

At the same time there was a genuine belief that they (the Europeans) would be doing the native New Zealanders a favour by introducing them to the advantages of a superior civilisation and there was no conception that their activities might be disruptive either socially or ecologically. In Anne Salmond's summary of the *Resolution's* visit to Tamatea (Dusky Sound) during Cook's second expedition to New Zealand from March to May 1773, she notes that George Forster commented in his *Voyage*,<sup>20</sup> "The superiority of a state of civilisation over that of barbarism

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<sup>20</sup>Forster, George. 1777. *A Voyage Round the World in His Britannic Majesty's Sloop, Resolution*. London: B. White.

could not be more clearly stated, than by the alterations and improvements we had made in this place.” He gives a detailed description of felling trees, clearing land, and filling the air with the sound of saws, hammers and the activity associated with establishing a European settlement and society, albeit a temporary one. The paragraph ends with the following complacent assumption: “In a word, all around us we perceived the rise of arts, and the dawn of science, in a country which had hitherto lain plunged in one long night of ignorance and barbarism.”<sup>21</sup>

To sum up, the changing religious and philosophical ideologies led inevitably to the unshakeable belief that the earth existed for man’s use and pleasure and encouraged the exchange of “wild” natural landscape for a pastoral, productive one. Natural philosophy’s objective was now to “enlarge knowledge by observation and experiment . . . so that nature being known, it may be mastered, managed, and used in the services of human life.” These ideas combined with John Locke’s assumptions that - “there would always be more than enough free land, as in the New World for anyone who wanted it” and the claim that - “money does not spoil and as mankind has agreed to its use, it means that a man may acquire more property than he himself needs for the sustaining of life”<sup>22</sup> - show a recipe for future environmental disaster both in Europe and in the new lands. Descartes’ overt split between nature and man which in time moulded eighteenth century attitudes and behaviour toward the natural environment survive today, in spite of the opposing views of Romanticism from contemporaneous writers such as Jean Jaques Rousseau and nineteenth century English Romantic and pastoral poets, for example William Wordsworth. Rousseau promoted the concept of the “Noble Savage” in the south seas and the Romantic Ideal, while Wordsworth had a contrary unified idea of man and nature and the transformative power of human experience through nature. The *carte blanche* attitude to dominating our natural

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<sup>21</sup>Salmond, Anne. *Between Worlds: Early Exchanges Between Maori and Europeans 1773-1815* Auckland: Penguin Books (N Z) Ltd., 1997. 63.

<sup>22</sup>Bronowski and Mazlich. *The Western Intellectual Tradition*. 249.

environment for human need and greed, a legacy of the Renaissance and the early modern period, has outweighed any Romantic vision that Wordsworth or Rousseau and their disciples may have espoused. These were the attitudes by which men such as James Cook first appraised (and subjected) the New Zealand environment.



## Chapter 1

### Land of Wasted Wealth

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Frank WRIGHT *The Close of Day* 1909

A sleeping virgin, nursed by sea and sky,  
 With wasted wealth in wild profusion strewn  
 Across thy breast.<sup>23</sup>

### Landfall in Unknown Seas - Cook, a Renaissance Explorer

Simply by sailing in a new direction  
 You could enlarge the world.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Bracken, Thomas. *Jubilee Day*.

<sup>24</sup>Curnow, Allen. "Landfall in Unknown Seas: The Three Hundredth Anniversary of the Discovery of New Zealand by Abel Tasman, 13th December, 1642" *Sailing or Drowning* 1943 in *A Small Room with Large Windows: Selected Poems*. London: Oxford University Press, 1960.33.

It can be seen that Cook's expeditions were a consequence of a changed world view and therefore he and his expedition saw the Aotearoa forests as a [currently unproductive] resource to be used as of right, and their reports back to the Admiralty reinforced that institution's beliefs and needs. On his first visit as Captain of the *Endeavour* in 1769, Cook was working to two agendas, one scientific and public, the other Imperialist and undisclosed, and these assist us to understand why he saw New Zealand as he did. His ostensible task was to track the path of Venus across the face of the sun. As historian Peter Aughton notes, a scientific venture lent credence to Cook's presence in the area and ensured he would be left undisturbed by other nations jealously guarding their interests in the Pacific. Besides, in that great age of scientific exploration, all Europe would benefit from any knowledge gained by witnessing the eclipse.<sup>25</sup> This was, however, a time when competing nations searched for knowledge, possessions and wealth. The second, Imperialist agenda, was recorded in secret instructions: orders to discover and lay claim to the great southern continent, *Terra Australis Incognita*. Aughton writes, "Cook's orders from the British Admiralty [were] to proceed . . . until you discover it, or fall in with the Eastern side of the Land discover'd [sic] by Tasman and now called New Zealand".<sup>26</sup> This expedition was designed to expand Tasman's findings and to locate and firmly fix Aotearoa New Zealand's position on the map. Cook's first written description of his initial sighting of Aotearoa New Zealand, was in the *Endeavour's* Journal entry, ". . . at 2 PM saw land from the mast head bearing WBN, [sic] which we stood directly for, and could but just see it of [sic] the deck at sun set."<sup>27</sup> A second entry the following day notes "the face of the country is of a hilly surface and appears to be clothed with wood and verdure." This is Cook's first reference to what came to be known as the New Zealand bush. Both references are scientific: first he locates the

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<sup>25</sup> Aughton, Peter, *Endeavour: The Story of Captain Cook's First Great Epic Voyage*. Gloucestershire: The Windrush Press, 1999. 109.

<sup>26</sup> Aughton, Peter. *Endeavour: The Story of Captain Cook's First Great Epic Voyage*. 109.

<sup>27</sup> Aughton, Peter. *Endeavour*, 167.

country's position and secondly, notes the most obvious useful feature. Cook records that in some areas the trees reach down as far as the high water mark. An alternative account, supplied by Peter Aughton based on various of the ship's company journal entries, confirms that: "the slopes of the hills were heavily wooded" and "wide river valleys could be seen fed by streams of fresh water."<sup>28</sup> Two main areas of interest are recorded in this one sentence: the unlimited supply of timber, significant because Europe was desperately short for building both ships and houses, and the wide river valley, which when cleared, might equate to the highly productive river meadows of Britain. All these statements use vocabulary that suggests the men were "struck by the grandeur and richness of the forested areas, which in many instances, extended to within one and a half miles of the beach."<sup>29</sup>

The *Endeavour's* journal included cartography, mapping the shoreline, and coastal depth sounding records for future shipping use, as well as the recording, classification and illustrating of native flora and fauna, the latter using the new scientific methods. Botanist Joseph Banks was responsible for some of this work as was Sydney Parkinson, a natural history draughtsman. He served two roles, that of scientific observer and recorder, as well as executing drawings and paintings profiling the nature of the landscape. The main aim was to present in a scientific manner a factual account of a new land and an opinion as to its suitability for establishing a trade colony. As Allen Curnow wrote in retrospect about early European intentions for Imperial expansion in the South Pacific:

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<sup>28</sup>Aughton, Peter. *Endeavour*, 114.

<sup>29</sup>Park, Geoff. *Nga Uruoa. The Groves of Life*, 81.



O you had estimated all the chances  
 Of business in those waters, the world's waters  
 Yet unexploited . . .  
 . . . invoked your God, gave seas to history  
 And islands to new hazardous tomorrows.<sup>30</sup>

The main outcome of these journals was that while initially New Zealand was not seen as a future settlement but as a resource for firstly flax then timber, Cook's three expeditions generated a valuable amount of written information about New Zealand which not only illustrates the increasingly scientific attitude of the time, but more significantly, established the foundations for Aotearoa New Zealand's future as a colonial outpost of Britain. Not only did these writers present a factual account of New Zealand's economic usefulness, they also portrayed a country of opportunity.

This is illustrated by Joseph Bank's description of the Hauraki Plains:

. . . where we found a very fine river broad as the Thames at Greenwich to not quite so deep. . . . Above this (pa)<sup>31</sup> the banks of the river were completely cloathd [sic] with the finest timber my Eyes ever beheld, of a tree we had before seen but only at a distance in Poverty bay and Hawks bay; thick woods of it were everywhere upon the Banks, every tree as streight [sic] as a pine and of immense size; still the higher we came the more numerous they were.

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<sup>30</sup>Curnow, Allen. *Landfall in Unknown Seas*, 34.

<sup>31</sup>My parenthesis

Banks so far has stressed the extent and quantity of trees in the Hauraki flood plain which in 1769 was covered in an immense Kahikatea forest for about twenty-five miles. He then measured and calculated their worth. Banks is quite clear as to the reasons for their mission. He writes: "Our first business was to measure one of these trees." While Banks leaves out the specific measurements, Cook supplies the figures: "He gives the circumference of this tree six feet above the ground, as "nineteen feet and eight inches, and the height, taken with a quadrant, (a dependable, scientific instrument) from the root to the first branch as eighty nine feet".<sup>32</sup> Cook wrote in his journal, " . . . it was as streight [sic] as an arrow and taper'd but very little in proportion to its length, so that I judged that there was 356 solid feet of timber in this tree clear of the branches."<sup>33</sup>

Cook does not give the economic value of the timber but one conjectures he most certainly worked it out, in terms of the current going rate in pounds sterling. They quickly discovered the wood to be too heavy for masts - "but would make the finest plank in the world" - and pondered the possibility of making the timber "light enough for mast as the pitch pine in America (to which our Carpenter likened this timber) is said to be lightened by tapping."<sup>34</sup> The significance of this is that because of the new age of exploration and expansion, Europe was facing a fast dwindling supply of timber for shipping and building and was looking to America and other colonies in the New World for a replacement supply.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Beaglehole, J.C. *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyage of Discovery: The Voyage of the Endeavour 1768-1771 Part One*. Millwood N.Y: Kraus Reprint. 1988. Footnote. 436.

<sup>33</sup> Beaglehole, J.C. *The Journals of Captain James Cook. Part One*, 206.

<sup>34</sup> Beaglehole, J.C. *The Journals of Captain James Cook. Part One*, 436.

<sup>35</sup> In fact, according to Beaglehole, the tree they later cut down to examine was probably a matai which often grows alongside kahikatea and upright; they are difficult to distinguish from each other. Matai is a denser heavier wood than kahikatea and would indeed be too heavy for masts.

Phillip Temple presents another account by Joseph Banks describing the “. . . immense quantity of Woodland, which was yet uncleared, but promised great returns to the people who would take the trouble of Clearing it . . . besides swamps which might easily be drained.”<sup>36</sup> This reference to the possibility of draining the flood plain in which this great forest flourished, prior to clearing the bush, is a good example of the modern scientific and technological approach that was being brought from Europe to the New World. New Zealand geographer, Geoff Park, notes that Banks grew up in the English Fens, which by way of newly developed technology had recently been drained. Banks applied this technological theory to the Hauraki Plains commenting that they could be drained like the Fens and turned into something closely approximating English farms. Banks commented many times on the size and number of the trees “which were enormous” and their abundance, “the largest I have seen - at least speaking of them in the gross” and goes on “We rowd [sic] (up the banks of the river Thames) for many miles between woods of these trees, to which we could see no bounds.” All these written examples reinforce their preoccupation with the amount and economic worth of the timber and the possible use of the land in accordance with contemporary eighteenth century values.

## Measurement and Calculation

From both the written descriptions supplied by Cook, Busby and Banks and the paintings and drawings produced by Banks and Parkinson, we glean two relevant points. Firstly, Aotearoa New Zealand was rich in native timber and secondly, that these men were cultivated, educated, and looked in enlightened, scientific terms towards the future. They used precision instruments,

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<sup>36</sup>Temple, Phillip. *Lake, Mountain, Tree: An Anthology of Writing on New Zealand Nature and Landscape*. Birkenhead, Auckland: Godwit Publishing, 1998. 16.



for example the quadrant, and wrote meticulous scientific reports. From them we learn much about New Zealand - as they saw it in practical terms. Most telling of all, for the justification of the expedition, was Cook's assessment of the usefulness of the land and the returns to be made if one worked hard enough: "The river Thames (Waihou) is indeed in every respect the properest [sic] place we have yet seen for establishing a colony . . . the noble timber, of which there is such an abundance, would furnish plenty of materials either for building defences, houses or vessels. The river would furnish plenty of fish and the Soil make ample returns of any European vegetable sown in it."<sup>37</sup> At this point Banks does not comment on the beauty of the landscape, the birdsong, or the flowering trees. His is a quantitative account, a taking stock of a new land and what it has to offer in material and potential economic worth.

### Outcomes of Early Expeditions: Deforestation and the Fledgling Timber Trade

Erne Adams surmises that "The 29th of May 1772, 230 years ago, was the probable date of the felling of the first kauri tree by pakeha bushmen." <sup>38</sup> He refers to the Marion expedition of 1772 "when the *Mascarin* and the *Marquis de Castires*, both requiring spar replacements, put in to the Bay of Islands, made friends with the Maoris and set about felling and bringing out of the forest tall, straight kauris suitable to their purpose." For half a century after Europeans discovered the timber, the trade was initially sporadic but in 1783 James Matra, who wrote a proposal for the settlement of Port Jackson, describes the abundant timber available from New Zealand: "New Zealand is covered with timber of size and every quality that indicates long duration; it grows close to the water's edge, and may be easily obtained," and suggests that: "it might be

<sup>37</sup>Beaglehole, J.C. *The Journals of Captain James Cook. Part One*, 19.

<sup>38</sup>Adams, J.G. Erne. *Kauri: A King Among Kings*. Revised Ed. Auckland: Wilson and Horton Ltd., 1977. 12.



worthwhile for ships despatched to New South Wales to take in some of this timber on their return, for use of the King's yards."<sup>39</sup> Kenneth Cumberland writes that from 1790 until British sovereignty was proclaimed, New Zealand was an unofficial outpost of New South Wales. The first to do anything about New Zealand's potentialities was William Wright Brampton on the *Endeavour*,<sup>40</sup> which in May 1794 arrived in the Bay of Islands to collect masts, planks and spars. However, it is possible that there were timber trips prior to Brampton's, because according to a later report by G.F. Angus in 1841, "seven vessels had arrived in Port Jackson before 1795 with timber from New Zealand."<sup>41</sup> Further to this, Dell aboard the *Fancy* visited Hauraki between November 20th 1794 and 21st February 1795. During this period, Dell's men "felled 213 trees from sixty to 140 feet long, fit for plank or spars for East India company ships, and collected and dressed a large quantity of flax."<sup>42</sup> As the reputation of kauri grew, merchant sailing ships, in ever increasing numbers, began a trade which continued well beyond the turn of the century into the days when steam supplanted sail, by which time large tracts of kauri forest in Northland and kahikatea in the Hauraki Gulf had begun to disappear in the rush for cheap timber.

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<sup>39</sup>Salmond, Anne. *Between Worlds: Early Exchanges Between Maori and Europeans 1773-1815*. Auckland: Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd 1997. 237. See J. M. Matra, 23 August 1783, in McNab 1908 I: 39.

<sup>40</sup>Salmond, Anne. *Between Worlds*: 238. Described as "an ancient 800-ton East Indiaman which needed extensive repairs" See Judge Advocates Records, Ships Protests and Protests of Bills, in NSW Archives, 5/1162 COD 193:29-31. Presumably James Cook's ship from his first voyage in 1769.

<sup>41</sup>Salmond, Anne. *Between Worlds*, 246.

<sup>42</sup>Salmond, Anne. *Between Worlds*, 250.

Note: Anne Salmond comments that ownership of the timber being removed was never questioned by Dell: "Kahikatea trees were prized for their fruit . . . such trees were named and claimed by particular (Maori) families. Dell had no notion of this however. So far as he and other Europeans were concerned ". . . the trees were simply part of the wilderness, and the question of ownership did not arise." 250.

In 1820 the first British naval expedition was put together and the *Dromedary*, after landing convicts in Australia, made for the Bay of Islands to undertake and complete what was probably the first bush felling contract in New Zealand.<sup>43</sup> By 1828 a well established timber industry was flourishing on the shores of the Hokianga.

### Outcomes of Cook's Expeditions: Advertising New Zealand

In spite of adverse reports about Maori aggressiveness, cannibalism and the unfortunate violent clashes with the natives - for example Abel Tasman's crew in Murderers Bay in 1642, Marion du Fresne and his men in 1772, and the Boyde Massacre in 1809 - most of the written



Herman Diedrich SPORING, *A fortified town or village called Hippah, built on a perforated rock, at Tolaga in New Zealand, c.1784*, The Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

information about New Zealand was favourable. As well as generating information about New Zealand - the scientific information about the indigenous New Zealanders, the flora and fauna, minerals, soils and water supply, and the practical application this would have for Britain and future colonists - Cook's three expeditions between 1768 -1777 accomplished something else; they furnished the first descriptions and paintings that would ultimately showcase and promote New Zealand in English drawing rooms and

fire the imagination (and greed) of the men who would establish the new colony. As well as Sydney Parkinson on the *Endeavour* he was accompanied in his two subsequent visits by the artists William Hodges and John Webber who represented the country as a beautiful, bush clad land, basking in a golden light and complete with noble savage with Roman profile, perfect for

<sup>43</sup>Salmond, Anne. *Between Worlds*, 14.

fulfilling the Romantic Utopian dream. Their productions are expressions of the Romantic tradition, well illustrated by Hodges' *A View of Dusky Bay* 1773 and Webber's *Cook's Cove* 1788.<sup>44</sup> Some of the works produced in Europe from sketches and much embellished, were intended to "sell" New Zealand to Europe as a desirable place of wealth and opportunity for impoverished and displaced families in the early nineteenth century. Up until this point, written descriptions about the New Zealand landscape mainly expressed, in utilitarian terms, the supposed fertility of the land, the abundance of rivers and fishing grounds and the magnificent forests full of wood for building houses, mills and ships. By contrast, Diedrich's drawing of "A fortified town built on a perforated rock (Tolaga Bay) became an icon in European drawing rooms as a subject "close to the spirit of romantic yearnings." The drawing reflected the eighteenth century taste for certain romantic aspects of nature; "waterfalls tumbling into dark ravines, tunnels of trees and natural grottoes [sic]."<sup>45</sup> Besides pragmatic descriptions such as Cook's and Bank's these other representations, by contrast, filled all the requirements of the Romantic vision which in their turn seduced those back at home. Anne Salmond mentions George Vancouver who travelled with Cook on his second and third voyages and later returned to New Zealand with two ships, the *Discovery* and *Chatham*, arriving in Tamatea (Dusky Sound) in November 1773. His botanist, Archibald Menzies describes the "wild and romantic appearance" of Five Fingers Point :

It is formed by a group of high peaked insulated Rocks perforated with holes & hideous caverns & furnished with projecting rocks & steep cliffs that in many places overhung their base yet afforded a scanty nourishment to some trees and bushes which here and there issued from crevices & adorned their craggy sides.

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<sup>44</sup>Docking, Gil. *Two Hundred Years of New Zealand Painting*. David Bateman. 1971. Plates 2 & 3.

<sup>45</sup> Salmond, Anne. *Between Worlds*, 16.



A little behind these a very steep rocky shore rose to a moderate height, & was covered towards the summit with trees of different kinds, forming on the whole, a prospect truly picturesque, & which at this time was certainly heightened by the novelty of our situation - the calm serenity of the evening & the wild and hideous noise of a heavy surf dashing incessantly against the rocks and cavernous shore.<sup>46</sup>

There were also descriptions that achieved a combination of scientific and pragmatic descriptions about the natural environment as well as the romantic tradition. Anne Salmond includes this description given by the missionary William Yate:

But the scenery is most lovely on the fresh water banks of this river: the only drawback to its enjoyment is the difficulty of landing, except at high water, on account of the depth of mud deposited on its banks. It is true, that, for fifty or sixty miles, there is a great sameness in the views, being confined by hills on one side, and an immense flat forest on the other; yet the whole is so peaceful, so well suited for meditation, and fitted to calm the ruffled passions of the soul, that hearts, even the most insensible to the beauties of nature, must feel its influence. . . . “The copse-wood and flax, with reeds and rushes of every description, flourish most luxuriantly on the banks of this noble river; ducks, and other waterfowl, sail proudly and undisturbedly on its placid bosom, and are so remarkable tame, as to come fearlessly within reach of the paddles, with which our boats are rowed. Nor does the fragrance exhaled from the flowers

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<sup>46</sup>Salmond, Anne. *Between Worlds*, 190.

and shrubs fail to increase the pleasure derived from an excursion on this stream. Indeed, the whole atmosphere seems impregnated with perfumes.<sup>47</sup>

In this evocative passage, Yate doesn't hesitate to honestly note the disadvantages of the area surrounding the Waihou (Thames) river in the Hauraki Basin. He is candid about the difficulty of landing and sameness of the views on the grand scale, which he intimates are somewhat boring. It is when he narrows his vision down to the intimate and particular that the tone changes and the Romanticism of Rousseau appears - "the whole is so peaceful, so well suited for meditation, and fitted to calm the ruffled passions of the soul . . ." An imperialist note is struck, as Ducks "sail proudly" across the water, (as does his Britannic Majesty's navy, across the world), and the river is granted the human attribute of nobility. In addition, the femininity and productivity of nature is reflected in the river's nurturing bosom, the impregnation of the senses with perfumes and the luxuriant growth on the banks that enclose the river, a somewhat different attitude from Bacon's eagerness to strangle nature before she multiplied.

If one read both the pragmatic and romantic reports of Aotearoa New Zealand, it would seem indeed to be paradise on earth. Both written descriptions and paintings had their desired effect and in Britain, Aotearoa New Zealand became an ideal country for colonisation; once this was established, the forests, already depleted slightly by the burgeoning late eighteenth century timber trade, were doomed. During this period a steady trickle of Europeans arrived in New Zealand, including sealers and whalers, undesirables and adventurers and missionaries from Britain, France and Germany, all looking for land and housing.

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<sup>47</sup>Salmond, Anne. *Between Worlds*, 243.



In summary, New Zealand was not in the strictest sense a virgin country when initially discovered by the first European explorers. The landscape had already been modified by settler Polynesians to the point where their survival may well have been threatened. As James Belich suggests, a possible consequence is the subsequent oral mythologies that demand respect and reverence for the environment from Maori, by symbolically acknowledging the appropriate gods, prior to using the natural resources for their needs. The Maori learnt by their mistakes and learnt to live with the spirit of the land. The first European explorers, culturally defined by the combined philosophies of the Reformation, the Renaissance and Age of Enlightenment, arrived with the firmly embedded assumption that nature was intended by God for man's sole use and advancement. It followed therefore, that the new land was quantified and accounted for according to the new scientific methods, not only to record what was already in existence but to evaluate how it could be of use economically and subsequently changed to suit their and the British Empire's needs. Their written records, supported by survey drawings and paintings, establish that they found New Zealand covered in enormous forests, the trees of which had measurable, economic value for Europe. They reported that by clearing and using the trees while they lasted and draining the land, New Zealand could be transformed from an unproductive "waste" land to viable English farms; by contrast, a few wrote less of economic gain and more of the beauty and individuality of the country. It seemed therefore, from all these superlatives, that for those seeking a new beginning, Aotearoa New Zealand was an economically promising, romantic paradise, ripe for the taking. The need for science to record and categorise the country's natural attributes, and a developing capitalist need to account for these assets in economic terms, is matched only by the imperialist need to expand empires for power and land. A significant role in this expansion was played by travellers; those who came for adventure and to proselytise, the itinerants and the opportunists, recorded their adventures and experiences and made a valuable contribution towards constructing New Zealand for the metropolitan public in Britain.

## Chapter 2

# Mapping the Interior

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### Travel Literature

From out of exploratory and scientific expeditions there developed a form of writing categorised as travel writing which was frequently generated concurrently with ship's journals and scientific

literature, by travellers accompanying the expeditions.



John HOYTE, *Devils Punchbowl on Bealey*, c.1875, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki

Travellers are by way of definition transitory, peripatetic, passing through the country of observation, rather than settling. They record what they see, apparently objectively, sometimes cursorily, while maintaining their position as a European with European views, outside the society they are describing. Travel journals often attempted a philosophical view of the non-European society from a European view-point, offered commentary on local pre-settlement politics, and consistently expressed either openly or by comparison a sense of the superior accoutrements of a white, Christian, imperialist civilisation with lingering

Cartesian elements:

In such a land it was that a few civilised beings were now going to reclaim a whole race to subdued and regular habits; and afford at the same time, another proof of the immense superiority of mind over matter.<sup>48</sup>

While the scientific expeditions were “mapping the surface of the globe”<sup>49</sup> by drawing the new lands as lines on the map, travel writers were filling in the gaps by mapping the interior of countries like New Zealand. For, as Mary Louise Pratt notes in *Imperial Eyes*,<sup>50</sup> travellers seldom restricted their journeys only to the coast, as a ship mapping the outlines of a country must do. They left the pockets of settlement and pushed their way into the interior, describing the flora and fauna, the geography and weather, the people and their customs:

We pushed on about six miles more to-day through forest and encamped at dark under an old rata tree of renown”. . . “We descended at least 1500 feet to the stream, crossed it and two of its tributaries and then ascended a ragged ridge, to the opposite bank of the dark, deep dell in which the stream flows. This dell, with its various branches, presents a very picturesque appearance.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Nicholas, J.L. *Narrative of a Voyage to New Zealand*. 2 vols. James Black and Son. Tavistock Street, Covent Garden 1817. Auckland: Facsimile Edition Wilson & Horton Ltd. ND. 366.

<sup>49</sup>Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. 1992. London: Routledge, 1994. 30.

<sup>50</sup>Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*. 30.

<sup>51</sup>Wakefield, Edward Jerningham Esq. *Adventure in New Zealand 1839-1844*, 2 vols. London: John Murray. 1845. Facsimile Edition. Auckland: Wilson & Horton Ltd., New Zealand. vol.1. 95.



In this way travellers, as Pratt suggests, gave countries like New Zealand substance, for the European imagination at home, by supplying geographical data, naming regions, rivers and mountains, either with the Maori name or increasingly with European ones and scientific material, naming and classifying plants all contained within a descriptive narrative. Mary Pratt refers to the figure of “the seeing man,” a label for the European male subject of European landscape discourse - he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess,”<sup>52</sup> and suggests that many travel writers take up this position. From their unchallenged position of superiority they “claimed” the landscape of a new country just by surveying it visually. Ownership in the imaginations by those back home occurred by default, by [visually] reading travellers’ written descriptions and reports and seeing the paintings. Visual ownership increased with the use of theodolites, affirming with technology this visual ownership, the right to possess by sight. Here is a description of Dr Dieffenbach’s climb to see the view in Queen Charlotte’s Sound:

They emerged from the forest into a coppice of fern, ten feet high . . . After a tedious scramble through this, they reached the summit, and were rewarded by a panoramic view of . . . Queen Charlotte’s sound. . . . They calculated the hill to be 800 feet above the level of the sea.<sup>53</sup>

followed by Wakefield’s comment:

Nothing can be imagined more magnificent than the scenery, or, however, less suitable for cultivation.

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<sup>52</sup>Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*. Introduction.7.

<sup>53</sup>Wakefield, vol. 1. 33.



The traveller, usually within the first chapter, provided the reader with a reason for the trip. On the surface, while they appear to have different, stated reasons I suggest they are often the same. Travellers are part of the machinery of civilising and Christianising a savage people and taming a wild natural environment, regardless of their motivation. Regardless of whether their intentions were subversive and culturally driven or stated, they were based on a predominantly English model, which was to improve the native's physical and spiritual lot, while at the same time legitimating the process of expansion, colonisation and trade.

As travellers, they eventually returned home to publish their observations for the "metropolitan reading public,"<sup>54</sup> and in so doing provided the following: firstly, they constructed the non European world beyond the outlines of Europe, for Europeans. Secondly, they reaffirmed for Europeans, the superiority of their own value system and thirdly, provided knowledge which increased the desire for further contact with the new country amongst their readers. In *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt offers a range of cultural significations that influenced travel writing, similar to those of ships diaries and journals, and the way travellers related to the natural environment they travelled through. This, in turn, determined the response of their readers. Pratt investigates how the systematising of nature and the scientific revolution,<sup>55</sup> romanticism, survival histories, the introduction of Christianity, developing capitalism, and the related dynamics of power and appropriation all influenced the process of colonisation and all influenced travel literature.

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<sup>54</sup>Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, Introduction. 4.

<sup>55</sup>As discussed earlier, Joseph Banks played a major role classifying New Zealand flora and fauna, in order to bring order out of chaos, to provide something recognisable out of strangeness and to provide padding for the lines on the map. Banks, therefore, was an early traveller with a specific task.

The two travellers I have selected are John Liddiard Nicholas, visiting New Zealand between 1814-1815 and author of *Narrative of a Voyage to New Zealand*, and Edward Jerningham Wakefield, whose visit twenty four-years later, from 1839-1844, produced *Adventure in New Zealand*. There are some similarities between the two men. Both have the financial freedom to undertake such a trip, both give plausible, personal reasons for doing so and both make the effort to map the interior of New Zealand. The ostensible difference lies in the type of expedition they were a part of. I use ostensible because as noted, the underlying reasons are the same. Nicholas visited New Zealand as friend and confidant of Samuel Marsden; he mixed in missionary circles, sharing and supporting Marsden's ideals, who as a missionary was determined to bring God to the benighted natives. He writes of Marsden:

. . . his (Marsden's) zeal for the service of his fellow-creatures, whom he wished to raise from the degradation of gross ignorance to a rank suited to human beings, prevailed over every other consideration.<sup>56</sup>

Nicholas reported that Marsden saw his role as one

. . . of calling them (the Maori) from their gross idolitries [sic] to a knowledge of revealed religion, enlightening their minds and humanising their pursuits.<sup>57</sup>

Wakefield, on the other hand, came to New Zealand with the settlers and while he was attached as secretary to his uncle, Colonel William Wakefield, his visit was primarily for adventure.

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<sup>56</sup>Nicholas, vol. 1. 22.

<sup>57</sup>Nicholas, vol. 1. 5.

Nicholas was part of a religiously motivated venture and Wakefield a secular one. How do these travellers' texts represent the natural environment and what in particular are their responses to the New Zealand forests? How are these responses culturally mediated?

As a writer, Nicholas is predominantly an eighteenth century Romantic who has set out to write a social commentary on the Maori. He writes: "I was at liberty to indulge the ardent desire I felt from my earliest days, of learning the manners and customs of different nations, and particularly those with which Europeans in general are but little acquainted."<sup>58</sup> Here he states his intentions to accomplish that which Pratt mentions, writing about non-European countries by Europeans for Europeans and in so doing, producing 'New Zealand' for the metropolitan reader. In the Preface he states that "the following narrative was composed from a journal which the Author kept during his voyage to New Zealand." He declares that he has been scrupulously exact with regard to the truth and is providing a view of New Zealanders, "a people so little known to Europeans" for their interest. Nicholas is reassuring those at home that New Zealanders are not totally depraved. His other intention is to record (Marsden's) "proceedings in the cause of humanity." As he is part of a Christian mission expedition, he feels superior to non-European culture. This attitude would in turn affect his response to the natural. Many of his descriptions bear reference to the Maori as "children of Nature," or as being in a "state of Nature," a feature of Romanticism. In Romantic style, the New Zealander he presents frequently includes references to the idea of Rousseau's noble savage:

Much time is frequently employed by his countrymen in observing certain stars and constellations . . . They have given names to each of them (the stars). To the man who will reflect and consider that all the improvement of civilised life

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<sup>58</sup>Nicholas, vol. 1. 23.



and all the discoveries of science, have proceeded from an anxious and persevering spirit of investigation, this fact of the New Zealanders contemplating the wonders of the firmament, and endeavouring to account for them by the wild vagaries of their own imagination, cannot fail to be interesting . . . He will see from this, that man, even in a state of nature, is anxious to ascertain the causes of the mighty's works which he surveys around him.<sup>59</sup>

Nicholas' narrative offers Europeans the chance to look at themselves and their civilisation in contrast to that of non-Europeans, as means of confirming their superiority. Regardless of whether non-European civilisations were regarded as belonging to the Romantic Noble Savage ideal or as barbaric heathens, they only served to highlight the advantages of a Christian society with its technological and science-based culture. It is doubtful that even the Romantic ideal led many to eschew the materialistic advantages of Europe, although a few, like Gauguin, fled to the south Pacific in order to satisfy their "art." In the following example Nicholas records Tippahe's recognition of European technological expertise, therefore proving for Nicholas that he is intelligent and can become civilised:

. . . he was so affected by the contrast of our enlightened knowledge, with the barbarous ignorance of his own countrymen, that he burst into tears, and exclaimed "New Zealand no good!" This fine instance of sensibility can only be appreciated by the man whose soul is equally susceptible of noble impression, and who being blessed himself with the light of civilisation and

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<sup>59</sup>Nicholas, vol. 1. 52.



refinement, can feel for the mind that, wrapped in the darkness of barbarism, is still but too conscious of the gloom that surrounds it.<sup>60</sup>

While this may sound smug, Nicholas is using this to reassure those at home that the natives are teachable. However, he is also implying that the native Maori way of life, no matter how idyllic, is inferior to the European and needs to be improved.

Probably because Nicholas's stated reason for his visit is to study the people and their culture, his references to the environment in general are not as a framework on which to hang the narrative but, as Pratt suggests often occurs in travel writing, forms an integral part of the narrative as he travels through the country, and includes a mixture of glowing descriptions, token attempts at scientific classification, and those with a view to settlement or trade. Here is one of his views of the scenery:

The island, which we had now an opportunity of seeing in every part, consisted of three hills, and the highest commanded such a magnificent prospect as I never in the whole course of my life beheld . . . which displayed enclosures covered with the finest verdure, and forests glittering with variegated foliage.<sup>61</sup>

How Nicholas relates to the natural environment and writes about it is influenced by both Romanticism and the imperial motives of colonisation and trade. Thus he interweaves both pragmatic and romantic descriptions of the bush. A two page description of the view finishes with the following disclaimer:

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<sup>60</sup>Nicholas, vol.1.12.

<sup>61</sup>Nicholas, vol.1. 114

Probably I have not consulted the good taste of my reader, in dwelling so long on these scenes; but it is difficult for the votary of unaffected Nature to withhold his admiration, when she presents herself in all the simplicity of innocence, and all the imposing grandeur of dignified sublimity. From me the tribute she receives is small; though at the same time, I could not forbear paying it.<sup>62</sup>

Because his self-appointed task is to record the social structure of the Maori, in order to justify their conversion and westernisation, Nicholas uses a number of conventions in order to highlight the natural features of the country. He apologises for digressing from his appointed task and for his ineptitude at describing Nature. He personifies Nature and places her in the position of a goddess, with himself as votary offering his gift of admiration. Nicholas uses the term *romantic* frequently, for example “. . . till we came to a long vista that presented a romantic view through the forest” and “Bays, harbours and promontories, come upon the eye in abrupt succession, while these bolder scenes of nature, are pleasingly harmonised by green hills that appear retiring from the view, and valleys winding off in the most romantic incurvities.”<sup>63</sup> He continues, “But to return to my narrative . . .” and brusquely gets on with the business of meeting with the natives, in order to reassure the reader that he is adhering to his appointed task, and that the nature description is less important than the social aspects of the natives. The three or four pages of descriptive nature writing give way to endless pages of conversation with the Maori, their customs and conversations, their buildings and fortifications and their party’s own travel arrangements.

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<sup>62</sup>Nicholas, vol.1. 114.

<sup>63</sup>Nicholas, vol.1. 102.

Nicholas provides a rapturous description of the native birdsong and closes with this comment: “The surrounding country here had all that sublime scenery that we observed in other parts; the forests being noble and stately, the hills chequered and picturesque, and the distant mountains bold and lofty.”<sup>64</sup> He almost gives the impression that his supply of romantic superlatives is drying up and I suggest that he is following a convention of which he sometimes tired. At the same time, Nicholas was clearly impressed with the flora and fauna of New Zealand and felt the need to record it.

Pratt suggests that journalists and travellers “fulfilled the role of mediator between the scientific network and the larger European public.”<sup>65</sup> Nicholas provides an entirely different view from Banks in that his observations of the natural environment and the bush are described in laymen’s and romantic terms rather than scientific ones, although, while he makes a disclaimer as to his lack of knowledge about the scientific classification of plants, he can’t resist attempting it, as seen here:

The scientific botanist would here find an ample range for his excursive genius; but for myself, I freely confess my incapacity to explore and classify the various stores of the vegetable kingdom. We met with several shrubs with which we were totally unacquainted, and many that we discovered to be of the myrtle *genus*; besides one which, from the pithiness of it’s wood, and the conformation of its leaves, resembled very much the elder tree.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Nicholas, vol.1. 335.

<sup>65</sup>Pratt, 4.

<sup>66</sup>Nicholas, vol.1. 335.

For the domestic subject, the last sentence strikes a reassuring note. After all New Zealand is not so very different, there are recognisable plants, and the reader may remain safely within his/her comfort zone. And even Nicholas is tempted to remain within that comfort zone rather than make any further attempts at plant classification:

The rich variety of natural productions here lay open to our view, would have been a source of delight to a person of more scientific attainments than myself, who . . . could feel comparatively little pleasure in looking at trees and shrubs, with whose classes and *genera* I was not aquatinted. I shall notice however those few which I was enabled to distinguish.<sup>67</sup>

Besides the romantic and the scientific responses to the forests, Nicholas gives the imperial expansionist view looking forward to the future and contemplating possible future settlement:

Should an extensive settlement be ever formed in New Zealand by our people, . . . this lake would form an admirable situation for the seat of government . . . The extensive forests that line one side of it, would afford an immense quantify of timber, that might, at a trifling expense, be floated to the opposite bank, where the ground being cleared to an considerable extent, the town might be built, and lands inclosed both for pasturage and husbandry.<sup>68</sup> . . . I might also add, that the forests, while affording the most excellent timber for building, could easily be converted into well-cultivated fields and gardens.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Nicholas, vol.1. 231.

<sup>68</sup>Nicholas, vol.1. 344.

<sup>69</sup>Nicholas, vol.1. 345.



Considering that Marsden later became a formidable trader in both flax and timber, mention of the New Zealand native forests is not of obvious importance besides providing for the mission buildings. Geoffrey Erne Adams comments on Marsden in his book on the kauri timber trade late in the nineteenth century: “The Reverend Samuel Marsden (was) one of the earliest of the kauri timber pioneers. He was a member of the first European party to visit the kauri country surrounding the Hokianga Harbour, making an overland journey from the Bay of Islands,”<sup>70</sup> and was involved in one of the first timber contracts felling the timber for profit. The kauri that was to become one of Marsden’s chief trading commodities is first mentioned by Nicholas halfway through volume one. “The pine was by far the most beautiful, and in height exceeded all the others beyond any degree of comparison.” He comments on the size of the mountain pine or “the cowrie [sic], rising to enormous size, was the most remarkable. Of this tree, which supplies the most excellent timber, the natives make their canoes; and the wood, from its solidity and firmness, is extremely valuable for building.”<sup>71</sup> Importantly, he notes the profusion of trees and shrubs and makes the assumption that the climate and soil is by far superior to that of New South Wales. Further on there is mention of the totara,

A species of pine, called by the natives towtarra, [sic] excited our astonishment, from the bulk and height of which it grew. We measured some of the trees, and found them to be from thirty to three and thirty feet in circumference, growing to the height of one hundred feet and upwards before they branched out and all perfectly straight. The quality of solid timber that one of these trees must supply is immense.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Adams, Geoffrey Erne. *Kauri: A King Among Kings*. Auckland: Wilson and Houghton Ltd., 1977. 12.

<sup>71</sup>Nicholas, vol.1. 233.

<sup>72</sup>Nicholas, vol.1. 329.

Nicholas comments that they have floated spars down to the ship from the interior, but he does not mention timber trading except with the Maori. He then gives a brief botanical description of the appearance of the trees and comments that the forest “abounded with them”.

Nicholas was also part of this trek and earlier trips around the Bay of Islands to find wood for building the mission settlement. He records, “As it now became necessary for the missionaries to lose no time in building their houses, and as the timber district lay at some distance on the south side of the Bay, we weighed anchor on the morning of the 20th, and proceeded towards that place with the intention of procuring a supply.”<sup>73</sup> They reached the Cowa Cowa [sic] river and noted that “the timber is floated down from the interior and grows on the banks of it in great abundance”<sup>74</sup> Marsden, Kendall and Nicholas set off to visit the chief from whom they intend to buy the timber. The visit being successful, they continued into the interior to select the timber required and “engage the natives to cut down as much timber as would be necessary for our purpose, and bring it by the usual conveyance to the vessel.”<sup>75</sup> Nicholas shifts away from the practical details of trade and returns to comment on the surroundings on which they propose to leave an indelible mark of change: “On whatever part we turned our eyes, a rich and romantic prospect invited our attention . . . a delightful view of picturesque images.”<sup>76</sup> It is almost as if he is trying to draw the reader’s attention away from their intended purpose. The party makes several visits to various chiefs in different areas of the Bay of Islands to buy timber and they are assured by the natives there is plenty of wood. Nicholas, who consistently interweaves the pragmatic with the romantic further describes the abundant timber, “a noble forest of pines

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<sup>73</sup>Nicholas, vol.1. 207.

<sup>74</sup>Nicholas, vol.1. 220.

<sup>75</sup>Nicholas, vol.1. 221.

<sup>76</sup>Nicholas, vol.1. 221.

growing to the height of eighty and a hundred feet, all of them straight as if they had been shaped by nature for no other purpose than to shew [sic] her regularity . . . being close to the river we could float them down without any great trouble or expense.”<sup>77</sup>

The trip with Marsden into the interior towards the Hokianga Harbour was very successful and “The principal forest mentioned by our conductors lay at a short distance from this village, (Wycaddee) where the pines were of an amazing height, and the timber extremely valuable. The facility of floating down the trees here very great, and the situation presented many advantages for a flourishing settlement.”<sup>78</sup>

In all, Nicholas mentions agreements with about six different tribal chiefs for timber, and comments on how quickly they complied. On returning to the ship, following one trip, they found spars ready for loading and the natives waiting for payment. He later describes the activity at the new timber felling settlement at Cowa- cowa [sic]:<sup>79</sup>

The sawyers cutting timber from morning till night without intermission, the smith making axes with the same industry and the carpenter employed with no less diligence in cutting out two draught holes in the bows of the vessel, to enable her to take in a cargo of timber; and when these were completed we were to take her to the Cow-cowa to receive the freight.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Nicholas, vol.1. 225.

<sup>78</sup>Nicholas, vol. 1. 247.

<sup>79</sup>Present day spelling Kawa Kawa.

<sup>80</sup>Nicholas, vol. 2. 48.

By now the wily Marsden, with an eye for profit, was not only preaching, but plundering, combining the reaping of souls for God with the reaping of timber for the mission buildings and churches as well as for trade at Port Jackson, on their imminent return to Australia. Nicholas includes a valuation of their cargo of flax timber, fish and pork:

By calculation which we now made of the value of the entire cargo, it appeared that it would produce at the Colony, the sum of four hundred and fifty one pounds four shillings; after deducting the enormous duty of one shilling, per foot, to which the timber was subject.<sup>81</sup>

Nicholas continues with an eye to the future:

But as the future cargoes of timber will come for the greater part in plank, they will be much more valuable, and I have little doubt but the vessel will in time repay the Missionary Society for the expenses they have incurred. They must however get this exorbitant duty upon the timber taken off. . . .<sup>82</sup>

His estimation for profit was 4,848 feet of timber at 2s. 6d. per foot came to six hundred and six pounds minus duty at 1s per foot, which brought the total profit on the timber to three hundred and sixty four pounds. Nicholas doesn't deduct the cost of the axes and guns that were used to pay for the timber. He however has provided the reader with an overview of the early process of buying timber, felling and shipping it, its value in European terms, and the future in store for the on-going milling and inevitable destruction of the New Zealand indigenous forests for profit.

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<sup>81</sup>Nicholas, vol. 2. 213.

<sup>82</sup>Nicholas, vol. 2. 214.



Nicholas's travel narrative concurs with a number of Pratt's suggested reasons for travel writing. He is totally supportive of the introduction of European Christian civilisation, which he regards as enormously advantageous to the natives, as well as the resulting trade and he discusses the methods of payment and the natives' already well developed adeptness in trade. He notes at the beginning of the journal that in order to engage the natives in both Christianity and their co-operation in trade, Marsden intended to create "artificial wants to which they had never before been accustomed, and which he knew must act as the strongest excitement to the exercise of their ingenuity." Marsden therefore was introducing the developing capitalist, economic system on which Europe survived, encouraging the Maori to desire technologies and material possessions they had no prior knowledge of, in order to trade for the materials desired in Europe.

While Nicholas describes the felling of timber by the natives he does not express any dismay for the destruction of the forests for which he feels they have paid a fair price. His narrative is comforting for the reader; the country is beautiful, in many ways like England, rich in resources and above all, suitable for a future colony.

In contrast to Nicholas, E. J. Wakefield states his reasons for coming to New Zealand as, "I intended to see the landing of the first body of colonists and then to return. . . . So interesting, however, did it become to watch the first steps of the infant colony . . . that I was tempted to postpone my trip for four years."<sup>83</sup> While Nicholas's narrative concentrates on sociological details, as well as his travel experiences and opportunity for trading with the natives, Wakefield, who arrives a quarter of a century later, when a fledgling colony is being established, is much

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<sup>83</sup>Wakefield, Edward Jerningham. *Adventure in New Zealand*. 2 vols. London: John Murray, 1845. Facsimile edition. Auckland: Wilson & Horton.

more interested in land ownership, the process of purchasing it and the development of a new colony and its governance. The greater part of his narrative consists of recording the establishment of the political and legal fabric of the country, treks into the interior and up the coast as far as the Hokianga on surveying expeditions, recording the geography of the country and naming pas and villages, rivers and mountains. Wakefield, who was a firm advocate of the New Zealand Land Company, was also involved in negotiating land deals on their behalf.

While Nicholas chiefly explored the Bay of Islands, Wakefield ranged further afield from the lower half of the North Island, the central North Island, the Hokianga, Nelson and Canterbury. As with Nicholas, the descriptions of scenery and forests are interwoven into the fabric of his text. He provides an interesting description of forest land ownership, belonging to the Ngatiawa chiefs near Port Nicholson:

But they knew not of any further right to a district covered with primeval forest, far too vast for the use of any descendants of their tribe . . . and the only disputes respecting land which had yet occurred between the natives themselves arose from the invasion of lands already cleared or likely to be wanted soon, or the taking of trees from a forest already marked out by another savage for a supply of canoes or house-timber. The first clearer became the acknowledged owner of a tract of hitherto intact land: the first axeman in a primeval forest laid claim to the surrounding trees.<sup>84</sup>

One of his first observations of the forest is as follows:

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<sup>84</sup>Wakefield, Vol 1. 86.

The grandeur of the forest which overshadowed these clear creeks, the luxuriance and entanglement of under wood, and the apparent richness of the soil, could nowhere be exceeded. We longed to see the time when the benefit of the latter should be reaped by industrious English yeomen.<sup>85</sup>

This passage illustrates that he was looking forward to the future success of the colony and the necessity for clearing the forest for farming in order to achieve this goal. Wakefield, like Nicholas, does not acknowledge that in order to benefit from the rich soil, the grandeur of the forest must be in part at least, destroyed. It can be assumed that the necessity of building towns and farms for survival was considered more important than losing the forest of which there was a seemingly unlimited amount. Wakefield shows that he too is an example of Pratt's "seeing eye-ownership" by surveying. For example, on a visit to Queen Charlotte Sound he records, "Nothing can be imagined more magnificent than the scenery, or, however, less suitable for cultivation."<sup>86</sup>

In his first volume Wakefield gives an excellent description:

We climbed the sides of some picturesque waterfalls, and attained the top of a ridge covered with the largest trees. The trunks of some of these reached to the height of seventy or eighty feet without a branch. . . . It was impossible not to be struck by the majesty of this primeval forest.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Wakefield, Vol 1. 86.

<sup>86</sup>Wakefield, vol 1. 33.

<sup>87</sup>Wakefield, vol 1. 32.

In his second volume he gives a description of travelling down the Wanganui River through a gorge, and finishes with the effect it had on him:

Such was the intense excitement produced on me by this burst of nature's majesty, when I first went through the pass, that I relieved myself involuntarily by a deep sigh and a rushing of tears to the eyes, when we had passed on into the comparatively tame and reposing scenery which immediately follows.<sup>88</sup>

Despite this, Wakefield is constantly on the lookout for land "fitting for agriculture" and frequently comments on the soil structure and fertility and confesses that he:

. . . is almost tired of describing fine districts of country. Suffice it to say, that the level tract which had passed over between the Ohau and the Manawatu, about five miles from the coast, was as promising and beautiful as any that I had yet seen, consisting of alternate wood and fine pasture land with occasional swamps only waiting to be drained, to be as available as any of the drier country.<sup>89</sup>

Two points of interest remain in Wakefield's text in relation to the forests and timber. One is the establishment of a saw mill at Horowhenua, furniture making and the growth of housing at the Hutt Valley, all of which demanded large quantities of timber. The second are his comments with regard to capitalists. Wakefield was on his way to the survey station at Karekare, or "Dig-dig" on the Oroua, a tributary of the Manawatu river, which he reached at dusk.

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<sup>88</sup>Wakefield, vol.2. 90.

<sup>89</sup>Wakefield, vol 2. 227.



Just below the survey station, on the north bank of the (Oroua) river, the saw-mill . . . was nearly ready for work. Two brothers named Kebbell, had persevered in a remarkable manner till their undertaking was complete . . . The engine was a rotary one of 20-horsepower. It was covered with a thatched building of the most curious form; gable after gable and roof after roof having been added on, as each part of the machinery was erected and required protection. Out of the midst of the heap of angles a great chimney rose to the height of about 40 feet. A great many of the natives were employed in rafting logs down the river and hauling them up the bank into the mill-yard, where tramways were laid down to carry them to the mill. The forge, the residences for the millers and their labourers, iron in various shapes and machinery of all kinds surrounded the bustling scene.<sup>90</sup>

The Horowhenua district and the area around Palmerston North, which itself began as a bush milling settlement, became a timber milling area early in New Zealand's history. Enormous amounts of timber were extracted from the Manawatu Plains for the new settlements in the area. Wakefield describes the forest on the Manawatu Plains as consisting of "magnificent totara trees."<sup>91</sup> The above description illustrates not only the beginnings of milling in earnest, but the way the timber was being used. As well as exporting the timber, as Nicholas described, within

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<sup>90</sup>Wakefield, vol 2. 240.

<sup>91</sup>Wakefield, vol.2. 235.

The remains of the original wharf used for loading the timber boats, may still be seen, now mostly under water, a mile downstream from the present bridge.

the four years of Wakefield's sojourn, it was being used for other commodities by the new settlers, also with a view to export. Wakefield writes:

The making of furniture at Wellington had been now for some time successfully carried on. The *totara*, the *mai* and the *hinau*, were found to work up into very handsome side boards, tables and bookshelves. It was predicted that the export of these woods to England would become of great importance as soon as they should become known there. A cabinet maker, named Levien, has a workshop adjoining the New Zealand Houses in Broad - street Buildings, where he continues to construct furniture of New Zealand woods, which has been much admired and bought at high prices.<sup>92</sup>

Finally, I want to look at Wakefield's comments about the Hutt Valley settlement he visited. The residents were in temporary accommodation waiting for the surveying to be completed.

Three gentlemen I was much pleased to see again in New Zealand, had formed themselves into a commercial firm, and had brought with them, among other things, the complete machinery of a steam engine of twenty horse-power, adapted for sawing or flour. . .they were as busy as the rest, landing and arranging their goods. I walked some distance along the surveyors line, and I made acquaintance of such of the newcomers as I did not already know. Each capitalist appeared to have a following of labourers from his own part of the

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<sup>92</sup>Wakefield, vol.2. 246.

country. Cornish miners and agricultural labourers had pitched their tents near Mr Molesworth.<sup>93</sup>

Wakefield continues with a description of a Utopian contentment in the new settlement where “the master and the man toiled with equal energy and good-will; and both enjoyed a good meal, often served up with all the comforts of civilised life and live as well as each other.”<sup>94</sup>

It is interesting to read Wakefield’s description of his friends as capitalists. Here is the beginning of what New Zealand was to develop into, as in any other colony; men with money and commercial acumen supplying the capital and machinery to progress the colony and hasten the destruction of the native forests in order to survive and for commercial gain. The twenty five years between Nicholas’ and Wakefield’s journals serve to highlight the way the attitude was changing from viewing the bush as romantic and awe inspiring to a profitable commodity. Wakefield’s contributions to the new colony lay in his *Aventures in New Zealand* which may have inspired further immigrants, and in land deals with the Maori on behalf of the New Zealand Company. Neither he nor Nicholas remained in New Zealand; both returned to England, leaving behind the new settlers and missionaries, who had to face the reality and hardships of breaking in the land.

Despite their romantic musings on the beauty of the New Zealand forests, in both Nicholas and Wakefield’s travel accounts they accept that practicality and progress are paramount. The

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<sup>93</sup>Wakefield, vol 2. 200.

<sup>94</sup>Wakefield, vol 2. 200.

Romantic primeval beauty of the forests is secondary to and separate from the missionaries' and settlers' needs to feed and shelter themselves, to build commercial buildings, and to provide income as export for the new colony, both township and mission. In order for the colony to survive the forests must go and yet time and again their descriptions of the peacefulness and beauty of the forests was part of the charm of the country. For the coming settlers, however, this was an alien landscape with which they had no sense of identification, no sense of self. "It had nothing to teach them, was no use as it was".<sup>95</sup> Unaware that the forests were a finite resource, they saw it as an enemy that stood in their way, a thing, in Francis Bacon's terms, to be uprooted and tamed.

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<sup>95</sup>Park, 83.



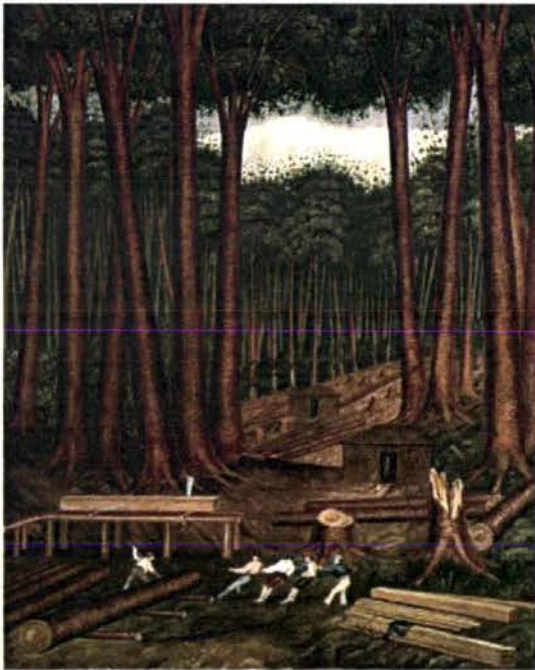
## Chapter 3

### Bushwacking and Burn-Offs

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#### Early Colonists' Land Acquisition - Missionaries and the Wakefield Settlements

The period from the early eighteenth to the early nineteenth century continued to be marked by a steady stream of settlers both missionary and lay, whose desire for land and promised wealth was matched by the corresponding acquisition of New Zealand land, forested and other. The aforementioned William Yate who worked for the Church Missionary Society, wrote:



Charles HEAPHY, **Kauri Forest, Wairoa River, Kaipara**, 1939, The Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

The forest-land is peculiarly rich . . . the rays of the sun cannot penetrate so far as to shine upon the mould and absorb moisture. This may in some measure, account for the exceeding thickness and surpassing beauty of the foliage: . . . the forests are so extensive and so dense, that no sound from without disturbs the traveller in his journey.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>Yate, William. *An Account of New Zealand and of the Church Missionary Society's mission in the Northern Island*. London: Seeley & Burnside, 1835. Wellington: Reed, 1971.

In this passage Yate goes on to discard the romantic vision and extol the practical advantages of there not being any wild beasts to strike terror into the traveller's heart and declared: "The forests and the plains of New Zealand seem to be reserved by Providence for the use of man." If we compare the previous passage about the Waihou riverbanks with this commentary, it is evident that in Yate there are many different cultural influences at work. While Rousseau's vision is acknowledged, there are also conflicting views; both missionaries are examples of churchmen who had absorbed the ideas of Francis Bacon and John Locke, that man is set aside from the rest of nature and that the natural world exists for mankind to use. Their attitudes illustrate that the established church was comfortable with exploiting the land for wealth while they carried out God's work saving Maori souls. The first settlers however, including missionaries, whalers and sealers, made only a small impact on the New Zealand forests.

On the basis of the glowing reports sent to England, the first New Zealand Company was set up in the early 1800's by a group of influential Englishmen. in order to facilitate colonisation. Two ships arrived here under its auspices, the *Rosanna* and the *Lambton*. The expedition which arrived in New Zealand in March 1826 was headed by Captain James Heard and he was accompanied by Thomas Shepherd, surveyor for the company. Shepherd, a landscape gardener with an eye for beauty and trained by a pupil of Capability Brown, was "struck with astonishment at the beautiful appearance" of the New Zealand he saw in 1826 and describes the rich loamy soil which was "thickly covered with beautiful trees and shrubs but no large timber." However, he goes on to say that they were told that further in the interior they would find very large towtarra [sic] trees.<sup>97</sup> Shepherd's is the first real written commentary that describes the beauty of the New Zealand forests.

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<sup>97</sup>Park, Geoff. *Nga Uruora*, 88.

Geoff Park ponders what New Zealand would have looked like today if, instead of Edward Gibbon Wakefield's utilitarian dream, the colony had been led by Thomas Shepherd with his feel for the spirit in nature and his abhorrence for wholesale clearing and tilling of the land.<sup>98</sup> But the *Rosanna* and her companion ship sailed for Australia, and The New Zealand Company in England was dissolved.

Thirty years later representatives of the newly formed New Zealand Colonisation Company arrived in New Zealand to purchase land on its behalf. The company was the brainchild of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, whose dreams had been fed by the descriptions and paintings supplied by earlier expeditions. In 1858, as a result of financial difficulties, this company too, was dissolved, but within twenty years had established New Plymouth, Wellington and Nelson and supported the establishments of the church settlements of Christchurch and Otago. Within those years of planned settlement, the face of the landscape as Joseph Banks had written about it was changed forever.

### **Pre-European Distribution of Native Forests**

1840 was a pivotal moment in New Zealand history. The previous decade had been marked by increasing lawlessness and Britain finally reluctantly succumbed to the pressure for formally annexing the colony in order to protect the Maoris from the greed and licentiousness of the motley assortment of Europeans living in New Zealand. From 1840, planned settlement began in earnest and a fledgling system of law and order was established along with rudimentary attempts to curb the dishonest land grabbing. From the moment the first of Wakefield's settlers arrived there began a rapid and fundamental change to the profile of the New Zealand landscape.

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<sup>98</sup>Park, Geoff. *Nga Uruora*, 88.



Prior to European settlement, the North Island was predominantly covered in forest with scrub and heath around the Bay of Plenty. Distribution of main species consisted of kauri in the north, tawa, totara, kahikatea and rimu across the central North Island and beech and black beech from the south as far north as the Hauraki Plains. In the South Island large tracts of bush on the West Coast were mainly kahikatea and rimu, rata and tawa in the north and large beech forests in the Southern areas and Stewart Island.<sup>99</sup>

### Principal Indicators For Forest Destruction

The principle indicator which would affect the native forests was population growth, both New Zealand born and from successive waves of settlers. Initially the population did not grow rapidly. Marsden's mission station in 1814 numbered about 20 souls and by 1832 still only had around 100 people, with other small settlements elsewhere. However, by 1838 there were about 1,000 Europeans in the Bay of Islands. New Zealand became a British colony in 1840 and between 1842 and 1852 the population doubled, 9,859 people of which were settled through the New Zealand Company.<sup>100</sup> By 1861 the total population of New Zealand had reached 99,021 and continued to grow until in 1911 the North Island boasted 563,991 and the South Island 444,477 (exclusive of Maori). 2,624 of these settlers were assisted immigrants.<sup>101</sup>

The results were far reaching. People need land in order to survive, and most of the land, in the North Island at least, was covered in forest. They also needed housing and buildings for a commercial infrastructure, the shops, offices, banks, hotels, warehouses, factories and mills,

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<sup>99</sup>McLauchlan, Gordon. *The Farming of New Zealand*. Auckland: Australia and New Zealand Book Company, 1981. 171.

<sup>100</sup>Prichard, M. F.Lloyd. *An Economic History of New Zealand to 1939*. Collins, 1970. 39.

<sup>101</sup>All statistics in this paragraph are quoted from Pritchard's tables.



required by the growing colony. Timber exports continued to be a source of income for the settlers and between 1889 and 1910, 42,568 super feet of timber at 176 pounds per thousand feet was exported from New Zealand. By 1912 exports peaked at 94,454 super feet at 490 pounds per thousand feet.<sup>102</sup>

People also need to feel at home; further threats to the forest via the settlers came from the introduction of plants and animals, in part through the acclimatisation societies, many of which soon became rampant pests in a temperate climate where there were no natural predators. This was in part a result of the settlers' need to create a sense of identity, and partly as a result of the intense interest in natural science at the time, which saw the transfer of flora and fauna all over the world from colony to colony and back to Europe. Lady Barker describes the formal garden at Heathstock, Canterbury in 1865: "Here and there clumps of tall trees rise above the shrubs, and as a background there is a thick plantation of red and blue gums, to shelter the garden from the strong N.W. winds."<sup>103</sup> Likewise Samuel Butler notes the fondness for cats: "I do not know how it is, but men here are much fonder of cats than they are at home."<sup>104</sup> Men travelled with them in bags over the pommel of their saddles taking them to their new stations or bush camps. In a later book of memoirs of breaking in the bush in the Caitlin district near Balclutha in the 1880s, Robert McLatchie keeps two cats, Billy and Smut, with him in the bush, as a foil to the solitariness of the bushman's existence and to keep rats at bay.<sup>105</sup> Imported cats, stoats, weasels,

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<sup>102</sup>Pritchard, Lloyd. *An Economic History*. Table 29. 427.

<sup>103</sup>Barker, Lady Mary Ann. *Station Life in New Zealand*. 1883. Viking Edition, Viking O'Neil Victoria Australia, 1987

<sup>104</sup>Butler, Samuel. *A First Year in Canterbury Settlement*, with Other Early Essays. R. A. Streatfield, (Ed). London: A. C. Fifield, 1914. 77.

<sup>105</sup>Keene, Kathleen. *Tang of the Bush*. The Story of Robert McLatchie 1875-1963 As told to his daughter Kathleen Keene. Copy Services Ltd. Invercargille, New Zealand, 1967. 41.

opossums, birds and deer were to cause havoc in the long term, for the native trees and bird population.

Ernest Dieffenbach, who was unusually perceptive in foreseeing the results of bringing alien plants and animals into the colony remarked in his *Travells in New Zealand* (1839-1841) “What a chain of alterations . . . takes place from the introduction of a single animal into a country where it was before unknown!” He remarked in a somewhat generalised statement that colonists who devote themselves “solely to the acquisition of money” are, from necessity and ignorance as much as from greed, “careless of nature’s interests and remote posterities.”<sup>106</sup> As historian Eric McCormick says, it was a misfortune for New Zealand that Dieffenbach did not remain in New Zealand and that were his warnings were not heeded.

### You Couldn’t Move for the Forest: Settler Disillusionment

In Charles Heaphy’s 1878 description of the Hutt Valley estuary, he wrote: “A lofty pine wood appeared to occupy the whole breadth and length of the Hutt Valley,” and goes on:

The various bends [of the river] are very beautiful and secluded. . . . The Kaikaterre . . . growing to an immense height. . . . The great trees come right to the waters edge of the river, beside which native huts are dwarfed. Nothing, apart from this clearing, exists, except the forest.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>McCormick, E.H. *New Zealand Literature: A Survey*. Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1959. 26.

<sup>107</sup>Park, Geoff. *Nga Uruora: The Groves of Life*. 82. Park illustrates this quote with a painting by Richard Cruise executed in 1820 which shows the trees extending to the waterline.

This is what the land hungry settlers faced.

The first of Wakefield's immigrants must have felt disconcerted as they stared from the decks of the *Aurora* towards the Hutt Valley in Port Nicholson in 1839 because as Park writes "Petone did not look like the new pastures they had been promised." Instead, the first settlers saw before them flat plains indeed, but not ready for farming. These plains were covered to within a mile of the shore with a thick forest stretching back to the mountains. Geoff Park posits that these men and women had only one aim, "to own a piece of earth, enough to feel free."<sup>108</sup> In his letter to the *Glasgow Chronicle*, May 1840, J. Campbell wrote "You couldn't move for the forest."<sup>109</sup> Implicit in his comment is despair. The romantic dream dissolved before their eyes as the reality of the hard work in front of them became clear and their subsequent ambivalent attitudes to the bush began to form. It was beautiful, noble and grand but it was also survival of the bush or the settler. The process of clearing began immediately and the following statistics give an idea of the rapidity with which this occurred.

In 1840 the total acreage under sown grass in the three main settlements of Auckland, New Plymouth and Wellington totalled 155.5 acres.<sup>110</sup> Twelve years later in 1852, land under cultivation in the main centres of Auckland, New Plymouth, Wellington, Nelson and Otago covered 22,082 acres and by 1858, 125, 696 acres<sup>111</sup> By 1892 a total area of 67 million acres was held divided up as follows: freehold, 13.6 million acres, lease with right to purchase, 1.7 million acres, lease from the crown, 12.5 million acres, reserved for public purposes, 6.6 million acres

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<sup>108</sup> Park quotes from Wood, Lieutenant John. *Twelve Months in Wellington, Port Nicholson*. Pelham Richardson, 1843.

<sup>109</sup> Wood, Lieutenant John. *Twelve Months in Wellington, Port Nicholson*. 82.

<sup>110</sup> Prichard, M. F. Lloyd. *An Economic History*, Table 11, 46.

<sup>111</sup> Prichard, M. F. Lloyd. *An Economic History*, Table 31, 77.



and Crown Lands 8.4 million acres. The Midland Railway Company owned 4 million acres and Native lands totalled 10.9 million. Barren land and lakes accounted for a further 9 million acres. Of the 12.5 million on lease from the crown, 11.8 were pastoral lease, 3 million of which were in the North Island in 66 runs and 11.8 million acres in the South Island held in 1,204 runs. Not all of this farmland was wrested from native forests, notably in Hawkes Bay and the South Island, where English pasture replaced native tussock and grasses, as described by Lady Barker in *Station Life in New Zealand* in Samuel Butler's *A First Year in Canterbury Settlement* and later in Guthrie-Smith's *Tutira: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station*, set in the Hawkes Bay area. For the main part in the North Island, however, most of the native bush was destroyed.

### Settler Attitudes: The Destruction and Reconstruction of Place

Changes are made to the landscape in a new country for a variety of reasons, the most important physical one being survival. Just as important however is the psychological need to maintain a sense of cultural identity. In order to achieve these goals, it is often necessary to first destroy what exists and then reconstruct a more familiar environment in place of the native one. In *Uncommon Ground*, Victoria Strang discusses how people make different places and that their "environmental interactions are an expression of cultural values."<sup>112</sup> She quotes: "The landscape is never inert, people engage with it, rework it, appropriate it and contest it. It is part of the way in which identities are created and disputed. . . . Strang examines the economic motives, land use, resource management and aspirations of two groups in the Mitchell River watershed Cape York Peninsula, Australia. Some of these indicators can be applied to the New Zealand settlers. E. H. McCormick wrote:

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<sup>112</sup>Strang, Veronica. *Uncommon Ground: Cultural Landscapes and Environmental Values*. (Bender 1993:1).



In six small settlements were gathered a few thousand people drawn from every quarter of the British Isles and set down, often with scant preparation, in surroundings whose very grandeur held the promise of isolation, physical danger and hard toil.<sup>113</sup>

The physical and intellectual isolation, in part, could be combated by the recreation of home. In Chapter One I looked at cultural mediation and how it affected written responses to the environment for explorers and travellers to Aotearoa New Zealand. For the settlers, the key to survival and one of the responses to their new environment was to make it as much like England as they could in order to feel a sense of identity and belonging. Dunlap observes: “The settlers destroyed and re-created, appreciated the beauties of the land, and sought to bring it closer to their own ideal, and they did it on a grand scale.”<sup>114</sup> A second response was the aspiration to make money, of owning their own land and improving their material standing. The early settlers land use and resource management practices were guided in part by these.

### The Settler Experience: Letters Home

In her account of her stay in New Zealand, Lady Barker, whose account of everyday rural life bears a strong similarity in content and style to Anne Hughes eighteenth century *Diary*,<sup>115</sup> makes a number of references to the native bush and also lends insight into recurring settler attitudes in

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<sup>113</sup>McCormick, E.H.. *New Zealand Literature: A Survey*. 21.

<sup>114</sup>Dunlap, Thomas, R. *Nature and the English Diaspora: Environment and History in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand*. Cambridge University Press, 1999. 46.

<sup>115</sup>Hughes, Anne. *The Diary of a Farmer's Wife, 1796-1797*. Farmers Weekly 1937. Told by Jeanne Preston. Penguin Books Ltd. 1981.

the 1860s which illustrates one of the ways the new settlers tried to recreate “home”. Writing as a gentlewoman and therefore a privileged member of society she records her visit to a comfortable home, Ilam, outside the Canterbury settlement of Christchurch.

The house is of wood, two stories high, and came out from England! . . . Inside, it is exactly like a most charming English house, and when I stood in the drawing-room it was difficult to believe that I was at the other end of the world. All the newest books and, papers, and periodicals covered the tables, the newest music lay on the piano, whilst a profusion of English greenhouse flowers in Minton’s loveliest vases added to the illusion.<sup>116</sup>

And an illusion is just what it was, as Lady Barker herself confirms:

. . . there is a certain absence of the stiffness and trimness of English pleasure grounds, which illustrates an escape from the region of conventionalities. Ti-ti palms are dotted here and there, and give a foreign and tropical appearance to the whole. There is a large kitchen garden and orchard, with none of the restrictions of high walls and locked gates which fence your English peaches and apricots.<sup>117</sup>

She describes an English scene that has been recreated in an alien environment and at first sight this reconstruction of “home” is convincing. But there are palpable differences. Here it is more relaxed and she lets little slips drop that indicate that it is not to disadvantage that the lawns are

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<sup>116</sup>Barker, Lady Mary Ann. *Station Life in New Zealand*. 51.

<sup>117</sup>Barker, Lady Mary Ann. *Station Life in New Zealand*. 52.

less stiff and trim and writes of it as an escape from convention with less restrictions and boundaries. Certainly her own adventurous behaviour, for example burning off the tussock and determindly treking into the bush for cattle under sufferance by the bushmen, suggests a freedom from convention that she may not have achieved in England.

A contradictive passage is the reference to ti-ti palms. They strike a 'foreign note' within an English scene that is already alien to the country within which it has been transplanted. The ti-ti, which in reality is the only native and non-foreign element, serves to reinforce that this is merely the illusion of an English garden. The passage illustrates the need for at least the well to-do settlers to impose on the strange and sometimes harsh natural environment a less exacting version of the English pastoral and garden landscape, which was one contributing factor in the destruction of the native forests. For in order to construct the English pastoral scene, the forest had to go. On their own station at Broomielaw in the Malvern Hills they plant introduced trees to remind them of home: They are delighted with ". . . quantities of broom in all directions . . . which grows very quickly in spite of the wind and attains to a luxuriant beauty rarely seen in England." She also plants oaks, maples and poplars and in the spring, English grass. The quick growing broom, which was planted for shelter from the winds, was to pose a problem for future generations.

Lady Barker's observations on the bush during an excursion to round up cattle tend to illustrate her own state of comfort rather than express any observations about the state of the forests but, she gives a description of the logging that was occurring in the Malvern Hills area and the grass sowing for pasture that was to transform the look of the land.

Here we dismounted, just at the edge of the great dense forest . . . and struck into a path or bullock track made for about three miles into the bush for the convenience of dragging out the felled trees by ropes or chains attached to bullocks . . . the huge logs of timber [are] dragged on the ground. . . . [the track] was a mere slough with deep holes of mud in it, and we scrambled along its extreme edge, chiefly trusting to the trees on each side, which still lay as they had been felled, the men not considering them good enough to remove. At last we came to a clearing, and I quite despair of making you understand how romantic and lovely this open space in the midst of the tall trees looked. For about two acres the trees had been nearly all felled, only one or two giants remaining; their stumps were already hidden by clematis. . . . The bushmen had scattered English grass seed all over the rich leafy mould and the ground was covered with bright green grass.<sup>118</sup>

And during a visit to Rockwood, Mary-Ann Barker describes the fruit of hard settler labour:

Just at our feet the Rockwood paddocks looked like carpets of emerald velvet, spread out among the yellowish tussocks; the fences which enclose them were either golden with broom and gorse, or gay with wild roses and honeysuckle.

In Letter XIV She mentions the remains of the ancient forests:

. . . a yard off track it is impossible to stir for the dense undergrowth. I notice the slender hold the large trees have of the ground, and it is not at all surprising, after such a gale as we had three weeks ago, to see many of the finest blown down in the

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<sup>118</sup>Barker, Lady Mary Ann. *Station Life in New Zealand*. 179.



clearing where the wind could reach them. They do not seem to have any tap-root at all, merely a very insufficient network of fibres, seldom of any size, which spreads a short way along the surface of the ground. As long as a Bush is undisturbed by civilisation, it appears to be impervious to wind or weather; but as soon as it is opened and cleared a little, it begins to diminish rapidly.<sup>119</sup>

Her observations of the forest, unlike Alice Roland and Mrs Brayton in Jane Mander's novel *The Story of a New Zealand River*, do not extend to an evaluation of the destructive process of civilisation except for her observation that clearing the forest, even in small portions, affects the survival of the remaining trees in the area. Nor does she attempt to look forward, as Dieffenbach did, into the future to a landscape devoid of forests and the possible consequences. Lady Barker's attitude to the environment may be summed up by her famous passage about the burn-off. Quite apart from the fact that she and her friend Alice seem to have been pyromaniacs in the making, the entire episode is full of fun and adventure as well as the necessity of producing fresh new grass for the stock. She also draws attention to forest destruction by fire, either accidental or deliberate:

There are traces all over the hills of vast forests having once existed; chiefly of totara, a sort of red pine, and those about us are scattered with huge logs of this valuable wood, all bearing traces of the action of fire; but shepherds and explorers on expeditions, looking for country, have gradually consumed them for fuel till not many pieces remain, except on the highest and most inaccessible ranges.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup>Barker, Lady Mary Ann. *Station Life in New Zealand*. 95.

<sup>120</sup>Barker, Mary Ann, 95.

Lady Barker's stay in New Zealand was of only four years duration and in that sense she is not a true settler. Knowing her time here was temporary contributes to her sense of adventure, and freedom. For while her sojourn here had its tragedies and hardships, ultimately it would end in an inevitable return to England and therefore was to be enjoyed. In that light, her appreciation of the beauty of the country and the forests, tempered as it was with the necessity of making a living, would not necessarily have elicited any analysis of or sense of responsibility for the European destruction of the forested areas she was familiar with.

### Transforming Space into Place: Naming and Surveying

Any study in this area must make mention of the surveyors' contribution to creating place, the role they played in the process of colonisation and the subsequent depletion of the native forests. Giselle Byrnes writes: "Typically, surveyors' diaries and field-books are geographical narratives based on the rhetoric of empirical observation."<sup>121</sup> Surveyors' texts, letters, diaries, sketches and maps are effective colonising tools as well as a distinctive way of acknowledging and recording the natural environment. She comments that the landscape itself is part of the evidence from the survey archive and makes the point that cultural landscapes, that is, those that are culturally mediated, prioritise the human presence and its effects. To illustrate her point she uses the surveyor Charles Heaphy's painting, 'A sawyer's clearing in a forest of Kauri' on the banks of the Kaipara river.<sup>122</sup> She notes that the image expresses the efforts of the New Zealand Company and the settler society to impose their own designs on the land.<sup>123</sup> The surveyor Felton Matthews wrote: "The country is so very much broken and rugged as to be really almost impracticable, and

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<sup>121</sup>Byrnes, Giselle. *Boundary Markers: Land Surveying and the Colonisation of New Zealand*. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2001.10.

<sup>122</sup>Byrnes, Giselle. *Boundary Markers*: 11.

<sup>123</sup>Byrnes, Giselle. *Boundary Markers*: 3.

the bush and fern are so dense that it is scarcely possible to force one's way through it.”<sup>124</sup> Not only did the surveyors explore and map the interior, preparing the land for division and sale by drawing up survey maps, but most influential of all they named the interior. Byrnes refers to the process as “The calligraphy of colonisation or writing the country.”<sup>125</sup> In naming and mapping a place you make it your own and while at first, as illustrated in Edward Gibbon Wakefield's account, many of the original Maori place names are used, as time went by English, Scottish, Scandinavian and French names were used to name and create a second identity for Aotearoa, New Zealand; An identity that co-exists, not always comfortably, with the indigenous one. Even now, in the early twenty-first century, we still pander to the lingering desire to retain metropolitan ties in naming places, despite the fact that the number of those that can trace their heritage back to Britain is shrinking weekly. An example is Mayfair, a North Shore retirement village, with its toy streets, closes and lanes all named from the up market end of London, straight from the Monopoly board.

## The Getting of Wealth

“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.”<sup>126</sup> So wrote Samuel Butler about attitudes in the mid nineteenth century. The process of colonisation was of necessity not only about a struggle to change the place to make it familiar but to make money, a necessity not only for survival but to fulfil the main purpose for emigration from Britain - to improve on the conditions they came from. Eric McCormick notes that Arthur S.

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<sup>124</sup>Byrnes, Giselle. *Boundary Markers*: 27.

<sup>125</sup>Butler, Samuel. *A First Year in Canterbury Settlement*. 77.

<sup>126</sup>Butler, Samuel. *A First Year in Canterbury Settlement*. 50.



Thompson, a military surgeon, wrote in his *The Story of New Zealand: Past and Present - Savage and Civilised* (1859), that children grew up "smart in the way of making money, but in a wild state of intellectual degradation." And Dieffenbach, writing as early as 1839 noted "the mania for becoming suddenly rich by speculations in town allotments spread like an epidemic through all classes."<sup>127</sup> For the South Islanders, wealth translated into pasture and sheep as seen in Lady Barker's letters. and by Butler's description of Mt. Cook in the 1860s: "I was struck almost breathless by the wonderful mountain that burst on my sight."<sup>128</sup> He continues with a cynical passage on the mountain's great height and then in the same tone continues: "I am forgetting myself into admiring a mountain which is of no use for sheep. This is wrong. A mountain here is only beautiful if it has good grass on it. Scenery is not scenery - it is "country," *subaudita voce* "sheep." If it is good for sheep, it is beautiful, magnificent, and all the rest of it; if not, it is not worth looking at." While Butler is writing decidedly tongue in cheek, there was truth in the implication that scenery was often considered worthless in itself. If it couldn't make money it was useless.<sup>129</sup> In the North Island wealth translated into first flax, then kauri gum and timber of which all played a vital role in furthering the development of the fledgeling colony. Trees were worthless standing. As Gordon McLauchlin states :

The problems were practical, work could overcome them and the measure of success was money. In many cases, money was a release from the colony, bought a return to Britain, this time to comfort. Almost every cultivated visitor to New Zealand in its

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<sup>127</sup>Dieffenbach, Ernest. *Travels in New Zealand* (1842) Vol. I.London: Printed by William Clowes and Sons.11.

<sup>128</sup>Butler, Samuel. *A First Year in Canterbury Settlement*. 66.

<sup>129</sup> F. E. Maning remarks on how the settlers have become obsessed with not only making money but with gold.: "The world is mad now a days about gold . . .nuggets and dust have the preference." *Old New Zealand*. 1863. Facsimile Edition, Auckland: Wilson and Horton Ltd., 24.



pioneering days noted the local preoccupation with making money. It became even more the hallmark of the second generation.<sup>130</sup>

The timber was therefore not only stripped in order to create pasture and space for agriculture to feed the new colony, but also used to build the infrastructure of urbanisation and commerce so important to the getting of wealth. William Satchell recreates a picture of the youthful Auckland during the Land Wars in the 1850s that illustrates the growth of the prosperous town:

Neatly painted cottages gleamed from their orchards and gardens round the shore . . . From the high land over our heads, an unbroken series of buildings, beginning with the little church of St Pauls. . . . Over the point rose the masts of the trading vessels. . . . I could hear the shanties of the sailors as they loaded the timber for the Port of Sydney. Auckland was not yet in her teens, yet already so much was accomplished. Truly the men of my race loitered not on the way. Ever present in their minds were the mighty cities they had left. No time to be lost. No time for dalliance. As they were, so must this be. Swiftly they built: would the things that they built endure?<sup>131</sup>

Between 1842 and 1852 the numbers of wooden buildings in Auckland increased from 331 to 1,937 excluding those of the Maori population.<sup>132</sup> As a result of this growth, the timber industry flourished and the number of mills established to dress the timber numbered 178 in 1841 while

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<sup>130</sup>McLauchlin, Gordon. *The Farming of New Zealand*. Ed. Ray Richards and Don Sinclair. Auckland: Australia & New Zealand Book Company, 1981.27.

<sup>131</sup>Satchell, William. *The Greenstone Door*. 1914. The Golden Press, 1973.157.

<sup>132</sup>Prichard, M. F.Lloyd. *An Economic History of New Zealand to 1939*. Table 21.p.62. This figure also excludes commercial buildings but includes shop premises attached to houses. By comparison in 1852 there were only 103 built in stone or brick and 157 of Raupo.

by 1846 there were 317 sash and door companies; this figure grew to 402 by 1852. In addition to building depleting the forests, the growth of railways and roads also cut huge swathes through the forests.

The Northland Peninsula was the most profitable source of timber for many years. Kauri was eagerly sought after both locally and for export, easy to work by hand and machine, and yielding straight grained timber free of knots it was in demand for framing, cladding, shingles, joinery and furniture. The Northland forests supplied the growing city of Auckland and by 1881 there were forty sawmills operating there and in Coromandel. The Kauri Timber Company was established in Melbourne in 1886 to buy out twenty-four mills in the Auckland province. At its peak it owned over thirty sawmills as well as millions of feet of standing kauri and the land. Much of the timber was exported to Australia.”<sup>133</sup> By 1912 the value of timber increased steadily, reaching 490,000 pounds in export earnings. The hey day of the sawmill was from 1875 on, and by 1905 there were 414 mills in New Zealand, employing 6,912 people. After this period the timber industry declined.

### **Both Lover and Butcher of Trees<sup>134</sup>**

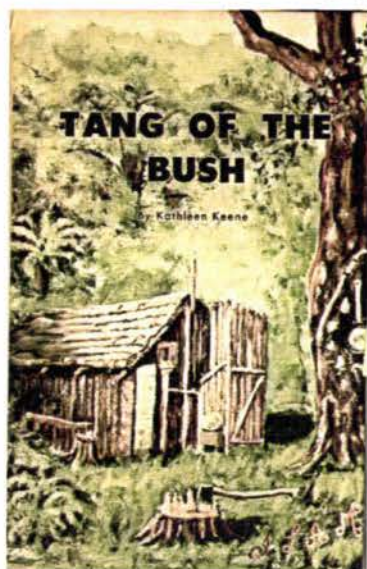
For many of the colonial settlers and their families, there was a dichotomy between their love for and appreciation of the bush and the necessity to make a life for themselves.

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<sup>133</sup>Thornton, Geoffrey. *New Zealand's Industrial Heritage*. A.H. & A.W Reed, 1982. 2.

<sup>134</sup>Ruzich, Joan. *Towards Diversity. Tracing Changing Constructions of Masculinities in Some Twentieth Century film and Fiction*. Massey University Thesis, 2001.27.

Two texts that invite discussion on attitudes to timber milling and breaking in the land are Robert McLatchie's memoirs, *Tang of the Bush*, and *The Story of a New Zealand River* by Jane Mander.



J L A M, *Tang of the Bush*,  
c. 1967, Copy Services Limited  
Invercargill

The mixed attitudes of settlers to the bush are well illustrated in Robert McLatchie's memoirs written down by his daughter, Kathleen Keene, which was published in time for the Catlin district centenary in 1966. In the forward to the book, John Chisholm, a long time friend, who was at school with McLatchie, writes: "All praise to those who give the young men and women of today who enjoy life in our wonderful world, a real glimpse of the struggle it was to live in the early days of Otago and what hardships had to be bravely faced in opening up the wilderness in order to make for us this "green and pleasant land." McLatchie was the son of pioneers. His

mother, Mary Shand, arrived in New Zealand on the *Maori* in 1852. Her father George was the first to own a vertical saw mill on the Taieri Plain. McLatchie's father Thomas, a carpenter from Dumfriesshire, arrived on the *Electric* in 1863, and headed straight for the goldfields, but when the gold fever waned,

. . . men turned their thoughts to farming and there was a feverish buying of land. My father knew nothing whatsoever about farming; but at a Government auction in Dunedin he bought 175 acres of bush land at Owaka Valley, cut off from the road by the Owaka river. The front section of sixty acres was run up to the very high price of four pounds an acre by James Roger on the opposite bank of the river.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>135</sup>Keene, Kathleen. *Tang of the Bush*. 14.



Robert, at nine, was introduced to the rigours of their future life breaking in the bush on the trip to Owaka. He remembered that: "When we entered the bush, the road became a sea of mud reaching to the horses' belly bands." This was a foretaste of the fight against the mud and rain that would be with him when he began to break in his own piece of bush as a young man. He also remembers the lighter moments when as boys they ran wild and free in the bush and writes:

Mr Tuck who drove a bullock wagon sometimes took his tame bullocks into the bush and brought out wild ones tied to them. We watched him try to cross the ford with a wild bullock. It lay in the water and would not get up in spite of everything he tried, so he cut its throat and quartered the carcase. . . . We enjoyed the whole gory business.<sup>136</sup>

As young boys they became, of necessity, hardened to the sights and sometimes brutality of the bush life in order to survive. Later, Robert himself would train bullocks to help drag out the timber on his allotment. McLatchie described the Owaka valley as being open country for sixteen miles, clothed with heavy tussock and flax, and flanked by bush covered hills. In 1841, fifty farms were already in the area, partly bush and partly open country. He mentions the way the soil was sapped by over cropping: ". . . the land became crop sick and almost useless until lime and manure were put back into the soil."<sup>137</sup> This was a feature of much of the New Zealand soil, that while it sustained the shallow-rooted native trees, it did not withstand heavy cropping, once cleared, for many seasons. Thomas McLatchie's farm was the first completely bush clad farm in the Owaka valley, being densely timbered with black pine and kowhai and impenetrable with bush lawyer and scrub. "By the second season some land had been cleared, and eight cows were

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<sup>136</sup>Keene, Kathleen. *Tang of the Bush*. 15.

<sup>137</sup>Keene, Kathleen. *Tang of the Bush*. 17.



being milked.” In itself this may not seem a great achievement, but to have cleared enough land on which to run eight cows was a major accomplishment, and the milk and cream was of importance not only for food for those on the farm, but to sell in order to make enough to continue with the process of breaking in the farm. New Zealand butter was a major export early in the history of the colony. Robert’s education in bush felling began early, indicating that the urgent necessity of sustaining a living from the land was of paramount importance and is well illustrated by the early present of an axe each. The axe became an icon of civilisation for the Maori but just as much for the settlers bringing the bush under control. Robert says “George and I were given small axes when we were quite young. We tried them out, both together, on the largest tree we could find, and I sliced his arm.” He goes on, “When bush felling was in progress it took but a few raindrops to turn me home from school. I would sneak back into the bush, well away from my father, and the first ring of my axe would bring the call “Who is there?” At nineteen, Robert McLatchie began to think of getting his own land. Successive governments had put in place several schemes to make it easier for young men to own their own land, as he explains:

The liberal Government was in power with Mr. (later Sir) John McKenzie as minister of lands (sic) . He was responsible for bringing in two excellent measures: “Lease in Perpetuity,” the occupier paying four per cent interest for all time; and “Occupation with right of Purchase,” five per cent being paid with the right of purchase in two years. Under the latter scheme I bought a section of 96 acres, valued at twenty five shillings an acre. Thus came the opportunity for young men with no capital to make a start in life. Such demand was there for land, that in one ballot there were eighty applications for one section.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup>Keene, Kathleen. *Tang of the Bush*. 30.

Robert won his land ballot and took possession of his block of bush which he began clearing, on his own, at the age of nineteen. *Brett's Colonists' Guide* was a useful addition to the early settler bookshelf and devotes a section to bush farming, making a home, clearing, underscrubbing, burning off and stumping.<sup>139</sup> Although McLatchie built his whare prior to the publication of the *Guide*, the procedure he follows is exactly that described in the *Colonists' Guide* which is, as the title suggests, a collection of information compiled of knowledge gained from the settlers over time.

The conflicting attitude to the bush which was part of the settlers' struggle is clearly expressed by Robert McLatchie. Prior to beginning to clear his bush he devoted a chapter to recording what it looked like and from this it is evident that many of the bushmen were not insensible to its beauty and were aware of what they were destroying. It is also evident that it was a sensibility not only restricted to women. McLatchie's passage is carefully constructed, almost as if the speaker feels obliged to make an apology on behalf to the bush, and instead of the relaxed, semi-colloquial tone of most of the text, in this passage there is a sudden change to something more formal:

Before the axe is laid to the foot of the tree, it would be fitting to pause awhile and absorb the beauty on every hand." . . . "The eyes follow the symmetrical tree trunks up to the lofty spreading branches overhead; while from the ground there rises a

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<sup>139</sup>*Brett's Colonists' Guide and Cyclopaedia of Useful Knowledge: Being a Compendium of Information by Practical Colonists.* Ed. Thomson W. Leys. Auckland: The Brett Printing and Publishing Company Ltd, Shortland St., 1902.17-23.

haunting aroma compounded of damp fern and moss, leaf mould and decaying logs. There is majesty in this superb work of nature.<sup>140</sup>

He continues on to describe the various species of trees which, they believed, gave an indication of the richness of the soil:

. . . the broadleaf and matai, totara and rimu, hinahina, turpentine with its light foliage and sweetly scented flowers of palest green . . . the maples, lacebark and ironwood or rata which made a splash of red in summertime . . . Spring was marked by the gold of kowhai blossoms, while the Autumn brought the kakas and pigeons to feast off the large red miro berries." . . . "Twisting and tangling round the trees were supplejacks and vines; and carpeting the bush floor were ferns and moss which hastened to hide the rotting logs, and even hung in festoons from the trees; while the beautiful tree ferns fanned out overhead.<sup>141</sup>

In the Tangitu seventy-fifth jubilee book, Jack O'Regan remembers, "We boys had hundreds of acres of native bush at our back doors. What tremendous bush it was - giant rimu, totara, matai, tawa, kaihikatea . . . each growing in its own environment, with the tremendous rata trees in full bloom in December, along the tops of the high ridges."<sup>142</sup> Jack, like the young McLatchie, remembers the freedom and adventure in his forest playground while his contemporary and neighbour Thora Brake wrote of her childhood: "Surrounding the fifty acres of bush-burn on our section was dense bush. The beautiful ferns, pongas, nikaus, supplejacks, konini and hundreds

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<sup>140</sup>Keene, Kathleen. *Tang of the Bush*. 33.

<sup>141</sup>Keene, Kathleen. *Tang of the Bush*. 34.

<sup>142</sup>Brake, Tui. *Bush Track to Highway: 75 Years of Settlement in the Districts of Tangitu, Mapiu, Kaitangiweka and Aratoro*. Compiled by Tui Brake. Taumaranui: C&S Publications, 1975, 84.



more, too numerous to mention, were always a great attraction to me. The way nature had put everything in place so perfectly, enthralled me, and it was most distressing to find that all was to be destroyed by axe and fire.”<sup>143</sup> Thora writes that: “The settlers, especially the children, genuinely appreciated the beauty of the bush and it was with some degree of regret that they were faced with the necessity of destroying the magnificent trees and the delicate growth of ferns and shrubs.” Families often recorded their appreciation by having family portraits taken in bush surroundings prior to it being felled.<sup>144</sup> As a comparison, in Jane Mander’s novel, when Alice Roland makes her first trip into the bush both her reaction to the bush is described, as well as the contrast of her husband’s response:

They now stood at the place where the real forest began, with an open avenue . . . cut . . . through a glorious tangle of undergrowth. The sunlight, sneaking through the tree tops, picked out spots upon the mauled and trampled ground, and on the trunks of trees, and in the vivid heads of giant ferns. With a catch in her breath, Alice saw, towering up out of the green depths on either side of that open way, row upon row of colossal grey pillars, seemingly as eternal as the hills, losing themselves above in a roof of impenetrable green.”<sup>145</sup>

As Alice walks through the bush she “felt around her the stirring beginnings of things. No-one could have realised that invaded silence of ages, have seen those violent assaults upon eternal peace, without feeling that it was a big thing to break in.”<sup>146</sup> As she listens to Tom talking about

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<sup>143</sup> Brake, Tui. *Bush Track to Highway*: 84.

<sup>144</sup> Brake, Tui. *Bush Track to Highway*: 19.

<sup>145</sup> Mander, Jane. *The Story of a New Zealand River*. 1938. Whitcomb & Tombs Ltd, 1960. 39.

<sup>146</sup> Mander, Jane. *The Story of a New Zealand River*. 40.

progress, of tramways, engines and trucks, of dams and waterways, of mills and ships as he outlines his plans for future greatness, she finds something powerfully arousing about it all. Alice herself is not immune to the promise and excitement of being part of a new growing nation, part of which involves this reshaping of the environment.

Her husband describes the bush thus: “Nothing to beat it outside of California. Those trees have stood there thousands of years. Might have stood there thousands more.” . . .”And you are going to cut them down!” exclaimed Alice, as if it were sacrilege. Later, with Asia and Mrs Brayton, she watches her first kauri felled:

The little party stood tense, their faces turned upward to the magnificent head of spreading branches stretched into the deep morning blue. There was not yet a quiver in all the dark mass of foliage, no sign of capitulation to the wanton needs of man . . . suddenly there was a suggestion of a quiver . . . The whole tree gave one gigantic shiver, poised for an instant, suspended, hesitating and then, realising the remorselessness of fate it plunged forward . . . “There, that’s over,” said the boss cheerfully. “I guess we can have lunch now . . . He could not understand why Alice had tears in her eyes, or why she looked at him as if he had committed a crime . . . He set off with the luncheon baskets . . . whistling gaily.<sup>147</sup>

It is tempting here to suggest that the difference in attitude lies in gender but contradictions to this lie in both Robert McLatchie’s bush eulogy as well as in Mrs Gird’s actions, when as a woman surviving without the assistance of her husband, she too has to be practical and cut down

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<sup>147</sup>Mander, Jane. *The Story of a New Zealand River*. 44.

the trees in order to survive. Tom is a businessman and mill owner. He represents the brash, energetic colonial, seeking power, recognition and wealth. He, like McLatchie in Otago is building a nation and a place for himself in it, in the Kaipara. His attitudes to survival are little different from those of his city counterpart, Mr Brompart, in William Satchell's *The Greenstone Door* except that Tom is honest while Brompart is portrayed as being involved in some shifty land deals. When Alice interrogates Tom over whether or not he is going to cut down the kauri his robust response is:

You bet I am. Great job too. Takes some tackling. He was proud that he had dared to stake everything he possessed on this great adventure. He knew that he was being discussed in Auckland business circles as a bold spirit and as a coming man.<sup>148</sup>

How did the early settlers reconcile the dichotomy between this sensitivity to the beauty of the forest around them and cutting it down? For McLatchie, as for most of the settlers, the answer lay in survival. And the way to block out the need for the destruction and any associated lingering guilt lay in sheer hard work. McLatchie's memoirs give no indication of frustration, hatred for the bush or regarding it as an enemy, but they are doubly filtered by time and by his daughter who has transcribed from his notes as well as listening to his stories. In addition, McLatchie was a deeply religious Protestant and I would suggest that negative feelings would be suppressed and trials be viewed as God given to strengthen resolve. McLatchie moves rapidly on and immediately follows his chapter extolling the bush with the one on bushfelling. His excitement and anticipation is the same as Lady Barker's and her friend Alice as they set off for a

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<sup>148</sup>Mander, Jane. *The Story of a New Zealand River*. 39.



day's entertainment burning the tussock. McLatchie is eager to get on with it, as witnessed in his opening sentence:

Preparations for bushfelling were made with some degree of excitement and anticipation of the day when I could say "My farm! My home!" I took a pride in my tools as every bushman does. Two axes, one with a sharp, thin blade for soft wood, the other somewhat thicker for hard wood; a crosscut saw, and a Gilpin slasher.<sup>149</sup>

The list reflects the advice in *Brett's Colonists' Guide* ". . . the best tools for bush felling are an American axe, about five pounds weight, and a light slash hook with a thin edge."<sup>150</sup> After listing his tools of trade [instruments of destruction], McLatchie describes the process of felling the timber. It is a pragmatic description devoid of sentimentality and follows the *Colonists' Guide* advice. He writes:

In the first week I felled a strip ten chains long and a chain wide, and kept at that rate every week. One had to be most careful to cut every lawyer and supplejack at ground level, and lop every branch from the fallen tree. In the hotter climate of the North Island, I understand lopping was unnecessary, as it was easier to get a good burn.<sup>151</sup> "Large trees which would be used later for posts or railway sleepers were scarfed in readiness for the crosscut saw. Then

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<sup>149</sup>Keene, Kathleen. *Tang of the Bush*. 37.

<sup>150</sup>*Brett's Colonists' Guide and Cyclopaedia of Useful Knowledge*. 19.

<sup>151</sup>Keene, Kathleen. *Tang of the Bush*. 38.

my neighbour, Bill Wilson, would come over and together we would cut twenty in an afternoon. I did the same for him.”

As can be seen, not only did these bush farmers work as a team, watching out for and assisting each other with felling and fencing, but in the wet season their trees supplied the sleepers for timber and all of them either assisted with building the railways or roads which also ate into the surrounding forests but provided the much needed access for carrying in supplies and sending the cream and wool out. I mentioned earlier the Protestant work ethic and in this passage McLatchie describes his feelings for the hard, honest work, work that keeps idle hands from mischief and the success that Dieffenbach foresaw as a result:<sup>152</sup>

Although the bush felling was hard work I liked it very much. It was a fine clean job, and there was satisfaction in seeing the clearing growing.<sup>153</sup>

It is important to remember that McLatchie’s land was not flat but on steep hill country. He matter-of-factly describes the danger and the difficulties of systematically removing huge trees alone, piece by piece. It is pragmatic, with no room for the Romantic or remorse. The timber felling of the large trees was followed by the September burn when the foliage was dry. Some of the trees were used for fencing and building but many remained wastefully on the ground. A good burn was as he describes:

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<sup>152</sup>,”No one need starve in New Zealand who works; and it is such a class of small agricultural leaseholders whose toil will prepare the country that it may ultimately attract capitalists.” Dieffenbach, 16.

<sup>153</sup>Keene, Kathleen. 40.

I saw that it was a very good burn; just the tree trunks and stumps remained. I lost no time preparing the seed bag . . . [the seed] showed up very plainly on the black ash." . . . "I spent five days on the hob . . . sowing twenty six pounds to the acre, climbing logs and dodging stumps . . . I knew the ryegrass would be sprouting within a week, transforming the blackened ground (of deep, warm ashes) into a beautiful green; thus fulfilling my immediate ambition.<sup>154</sup>

The following winter the bush felling process began again. This of course was not the end of the process as the *Colonists' Guide* indicates. McLatchie notes that:

The felling and the burning of the bush does not make a farm; the land must be prepared for the plough. Disposing of large logs and lifting large stumps which are rooted to the clay like molar teeth to a jawbone entails the heaviest work a farmer can undertake. The sleepers and posts were first taken off, and a fraction of the wood carted away for house fires, but the remainder, including beautiful black pine, was deliberately burned.<sup>155</sup>

Here in his last sentence there creeps in a note of subjectivity. McLatchie acknowledges the beauty of the trees that are being removed to make way for his dream of a sheep farm but at the same time "it was considered a disgrace to leave trees standing."<sup>156</sup> On his own admission: "I knew nothing whatever about sheep, my experience being limited to Shorthorn cattle . . . With sheep on the farm I needed a dog, so bought a black and white collie pup."<sup>157</sup> It is astounding

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<sup>154</sup>Keene, Kathleen. *Tang of the Bush*. 45.

<sup>155</sup>Keene, Kathleen. *Tang of the Bush*. 71.

<sup>156</sup>Keene, Kathleen. *Tang of the Bush*. 39.

<sup>157</sup>Keene, Kathleen. *Tang of the Bush*. 74.



that these young bush farmers launched into breaking in the land and farming with such limited knowledge. And yet the dream is realised after years of hard work and he becomes a successful farmer. At the end of his life, as McLatchie returns to the area for a visit, he expresses his feelings of his contribution to the development of New Zealand:

... as I motored to Owaka on a crisp May morning ... Owaka Valley I scarcely recognised. Not a log or stump could be seen, and not a rabbit. Before me lay rolling country with grazing flocks and sleek Shorthorn cattle.<sup>158</sup>

His attitude as a real settler stems from the same premise as Mander's Tom Roland, but stated in less vociferous terms:

What would you have people live in this country? Timber is cheaper than bricks. Those trees make houses for the poor. Somebody has to cut em (sic) down. Look at the people that can own their own houses in New Zealand. Why? Cheap land, cheap timber,. Something you don't have in England. And you talk sentiment to me! Pooh!<sup>159</sup>

As Robert and Ethel McLatchie grow old they reflect together on their contribution:

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<sup>158</sup>Keene, Kathleen. *Tang of the Bush*. 9.

<sup>159</sup>Mander, Jane. *The Story of a New Zealand River*. 39.

Together we looked back across the years, proud in the knowledge that we, with all our generation of farmers, had contributed to the development of the country and the production of food.<sup>160</sup>

Herein lies part of the reason for the settlers' mixed attitudes to the bush and the need to struggle, with in McLatchie's case, success. The tremendous drive to survive, be economically successful and to contribute to the building and feeding of a young nation at home and the metropolis abroad, for the time being, took precedence over the standing tree. "Settlers everywhere spoke of individual effort and of themselves as rugged pioneers, but their progress was the expansion of an industrial society serving a world market."<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Mander, Jane. *The Story of a New Zealand River*. 147.

<sup>161</sup> Dunlap, Thomas, R. *Nature and the English Diaspora: Environment and History in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand*. 49.

## Chapter 4

### Bush Utu

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For years we've been going along that quiet that we've almost forgot what sudden death is like, but the bush is out for its utu now. . . .<sup>162</sup>

Just as immigrants to a new country re-shape the land, so too does the land shape them. In Baconian terms nature was brought successfully to heel, tamed and controlled, to serve the white man's needs. The New Zealand bush was described as rampant, but soon to be productive. Dieffenbach, normally so scientific and lacking in Romantic expression, forgets himself enough to personify nature when he exclaims:



Gustavus Ferdinand VON TEMPSKY, *Ambuscade in Taranaki*, 1866, Auckland War Memorial Museum

. . . indeed throughout the whole of New Zealand nature seems to be eager to destroy and to reproduce.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup>Mander, Jane. *The Story of a New Zealand River*. 209.

<sup>163</sup>Dieffenbach, Dr. Ernest. *Travells in New Zealand*. 18.



How then did nature, personified or not, bite back and the bush exact its toll? There are several indicators; despair, failure and poverty were attributable to ill-considered government policies, but there were other ways the bush took its toll on the bushmen and their families.

First, the life was dangerous, and deaths were frequent. *The Bushfeller* expresses a wife's anxiety for her husband's life in the bush:

Lord, mind your trees today!  
My man is out there clearing.  
God send the chips fly safe.  
My heart is always fearing . . .<sup>164</sup>

It was accepted by bushmen that felling the timber was dangerous work and as Robert McLatchie describes, sensible precautions were taken.<sup>165</sup> Tom Roland was noted for the safety measures he insisted upon for his men when felling and when handling the timber on the logging tramway.<sup>166</sup> In the King Country Chronicle in 1912 is the following report: "Mr W. McManus met with a

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<sup>164</sup>Duggan, Eileen. *The Bushfeller*. Landscape in New Zealand Literature: The Late Colonial Period: (1890-1930) Module 3(1). University Extension, University of Otago, 1986. 6.

<sup>165</sup>Keene, Kathleen. *Tang of the Bush*. 39. "When danger threatened, the tool in one's hand was instinctively thrown aside, as a sharp axe or saw is in itself a danger . . . When a bushman's axe fell silent his mate gave a cooe. Failing an answer he investigated at once, in case here had been an accident. Donald Stewart was bushfelling alone on his farm below Landreth's. Jim Landreth missed the ring of the axe and found Stewart dead beneath a tree which had split up and struck him."

<sup>166</sup>The utmost care had always been taken to keep people off the tramway, and during the day a guard was stationed . . . to watch the coming and going from school. Every family had been warned and there were signposts at every interval." Mander, 293

nasty accident a few days ago while bush felling on father's section. His axe slipped and cut a nasty gash in his knee."<sup>167</sup> As Duggan writes in *The Bushfeller*:

If he came home at nights,  
We'd know, but it is only-  
We might not even hear-  
A man could die there lonely.<sup>168</sup>

McLatchie remembers a neighbour who died alone in the bush, pinned under a tree, and not discovered for some time.

Tom Roland's death may be read as the bush exacting its toll. While there were contributing factors, the children playing on the line at a time when it should have been safe; Tom, disturbed by his wife's letter and working after hours; his "reckless but not dangerous" driving of the wagons on the tramway; Alice's attitude to Tom, exacerbated by the isolation of the community and the type of man Tom was, hard, ambitious and unrefined, and the work he did; all contributed to a situation that was going to happen eventually. He knew the danger, hence all the precautions. The bush, one way or another would have taken another life, and as the owner, the creator of the destruction, fate would see to it that eventually, it would be him.

Did the settlers believe the bush was a malignant force? Lady Barker described it as gloomy:

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<sup>167</sup>Brake, Tui. *Bush Track to Highway*. Chronicle article July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1912. 27.

<sup>168</sup>Duggan, Eileen. *The Bushfeller*. Landscape in New Zealand Literature: The Late Colonial Period: (1890-1930) Module 3(1). University Extension, University of Otago, 1986. 6.

Close on our right hand rose the Government Bush out of which we get our firewood, standing grand and gloomy amid huge cliffs and crags; even the summer sunshine could not enliven it, nor the twitter and chirrup of countless birds.”<sup>169</sup>

M.H. Holcroft wrote much later in 1940 “I find it hard to believe that New Zealanders can remain unaware of the sinister quality of the great rain forest . . . .”<sup>170</sup> The toll exacted by the bush may be attributed to malignancy, fate, or prosaically, an eventuality arising from certain disruptive activities. And then, there is the concept of Utu; revenge. In the process of felling, the bush has been forced to relinquish part of itself, and eventually will demand its price.

Fate and retribution go hand in hand in *The Toll of the Bush*, Satchell’s romantic novel set in the Hokianga District in the late 1890s. In his introduction to the *Toll of the Bush*, Kendrick Smithyman assesses the bush as a moral and judgmental force, in the way it deals with Fletcher who becomes the sacrifice once Mark Gird’s protective influence has been removed by death. He remarks that: “the natural world is made [by Satchell] to comment on the behaviour of people.” “In the depth (of the drama) are forces of Nature at their ultimately moral work.”<sup>171</sup> And from the retributive, joyless, Victorian, Protestant point of view, with the deceitful, Nathaniel Hawthorne type priest in the background, this is a valid reading. The dual figure of “Mrs Do as you would be done by” and “Mrs Be done by as you did” apply to the natural world; if you are evil, evil will befall you.

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<sup>169</sup>Barker, Lady Mary Ann. *Station Life in New Zealand*. 91.

<sup>170</sup>Holcroft, M.H. *The Deepening Stream* 1940 Christchurch: Caxton Press, 1950. 25.

<sup>171</sup>Satchell, William. *The Toll of the Bush*. 1905. University of Auckland Printing Services, 1985.9



There is, however, another view. Satchell's characters act the way they do because of the effect of the bush on them, and this arises from their own natures; their goodness, desires and failings; their ability to work with nature or against it.

That environment or nature shapes mankind as much as man shapes the environment cannot be denied. Bad experiences can embitter and rouse hatred for places and landscapes in both reality and memory. And if the environment is interfered with and the delicate balance of nature jeopardised, it follows that any adverse effects will also affect man. This is what the toll of the bush is. On one level it can be viewed as just retribution, on another, in Geoffrey's terms, disasters are a natural progression. Both exist side by side in the novel and either way, the bush has a lasting affect on those who live in it and by it.

In *The Toll of the Bush*, those in tune with the environment, for example Robert, who loves the land and working with the seasons, are on the whole placid and happy. Robert is generous, giving away fish, has time for children, and those less fortunate than himself. He willingly accedes to Lena's request for tea and soap. He is also a child of nature in that he is innocent, as seen in his astonishment at the effect his guileless questioning of Lena about their clothing arrangements, when their mother is washing those they have on. While Robert is stereotypical of the bucolic country lad, good with his hands but a bit slow, the main impression gained is one of a contented man, who eventually marries the girl of his heart as his reward for patience and steadfastness, both with the land and the people. For Robert and Lena the bush not only has a mysterious quality, but a nurturing one. During their courtship, they walk unafraid, but cautious, in the bush at night, experiencing it by touch rather than sight. As they emerge into a clearing lit by starlight, Lena turns to look back. "The bush stood black and insoluble; it seemed impossible



that the entrance to it could ever be found again.”<sup>172</sup> Here, the bush has a magical indecipherable quality, redolent of the Enchanted Forest of Avalon, where people are present one minute and gone the next: “At last, step by step, she moved backwards till the bush concealed her. Robert rubbed his eyes . . . and went back to his interrupted work.”<sup>173</sup> and like Avalon, the bush breaks their moment of completeness with a warning:

“Suddenly an owl screamed harshly on the edge of the bush; there was the pad, pad of some agitated creature - animal or human? - going by a few yards down the hill. Lena drew back sharply. It seemed that the spirits had been whispering at her heart, but she couldn’t catch the words.”<sup>174</sup>

The sweet-natured Lena comments during an evening walk with her lover, “How sweet the bush smells” and later, in her confusion and shame she is protected by the isolation of “. . . Mrs Gird’s section in the thick bush, [where] the sunny days crept slowly by. . . .”<sup>175</sup> Again the bush has a protective, enfolding quality for those who love it and are themselves lovely.

In contrast to Robert, Geoffrey is a man of science and logic. He is not in tune with nature and fights against life on the land. On his return to the farm he exclaims in frustration to Robert :

Why aren’t there armies of peace as of war? Man’s the most astonishing kind of fool, if you come to reflect upon his ways. He could land an army corps

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<sup>172</sup> Satchell, William. *Toll of the Bush*. 90.

<sup>173</sup> Satchell, William. *Toll of the Bush*. 75.

<sup>174</sup> Satchell, William. *Toll of the Bush*. 92.

<sup>175</sup> Satchell, William. *Toll of the Bush*. 160.

here, and for an amount no greater than it costs to keep the beggars in idleness, convert the wilderness into a garden where men could live contentedly.<sup>176</sup>

Geoffrey shares his own logical explanation for the mystery and myth surrounding Mark Gird's accident with Eve who raises the question of *utu*, but until he undergoes his own trial through the medium of the bush he is unable, as is Eve, to understand himself or find love. The bush for them is a terrifying but purifying journey of discovery and reaches a central point under the *kauri* tree they select as their marker.

He stood as is the manner of his kind, in royal isolation from the remainder of the forest; so magnificent in his suggestions of strength and eternal youth that, for the moment, the pair stood still, forgetful of self, in that mute reverence which the mighty works of nature must for ever arouse in the heart of man.<sup>177</sup>

But the bush is not yet ready to release them and they select the wrong tree. They struggle on pitting themselves against their prison:

Deeper and deeper they penetrated into the primeval solitudes, where no man had come perchance since the beginning of the world. Nothing they had yet seen equalled in grandeur and beauty the scene the now invaded. . . . Monstrous plants . . . choked the earth and wrestled with one another in a fierce battle for life. . . . Again and again they were driven away in search of easier country.

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<sup>176</sup>Satchell, William. *Toll of the Bush*. 19.

<sup>177</sup>Satchell, William. *Toll of the Bush*. 222.

Geoffrey is driven to vow “When we get out of this hell - if we ever do - we will stay still and wait.” Geoffrey and Eve, however, are not to be the victims of Utu; that is reserved for Fletcher, leaving them free for each other.

Central to the novel is Mark Gird.<sup>178</sup> His silent, motionless presence, “dead up to the eyes”, like a massive, half destroyed kauri, infiltrates the consciousness of the township, determining the settlers’ and bushmen’s welfare alike, with the belief that has grown around him, that as long as he lives, no other bushman will be destroyed and that *Utu* will be suspended. Eileen Duggan expresses what Mrs Gird must have prayed for each day, before the bush took Mark’s vitality:

God, let the trunks fall clear,  
He did not choose his calling;  
He’s young and full of life-  
A tree is heavy, falling.<sup>179</sup>

Central to but not part of the community, the Girds live on the extreme outskirts of the settlement, in a clearing enfolded in the bush, which, like Mark, is half destroyed and half living:

Over the emerald sheen of the tree ferns spread a faint blood-coloured stain  
from the scattered stamens of the rata flowers.

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<sup>178</sup>In some respects he bears a similarity to David Bruce, also a man of steadfastness and presence, and central to the story, who manipulates those around him and makes them dependent on him both physically and mentally.

<sup>179</sup>Duggan, Eileen. *The Bushfeller*. Landscape in New Zealand Literature: The Late Colonial Period: (1890-1930) Module 3(1). University Extension, University of Otago, 1986. 6.

Eve looked round her ... at a loss for words. At the evidence of toil everywhere, the blackened trees, the fallen logs, some with deep axe marks in them, the wilting grass among the stumps. Then the untouched virgin forest, the tree ferns, the rata, weltering in his vivid summer garment. It seemed that the task set was too great, that God had forgotten - nay , that the beautiful blue heaven was flecked with blood.<sup>180</sup>

Mrs Gird, the oracle and wise woman of the forest is at one with her surroundings. She is the one person the settlers go to for sustenance and advice, dispensed with tea. She is the one person they can confide in, knowing that any need she has to share information is met by Mark, who cannot. Once Mark is gone, she emerges from the bush, her task completed, and joins the community. They no longer have need of each other.

From an eco-critical point of view, this novel is one of the few where the lives of the characters, their success or destruction is determined by their psychological and physical relationship with the environment and the bush around them. As Smithyman comments, *The Toll of the Bush* contains elements of a Thomas Hardy novel. In Hardy's novels, certainly, the fate of the characters seems irrevocably intertwined with the landscape, as do Satchell's characters with the bush, but without the bleakness of both Hardy's environment or the hopelessness of the characters in its grip, excepting for the tragic figure of Anderson, who, in his hatred and despair, ultimately becomes the forest's instrument of destruction. For Anderson, his relationship with the bush is also a journey of self and other. The "hard, clean work" of a bushman is healing and he pulls himself out of the mire of alcoholism, only to become obsessed with vengeance at his wife's desertion. Returning to his old self, he seeks retribution. For him, though, through his

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<sup>180</sup>Satchell, William. *Toll of the Bush*. 119.



heroic actions, the forest fire he himself sets, ends by purifying him in death, as it destroys the evil Priest, Fletcher. It is as a hero, not a drunk that Anderson is remembered by the settlers.

A second reason affecting attitude towards the bush was that often the balloted land was too small for farming to be sustainable or, as in the case of the *Improved Farm Settlement Scheme* of 1909 in the Tangitu and Marapa Blocks, the men who qualified for the land “. . . had to be resident on their land within eighteen months from the date of allotment, must possess no more than fifty pounds in capital; must be landless and married.”<sup>181</sup> This meant that there was not enough money to feed their families and become established, let alone become productive.” Many were destroyed physically, emotionally and economically and walked off their land embittered, after a lifetime of fruitless hardship. Blanche Baughan crystallised their thoughts in *The Old Place*:

So the last day's come at last, the close of my fifteen year -  
The end of hope, an' the struggles, an' messes I've put in  
here. . .

That bit o' Bush paddock I fall'd myself, an' watched, each  
year, come clean  
(Don't it look fresh in the tawny? A scrap of Old-Country  
green): . . .

Clear'd I have, an I've clear'd an clear'd, yet every where  
slap in your face,  
Briar, tauhinu, an ruin! - God it's a brute of a place. . .

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<sup>181</sup> Brake, Tui. *Bushtrack to Highway*. 18.

Well, I'm leaving the poor old place, and it cuts as keen as a knife;  
 The place that's broken my heart-the place where I've lived  
 my life.<sup>182</sup>

These lines encapsulate much that went wrong for some settlers and early colonial farmers, not the Canterbury Squatocracy who were building up their often prosperous sheep stations, but the back-block, high country sheep farmers of the North Island whose land often slipped away into the gullies after the heavy rain, cattle and sheep became lost or died in the bush and accidental fire swept through their blocks. Sometimes, with good reason, they must have ended up hating the bush as a hellish and vindictive environment.

Thirdly, New Zealanders began to see the results of their destruction and the long term results which were to stimulate a change in their attitudes to the bush. One was the recognition that the thin layer of top soil was not suited to long term pasture, which in many places failed for lack of nutrients. The removal of timber led to erosion and slips, and silt-filled valleys and rivers. There was a growing awareness that the bush was fast becoming a threatened commodity. Lady Barker, in her letters home, records the Government blocks of bush, and the licence that station owners had to apply for in order to acquire firewood if they had no stand of bush on their land.

“Fuel is most difficult to get here, and very expensive, as we have no available  
 “bush” on the Run; so we have first to take out a licence for cutting wood in the  
 Government bush, then to employ men to cut it.” . . . “We are most unfortunate  
 in the matter of firing; most stations have a bush near to the homestead. . . .”<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>182</sup>Baughan, B. E. *The Old Place*. The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse. Ed. Allen Curnow. Auckland: Blackwood & Janet Paul Ltd., 1966. 104.

<sup>183</sup>Barker, Lady Mary Ann. *Station Life in New Zealand*. 62.

It is already evident that restrictions had been put in place, as the bush, never very plentiful in Canterbury, became difficult to find. By the 1860s there existed large blocks of Government owned forest, partly purchased as a conservation measure, which required a licence for removing wood from it.

Even more devastating was the growing suspicion that for some who fought and struggled with the bush it would never end. Where it was left to itself for even one year, the bush began to fight back and regenerate. There was also the suspicion that the struggle had not been worth it; that the problems that had come with clearing the land were on-going and too expensive to rectify. By 1900, the tide began to turn and new conservationist attitudes were formed which ran as an undercurrent to the commonly held view that the forest was there in unlimited amounts, free for the taking, to build both private wealth and a nation.

## Chapter 5

### Desecration or Improvement

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Colin McCahon, *Takaka: Night and Day*, 1948, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, gift of the Rutland Group, 1958

Have I then for sixty years desecrated God's earth and dubbed it improvement?<sup>184</sup>

Herbert Guthrie-Smith's book *Tutira* spans the first forty years of his occupation of Tutira Station in Hawkes Bay, but it is this comment, made not long before his death, in his preface to the third edition that reflected the growing unease in the 1920s and 30s with which the long term impacts of reshaping of New Zealand's landscape were being viewed. The dichotomy between preservation and utilisation of the indigenous forests that had existed from the beginning of settlement was beginning to crystallise into a conviction that deforestation had not been of unequivocal advantage. By 1925 the Minister of Lands and Survey<sup>185</sup> acknowledged that it

<sup>184</sup>Guthrie-Smith, W. Herbert. *Tutira: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station*. 1921. Preface to the 3rd Edition (1940). Auckland: Random House, 1999. xxiii.

<sup>185</sup>McLeod, Alexander Donald. Minister of Lands from 25/06/24 to 26/11/28. NZ Parliamentary Record 1840-1984



“would have been better for New Zealand as a whole if hundreds of thousands of acres felled and burnt had been allowed to remain virgin bush.”<sup>186</sup> Prior to the early twentieth century this disquiet was acknowledged as an occasional unexplained need to record how the bush had looked, as in *Tang of the Bush*, and appears in sporadic legislative attempts at preservation, for economic and scenic reasons rather than environmental concerns. Around the turn of the century, naturalists Guthrie-Smith and Walter Buller were noting the permanent changes that invading species were making to the land and as a result, the loss of indigenous species. Both recognised the need to record this process and to preserve what remained. Increasingly during the 1930s, 40s and 50s creative writers of prose fiction and poetry such as A.R.D. Fairburn, Blanche Baughan, Frank Sargeson and social commentators such as Roderick Finlayson and Monte Holcroft engaged in a discourse, sometimes tentatively, that in various ways reflected and addressed the unease that Guthrie-Smith voiced at the end of his life.

The contradictory attitudes that had always been evident were in part related to the sometimes confusing legislation for land and forest use, from 1840. By the 1880s, despite the continued land clearance, there was a shift of emphasis in legislation that mirrored the growing environmental concerns about deforestation.

### **Legislation: Conservation, Deforestation and Afforestation**

Concurrently, from 1840 two main attitudes towards the indigenous forests persisted. On one hand, the legacy of the European Romantic movement shifted the perception of wild, untamed

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<sup>186</sup>Hodge, Robin. “*Nature’s Trustee: Perinea Moncrieff and Nature Conservation in New Zealand 1920-1950*”, PhD thesis, Massey University, 1999. 271 from Annual Report, Department of Lands and Survey, AJAR, 1925, C1p3. in *Crown Laws, Policies and Practices in Relation to Flora and Fauna, 1840-1912*.

places as evil and dangerous, to be avoided or tamed, to one of “appreciation and reverence”. In *Crown laws, Policies and Practices in Relation to Flora and Fauna, 1840-1912* it is suggested that (as a result of the Romantic movement), wild places were: “not only beautiful but could serve as areas of physical recreation and mental and spiritual rejuvenation for those oppressed by civilisation and urbanisation.”<sup>187</sup> Therefore the forests, it was recognised by some, should be preserved. It is noted that the conservation of kauri forests was initially proposed in March 1840 by Captain William Symonds, an early land surveyor, who suggested that the forests be assessed and reserved before settlement proceeded in earnest.<sup>188</sup> Land Boards were established to control the use of state forest land as noted in *Brett’s Colonists’ Guide*: “The Board may issue licenses for a period not exceeding seven years for felling timber.” The Act contained special regulations for homesteads, also laid out in the *Colonists’ Guide*: “Every tenant has a right to fell timber on the land occupied by him for his own use in repairing the house, homestead or other buildings and for making fences or for firewood. The settler cannot cut timber for sale without a license as before mentioned.”<sup>189</sup> This is illustrated in the aforementioned passage from Lady Barker’s letter home as early as the 1850s, within ten years of becoming a Crown colony.

Indigenous deforestation, on the other hand, was favoured on land to be used for European settlement and agriculture,<sup>190</sup> and until the 1870s, Crown policy on forestry was limited to

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<sup>187</sup>Mar, Cathy, et al. 2001. 228-312. New Zealand. Waitangi Tribunal Publication. 260 in *Crown laws, Policies, and Practices in Relation to Flora and Fauna, 1840-1912*. Wellington:

<sup>188</sup>His main reason was to reserve the best trees for navy use. *Crown Laws and Policies*. 306

<sup>189</sup>*The Colonists’ Guide and Cyclopaedia*. 1018.

<sup>190</sup>References to deforestation and settlement versus forest reservation occur throughout the period. During the debate on the New Zealand Forests Bill in 1874, William Buckland of Franklin maintained that Nelson Province would achieve prosperity by ‘the destruction of its

“attempting to facilitate efficient utilisation of forests on Crown lands through a licensing system for felling.”<sup>191</sup> Reserving indigenous forest most certainly took second place, and in the first year of Crown government, officials at the Colonial Land and Emigration Office reacted negatively to the suggestion that the Crown should reserve kauri forests: “As to reserve the forests is to reserve the land, and with whatever object it is pediments to the progress of settlement and hurtful to the interests of the settlers.”<sup>192</sup> From 1840 to well beyond 1912 slashing and burning of forest continued, on any land that looked remotely as if it would carry pasture and stock, in the belief that like the indigenous people, the forests were doomed as a natural part of the process of colonisation. This belief was upheld by men such as John Sheehan, MP for Rodney, who stated: “The same mysterious law which appears to operate . . . by which the brown race, sooner or later, passes from the face of the Earth - applies to native timber . . . The moment civilisation and the forest come into contact, that moment the forest begins to go to the wall.”<sup>193</sup>

However, as the forests and the birdlife began to visibly disappear, attitudes began to change and in 1877, following the establishment of the Land Act, forest reserves were established and provision made for the appointment of rangers. By the middle of the 1880s more than half a

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forests so that its waste lands may become fitted for settlement’ in *Crown Laws Policies and Practices in Relation to Flora and Fauna, 1840-1912*. 293.

<sup>191</sup> Roche, Michael Matthew. *History of Forestry*. Wellington: NZ Forestry Service in conjunction with GP Books, 1990, 116, in *Crown Laws Policies and Practices in Relation to Flora and Fauna, 1840-1912*. 294.

<sup>192</sup> Officials at the Colonial Land and Emigration Office made this comment in the first year of Crown government, when asked about the need for demarcation and maintenance of reserves of indigenous forests. *Crown Laws Policies and Practices in Relation to Flora and Fauna, 1840-1912*. 293.

<sup>193</sup> *Crown Laws, Policies and Practices in Relation to Flora and Fauna, 1840-1912*. 293. Quoted from Rote, *History Forestry* 21-23, (citing New Zealand Gazette, 3 November 1841)



million hectares of forest reserve had been gazetted - including 14,164 hectares at Waipoua, which today carries New Zealand's finest stand of mature kauri trees. By the late 1890s and early 1900s, the shrinking forests had attracted the notice of and were being recorded by local writers such as William Pember-Reeves, Dora Wilcox (*The Last of the Forest*) and later, Alan Mulgan (*Dead Timber*) and Blanche Baughan (*A Bush Section*). In his *The Passing of the Forest: A Lament for the Children of Tane*, Pember-Reeves writes of the ruthless clearing of the hill country:

Ancient of days in green old age they [the hills] stand,  
Though lost the beauty that became man's prey  
When from their flanks he stripped the woods away . . .

Gone is the forests labyrinth of life  
Its clambering, thrusting, clasping, throttling race,  
Creeper with creeper, bush with bush at strife,  
Struggling in silence for a breathing space  
Below a realm with tangled rankness rife  
Aloft tree columns in victorious grace.  
Gone the dumb hosts in warfare dim; none stay;  
Dense brake and stately trunk have passed away.

Gone are those gentle forest-haunting things,  
Eaters of honey, honey sweet in song . . .

Pember-Reeves' poem is an example of the persistent dualistic approach to the forest - caught between dislike for its "clasping, throttling race" and appreciation for "the loveliness of ages" :



The axe bites deep. The rushing fire streams bright;  
 Swift, beautiful and fierce it speeds for Man,  
 Nature's rough handed Forman, keen to smite  
 And mar the loveliness of ages. Scan  
 The blackened forest ruined in a night,  
 The sylvan parthenon that God will plan  
 But builds not twice. Ah, bitter price to pay  
 For man's dominion - beauty swept away!<sup>194</sup>

Patrick Evans criticises this poem as a “competent piece of insincerity”<sup>195</sup> on the grounds that unlike Blanche Baughan, Reeves was a conservative establishment figure whose main aim was to preserve a European cultural tradition, including the way one wrote poetry. In this aspect Evans seems to be suggesting that *The Passing of the Forest* is written in a conservative, Victorian style which has a soporific effect on contemporary readers. Evans may also be suggesting that Pember-Reeves' gesture is a token apology for the destruction of the forests which he acknowledges while being fully aware that it would continue. Therefore while he supported the status quo as far as bush clearing was concerned, Pember-Reeves the historian and radical, liberal politician, at least attempted to record something that he acknowledged as an issue. The final lines, despite their romantic tone suggests that he was certainly aware of the long-term environmental impacts of deforestation: “God will plan, But builds not twice.” The result of a

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<sup>194</sup>Pember-Reeves, William. *The Passing of the Forest: A Lament for the Children of Tane*. Landscape in New Zealand Literature: The Late Colonial Period: (1890-1930) Module 3 (1). University Extension, University of Otago, 1986. 4.

<sup>195</sup>Evans, Patrick. *The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature*. Auckland: Penguin Books, 1990.49.

ruthless colonialism is also expressed in his final statement: “Ah, bitter price to pay, for Man’s dominion - beauty passed away.” He recognised that the settler imperative to own and farm land was the cause of this ecological change and that even if regeneration occurred, it would be a long process.

While Pember-Reeves used the national stage for his poem, in ‘A Bush Section’, Baughan restricts herself to a single bush block. Here is the poetic expression of Robert McLatchie’s prose. But because *A Bush Section* was written during Baughan’s early years in the country, as a recent immigrant she captures the desolate landscape with eyes fresh from England, and an awareness of landscape that could only be achieved by a newcomer or a native returning after a long sojourn abroad. Again and again she returns to the static image of dead, burned logs in contrast to the sparkling stream, the movement of the train and the heavens all of which move forward and away from the gullies and hills which are in the process of being broken in:

At the little raw farm on the edge of the desolate hillside  
Perched on the brink, overlooking the desolate valley

Where there are:

Logs, at the door, by the fence; logs, broadcast over the paddock;  
Sprawling in motionless thousands away down the green of the  
gully,  
Logs, grey-black. And the opposite rampart of ridges  
Bristles against the sky, all tawny, tumultuous landscape  
Is stuck, and prickled and spiked with the standing black and grey  
splinters,

Strewn, all over its hollows and hills, with the long, prone, grey  
black logs.<sup>196</sup>

She sees an unchanging, ugly and hopeless dreariness in the landscape as the result of the indiscriminate and wasteful clearing :

Out, on this desert of logs, on this dead disconsolate ocean . . .  
The prone logs never arise,  
The erect ones never grow green  
The leaves never rustle, the birds went away with the bush, -  
There is no change

Baughan addresses the child who is "Mid the logs, a developing soul:"

Good luck to that little right arm!  
Green Bush to the Moa, Burnt Bush to the resolute settler  
In strenuous years ahead,  
Wilt thou wield the axe of Fire? . . .  
  
- Till the charr'd logs vanish away;  
Till the wounds of the land are whole.  
Till the skeleton valleys and hills  
With greenness and growing / rejoice.

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<sup>196</sup>Baughan, B. E. 'A Bush Section' *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse*. 1960. Ed. Allen Curfew. Auckland: Blackwood and Janet Paul Ltd., 1966.

In the final two stanzas Baughan ponders the psychological and economic quality of an existence built out of ruin: “With the burnt bush within and without thee . . . Bright Promise on Poverty’s threshold! . . . How far wilt thou go?” Her “Bright Promise” refers to the green pasture “grazed from the soil-sweetening ashes,” a promise that faded quickly as the settlers found that the magical effect of the burn-offs was short-lived; the soil that sustained great forests would, without fertiliser, falter and become impoverished, reverting to scrub and bracken; and the struggle would, for some, last a lifetime. Baughan writes of the changes that have occurred with a sharp awareness of the fight that may lie ahead, and like Pember-Reeves, of the underlying question of what the devastation of the bush may mean in the long term, for the settler.

### Concrete Change: The Establishment of Reserves

While poets and writers were questioning the long term physical and psychological effects of deforestation, so too did the political establishment. Indications that preservation of indigenous forest was increasingly considered necessary was the establishment of the first national parks, followed by regional and civic parks and much later, in the mid twentieth century, the forest park. In other colonial countries, for example America and Canada, publicly owned wilderness areas became icons of national identity. In addition, “Public ownership of these areas could prevent destruction and depreciation by private or excessive commercialism.”<sup>197</sup> The world’s first national park, Yellowstone, was established at Yosemite, in 1872. It is not surprising that the second, Tongariro National Park, was founded fifteen years later in New Zealand, the last of the countries to be colonised via the English Diaspora, and moreover a country colonised when

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<sup>197</sup>*Crown Laws, Policies, and Practices in Relation to Flora and Fauna, 1840-1912.* 266.



Darwin's theories were globally challenging biologists and naturalists. The conception of the need for conservation of some sort, for whatever reasons, (and they were many) already existed. New Zealand had legal authority since 1840 to create reserves for recreation, and in a series of Land Acts in 1877, 1884, 1892 and 1903 reserves of Crown land for growth and preservation of timber, gardens, parks, domains and natural curiosities were passed, the last being specifically for land with scenic attributes to be gazetted.

In a growing recognition of the need for publicly owned reserves one of the leading figures was Thomas Kirk, who in 1885 was appointed the Chief Conservator of State Forests branch of the department of Lands and Survey. In this position he was "responsible for reducing wasteful use of the indigenous forests and dedicated 324,000 hectares as forest reserves."<sup>198</sup> Kirk, however, as well as being a naturalist, had also been a timber man and his motivations were clearly economic as much as environmental. Professor Kirk is mentioned in the *Brett's Colonists' Guide* as being authorised to "prepare a report on our state forests and the state of the timber trade in New Zealand. The writer quotes Professor Kirk's remarks concerning the rapid destruction of local forests: "Any steps tending to postpone the period of exhaustion [of the forests] will be of the greatest benefit to Auckland. Should, however, this warning be unheeded, a large displacement of labour will result, and the prosperity of the North will be greatly retarded."<sup>199</sup> The warring factions of preservation, conservation, utilisation and profit are here well illustrated.

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<sup>198</sup>*The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*. 1989. Auckland: David Bateman, 1992. 440.

<sup>199</sup>From a review of Professor Quirk's report by *New Zealand Country Journal*, 1887 in *Brett's Colonists' Guide*, 236.

A colonial settler whose foresight (and desire to be landed gentry) eventually led to land being set aside as a reserve is Sir Walter Buller. As Geoff Park notes, Buller was a mixture of naturalist, conservationist and capitalist. “His natural history brought him fame, but at its root was fascination at the ancient life of a primeval paradise failing to adapt to the empire”.<sup>200</sup> He acquired Lake Papaitonga on the Horowhenua Plains in 1892. It comprised a 2 acre lake-shore section, which was intended to become the seat of his “country estate,” a lease on the lake and all the forested land back to the railway line. The Homestead was never built and only a fraction of the bush remains, but there, though threatened today by its very isolation, is a remnant of the coastal forest that once stretched along the Kapiti Coast. Like Guthrie-Smith, Buller was a keen naturalist and bird lover and filled the area with birds, native and exotic. And like Guthrie-Smith, he wrote extensively about the native birds of New Zealand. The fact is that despite the irregular manner in which he acquired the land, without him, this island of ancient kahikatea forest would have been carved up for the neighbouring state farm. Park notes that, “Something in him aroused the urge to save a piece of the great forest that was becoming a landscape of charred stumps and muddy roads.”<sup>201</sup> Buller wrote of forest preservation:

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<sup>200</sup>Park, Geoff. *Nga Aurora*, 170.

<sup>201</sup>One of the local Europeans who lived along the forest margins described the plains as they had been not long previously: “The lake lay clasped in the emerald arms of the bush which surrounded it on every side save immediately about where we stood. Mile after mile the bush stretched across the flat on which the town of Leaven now stands, and swept up the mountain-side to the relief of the white snow cap. Straight and tall the timber grew to the waters edge, fringed with flax . . . and over the bush, flashing their white breasts as they whirled and wheeled in the sunshine, pidgins flew literally in thousands, drifting from tree to tree . . .” McDonald Donald, *Te Hekenga*, p. 23. Buller, *Supplement*, p. xxxiii, op.cit. P Geoff Park, *Nga Uruora*, 173.

It is inevitable, of course, that with the progress of active colonisation, much of our lovely forest scenery must disappear. Even in this provincial district during the last few years, bush scenery of exquisite beauty - not to be equalled perhaps, in any part of the world - has to yield to the woodsman's axe, and it would be only false sentiment to deplore the fact in view of the necessities of practical settlement. But I take it to be the duty of every colonist who has the means and the opportunity, to do what he can to protect and conserve some, at any rate, of the natural features of this beautiful land of ours.<sup>202</sup>

Park comments that in 1912 when Leo Buller returned from England to settle his late father's estate and his friend, MP Willy Field "lobbied the government to buy it" the Government surveyor recommended against it. "If the Government wanted scenery, there were other less costly sanctuaries on which to spend its money." It wasn't until 1981, that the Government finally purchased Papaitonga as a scenic reserve. Park also comments that: "Buller had a fine-tuned sense of scenery" but no real understanding of either the ecosystem or the implications of Papaitonga for Maori. Nevertheless, without Walter Buller, Papaitonga would not have existed for any protective legislation to be passed, neither would it exist for local Maori to harvest medicinal plants from..<sup>203</sup> As Park says: "Part of Papaitonga's magic, though is that just before it was too late, the colonial paradigms about nature's fate shifted . . . and an example of nature's design for the land survived."<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>202</sup>Park, Geoff. *Nga Uruora: the Groves of Life*. 174. Originally in Buller letter, 20 May 1895, to Wellington Scenery Preservation Society, and publ. (21-23 May) in *The Evening Post*.

<sup>203</sup>Feather, Pat. Mangori Village, Shannon, who told me that this place is regarded as sacred by Maori and that medicinal herbs are taken occasionally for use by the local tribe.

<sup>204</sup>Park, Geoff. *Nga Uruora: The Groves of Life*. 223.



The growing concern that deforestation was impacting severely, not only on the environment but eventually on the economy, led to a policy of afforestation, or tree replacement early in the colony's history. This included encouraging planting where trees were naturally sparse for example, on the Canterbury plains. The 1858 Planting of Trees Ordinance had already offered incentives for tree planting and the Forest Trees Planting Encouragement Act 1871,<sup>205</sup> awarded two acres of land to anyone who had planted one acre of forest trees, if the total area planted was between 20 and 250 acres.<sup>206</sup> These plantings were not necessarily with slow growing natives but with faster growing exotics, *Pinus radiata* (Monterey Pine) and Eucalyptus for profit, while many landowners experimented with European specimens for shelter and aesthetic purposes and sentimental reasons. Of these, it is *Pinus radiata* that has become, by adoption, part of the New Zealand landscape and psyche. Guthrie-Smith, naturalist and farmer, in *Tutira: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station*,<sup>207</sup> mentions pines and wrote "Pinus radiata still stands almost alone in its ability to move great distances and to become a forest tree." (304)

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<sup>205</sup>Repealed in 1885.

<sup>206</sup>*The Illustrated Encyclopedia of New Zealand*. 1989. Auckland: David Bateman. 1992. 440

<sup>207</sup>Guthrie-Smith, H. *Tutira: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station*. 1921. Auckland: Random House, 1999.



## The crisis of deforestation and invasion

William Cronon<sup>208</sup> notes in his foreword to the fourth edition of Guthrie-Smith's book, that *Tutira: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station* is a complete account of "an understanding of the changing human place in nature" and makes the point that New Zealand has played a disproportionate role in the scholarly study of anthropogenic environmental change, particularly because it happened so suddenly and "the self consciousness of those who participated in it"<sup>209</sup> It is this very self consciousness that compelled Guthrie-Smith to note with infinite care, every change, small and large, to the face of his land, that he as an invader, was making. Cronon asserts that, both the New Zealand story and Tutira have influenced and benefited

. . . the field of environmental history - the study of people altering the land around them by the way they live their lives, and being affected in turn by the ecological changes they themselves help to bring about.

Guthrie-Smith's account covers almost all the points I have addressed in the previous chapters. First and foremost though, it is an account of place; of Guthrie-Smith carving out a life for himself and making his own mark on the land in his care, a mark that is recognisable as being culturally of European origin and it is an account that in many respects, mirrors Thoreau's *Walden*.<sup>210</sup> *Walden* has been widely accepted as North America's classic in environmental literature. More recently Guthrie Smith's account of Tutira in New Zealand is beginning to achieve similar

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<sup>208</sup>Cronon is a North American Author in Eco-criticism and author of *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*.

<sup>209</sup>Cronon, xii.

<sup>210</sup>Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden, or, Life in the Woods*. London: Oxford University Press, 1906.

status<sup>211</sup> It is a story of survival, both financial and physical, the same story as that of Robert McLatchie in the Catlins, as Lady Barker's in Canterbury, of the albeit fictional Tom and Alice Roland on the Kaipara Harbour and Robert Hernshaw on the Hokianga; of Frank Sargeson's uncle in the King Country; of all pioneers breaking in land across New Zealand. But in Tutira the impact of invasion, human, animal and plant, is recorded in intimate detail, as for example the process of invasive weed seed transference:

Their tiny seeds in a score of ways reach the pockets, clothes and boots of every labourer employed. He manures them when he dungs the ground, he plants them with his cabbages, he sinks them in his celery trench, he forks them with his asparagus. They cling to his tools, his pea stakes, his matting, his garden line. He mixes them in his potting shed with shredded turf, with sand and leaf mould. In a hundred ways they are disseminated."<sup>212</sup>

Devoting an entire paragraph to seed transference could have been intolerably dry but the intimate detail is unexpectedly reminiscent of the detailed observation of naturalist and painter Beatrix Potter's gardener in *The Tales of Peter Rabbit*. Herbert Guthrie-Smith uses the same elegant language with an eye for detail as in Potter's description of Mr McGregor tending his rows of lettuces and working in his potting shed:

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<sup>211</sup>The thesis of both writers could be summed up in this passage spoken by David Langston, a woodsman based on Thoreau, in Gene Stratton-Porter's *The Harvester*: "I am of the woods . . . they do instil always and forever the fineness of nature and her ways. I have her lessons so well learned they help me more than anything else to discern the qualities of human nature." 63.

<sup>212</sup>Guthrie-Smith, H. *Tutira: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station*. 1921. Auckland. Random House. 1999. 268.

Mr McGregor was on his hands and knees planting out young cabbages. . . . [He] began to turn them [the flowerpots] over carefully, looking under each.<sup>213</sup> Mr McGregor looked down after emptying his sack. He saw some funny little brown tips of ears sticking up through the lawn mowings. He stared at them for some time.<sup>214</sup>

The comparison is used to illustrate the similarity between the economic elegance of the language Guthrie-Smith uses with that of Beatrix Potter.<sup>215</sup> In Guthrie-Smith's hands the process of seed transference acquires the qualities of a story. In his description the seeds take on a life of their own, which of course they have, but how many writers, outside of the laboratory record it? More importantly, underlying this "*vignette*" is the seriousness of how easily, how subversively, the seeds of an alien species will spread, their innocent agent of transference going about his daily tasks, probably whistling the while, oblivious to the invasion he will ultimately be responsible for.

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<sup>213</sup>Potter, Beatrix. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* F. Warne & Co. 1902. Auckland: Penguin Books New Zealand Ltd. 1982, 12.

<sup>214</sup>Potter Beatrix. *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies*. 40.

<sup>215</sup>Compare this with a passage from Thoreau: "But the ice itself is the object of most interest . . . If you examine it closely the morning after it freezes, you will find that the greater part of the bubbles, which at first appeared to be within it, are against its undersurface, and that more are continually rising from the bottom; while the ice is as yet comparatively solid and dark, that is, you see the water through it. These bubbles form an eighteenth to an eighth of an inch in diameter, very clear and beautiful, and you see your face reflected in them through the ice." Thoreau's description of these frozen ice bubbles continues for a further page, and at no point does it become tedious to read. While different in style to Guthrie-Smith, the naturalist's attention to detail is the same.



Guthrie-Smith tackles all the problems of his estate; the adverse impacts on the profile of his land by stock, scouring, weeds, and human activity. His appraisal is an attempt to see things fairly and in his chapter on acclimatisation centres he writes:

It is true that some of the birds are already troublesome, and it is likely that others may become so. It must nevertheless not be forgotten that good has been done as well as evil; that if, for example, the sparrow takes a proportion of the farmer's ripened grain, it is but a fraction of what was robbed from the pioneer by plagues of caterpillar, grasshopper, and black crickets.<sup>216</sup>

Today, because of the observations of men such as Guthrie-Smith, increased understanding of the importance of ecological balance, and the danger to our primary industry, agriculture, Aotearoa New Zealand today has strict border controls in place to prevent unwanted organisms from entering the country. The Ministry for Agriculture and Fisheries is responsible for this role, controlling the entry of insects, animals, diseases and alien plant material that may damage crops and indigenous flora and fauna.

Herbert Guthrie-Smith also describes what was left of the native timber on his station: "Although Tutira when first taken up as a sheep-run was a wilderness of bracken it had nevertheless been within a very recent period wholly under forest." 59 He writes that timber was plentiful:

. . .the swamps drained and undrained are full of it" and "In the great drains scoured out by floodwater are to be found the crowns and octopus like roots of

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<sup>216</sup>Guthrie-Smith, H. *Tutira: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station*. 343.



trees. Timber lies in the basin of every lake. . . It shows beneath the turfed lands whiter in the morning frost . . . Surface timber, chiefly totara is or rather was - for thousands of posts and strainers have been split from it - plentiful.

He is unable to either ascertain when the forest disappeared and why, or account for the barrenness of the soil, despite the fact that it supported such a forest not long before settlement took place. He records that a third of the timber was still standing at the time of his arrival "thousands of boles, blackened and charred . . . stood eighty or ninety feet high"<sup>217</sup> and concludes that "there is little doubt that the aboriginal forests were destroyed by fire." Guthrie-Smith then describes in minute detail the process of regeneration based on a patch of forest on his land that has achieved this in the forty years he had been on the property. He fenced off an area of regenerating bush to observe how this would occur over time, which he named The Hanger and writes: "Its narrative will show how rapidly primordial conditions reassert themselves if given a chance.", that is, without the interference of men, stock and foreign weeds. The latter alien creepers and plants he refers to as plague plants were often escapees from the homestead garden. The importance of *Tutira* is that it is a meticulous record and example of how Europeans impacted on the ecological balance of the New Zealand environment. *Tutira* is, as he explains, just one station, but is also a mirror for Hawkes Bay and a reference point for the rest of the country. In his conclusion Guthrie-Smith writes his hopes for the future of the country and the world:

We are, I verily believe, in the forefront of a new era. The lamentable *laissez* [sic] *faire* in regard to misuse of land and water is passing away. For the first time in the history of the globe we are about to cease to maltreat this kindly old

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<sup>217</sup>Guthrie Smith, H. *Tutira*, 62.

world of ours . . . cleansing its waterways, staunching its wounds and waste, conserving its fertility, renewing its forests, watering its deserts, beautifying it with colour and elegance of plant life, reanimating its woods with song and movement of birds.

Guthrie-Smith's environmental attitude and forebodings sixty years ago are still relevant, and continue to form the major, current environmental concerns today, not only locally but globally. The fulfilment of his expectations, however, for attitudinal change was to be a while coming, and not till the 1970s were warnings of environmental disaster to be taken seriously. In the meantime, other New Zealand writers were beginning to question the entrenched attitudes of environmental, social and economic exploitation, and the resulting ecological imbalance<sup>218</sup> as Maori and European relationships with the land and forest were beginning to be re-examined.

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<sup>218</sup>A concept that is being re-visited in the twenty-first century, as large corporations are being asked to report on their Triple Bottom Line (TBL) - the economic, social and environmental impacts of their company on the local environment.

## Chapter 6

### Smiling English Farms Reconsidered

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James PRESTON, *Opawa Station [Rutherford's]*. Not dated, Canterbury Museum

Essayist M.H. Holcroft writes that “When a man passes middle age he begins to discover the curious vitality of the past.”<sup>219</sup> However, well before middle age, some young New Zealand writers in the early to mid twentieth century were either looking back over their shoulders to what seemed an idyllic life close to the land, without the current proliferation and impediments of a mechanistic, technological society, or looking back with regret on the scarred landscape, the result of the search for such things, and the resulting problems incurred. Some, Holcroft and Roderick Finlayson among them, were also looking forward with a warning, to a future society governed by increasing capitalism and consumerism. Monte Holcroft is adamant that: “writers establish the relationship between a people and its country”.<sup>220</sup> He believed that good writers develop out of a good education system and that writers need to be spiritually nourished. “There

<sup>219</sup>Holcroft, M.H. *The Waiting Hills*. Wellington: The Progressive Publishing Society, 1943. 5

<sup>220</sup>Holcroft, M.H. *Creative Problems in New Zealand* Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1948. 18.



can be”, he writes, “only a doubtful future for a nation that neglects the soil. It is from the soil that life receives its sanction, its strength and its purity . . . The evolutionary process moves smoothly while the flow of energy comes directly from the soil” Holcroft is utilising both the image of a garden of knowledge, as well as the concept of a successful society being rooted in the land. The “soil” is education and “A new outlook on all questions of the land, its natural bounty and its fundamental place in the country’s life can be developed only by fostering it in schools.”<sup>221</sup>

New Zealand essayists, such as Holcroft, were exhibiting in their work a growing awareness that Europeans had an unenviable record in the treatment of the land as well as alienating themselves from it through increased urbanisation and technology. Writers stimulate discussion on political and social issues through creative writing, and environmental issues were addressed, although not by that name. Holcroft notes that New Zealand’s early novels reveal a “preoccupation with the land, its strangeness, its emptiness,” and I would add to that, a preoccupation with their relationship to the bush, as seen in novels such as William Satchell’s *Toll of the Bush*, and later, John Mulgan’s *Man Alone*.<sup>222</sup> This implies a psychological as well as physical relationship with the environment, which Holcroft addresses.

By the late 1930s, Holcroft was exploring the European New Zealander’s attitude to the bush and questioning the effects of both the bush and the process of its destruction on the national psyche. As previously mentioned, he found the great rain forests sinister, haunted and saturated with its previous, non-human history. He writes “We grow fond of the native bush . . . but we are not really at home there,” and suggests that from time to time we sense something of the past

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<sup>221</sup>Holcroft, M.H. *Creative Problems in New Zealand*, 46.

<sup>222</sup>Mulgan, John. *Man Alone*. (1939) Auckland: Penguin Edition, 1990.



“something which comes so faintly . . . that it can be shrugged away as a chill breath out of the night”. He continues:

It can be beautiful from a distance, when the sun comes flashing down a wall of green and the river voices break through the stillness. But if you stand alone in a trackless glen, hearing no sound save the wood pigeons high up on the limestone bluffs . . . the twilight seems to creep almost audibly among the thickets, and the forest reveals itself as something that is not ours, something that has never belonged even to the Maori, but has known centuries of an undisturbed stillness, or has contained some dream of life too strange for our minds to grasp.<sup>223</sup>

Holcroft's thesis on the effects of the forests on New Zealanders included both spiritual and psychological aspects, he saw the struggle with the forest as in the realm of psychology, as a reservoir of instincts which for thousands of years have been struggling against the restraints of civilisation.”<sup>224</sup> He also believed that the influence of the forest still resided deep in the nation's psyche and may one day be a source of spiritual power in the future. Holcroft posits that the struggle against the forest made New Zealanders practical rather than creative, with a preference for material interests. He also asserted that our contact with the wilderness instilled a sense of superiority rather than spiritual humility.<sup>225</sup> While this is suggestive of Victorian Romanticism, it

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<sup>223</sup>Holcroft, M.H. *Discovered Isles: A Trilogy* Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1950. 25-26. Comprising *The Deepening Stream* (1940), *The Waiting Hills* (1943) and *Encircling Seas* (1950).

<sup>224</sup>Holcroft, M.H. *Discovered Isles*. 29.

<sup>225</sup>Holcroft M.H. *Discovered Isles*. 30-31

is nevertheless true that second and third generation New Zealanders felt, as pasture replaced forest, that they had achieved a victory over nature.<sup>226</sup> Holcroft recognised that which Samuel Butler before him had commented on - New Zealanders' obsession with money and possessions. And like Finlayson, he anticipated the long-term environmental impacts of mechanisation, for example, from the motor car, which he suggested had deepened "the imprint of the machine on the human mind." While he reluctantly admitted advantages, he addressed the disadvantages vigorously, listing them as the social status of car ownership, purchase by time-payment (which of course adds to the national debt), the on-going costs of maintenance and eventual renewal. Socially, Holcroft suggests that the car has altered the focus of family life, and may in time also alter the national psyche to "favour political theories which express an easy and optimistic attitude to matters of currency and national wealth."<sup>227</sup> It is in his final conclusion to this chapter, that he issues a warning:

In the meantime New Zealanders buy their motor cars more frequently than any other people in the British Commonwealth. The shining roads lead on, and there are only little white clouds in the sky. All the world is on wheels, and New Zealand is a little world of its own. What will be the total contribution of the motor car to this offshoot of a weary civilisation?<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>226</sup>See Robert McLatchie.

<sup>227</sup>Holcroft, M.H. *Discovered Isles*. 44

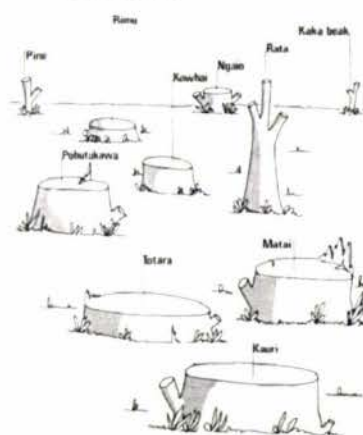
<sup>228</sup>Holcroft, M.H. *Discovered Isles*.45.

From the standpoint of 2002, the long term impact of modern transport has been considerable. In the words of Joni Mitchell:<sup>229</sup>

So it always seems to go  
that you don't ever know  
what you've got till it's gone.  
They paved paradise  
and put up a parking lot.

The forests have been in part removed to accommodate rail and roads and are still being impacted, as with the Northern Motorway to Orewa which cuts through a swathe of virgin bush in order to bring business closer to the town centre. In the twenty-first century, Holcroft's "little white clouds" have mushroomed into storm clouds of environmental degradation, reduced indigenous forest coverage on a global scale, decreasing finite resources, air pollution, ozone depletion, global warming, political manoeuvring, increased road deaths and an enormous growth in the transport industry in an effort to support, amongst other things, the desire for speed and status.

### The Real Joker's Garden



Jim BARR, *The Real Joker's Garden*, c. 1982, Artist

<sup>229</sup>Mitchell, Joni. *Big Yellow Taxi*. Lyrics and music. Released by Columbia Records. 1968 <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/kids/lyrics/bigyellow.htm>

Holcroft's was not the only ecological and social voice at the time. There were other writers who recognised the relationship between environmental issues and social, economic and political change. On the title page of *The Springing Fern* Roderick Finlayson wrote:

In this country after fire has destroyed  
the giants of the forest then  
at the end of winter,  
up shoot the fronds of fern,  
coiled springs ready to burst into new  
and vigorous growth<sup>230</sup>

The coiled springs constitute the renewal of life, but this renewal encapsulate, as well, the on-going struggle against the land. There is a third image they carry. Compare these lines with Fairburn's:

‘Observe the young and tender frond  
of this punga: shaped and curved  
like the scroll of a fiddle; fit instrument  
to play archaic tunes.’  
  
‘I see  
the shape of a coiled spring.’<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>230</sup>Finlayson, Roderick. *The Springing Fern*. Wellington. School Publications Branch, Department of Education. Whitcomb & Tombs, 1965.

<sup>231</sup>Fairburn, A.R.D. *Conversation in the Bush* from *Dominion*. The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse. Auckland: Penguin Books Ltd., 1960. 148



For Finlayson and Fairburn the coiled spring represents mechanisation and technology about to unleash itself on a consumer oriented world, and for them, this meant a widening gulf between urban and rural, the inhabitants of the land and the land that supported them. It also signals a shift in emphasis for some writers, from the indigenous forests and wilderness to the commercial urban jungle.

In *The Possessor*, A. R. D Fairburn writes of the possession and rape of the land by the European settlers. Interestingly, he has borrowed from the Psalms of David in style and reversed the subject matter from songs of praise to one of despoliation and deprivation. In the second stanza, the content is reminiscent of the sixteenth century enclosures in England where tenant farmers were left homeless and without income.

On my land grew a green tree  
 that gave shade to the weary . . .  
 My people drank of the waters after their labour,  
 had comfort of the tree in the heat of noon . . .

I cut down the tree, and made posts  
 and fenced my land,  
 I banished my people and turned away the traveller;  
 And now I share my land with sparrows that trespass  
 upon my rood of air. The earth  
 is barren, the stream is dry; the sun has blackened

grass that was green and springing, flowers that were fair.<sup>232</sup>

Most telling is the reference to even the sparrows trespassing on his “rood of air.” His sense of ownership, the destruction of the shade-giving trees, the changes he has made to the land, have brought only barrenness. This short section of *Dominion* encompasses not only the increasing environmental problems brought about by deforestation, but addresses the dispossession of the Maori as does Guthrie-Smith in *Tutira*.

While Baughan sees the ugliness, and Fairburn the social deprivation caused through clearing and enclosure of the land, John Mulgan writes of the way the “long, slow, furious engagement with the stubborn and beautiful land”<sup>233</sup> helped to make his hero of *Man Alone* a man capable of suffering and enduring, a quality Mulgan recognised in many of his fellow soldiers in World War II. Frank Sargeson on the other hand, like Guthrie-Smith, was to recognise and alert readers to the adverse environmental rather than psychological impacts of felling the forests.

In *Man Alone*, Alan Mulgan addressed a range of social issues, including the Depression, the Queen Street riots and the ever present urge to own a piece of land:

They used to talk at times, Johnson and Scott, about buying a farm. Everybody wanted to buy a farm sooner or later in New Zealand. You didn't buy a farm and build a house and grow pine trees round it to stay there, but to sell it to

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<sup>232</sup>Fairburn. A.R.D. *The Possessor* from *Dominion* The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse. Auckland: Penguin Books Ltd., 1960. 148.

<sup>233</sup>Day, Paul W and Mulgan, John. New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1968. 118.

somebody else and live on the profit. To hear two farmers talk the towns were full of men who had sold farms for the profit and an easy life.<sup>234</sup>

For Johnson it never happens and instead, he becomes caught up in an endless round of soul destroying toil on a variety of farms, with owners who have become almost inhuman in their unceasing, poverty stricken war against the bush. On the last of these in the King Country, his boss Stenning tells Johnson "It's a damn bloody hard country where-ever you live it."<sup>235</sup> Stenning was battling re-growth and fern as was every other farmer that had cleared bush and repeats the hopeful refrain: "Give grass a chance, that's what they say, and it will beat the fern." Inevitably, in the lonely, surly boredom of the hill country farm, tragedy strikes and Johnson is on the run. "He had to go a long way this time to disappear. . . . This was too small a country for the fugitive. . . . He was going to the bush country. . . . It would need not courage, but patience and endurance".<sup>236</sup> Johnson had acquired these qualities during the hardships of the Depression and work camps as well as his time on farms. In the end it required courage as well for Johnson to survive his months of isolation, hunger and exposure in the Kaimanawa Ranges where his resources and spirit are tested to the limit by the elements and the unforgiving forest, which both protects and challenges him. Johnson needs the bush to hide him from capture; the bush fulfils this need, but at the same time it is a fight for survival. The bush was:

. . . deep, thick and matted, great trees going up to the sky, and beneath them a tangle of ferns . . . the ground heavy with layers of rotting leaves and mould.

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<sup>234</sup>Mulgan, John. *Man Alone*. (1939) Auckland: Penguin Books, 1972.

<sup>235</sup>Mulgan, John. *Man Alone*. 77.

<sup>236</sup>Mulgan, John. *Man Alone*. 130.

To go forward at all was difficult, held back all the time by twining undergrowth. . . .<sup>237</sup>

The forest itself restrains Johnson, holding him within its grasp, as it did with Geoffrey and Eve in *Toll of the Bush*, until he accepts it on its own terms. In the depths of the Kaimanawas, he builds a camp and settles down to exist “There came on him a settled apathy which stopped him from feeling the conditions in which he lived . . . it was a sickness against which he had to fight.” After a while “Johnson lost all real count of time there in the dark loneliness of the bush.” He has difficulty feeding himself and “He guessed that someone who really knew that ways of the bush could have found them (fern roots) but he was unsuccessful himself.” For Johnson the struggle against the bush is psychological as much physical. “He felt within himself a great solitude . . . there was a heaviness of the bush that pressed upon him and weighed him down . . . .”<sup>238</sup> After a period of stillness imprisoned in the womb of bush he found himself now accepting the discomforts that had at first disturbed him” and he reached a stage where : . . . he would sit for hours by the smoking fire outside his cave in dreams that were half sleep, and then even to go and hunt birds was an effort for him.” Johnson realises that he has to face his fear of the world outside and his weakened state by fighting it, by coming through on the other side, and re-entering the world. The third part of his trial is his struggle to find his way out onto the East Coast. When the time comes it is becomes difficult to give up his warm comforting cave and like a baby being born, in a fury he packs up his things and begins the fight to get out. That rebirth is a long struggle which he almost loses. For days he claws his way out: “He came, on this journey to hate the heavy silence of the bush and the dense obstructions that it offered him, where before he had welcomed it as sanctuary . . . He was exhausted by the effort of forcing his way though

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<sup>237</sup>Mulgan, John. *Man Alone*. 139

<sup>238</sup>Mulgan, John. *Man Alone*. 142.



this jungle that seemed to grow more and more thickly as he went on . . . Supple-jack and bush lawyer caught and tripped him . . . The continual, sightless darkness of the bush was like a nightmare.”<sup>239</sup> Exhausted and starving, near the end of his strength, Johnson is finally delivered up from the bush. Making for a hut seen in a brief parting of heavy clouds he bursts through the door into light and warmth and human company where he is given respite to reassess his life and future. His incarceration within the bush has been punishment enough for his crime, for which he nearly paid for his own life, but also brought him face to face with his strengths and weaknesses as well as the duality of nature. Johnson admits to Bill Crawley that: “I found it tougher than expected.” Mulgan makes the point at the end of the novel that the concrete jungle can be just as frightening or comforting as the forests. Johnson, still on the run in England, hides for a short time in London which he liked: “It was pleasant to wander about among so many people. There were so many people that no one cared for individuals. It was as lonely and as impersonal as living in the bush.” Survival in the city of commerce and trade requires a resilience and inner reserve against rejection and alienation, similar to those required in the wilderness. Mulgan saw New Zealanders as a people shaped like Johnson by their environment; taciturn, unsentimental and detached but with deep inner reserves. A society that had warred against the wilderness to be born, and survive. Johnson, after his ordeal, reaches a point where nothing really worries him and he has gained inner peace. Perhaps this is what Mulgan hoped for New Zealand society. Frank Sargeson, on the other hand, while he felt an initial repulsion for the New Zealand bush, eventually grew to love it. For him, personally, his uncle’s high country hill farm became a place for self-testing and self-knowledge but on a practical level he was also concerned about erosion, as he saw the land being washed into the sea.

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<sup>239</sup>Mulgan, John. *Man Alone*. 146

The pitiless struggle with the land portrayed by Mulgan is also paid tribute to by Denis Glover in a poignant poem *The Magpies*, in which Tom and Elizabeth begin to farm with youth, strength and beauty on their side, but:

Year in year out they worked  
     While the pines grew overhead,  
 And Quardle oodle ardle wardle doodle  
     The magpies said.

But all the beautiful crops soon went  
     To the mortgage man instead /

Elizabeth is dead now (it's years ago)  
     Old Tom went light in the head /

The farm's still there. Mortgage corporations  
     Couldn't give it away.  
 And Quardle oodle ardle wardle doodle  
     The magpies said.<sup>240</sup>

There were many during the Depression that walked off their farms only to end up in the work camps that Allan Mulgan describes with such depressing detail in *Man Alone*.

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<sup>240</sup>Glover, Denis. "The Magpies" in *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse*, 219.

Short story writer Frank Sargeson, was alerted to the problems of deforestation when staying on his uncle's King Country farm in his late teens, and the attitudes formed then were to influence him for life. On his first visit to the farm at nineteen, his impressions of the bush echo Monte Holcroft's:

But once again I felt repelled: the hills that heaved themselves up in every direction near and far seemed to be forever enclosed in an impenetrable sheath of silence: . . . and the bush where it still climbed the hills was so positively dark and forbidding that I felt a thrill of terror as I remembered my previous night's ride.<sup>241</sup>

However, repeated visits to the farm over time were to change his view:

. . . part of the attraction of my uncle's farm was that by walking into the bush only a few miles in almost any direction you could risk your chances of getting lost: and there was also the thrill of treading ground and wondering whether any human foot had ever trod there previously.<sup>242</sup>

Out of this visit to the farm emerged one of Sargeson's short stories, *Gods Live in Woods*. In it, much of the dialogue centres on conversations between Uncle Henry and his nephew, Roy, that sum up Sargeson's own uncle's misgivings over land clearance that he describes in his memoir *Once is Enough*. They are the same misgivings expressed by Guthrie-Smith in about 1940. In

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<sup>241</sup>Sargeson, Frank. *Once is Enough*. Wellington: A.H & A.W Reed Ltd., 1973. 46.

<sup>242</sup>Sareson, Frank. *Once is Enough*, 46.

*Once is Enough*, Sargeson writes that when he first saw the farm, most of the bush had been cleared and milled excepting a few patches that his uncle had decided to keep.

. . . filling a long wide gully between the two spurs was the only piece of bush left on the farm. Everywhere else you saw only the grass, sheep and cattle dotted about, fern and manuka getting away, the fire blackened skeletons of trees still standing, and the great bare faces with the clay and papa showing.<sup>243</sup>

It had been as though when he took up his land in the year 1913 he returned to European beginnings in New Zealand a hundred years previously, cramming into seven years a sort of small-scale repetition of his country's history - repeating in his ignorance, as he would later on admit, some of the worst mistakes the pioneers had made.<sup>244</sup>

Uncle Henry, in *Gods Live in Woods*, expresses Sargeson's Uncle's regrets:

Roy wanted to know, didn't he feel like cutting the bush out?

No. Henry said, I've done enough of that

Why? Roy said. Wouldn't it pay?

Oh yes, Henry said, there'd be money in it all right.

In his memoir, Sargeson recalls that his uncle accompanied him to watch a "drive" where a single tree is felled in such a way as to bring down as many others, previously scarfed, in its path as possible. The young Sargeson was excited by the prospect:

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<sup>243</sup>Sargeson, Frank "Gods Live in Woods." In *Collected Stories: 1934-1963*. Auckland: Longman Paul Ltd., 1969. 241.

<sup>244</sup>Sargeson, Frank. *Once is Enough*. 53.



I immediately determined not to miss my chances of seeing this destructive wonder; nor, as it turned out, could my uncle resist the attraction either, despite his being doubtful about accompanying me to begin with. I remember he said it was as though a man excused himself for going to see somebody hanged away back in the days when public hanging was reckoned a respectable way of doing a man in: and what he was speaking was his suspicion that it was ignorant folly to cut and burn the hill-country bush when the advantage might be so transient, and the permanent damage so very serious.<sup>245</sup>

The resulting damage is voiced in *Gods Live in Woods*. Roy observes the hill slopes that had retained some grass, but were scarred by slips in the clay and papa. “You could see some posts and wire sticking out of the clay. “That one came down in the flood last winter”, Henry said. “A man is lucky to have any farm left”. As they stand together watching two creeks intermingle, one from the bush and one from the cleared hills: “You couldn’t help noticing that the water was cloudy in one and clear in the other” and Uncle Henry observes: “A man can stand here and watch his farm going down to the sea.”<sup>246</sup> Sargeson here reinforced the huge ecological damage that had occurred and which his uncle was well aware of. In *Once is Enough* Sargeson commented that when his uncle first arrived it had not occurred to him that this country, allotted by government ballot in 1913, was unsuitable for grass for sheep and didn’t for several years after the bush had been burned: “How could it when newly cleared ground, temporarily enriched

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<sup>245</sup>Sargeson, Frank. *Once is Enough*. 57

<sup>246</sup>Sargeson, Frank. *Gods Live in Woods*. 242

by potash, would for a season or two grow grass that came up higher than a man was tall.”<sup>247</sup> In Sargeson’s third book of his memoirs he drew attention to the magic of top dressing, as he recalled the huge amount of labour that had gone into reclaiming the New Zealand wilderness and “making two blades of grass grow where none had grown before” and writes: “Those were the days when the flash-in-the-pan consequences of the application to the soil of chemically prepared phosphate dust were about to seduce the farming community into a belief that if only you could afford to put enough on, that was to say superphosphate, your pasture problems would be solved for ever.”<sup>248</sup> The miracle of top dressing is also addressed in less well known writer, Neil Rennie’s novel, *The Super Man* which is set in the early 1950s. Heather comments “Aerial top-dressing’s marvellous. When I think of the way my father slogged to spread some manure on just the easier hills of our farm - and now an aeroplane flies over and whoosh, it’s on.”<sup>249</sup> Rennie also notes the struggle to convert farmers to aerial top-dressing.<sup>250</sup> What is not mentioned, of course, are the environmental problems this would cause. Farmers and manufacturers of superphosphate in the 1950s were unaware of the future ecological damage caused by chemical laden farm run-off into streams. Once again, trying to mend the adverse impacts of past interference with the indigenous ecology of the country was to bring increased problems for the future.

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<sup>247</sup>Sargeson, Frank. *Once is Enough*. 53.

<sup>248</sup>Sargeson quotes a woman Labour politician in her election speech as saying: “Yes, we’re going to help the farmer, yes he’ll get all the manure he needs, and no matter what sort of manure it is, phosphate, yes, and yes! *Superphosphate!* . . .”  
Sargeson, Frank. *Never Enough*. Wellington: A.H.& A.W. Reed.1977. 22.

<sup>249</sup>Rennie, Neil. *The Super Man*. Auckland: Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop. 1988. 179.

<sup>250</sup>Rennie, Neil. *The Super Man*. 160

### Native Alien: *Pinus Radiata*

Seven ageing pine-trees hide  
 Their heads in air but, planted on bare knees,  
 Supplicate wind and tide.<sup>251</sup>

*Pinus radiata* was first planted in the 1850s and within 30 years there were large plantations in Canterbury and both pines and other exotic softwood were grown for building. The soft wood of these timbers made them susceptible to rot and borer infestation but the treatment to preserve these timbers has created an environmental problem of its own.<sup>252</sup> Currently, there are 995,000 hectares of productive exotic forests in New Zealand, mainly on the high plateau of the central North Island. This has relevance because of the impact of *Pinus radiata* on the New Zealand psyche. Pines have been here almost as long as the Europeans. As much as the native bush, the pine tree has impacted on New Zealanders as part of our heritage and identification with the land. Above all other imported species, excepting perhaps the macrocarpa, the gloomy pine seems to have impressed itself on the New Zealand mind; at a psychological level it has “gone native” unlike the oak or silver birch.

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<sup>251</sup>Curnow, Allen. *A Small Room with Large Windows*. The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse. 211.

<sup>252</sup>A Timber Preservation Authority to license acceptable preservation plants was set up in 1953 *New Zealand Encyclopedia*. 440

Disposal of treated timber and sawdust from the construction industry is one of the largest wastes to landfill in New Zealand. Preserved timber cannot be burnt nor can the shavings be used as soil conditioner. In addition, the sites where timber was treated or stacked have become heavily contaminated with the chemicals leaching into the surrounding soil.



Now in a field azure rapidly folding  
 Swells a cloud sable, a bad bitching squall  
 Thrashes the old pines, has them twitching  
 Root and branch, rumouring a Gotterdämmerung.  
 Foreknowledge infects them to the heart.<sup>253</sup>

Pines are a recurring alternative “tree image” in the poetry and prose of the mid twentieth century which is not surprising considering that they are so obviously part of our national landscape, replacing the native forests. It has even been given as a nick name to a past All Black of impressive stature “Pine-tree Meads.” It is curious that a leading player in the country’s national



Peter BROMHEAD, *One Tree Hill*, c. 2001, Artist

game wasn’t christened Kauri or Totara Meads, or even Tane Mahuta.<sup>254</sup> Presumably either the visual appearance or the half rhyming of tree and Meads was a subconscious agent in the choice. The pine tree’s power as a national icon was reinforced by public outcry when the lone pine on One Tree Hill was attacked in October 1994 by Maori protester, Mike Smith. Not only did the “emotional cacophony which followed the attack overwhelm Smith’s message of opposition to

<sup>253</sup>Curnow, Allen. “A Small Room with Large Windows” in *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse* ed. Allen Curnow. Auckland: Blackwood and Janet Paul, 1960. 212.

<sup>254</sup>Colin Meads, South Island farmer who played in the position of “lock” for the All Black Rugby Union team in the 1960s.



the national government's fiscal envelope",<sup>255</sup> but anger at the attempted destruction of that rather ragged descendant of the Californian Monterey Pine conflicted with the fact that it was not a native, so why were some Aucklanders so enraged and grieved?. Was it merely because it had been there for 120 years, or was it something deeper? Are the seven ageing pine-trees in the opening line of Curnow's poem the seven ages of New Zealanders who identify so strongly with the pine trees that were planted as a poor substitute for the native bush; or planted as shelter belts from the howling "roaring forties" gales and as shade from the pitiless glare of the man made, treeless landscape. Plantation pines, that made money in timber, pulp and paper. Pine trees and pine plantations recur time and again in our literature, often as a background to a poem and sometimes, as in Maurice Gee's short story *Right Hand Man*, as symbol for the sickness of the narrow, imprisoned suburban mind or an attempt at gaining power.

The central feature in Maurice Gee's short story *Right Hand Man*, is a scruffy pine plantation on the edge of a suburban playground which becomes the focus of a local council versus public debate after a man is seen to expose himself to young girls before disappearing into the trees. Environmentalists want to save the plantation as an oasis of green in suburbia, in order to fight suburban neurosis. The women with suburban neurosis want to cut them down in order to protect their children from perverts and rapists. The central character, councillor Vincent Brown, swings the vote in council in order to make his mark before retirement, following years of impotent service to the city. Vincent goes to the plantation to see for himself the place where the pervert hangs around.

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<sup>255</sup>Chisholm, Donna. "Branching out from One Tree Hill to Parliament." *Sunday Star-Times*, July 14, 2002, Section A4.

“The shadow of the pines lay over the climbing frames . . . The trees themselves were secretive and ragged. He could see how they could attract a pervert. As he drives along the unsealed road: It astonished him that an area like this should exist in the middle of the city . . . He could not understand how he had overlooked it. He could feel the threat of the place - a stirring in his blood - and knew as he climbed out of his car and stood in the presence of the trees that he was facing something dark and untamed that must be brought under control.

Here again the metropolitan urge to destroy a mass of trees as something tangibly threatening, reasserts itself. Vincent’s response is instinctive and brings him face to face with the primal, dark urges within him. As he stands there and watches the school girls from amongst the trees “darkness seems to enclose” him as he identifies with the pervert and for a moment he sees “how the act would explode one into light and power.” The pine plantation becomes a symbol of fear for Vincent, something he doesn’t understand and is therefore a threat to his sanity. It is a symbol of the misused power city councils have, with which they buy votes, and it is a symbol of the long warfare for supremacy of urbanisation over the wilderness.

Vincent’s determination to get rid of the plantation is intensified by the previous mayor’s son Mark, a poet and environmentalist who tries to save the trees. The day the trees are cut Vincent and Mark watch together, the one in vindictive and self-righteous triumph, the other in sadness. “Another tree crashed down. A fractured branch pierced its foliage and stood yellow and bleeding in the light . . . he took out the balaclava . . . I cared for those pines in a way you’ll never know. They were part of me.” Vincent’s understanding was lost in an envy in him like a

flush of blood.”<sup>256</sup> For Mark, emasculated and derided by his brutal father, has to “do things” in order to get by – and the pine trees were his friends, concealing and protecting him. Vincent becomes aware of a sense of loss and failure as he drives away to report Mark to the authorities. The significance of the pine plantation for each of the individuals or groups in Gee’s story is a reflection of their own natures, imaginations and perversions and at the end the shrill voices of the women demanding vengeance is echoed by the screaming of the chain saws. Mark loses the protective haven from which he gains his only source of power. Vincent’s triumph in the end is hollow, and the psychological power he expected to gain from destroying the plantation eludes him.

### Roderick Finlayson: Prophet Environmentalist

Modern Materialistic Science results only in the Consuming of Natural Resources and in the Disintegration of Society. It is Death feeding on Life.

So wrote Finlayson, in his pamphlet *Our Life in this Land*, (1940) in which his purpose was to: “re-affirm my faith in the land and the people as the only source from which new life may spring. Which is not to say that this growth shall be self-resurrecting nor that the people shall not need a saviour.”<sup>257</sup>

It is Finlayson, who in *Our Life in this Land* encouraged the 1940s readership to look at the direction New Zealand society was taking. The pamphlet reads like an early version of the 1975 Values Party Manifesto. Finlayson, however, was not only concerned with deforestation, but the

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<sup>256</sup>Gee, Maurice. *Right Hand Man*. 189.

<sup>257</sup>Finlayson, Roderick. *Our Life in this Land*. Easter Monday 1940. Auckland: Facsimile Edition. Woolmore Printing Ltd. 1985.

wider negative aspects in society that he regarded as a direct result of moving away from a non-technological, rural ideology (a somewhat Romantic view) to a materialistic urban, capitalist environment. A major component of his social thesis was concern for the factory worker “alienated from the product he is making and from the social system which demands its manufacture. Such work is drudgery, soulless and predictable routine which confers on its victim no pleasure and no true reward . . .”<sup>258</sup> for it is the machine that makes the product and there is no personal creativity involved. John Muirhead suggests that “although he had no formal affiliations with the left,” Finlayson’s sympathies lay with Marxist doctrine. The way the settlers had treated the land by removing the forests is just one aspect of this separation from nature and the land in the pursuit of personal wealth. In his introduction to Finlayson’s collection of short stories, *Brown Man’s Burden*, Bill Pearson asserts that Finlayson’s thesis in his stories is to “question the worth of the values of our industrial society”, ideas that were stimulated by D’Arcy Cresswell. He commented that Cresswell, like the Victorian social critics, Carlyle, Ruskin and Arnold “attacked the values of utilitarianism and the consequences of industrial capitalism” and maintained that the only answer to the ugliness of our society was to reawaken, through poetry, “a properly religious attitude to Nature and the land, restoring harmony to the earth.” (p.xv). Finlayson subscribed to this view, reiterated in an unsigned *Landfall* article (possibly Charles Brasch, the editor) which begins, “In every society that is not fossilised or enslaved men are looking all the time for writers and other artists to speak for them and to them . . .”<sup>259</sup> a view that continues in the twentyfirst century to be promulgated as a valid method of communicating social

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<sup>258</sup>Muirhead, John. *The Social Thesis and Prose Fiction of Roderick Finlayson*. Thesis. Massey University. 1971. 24. Quoted from Roderick Finlayson. “Bread and Butter and Good Taste: some thoughts for the patriots” *New Zealand Tablet*, July 14, 1943. 8.

<sup>259</sup>Muirhead, John. *The Social Thesis*, 23.



ills in an ecologically damaged environment. Muirhead contends that in Finlayson's rejection of an industrialisation that divorces man from nature,

“...the farmer is no longer a cultivator, he is the rural foil to the urban industrialist, subservient to the machines and technology of the “chemico-tractor monoculture” in which he is involved.”<sup>260</sup> . . . .

The rise of the huckstering class and its political agents made impossible the harmony of man with Nature and destroyed the hope of a social order founded upon that harmony.<sup>261</sup>

For Finlayson, the beginning of this mechanisation came with the refrigeration and mass production of meat for the overseas market. The seeds however, were sown with the establishment of timbermills, the export of native timber for profit, and the flax industry which so adversely affected the Maori lifestyle and health, in the previous century. His answer for society to retrieve themselves from disaster was to return to nature, to the bucolic life, to small farms, looking towards nature as their guide for all aspects of physical and spiritual existence. He strongly advocated ideas of soil replenishment and composting as it is from the soil that all life is sustained.

Culture cannot be founded except upon the most honest and simple of bases. Culture is growth, not a veneer. And what it grows from is the soil and the honest cultivation of the soil, that is agriculture. But we see

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<sup>260</sup>Muirehead, John. *The Social Thesis*, 23.

<sup>261</sup>Finlayson, Roderick. *Our Life in this Land*. 1940. Auckland: Facsimile Edition, Dennis McEldowney, 1985. 10.

how we have not only neglected agriculture but how we have no true conception of that primary culture. So that after one hundred years of settlement we are strangers in a strange land, having no identity with the soil nor even any knowledge of it. We are much greater strangers indeed than our pioneering grandfathers were.

And yet, despite his somewhat romantic and radical ideas he was under no illusion that there could be a return to the past. As John Muirhead quotes from Finlayson's article "*The Sun Still Rises*", "new approaches need to be investigated".<sup>262</sup>

There is no going back to some former happier age. We must use our mental and physical resources to surmount the problems of our own age, using its resources in a new way.

Finlayson's belief can be seen as continuing today in the environmental movement in New Zealand. It is also encompassed within the Resource Management Act and the policies of the Regional Councils that administer it; the Ministry for the Environment and the work of the Department of Conservation.

Roderick Finlayson's ideas are the foreunner for the Values Party and the New Zealand environmental movement which was influenced by the 1962 publication of Rachel Carson's revolutionary *Silent Spring*; a document which set in motion a global ripple of fear for the safety and stability of the world's ecological future; a stability which will determine mankind's quality

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<sup>262</sup>Finlayson, Roderick. *Our Life in this Land*. 1940. Auckland: Facsimile Edition, Dennis McEldowney. 1985.15-16.

of life, or indeed any life at all, for as Mahatma Ghandi said: "The earth has more than enough for every man's need, but not enough for every man's greed."<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>263</sup>Ghandi, Mahatma. in the Values Party Manifesto *Beyond Tomorrow*. Wellington: 1975. 3.

## CHAPTER 7

### SILENT SPRING REVISITED<sup>264</sup>

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Hey farmer farmer  
 Put away that D. D. T.  
 Give me  
 Spots on my apples  
 But leave me the birds and bees  
 Please.<sup>265</sup>

The process of government policy, allowing for a time lag, sometimes, but not always, reflects the public mood of the time. It can also be a result of individual politicians voting in order to keep their seat in parliament, or in order to meet the policies of influential corporates who support political parties with funding. This chapter looks at New Zealand party policies that responded to changing attitudes to environmental issues from the 1960s, in particular the 1975 *Values Party Manifesto*. This document was in part a reaction to two earlier works which helped to shake the world from its ecological and environmental apathy. These were Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and *Blueprint for Survival*.

*Silent Spring* was published in 1962 and is as much an environmental classic as is *Walden* or *Tutira*. Carson's argument seriously addressed the widespread use of man-made chemicals being released into the environment, before the long-term adverse effects had been sufficiently

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<sup>264</sup>From the title of the book by Marco Gino J. Ed. *Silent Spring Revisited*. Washington DC: American Chemical Society.1987.

<sup>265</sup>Mitchell, Joni. *Big Yellow Taxi*.



assessed. *Silent Spring* caused global controversy amongst scientists and more significantly, the general public. It also aroused the ire of large chemical companies who saw Carson's thesis as a threat to their acquisition of wealth. While Carson was mainly concerned with the long-term effects of chemicals, *Silent Spring* reiterated the inter-relationship of all natural processes and organisms in a similar way to how they are addressed in *Tutira* and *Gods Live in Woods*.

Rachel Carson's thesis "emphasises the use of chlorinated hydrocarbons and organo-phosphates as the main problems leading to fish and bird kills, human nervous system disorders and death."<sup>266</sup> She also considered the effects of CHCs on water resources, the disruption off-key metabolic pathways and mutations as a "high price to pay for having no mosquitoes." Insects and diseases, she pointed out, develop resistance to chemicals and the long-term use of substances such as DDT.

Rachel Carson wrote in 1961: "DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane) . . . is now so universally used that in most minds the product takes on the harmless aspect of the familiar." Discovered in 1874 but not used widely as an insecticide until 1939, it was "hailed as a means of stamping out insect-borne disease and winning the farmer's on-going war against crop destroyers overnight. The discoverer, Paul Müller of Switzerland, won the Nobel Prize."<sup>267</sup> Partially as a result of Carson's work, DDT has since been banned in most countries, including New Zealand.

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<sup>266</sup>Marco, Gino. Ed. *Silent Spring Revisited*. xv

<sup>267</sup>Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. London: Hamish Hamilton 1963.

Carson stated that DDT is not absorbed through the skin but through the digestive tract and lungs, that because it is fat soluble, it is stored in the fatty tissues of the body, adrenal glands, liver, testes or thyroid and the intestines, that the fatty storage depots act as biological magnifiers, "so that an intake of as little as one tenth of one part per million in the diet results in storage of about 10-15 parts per million, and increase of one hundredfold or more", and that the poison may be passed from mother to offspring in human milk. It is, (like PCBs or polychlorinated bi-phenyls), passed on in the links of the food chain and never breaks down.

The disastrous consequences for humans and animals as DDT entered the food chain were the direct results of a new chemical being released into the environment without risk management procedures being in place.<sup>268</sup> Carson wrote:

It is not my contention that chemical insecticides must never be used. I do contend that we have put poisonous and biologically potent chemicals indiscriminately into the hands of persons largely or wholly ignorant of their potential for harm.”<sup>269</sup>

Carson also noted the despoilation of protected areas:

Trees within the Connecticut Arboretum Natural Area were seriously injured when the town of Waterford sprayed the roadsides with chemical weed killers in 1957. Even large trees not directly sprayed were affected. The leaves of the oaks began to curl and turn brown . . . Then new shoots began to be put forth and grew with abnormal rapidity . . . Two season later, large branches on these trees had died, others were without leaves.”<sup>270</sup> Carson concluded that: “. . .our desire for total control of nature was conceived in ignorance.”

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<sup>268</sup>Today’s equivalent environmental issue in New Zealand is the current debate on genetic engineering or GE. (known in Britain as genetic modification or GM, a less aggressive term and therefore supposedly more acceptable to the public) As with other environmental issues, the argument against genetic engineering is opposed by those who see it as a way of making progress (money). Those who take a more cautious approach are accused of preventing progress. Governments are influenced by a powerful and wealthy business sector which complicates the issue accordingly.

<sup>269</sup>Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. 11.

<sup>270</sup>Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. 58.

Rachel Carson made a number of major contributions to the environmental movement. One was the growth of books that foretold local or global environmental disaster as a result of releasing diseases like myxomatosis into the environment without proper testing. Today this genre is being repeated as the discourse on genetic engineering is waged between the scientists employed by multi-corporates and environmentalists. A recently published fiction example is Chris Baker's *Kokopu Dreams*, in which the imported calcivims to control rabbits mutated and killed off most of New Zealand's human population within three weeks, threatening the continuation of the species. The survivors are thrown back to a pre-industrial civilisation where the bush, the rivers, and the wild life are intact but where the infrastructure of society is destroyed. Sean says:

There weren't many folk left and mostly they knew how to behave. If they pushed here they'd get a bulge there. Every action had a price. Even doing nothing had a price.<sup>271</sup>

Chris Baker is highlighting the ecological issues that Carson had raised. If nature is tampered with, the results may be unexpectedly unpleasant, spreading outwards like ripples on a pond and affecting everything, because nothing in nature stands alone. Carson's book also influenced legislation in the United States<sup>272</sup> (and elsewhere, including New Zealand) and issued a direct challenge to the general public who not only grasped her argument but championed it. *Silent Spring* made ecology a household word. As John Moore writes in his essay *The Not So Silent Spring*: "An entire nation, which was emerging from the apathy of the 1950s and just beginning

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<sup>271</sup>Baker, Chris. *Kokopu Dreams*. Wellington: Huia Publications. 2000. 1

<sup>272</sup>One result of *Silent Spring* was Congressional action leading to the establishment of the USEPA (United States Environmental Protection Agency).



to experiment with the heady activism of the 1960s, proved to be a fertile field for its message . . . I believe *Silent Spring* is remembered today because it prompted us to ask the right questions. . . . What is the proper role of pesticides in our society?"<sup>273</sup>

Carson's book had far-reaching effects beyond North America. Social upheaval was also a phenomenon of Europe, Britain, Australia and New Zealand. *Silent Spring* showed that the general public "given the impetus, may have a greater ability to see the whole picture than do some highly trained experts."<sup>274</sup> Ordinary people began to question the inter-relationships between politics, economics, business, consumerism, population and the Earth's ability to sustain continual growth.

### Out of *Silent Spring*: Blueprint for Survival

The 1970s are noted for radical change in attitudes towards environmental issues. In 1972 one of the most influential articles in English to follow *Silent Spring* came from the editors of *Ecologist*. This was *Blueprint for Survival*<sup>275</sup> which addresses human ecology, environmental policy and the conservation of natural resources. One result of this renewed environmental concern was the proliferation of environmental books directed at the general public in the 1970s and 1980s<sup>276</sup> and second was the establishment of environmental groups and business

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<sup>273</sup>Moore, John "The Not So Silent Spring." *Silent Spring Revisited*. 23

<sup>274</sup>Briggs, Shirley, A. "Rachel Carson: her Vision." *Silent Spring Revisited*. 9

<sup>275</sup>*Blueprint for Survival*. Ed. Edward Goldsmith et al. *Ecologist*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 1972

<sup>276</sup>Books such as Dr Paul Erlich's *The Population Bomb* (1971), *Household Ecology* (1971) by Julia Percival and Pixie Burger, and Dr Ernst F. Shumacher's *Small is Beautiful: a study of economics as if people mattered* (1973). The 1980s saw a second wave, for example Erik



programmes world wide.<sup>277</sup> In New Zealand there was a third and different response: the launching in 1971 of the world 's first green party.

### **Beyond Tomorrow: The Values Party Manifesto 1975**

What is quite clear is that a way of life which bases itself on materialism, that is on permanent limitless expansion, in a finite environment, cannot last long, and that its life expectation is the shorter, the more successfully it pursues its expansionist objectives.<sup>278</sup>

This quote forms the introductory paragraph in the Values Party Manifesto released in 1975. *Beyond Tomorrow*, one of New Zealand's "Green" texts and a major environmental document, follows Roderick Finlayson's arguments. As an environmental document it addresses all issues that affect the inter-dependent well-being of the planet and the societies it supports. The basic premise of the document is that continued economic growth is not sustainable. The writers argue that the two most threatening aspects of growth are population growth and the pressure it places on the environment, and industrial growth driven by profit. Both use up finite raw materials.

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Millstone's *Food Additives: Taking the lid off what we really eat* (1986) and *The Green Consumer Guide* (1989) by Elkington and Hailes and published by The Natural Step.

<sup>277</sup>The "I Care" Campaign to promote the protection of the environment was run in 1974. NZBC radio and television enlisted the aid of advertisers and listeners to clean up their act. Moore, Mike. *Beyond Today*. 1981. 57.

Keep "New Zealand Beautiful" began about this time. Overseas in the 1980s programmes such as "The Natural Step" from Sweden and "Blue Angel" eco-labelling in Germany were initiated.

<sup>278</sup>Schumacher, Dr E. F. - Economic advisor, British National Coal Board

The Values Party advocated a "Stable-State" society. "The Values party believes that the most needed environmental reform in New Zealand is a conscious commitment to stabilising the population level and the eventual attainment of a steady-state economy",<sup>279</sup> a view directly opposed to the commitment to continual growth, in the twentyfirst century.

Their environmental policies included industry, the idea that the polluter pays through extra taxation and the responsibility for industries to clean up their own mess. Today this is reflected in the Resource Management Act 1991 and enforced by local government and the Environment Court. Many of the policies were unrealistic or idealistic; in industry they proposed to stop the establishment of new polluting industries. In the light of modern technology it is often possible for highly polluting industries to meet required environmental standards that minimise adverse effects on the environment, without limiting their growth. A direct influence of *Silent Spring* is evident in their policy regarding chemicals:



Artist unknown, in *Beyond Today*, by Mike Moore, 1981

<sup>279</sup>*Beyond Tomorrow*, 1975, 37.

- Enact new laws to ensure that chemicals are subject to stringent scientific tests before being registered for use . . . especially those which may persist in food chains.<sup>280</sup>

And under environment:

- Give teeth to all environmental legislation and law enforcement.
- Start a continuing multi-faceted public education programme on environmental and ecological matters, especially at all levels in school.
- Require the Consumers Institute to take into account the ecological effects of relevant products when it publicises recommendations on them.<sup>281</sup>

Although it took another twenty years to change attitudes at government level, “environmental teeth” are now available through the Environment Court, which was established to assist with enforcing the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) but it is a “bottom of the cliff” approach instead of pollution prevention which is the focus today. Environmental Education took twenty years to be established as part of the school curriculum, and the Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) of products is today barely touched on.

Under Land Utilisation and Ecology, *Beyond Tomorrow* asserts: “Land is not only an economic resource. It is also the Nation’s most important recreational asset and as such belongs to the people of New Zealand.”<sup>282</sup> This was obviously not a new idea, as seen in the previous chapters,

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<sup>280</sup>*Beyond Tomorrow*, 37.

<sup>281</sup>*Beyond Tomorrow*, 39.

<sup>282</sup>*Beyond Tomorrow*, 25.

but it was a new approach, as for the first time it had been incorporated in an integrated “green” manifesto. They (the Values Party) proposed that regional communities would be empowered to set aside residual areas of native bush, forest or vegetation in farming districts as reserves.

## Values and Indigenous Forests

They took all the trees  
and put them in a tree museum  
and charged the people  
a dollar and a half to see them.<sup>283</sup>

The Values Party Manifesto policy on forestry is their briefest, but also the most direct. They proposed to classify all indigenous forests as either protection or production forests, with the object of preserving the remaining virgin forests, limit the planting of *Pinus radiata* in favour of alternative species, (including natives) and separate the production-related divisions of the forestry service from the environmental division. Significantly, a separate paragraph addresses the future of the West Coast native beech forests, 663,000 acres of which had been earmarked by the then current government for logging. The proposal included replanting 300,000 acres in exotic radiata pine. The scheme had been shelved, while a further proposal was investigated which included the entire northern half of the South Island. The Manifesto clearly outlines these intentions and their opposition to the proposals:

The Values Party would firstly, oppose the establishment of a Kraft mill to exploit West Coast beech forests; secondly, halt all clear felling of West Coast beech forests and take no action on proposals for large scale

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<sup>283</sup>Mitchell, Joni. *Big Yellow Taxi*



milling pending a report from an independent study group, and thirdly, prevent exotic conversion of Southland beech forest but permit continued management on a continuous yield basis.<sup>284</sup>

Values, then, were clear about their intentions to restrict both felling of native timber and large plantings of exotics<sup>285</sup> and they clearly recognised the loss of forest as being of utmost importance ecologically. At the same time they agreed that some activity would continue at the present level as livelihoods and the economy were dependent on that.

*Beyond Tomorrow* is an important environmental document because it was revolutionary. The document clearly illustrates the recognised links between population, industrial growth, economics and environmental degradation and currently available alternatives. The writers support their arguments with some scientific data and references to overseas literature. In addition, the writers make an effort to present an impartial argument and there is little or no reference, negative or otherwise, to the existing government or other party policies. For the first time, a New Zealand political party attempted to place the well-being of the environment of the country as a primary consideration for our continued sustainable survival. Not all the policies were viable and the Values Party did not come to power, but in 1972 they fielded 42 candidates and attracted two percent of the total national vote, which indicated that there was growing interest in environmental issues. By 1975 their arguments had become so compelling that in Palmerston North alone the ecologically committed flocked to vote Values, mostly instead of Labour, with the (unfortunate) result of dislodging the local Labour candidate.<sup>286</sup> What matters is

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<sup>284</sup>*Beyond Tomorrow*, 30.

<sup>285</sup>*Beyond Tomorrow*, 30.

<sup>286</sup>A National Government replaced Labour in that year.

that their ideas persisted, filtering into the other parties' policies and demonstrating the changed attitudes not only to the native forests, but the environment as a whole. The ramifications for Aotearoa New Zealand's future were to be considerable.

### **Out of Beyond Tomorrow: Beyond Today**

**(A look at a sustainable economy, resource management and control and a history of environmental politics in New Zealand.)**

Everyone claims to be an environmentalist until it might cost them something.<sup>287</sup>

A comparison of *Beyond Tomorrow* should be made with the above document published by Mike Moore (Labour's Shadow Minister for the Environment and Housing) in 1981, because it demonstrates how some of the environmental issues were absorbed by the main political parties. The popularity of the Values Party and the questions they raised put enough pressure on the two main political parties, especially Labour, to ensure that they incorporated environmental issues into their policies. Moore at no stage gives any indication of where the ideas originated from in his "history", and of course the Values Party Manifesto was not the only document available on ecology and environment. However, he writes: "I've traced a number of important and historic decisions on environmental matters over the past decade . . ." He states that he has attempted to put together "some arguments for a sustainable economy, resources and development" . . . and that he has included in Labour's Policy on the Environment for 1981 "the principles and programmes of which will remain as firm party policy."

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<sup>287</sup> Moore, Mike. *Beyond Today: A look at a sustainable economy, resource management and control and a history of environmental politics in New Zealand*. Christchurch: Papanui LEC, 1981.

The title of Moore's document invites discussion as it implies that *Beyond Tomorrow* was an impossible goal somewhere in the future while *Beyond Today* has more immediacy and relevancy for the present. It is not a "Green" text in the same sense as *Beyond Tomorrow* because it mainly builds on the former's ideas rather than being innovative. The focus has shifted to economics and resources and Moore quotes Schumacher's argument that "in an economic sense we treat our resources as income when they are in fact capital which earns interest".<sup>288</sup> He makes the point that selling off current energy resources (like kauri and flax in the past) is just like borrowing, in fact it's borrowing from the future to pay for the past which is worse." The Values Party makes little direct reference to resources except in relation to consumerism which they state "stimulates economic expansion . . . and wastes resources such as energy, materials and time."<sup>289</sup> It is interesting to note the references to forests in the light of the statements made by the Values Party. "The Government's (National) decision to call for commercial proposals for the use of the South Island beech forests was made after investigation into the environmental implications." Moore notes that "wide ranging safeguards to preserve the environmental value of the forests have been incorporated, and a South Island Beech Forests Management and Utilisation Council set up to advise Government on all aspects of the project." The term environmental impact report used in *Beyond Tomorrow* is used in this document in conjunction with State Forest 14 in the Kaimai Ranges "to ensure the best use of this forest." Prior to the Values Party policy, undertaking environmental impact reports by the Government prior to using natural resources did not commonly occur. By 1981, Mike Moore was suggesting that it become obligatory. Further reference to forestry in this document is mention of the Native Forests Action Council who were pressing for a nature conservancy that would locate under a single conservation-

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<sup>288</sup>*Beyond Today*, 24. Quoted from Schumacher, E. *Small is Beautiful*. n.p.

<sup>289</sup>*Beyond Tomorrow*, 33.



oriented body, all the research, planning and administration functions for all the natural Crown lands. The Minister for the Environment would chair a statutory council to control it. It is interesting to note the reference to The Commission for the Environment whose parameters they proposed to work within. The Commission for the Environment aimed to blend conservation commitment with resource management expertise, which was in effect to use the forests, but with restrictions. They saw the Conservancy's role as administering native forests, remaining unoccupied Crown lands, and national parks and reserves.<sup>290</sup> Further indications of the perception for a need for conservation is indicated in the Labour Party's 1981 Environment Policy which begins:

No longer can New Zealand pretend that resources will expand to meet insatiable demand. If there is to be long-term development this will be dependent upon a sustainable economy. Unless conservation and development are fully integrated, and not viewed as opposites, this will not be achieved.<sup>291</sup>

In relation to indigenous forests they reiterated the need for conservation and preservation while at the same time protecting the timber industry, found in article 35 and 36.<sup>292</sup> In article 37 they

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<sup>290</sup> Moore, Mike. *Beyond Today*, 81.

<sup>291</sup> Moore, Mike. *Beyond Today*, 89.

<sup>292</sup> 35. Though New Zealand native forests are a valuable scientific, cultural and commercial resource, they must not be abused, misused or wasted. Labour recognises that in the North Island it is critical that we retain the remnant of virgin state forest. Labour's policy recognises the difference between North and South Island situations. Labour believes that the logging of native forests in the South Island should be reduced by a careful programme tailored to replacement levels. 93.

36. In the North Island, the commercial logging of virgin indigenous state forests will be phased out within Labour's first three year term and legal protection will be extended to the remaining



promise to support beech forest utilisation based largely on renewal of beech forests, while at the same time plant fast growing trees to sustain the timber industry. They also endorsed proposed plans to extend Westland National Parks.

### **Out of Beyond Tomorrow: The Resource Management Act 1991**

The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) was a revolutionary piece of legislation unlike anything else in the world, that reflected the changing attitudes to the New Zealand environment. Its main thrust is that it is enabling and effects based and operates from the point of view that people are able to use resources as long as they don't adversely affect the environment.<sup>293</sup>

Mike Moore had declared in *Beyond Today*: "I want to see a system where the issues of the environment are not subject to day-to-day political expediency" and the RMA was the result. It

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areas of virgin forest. Rural communities depending on sawmilling must, however, be protected. Labour will use the State's available radiata pine resources to protect sawmill employment . . .

<sup>293</sup> *Resource Management Act: Part II Purpose and Principles*

#### **5. Purpose -**

1) The purpose of this Act is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.

2) In this Act, "sustainable management" means managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being and for their health and safety while -

a) sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and

b) safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems; and

c) Avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.

#### **6. Matters of National Importance -**

c) The protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna

e) The relationship of Maori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu, and other taonga.

was intended that as a piece of permanent legislation, it would not be altered to suit the whims of different Governments or be influenced by big business.

However after eleven years of implementing the RMA it has proven more complex than was at first anticipated. For example, local government who administer and enforce the act are under resourced. In addition the act is based on cause and effect relationships but it is often difficult to pin point the cause of pollution, especially from present effects that have historical causes. There is a need to control cause rather than effects. Also, there is pressure by big business with complaints and rhetoric about the effects (often economic) of the RMA on their individual business. Generally, business is not interested in ethics and don't want to pay to clean up their act. On the other hand the environmentalists who are largely interested in ethics rather than money don't want to see the RMA watered down. Issues that are emerging are that some practitioners are beginning to think that while the ethical and philosophical underpinnings of the RMA are good, practical considerations make it difficult to work with and therefore some modification may be necessary.

### **Beyond Tomorrow: Thinking Beyond Tomorrow 2002.**

The subtitle of the Green Party's policy is "*A Framework for an Eco-nation*" and illustrates the current growing awareness on inter-relationships between business and the environment: "Government, citizens and business must work together to make it happen."<sup>294</sup> It is generally contended that business and industry are the main contributory factors towards pollution and

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<sup>294</sup>*Thinking Beyond Tomorrow: A Framework for an Eco-nation*. Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand.

global environmental degradation, although advertisers and consumers keep up demand for products and services and therefore must also accept blame.

There are two issues that I wish to mention in relation to present environmental attitudes. The first is the shift in emphasis toward managing indigenous forests, now called Forestry Recovery and the second is the use of forests as carbon sinks. A large part of the native forests of Aotearoa are now under government protection. Where Maori are the owners they are being encouraged not to mill the timber as ruthlessly as Europeans have done. However, not unreasonably in a world dominated by capitalist values, some Maori see no reason why it shouldn't be their chance to profit from their own timber as Europeans have done. Therefore alternatives are being offered Maori to find a compromise to keep the forests intact:

The government is providing \$19.7 m over seven years for the negotiation of conservation settlements to encourage Maori to retain forests and to assist with developing sustainable management for those who wish to log the forests. "The policy relates to about 57,000 hectares of native forests, mainly in Southland, allocated under the South Island Landless Natives Act (SILNA) in 1906. These forests are exempt from Forest Act requirements after a 1990 ruling that the Crown's indigenous forest policy breached the Treaty of Waitangi."<sup>295</sup> . . . In Southland a voluntary moratorium on logging began in 1999 involving

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<sup>295</sup>Article 2 of The Treaty of Waitangi ". . . confirms and guarantees to the Chiefs and Tribes of New Zealand and to the respective families and individuals thereof the full exclusive and undisturbed possession their Lands and Estates, Forests, Fisheries and other properties that they may collectively or individually possess . . ."

financial incentives for forest protection and is being extended to March 2002.

<sup>296</sup>

Elsewhere in New Zealand, in return for preservation of their lands, the Government have compensated Maori with the profits from equitable areas of state pine forests which eventually will be handed over.

There are two main thrusts in the Government Forest Recovery programme. Forest clearance caused loss of habitats and loss of species and encouraged invasion by plant pests in newly cleared areas, as Guthrie-Smith demonstrated. The combination of these ultimately destroys the ecosystem of an area. Redressing the balance through natural regeneration is being encouraged and part of this is the eradication or removal of animal and plant pests. Stock, whether cows, sheep, goats or deer, damage tree roots, graze on seedlings and trample undergrowth species. Animals also ringbark trees and compact the earth, stopping seedling growth, erode stream banks, and introduce weeds and fungal diseases into the area.<sup>297</sup> Controlling invaders such as farm stock, goats, deer, wallaby, brushtail possums, and various pest plants which overcome the bush, prevents this damage occurring and encourages the natural biodiversity of the forests. Possums are a particular pest and current figures of possums stand at over 70 million. They devour 8 million tonnes of plant material a year - around 4,000 truckloads every night.<sup>298</sup> Deer destroy native forests by trampling, browsing, stripping bark and increasing soil erosion.

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<sup>296</sup>Financial incentives given to protect native forests. *New Zealand Environment* Issue 9: 24, May 2002. 3

<sup>297</sup>*Native Forests and Wetlands: A Guide to the Care and Protection of Natural Areas*. Auckland Regional Council, 2002.

<sup>298</sup>Auckland Regional Council pamphlet: *Animal Pests of the Auckland Region*.



A second crucial area of research is the value of the forests as carbon sinks. The argument for or against the reality of global warming and climate change needs to be taken into account. However, whether or not the probable cause is part of a natural cycle as the world emerges from the last ice age, the point is that global warming has been accelerated by increasing population, man's increasing use of fossil fuels in the western industrial world and the globe's reduced capability to absorb the damage because large forests have been destroyed. Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research Report emphasises that designing strategies for monitoring indigenous forest biodiversity is important for, amongst other things, assessing carbon stored in indigenous forests, especially the podocarps and shrublands, that would contribute to the national carbon budget.<sup>299</sup> Companies question the huge cost of implementing programmes such as the Kyoto agreement, but what is the alternative? Do nothing? It is imperative the Business Round Table become less parochial and self-absorbed and recognise these are not local or national but global issues and that industry leaders are of key importance as agents for change. Conservation International is one such group of businessmen who are addressing environmental issues in a unique way, in relation to national parks and reserves.

## National Parks: The Present

New Zealand national and forest parks are well established and continue to have land added. However there is current concern for stability of flora and fauna. As mentioned previously with Papaitonga, reserves and parks are fundamentally a European construct. While they play a major role in protecting what is left of indigenous forests, flora and fauna, the European idea of "fencing off" a piece of land to preserve it, almost as a curiosity or museum piece, brings

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<sup>299</sup>Research Report 2001. Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research. New Zealand. 43. Key Contact: David Whitehead Lincoln University.

ecological problems. Both Geoff Park and Thomas Dunlap comment on their isolation as islands of wilderness increasingly surrounded by people and question the subsequent shape of their future evolution. Park writes:

“... exclusive emphasis on disparate parcels of land has ignored the insouciant freeness of wild creatures, causing disquiet to those wedded to the ‘conservation estate’, with its special places and inviolate boundaries. They should not only be regarded as isolated and protected, pristine places but as a “nourishing terrain that gives and receives life.”<sup>300</sup>

This concern with isolation is being addressed by an influential group of businessmen and actor Harrison Ford, who recognise that national parks are becoming surrounded by urban areas and that wildlife movement is becoming restricted as a result. They are negotiating to buy large tracts of land that will link up various wild life and national parks in the Americas, Asia and Africa, which will provide corridors for wild life to move along, as changes in climate occur and food supplies dwindle.

This measure will probably be unnecessary in New Zealand as there are no indigenous large mammals that need to be catered for in the event of severe climate change and the country is also geographically small. Currently, while possum eradication programmes are operational, isolated forests areas are an advantage. Nevertheless the work of Conservation International demonstrates the increasing global concern and commitment of individuals for maintaining the biodiversity of the planet.

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<sup>300</sup>Park, Geoff. “Going Between Goddesses.” In *Quicksands: Foundational Histories in Australia and New Zealand*. Sydney: Neumann, Klaus, ed. et al. UNSW Press Ltd., 1999.

## Reassessing Capitalism

The second point is the present global push to involve business in green policies in order to achieve overall sustainable economic development. In New Zealand, texts and university courses on environmental business management have become a growth industry, and companies are encouraged to have an environmental policy and management plan and to use clean technology and cleaner production practices. Reporting methods such as Triple Bottom Line have been established to measure their economic, social and environmental improvements. Richard Welford, a recognised British author in environmental business practice, writes:

. . . reform has to revolve around the fundamental ways in which we do business, in which the capitalist system forces business to operate and in the organisation of enterprises which are responsible for so much damage to date . . . business as usual is still lately alien to the sustainability of the planet. We need to recognise that the issues surrounding human life and economic activity are an interdependent part of wider ecological processes that sustain life on Earth. We must operate within those ecological processes or they will, in turn, bring about the demise of those very issues. . . .The dominant ideology of capitalism based on the exploitation of valuable resources (including people) needs to be fundamentally reassessed.”<sup>301</sup>

Paul Hawkin writes:

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<sup>301</sup>Welford, Richard. *Environmental Strategy and Sustainable Development*. London: Routledge. 1995.



The ultimate purpose of business is not, or should not be, simply to make money. Nor is it merely a system of making and selling things. The promise of business is to increase the general well-being of human kind through service, a creative invention and ethical philosophy. Making money is, on its own terms, totally meaningless, an insufficient pursuit for the complex and decaying world we live in . . . We have the capacity and ability to create a remarkably different economy, one that can restore ecosystems and protect the environment while bringing forth innovation, prosperity, meaningful work and true security.<sup>302</sup>

The changed attitudes outlined which began to be felt in New Zealand in the 1980s are some of the more positive towards the environment. There remain the negatives, for example the persistence of developers to side-step the consent process or to pressure individual groups into selling land for housing or business developments in order to make money faster. Developers buy up large amounts of land and are not required at the moment to put in parks or playgrounds for the use of the community because these have no economic value. There are also the adverse effects on people of living and working in urban air-conditioned environments of glass and steel, cut off from the natural environment. The effect of being trapped in a world driven by the Protestant work ethic where, as Roderick Finlayson had already feared, the work is often unfulfilling drudgery, is one in which man has become a “desiring machine”<sup>303</sup> straining to become replete with the production of empty consumer products. Ecopsychologist Lester Brown

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<sup>302</sup>Hawkin, Paul. “A Teasing Irony” In *Business and the Environment*. Ed. Welford, Richard et.al. London: Earthscan Publications, 1996, 5.

<sup>303</sup>From the title of the essay *Desiring Machines*. In *L'Anti-Oedipe*. English. *Anti Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatarri. Preface. Michel Foucault. London: Athlone, 1983.



points out that some ecopsychologists believe that our consumption habits are connected to deep addictive attractions and comments: "Little wonder. The advertising industry is a contingent of talented "pushers" working to make us compulsive consumers."<sup>304</sup> As a result, western civilisation has lost sight of the fundamental differences between want and need and enough. Brown clarifies ecopsychology as seeking to "free people from the addictions of the shopping mall and to encourage values that serve the life of the planet rather than imperilling it" while James Hillman suggests that we suffer from "a collective depressed exhaustion from trying to cope with the expectations of self-actualisation apart from the actual world," in a consumer oriented society. He writes:

The most radical deconstruction of subjectivity, called displacing the subject to-day would be re-placing the subject back into the world, or re-placing the subject altogether with the world.<sup>305</sup>

Environmental pressures are changing attitudes toward ecology and environment in the twentyfirst century, forcing human beings to reassess their future role in the planet's ecology in the terms of the distant past. This will impact on the way our interaction with the environment is represented in written texts.

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<sup>304</sup>Brown, Lester. "Ecopsychology and the Environmental Revolution". xvi. *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth Healing the Mind.* Ed. Theodore Roszak, et al. San Francisco. Sierra Club Books. 1995.

<sup>305</sup>Hillman, James. "A Psyche the Size of the Earth". xxi. *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth Healing the Mind.* Ed. Theodore Roszak, et al. San Francisco. Sierra Club Books. 1995.

## CHAPTER 8

# ANCIENT FORESTS AND THE PSYCHE

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Mattina recalled: . . . the walls of glass reflecting an absent forest, clearly and uncannily, with the images of huge torn trees, bowers of leaves, severed tree trunks, as if a forest grew in the sky and no longer on earth.<sup>306</sup>

Modern authors are increasingly addressing environmental issues in their writing and are examining both the psychological, physical and environmental effects of the separation of subject



Denys WATKINS, *In the Wilderness*, 1989, Artist

from world. I have chosen Patricia Grace's *Potiki*, Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* and Janet Frame's *The Carpathians* because firstly, each of these books addresses issues arising from the psychological break from the pre-European, largely forested environment of Aotearoa, and reconnection with it. Secondly, all three books were published in the 1980s within twenty years of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and in the wake the 1970s environmental movement in Aotearoa New Zealand. They reflect both changing attitudes and the concern as it was then for the threatened

environment, the effects of an industrial technological society, and the way it can perpetuate a dislocation between people and place. For example, these authors suggest that our sense of

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<sup>306</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*. Auckland: Century Hutchinson, 1998.111.

identity with place maintains unbreakable links to images of an ancient, collective inherited past, permanently implanted in our memory and awaiting recognition and reconnection, as the above quote from Janet Frame suggests. This passage describes how when foreigner Mattina recalls her first glimpse of Auckland from the air, she remembers seeing not only the plate glass representation of a modern consumer industrial society, but senses as well in the reflected clouds, the continuing presence of the great, primeval forests that were on the isthmus in the distant past. It is a presence so strong that it impresses itself in the psyche, even in one who has never had any previous connection with Aotearoa. And thirdly, while each of these authors looks at the importance of the relationship of place, environment and our sense of self, both Frame and Grace consciously demonstrate the role of writers in raising environmental awareness.

## Replacing the Subject with the World

In this final chapter I examine this reconstructed concept of people being of the world rather than merely in it. It is reconstructed only in the sense that since Descartes', it has been contended that human beings, that is their egos, are set apart from the rest of nature as self and other. The current argument is that in order to survive, "I think. Therefore I exist"<sup>307</sup> must be replaced with: We exist; one part of a whole. Due to environmental phenomena we happen to have developed cognitive ability and language. At present we are using that cognitive ability to destroy the whole. We now have the ability to finally destroy self. Therefore, for the whole to survive, the "me" and the "not-me" must be reconstructed and reconciled.

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<sup>307</sup>Descartes, Rene. *Discourse on Method*. In *The Western Intellectual Tradition* by J Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish. London: Penguin. 1960. 257.



Civilisation, in particular the Western, capitalist, consumer sector, needs to come to terms with the fact that *Homo sapiens* is only one species within an ecologically interdependent environment. The relatively new field of ecopsychology recognises that Western civilisation's estrangement from the natural world has adverse effects on both the physical and psychological well-being of people and that the break with subject from world has been not only damaging but is an artificial one. Ecopsychologists argue that contrary to Descartes hypothesis:

"The human subject has all along been implicated in the wider world of nature. How could it be otherwise, since the human subject is composed of the same nature as the world?"<sup>308</sup> And in fact some New Zealand authors, for example, Patricia Grace and Keri Hume write about the Maori interconnectedness with the land and forests as a history in which a sustainable, working relationship with the environment has never been completely lost. The psychology, ecology and spirituality of place are contained through all time in memory, legend and language.

In effect, the ecopsychological thesis is a direct reversal of René Descartes' *Discourse on Method* and its subsequent Freudian development of the individual ego; the ascendancy of self over other. Ecopsychology on the other hand supports the belief that there is an emotional bond between human beings and their natural environment; that nature and mind are inseparable. Hippocrates, as ecopsychologist James Hillman reminds us, expressed this another way, twenty five hundred years ago. He stressed the interdependence of body and mind with environment in his treatise *Airs, Waters, Places* as follows:

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<sup>308</sup>Hillman, James. "A Psyche the Size of the Earth." *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth Healing the Mind*. Ed. Theodore Roszak, et al. xix.



To grasp the disorders in any subject we must study carefully the environment of the disorder: the kind of water; the winds, the humidity, temperatures; the food and plants; the times of day; the seasons. Treatment of the inner requires attention of the outer.<sup>309</sup>

Hippocrates had therefore grasped that there are no limits to the subject; the subject does not begin and end with the skin but is part of the world and when the self is ill, the state of the environment should be taken into account. When our environment is threatened or destroyed our sense of identity and self is also threatened, as seen in *Potiki*.<sup>310</sup> Descartes' hypothesis is undergoing a reversal as we replace ourselves into the planet's ecological system. It is both a spiritual and psychological change as well as physical, and it is necessary for the planet's and our survival. Environmentalists and ecologists refer to it as sustainability.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Maori were integrated within their environment, the land, sea and forests. For them, the destruction of the native forests and dislocation from this relationship has led to serious psychological and social issues and loss of identity. On the other hand, it may have restricted the process for immigrants of identifying with their new land. What I am suggesting is that in their haste to destroy the indigenous forests in order to make Aotearoa look like somewhere else, and to sustain an alternative ideology, the process of a national identification with the spirit of the land of Aotearoa has been delayed. Europeans have been too busy looking back to the forests of Europe rather than embracing what was already here. Janet Frame touches on this in *The Carpathians* in the figure of Sharon who is connecting her self with the land through identification with Maori history and legends rather than those of her European ancestral

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<sup>309</sup>Hillman, James. "A Psyche the Size of Earth." xix.

<sup>310</sup>Grace, Patricia. *Potiki*. Auckland: Penguin Books, 1986

memories. Frame also comments on the reconnection of Maori with their past through memory and legend as does Keri Hume in the mystical figure of the Kaumatua. Patricia Grace examines this psychological bond between the forests and the people as a dual continuum of the life of the forests and the tribe. The tribe's history and connection with their past, present and future is recorded in the reborn forest, as carvings in their meeting house.

### Carved Ancestor Forests

As in the medieval *Pearl*<sup>311</sup> with its multi layered levels of meaning, Patricia Grace weaves together many strands within her text. In this sense it is an "ecological" text in that the factors that constitute the whanau's relationship with the environment are totally interdependent and are difficult to separate. The psychology, ecology and spirituality of place, linked through memory and stories are all part of that which has created, and continues to create, the story of the Tamihanas, which is also the story of their relationship with the forests and the land that sustains them. *Potiki* both reinforces the oneness of subject and world and illustrates how this is being destroyed by modern civilisation. Throughout is the image not of the forest as a whole as much as the life-giving nature of trees, the circular nature of ecology, life and death. As Roimata says: "There is freedom to search the nothing (the neutral place of the shore), searching for the speck, the beginning - or the end that is the beginning" for "The tree, after a lifetime of fruiting, has after the first death, a further fruiting at the hands of the master" as he carves their ancestors, "figures first developed in the forests but dependent on the master with his tools . . . to bring them to birth in the house of ancestors. The master carver brings forth only what is already there, "waiting in the womb of the tree that may have also spent time as a house, a classroom, bridge or pier." The circles of life in the village and the land are replicated in the cycle of the

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<sup>311</sup>*Pearl*. C 1390. MS Cotton. British Museum. ed. E. V. Gordon. 1952. Oxford: UP. 1974.

trees. Trees are not only reborn from their own seed but are given new life in the carvings of the ancestors. In this way the history of both forest and people becomes united. Grace uses the image of continuing life in carvings to suggest that subject and world, self and “standing place” cannot be separated. The story both begins and ends with the birth and death of the central figure, Toko, the mystical son of the carved loving man and the child woman. Toko is the spiritual and physical link between trees and people, between people and place. In him, the edges between the people and trees and the ancestors are deliberately blurred as Grace emphasises their oneness. As the young carver James tells in his story:

It was a story that opened and put its seed into the time of remembering. It became a people story through wood, both people and wood being parented by earth and sky so that the tree and the people are one, being whanau to the tree.<sup>312</sup>

Through James, the young man who told his story by his hands, Toko is “returned, with all his life stories, to the whanau,”<sup>313</sup> As the final figure to be called forth as a carving for the new house of ancestors, the completed Potiki, subject reunited with world, he tells the final story in which he says:

... and from this place of now, behind, and in, and beyond the tree, from where I have oversight, I watch the people.”<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>312</sup>Grace, Patricia. *Potiki*. 181.

<sup>313</sup>Grace, Patricia. *Potiki*. 181.

<sup>314</sup>Grace, Patricia. *Potiki*, 183.

With his death and rebirth as a carving, Toko completes and continues the circle of life between tree and man.

Patricia Grace returns many times to tree of life image in the text. The whanau's collective strength lies deep in the tangible, interwoven roots of the forest and in the living images of their ancestors, their land and language. As their stories are told and retold and added to as an oral family tree, and carved into the wood of the house of ancestors and as the story of the family continues unending through life, birth and death, there is no past or future, only an unending, circular, interwoven present. These stories carved in the ancestral figures of the meeting house are fundamental to the identity and survival of the whanau, as Roimata says: "Our main book was the wharenuī, which is itself a story, a history, a gallery, a study, a design structure and a taonga. And we are part of that book, along with family past and family yet to come."<sup>315</sup> The whanau's identity is interwoven with their stories and the ancient, forest memories.

## Return to the Land

The outward manifestation of replacement of subject with world and self into environment is illustrated by Grace in the return of the whanau to work their land, not for money, but for the sense of strength and purpose and identity it provides. In *Potiki*, Hemi describes a time of dislocation from the land, as young people moved away for jobs in the towns and became separated from family and land and memories. As jobs became scarce they drifted back to the village, Hemi amongst them. He says:

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<sup>315</sup>Grace, Patricia. *Potiki*. 104.



He had not been happy about giving up what he knew was a charge that he'd been given. . . . he'd always known that one day he would return to the land, and that the land would support them all again.

And they still had their land, that was something to feel good about. Still had everything, except for the hills. The hills had gone . . . what had happened there wasn't right but it was over and done with. Now at least the family was still here, on the ancestral land.<sup>316</sup>

Hemi, as does Hene in *The Carpathians*, watches the people returning to the land; and understands that they knew that they belonged to the land, "had known all along that there had to be a foothold otherwise you were dust blowing here and there and anywhere - you were lost, gone."<sup>317</sup> Hemi's role is to re-educate the family on how to survive on the land as he was taught; how to read the seasons, when to plant, harvest, know the phases of the moon and the rituals that accompany each phase of the life on the land. It is the same relationship with the land as early European societies are surmised to have enjoyed; hard, precarious but deeply satisfying. The proposed development of the area as a resort is, therefore, doubly threatening, for it strikes both at the new-found freedom from the constraints of city life and dependence on employers as well as destroying the heart of their community

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<sup>316</sup>Grace, Patricia. *Potiki*. 60

<sup>317</sup>Grace, Patricia. *Potiki*. 61

## Psychological and Environmental Issues of Land Development

Parallel to and balancing Toko's story in *Potiki* is the story of the threat to the family ancestral land, house of ancestors and tribal burial ground, their standing place. While Toko represents the continuity of family with place, and oneness of subject and world, the development company represents the threat of capitalism and technology to that continuity. Grace also uses this theme to draw attention to the adverse environmental affects associated with land development and how this physically affects the local community.

Underlying the issue of the proposed resort is the total lack of understanding and communication between two different cultures on what place means. In 1973 Bill Pearson wrote in the introduction to *Brown Man's Burden* that Finlayson's stories questioned the values of industrial society. An example is *The Totara Tree*, in which a power company wanted to move a tree for power lines which provokes Uncle Tuna to exclaim in fury, "Can't the pakeha bear the sight of one single tree without reaching for his axe?"<sup>318</sup> In *Potiki* Mr Dolman can't look at a good view without wanting to turn it into an investment.<sup>319</sup> Victoria Strang in *Uncommon Ground* helps to explain this:

Emu lagoon is only one place, but it is also many places - all the different places that people make of it. Though they move through the same world, people see, understand, experience and value quite different

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<sup>318</sup>Finlayson, Roderick. *The Totara Tree*. ed. Pearson, Bill. *Browns Man's Burden*. ix. There is a saying "Be a real New Zealander; chop down a tree a day."

<sup>319</sup>The RMA is intended to curb this. It is pertinent also to mention the recent heated discussion and negotiation over Young Nick's Head which is now to be gifted to the nation as a national treasure by the American purchaser of the property.

things. They can walk around the same water, scuff the same dust and sit under the same trees, but they are not in the same place.<sup>320</sup>

In *Potiki*, the development company and the local tribe are standing on and discussing the same piece of land, but while the whanau can appreciate the developer's point of view, Mr Dolman has no conception of theirs. He only sees the land through the Western cultural mediation of possession and money. He does not feel the land through memories, as a living part of tribal history. Patricia Grace here illustrates the connections between language and environment, and how language can influence attitudes towards the land, not only in stories that lace and bind people to the land but as a destructive influence, when the cultural mediation of the language is rooted in different sources. One of the central passages in the book where this is illustrated is the "negotiation" meeting between Uncle Stan and the family and Mr Dolman in the wharenuī. It is not so much a dialogue as two parallel monologues separated by two opposing cultures. It is not an entirely disconnected conversation, but while Uncle Stan recognises Mr Dolman's motivation for what he wants to do, the latter has no conception of why the whanau will not sell the land, move their house of ancestors or dig up their cemetery. For Dolman, as the spokesperson for the Cartesian, capitalist, opportunist world, "money talks." It is just a question of how much. Uncle Stan explains, "This land we are on now . . . is all ancestral land - the ancestral land of the people here . . . the hills have gone but it won't happen to the rest. . . . We will not sell the land, nor will access be given." He continues, "we'll never let this house be moved. Never" and about the land behind the whare tipuna he says: "That is a sacred site . . . our dead lie there." In this "negotiation" Dolman is physically and psychologically deaf to the whanau's relationship with the land, they "realised that the man had not, had never, understood anything that we had ever

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<sup>320</sup>Strang, Victoria. *Uncommon Ground: Cultural Landscape and Environmental Values*. Oxford, New York: Berg, 1997. 4.



said, and never would.” In fact as far as Dolman is concerned the language the whanau is speaking is unfathomable. Stan sums up their relationship with the land when he refers to it as the heart and soul of the whanau; without it the body, both individually and collectively, will crumble. Dolman doesn’t actually reply - his “response” is in the form of a monologue as he refers to progress and work for all. With callous ease he proposes to re-site both ancestral house and cemetery to “A new site, somewhere nearby . . . its been done often enough before.”<sup>321</sup> Grace illustrates how language plays a role in emphasising different cultural backgrounds and beliefs about self and environment, and because of this, language can either bind us to or separate us from the natural world. As a result of his lack of empathy, Dolman continues to bulldoze the community as he bulldozes the land, and his efforts at separating one from the other leads to human tragedy and environmental degradation. The bribery of jobs and positions is an empty promise and a threat to their pride and independence. Instead of owning the land and working as a community in their gardens for the common survival of the whanau, they will be “owned” by and economically dependent on the resort, while individuals will be competing for jobs and money. The appropriation of the land for a resort threatens the physical, psychological and spiritual dislocation of a community from its life-force, the land and the bush.

For Stan and Hemi and Roimata the whanau are part of the land, as Hemi says: “Our whanau is the land and sea. Destroy the land and sea and we destroy ourselves.”<sup>322</sup> It is not just a matter of survival in the sense of growing food and being self sufficient. As the earthworks begin and the shape of the land changes Roimata says: “Our lives had changed. We were living under the

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<sup>321</sup>Grace, Patricia. *Potiki*, 91.

<sup>322</sup>Grace, Patricia. *Potiki*, 99.



machines and under a changing landscape, which can change the you, shift the insides of you.”<sup>323</sup>

Giving up the land of their ancestors would strike at the Tamihana family’s very souls.

In his recent Testimony to Waitangi Tribunal, bio-physicist Peter Wills notes that:

Knowledge of things and events [for Maori] is concerned with the particularities of *whakapapa* - layers of genealogy and lines of descent, their patterns and linkages.<sup>324</sup>

He also comments that:

For Maori, everything is rooted, not only to its origin in time, but also to its origin in space - the place and tradition of the tangata whenua to which it belongs. This relationship with the earth and its local geography, something amounting to an umbilical connection, is of particular poignancy in the contrast between scientific and Maori explanations of the causes of things.<sup>325</sup>

The stories of geneology and history that “lace and bind the earthly matters to matters not of earth”<sup>326</sup> ensure that the family are spiritually and psychologically an extension of the land itself. It is not just the land at stake; it is their very sense of self. Uncle Stan says “We will not ever, not

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<sup>323</sup>Grace, Patricia. *Potiki*. 151.

<sup>324</sup>Wills, Peter R. “Issues of Scientific and Maori Epistemology.” Testimony to: *Waitangi Tribunal*. On behalf of: Wai262 Claimants.2:8

<sup>325</sup>Wills, Peter R. “Issues of Scientific and Maori Epistemology.” Testimony to: *Waitangi Tribunal*. On behalf of: Wai262 Claimants.2:10.

<sup>326</sup>Grace, Patricia. *Potiki*. 87

ever, let the land go. "Take away the heart, the soul, and the body crumbles."<sup>327</sup> This is a fundamentally different attitude to the land from the concept of place that the early settlers tried to recreate in New Zealand. For Maori, *whanau is place* and place is *whanau* "their *turangawaewae*, their own standing place."<sup>328</sup>

### The Despoilation of Ancestral Place

Grace is explicit about the environmental degradation to the ancestral land which major earthworks engender. She mentions the scarred hills cleared of their bush, and the resulting slips and erosion from the rain. The clear water of the sea, home to a major food source changes to dirty brown as the sediment and run-off causes pollution, alters the course of the river and affects the fishing. The pollution of their coastal waters by developers crystallises for the family the differences of what land use means, between Maori and European. For Maori, as scientist Peter Wills interprets: "Everything is in some sense intrinsically sacred and a demand for respect arises from the very nature of things." He adds that: "For science, nothing at all is sacred."<sup>329</sup>

In the end, Mr Dolman's investment is suspended when his own workers rebel against his ruthlessness. The Maori concept of the sacred in nature is respected, and the pakeha is hurt where he is most vulnerable, his desire to make money, because the creed of capital growth and economic progress are no less sacred to some Europeans than the natural cycles of life and growth associated with the land and the forests are to their Maori counterparts.

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<sup>327</sup>Grace, Patricia. *Potiki*. 97.

<sup>328</sup>Grace, Patricia. *Potiki*. 87.

<sup>329</sup>Wills, Peter R. "Issues of Scientific and Maori Epistemology." Testimony to: *Waitangi Tribunal*. On behalf of: Wai262 Claimants.2:22.

The developing awareness of western civilisation's dislocation from their environment, the resulting lack of well-being and the reassessment of values is a growing discourse amongst writers, who are re-searching and re-acknowledging the place of people's ecological role and the inter-connections between human psychology and environment, about place, identity, spirituality and language. In *Potiki*, the final outcome is summed up by the whanau's attitudes to their heritage by both Hemi and Roimata, who reinforce the power of ecology and nature to redress any imbalance, given time:

The hills are quiet now. They went from our hands long ago but we do not need them in our hands. We only need them to be there, to be left to heal, to be left for trees to grow on. With trees on the hills again our own corner is safe and we are who we are. For now it is safe. . . . With trees on the hills we can keep our ground productive, our sacred places safe, our water clear." . . . [We] have it in trust from those who have gone on ahead of us."<sup>330</sup>

Roimata says:

The hills will be scarred for some time, and the beach front spoiled. But the scars will heal as growth returns, because the forest is there always, coiled in the body of the land.<sup>331</sup>

Within the buried forest seeds lies the spiritual and physical hope for the future.

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<sup>330</sup>Grace, Patricia. *Potiki*. 176

<sup>331</sup>Grace, Patricia. *Potiki*. 169.

For Grace and for environmentalists, the hope for the future lies in the power of regeneration that lies within ecology and the environment, if it is respected and nurtured. This can only occur if there is a philosophical and behavioural shift in consciousness, where we reconnect self with environment and begin to behave as if we are part of it, not separate from, by caring for it.

### The Memory Flower: Searching the Interior

As with Grace, Janet Frame also illustrates the power of ancient memory to reconnect subject and world in *The Carpathians*,<sup>332</sup> but while Patricia Grace uses the memories of the life giving ancient forests to reconnect subject with world, Frame's central figure, Mattina, through self-imposed isolation of subject from world, rediscovers the natural world through the memory flower of Puamahara. In Frame's novel, Mattina deliberately removes herself from her usual environment of downtown New York to the alien environment of a virtually unknown, small town in New Zealand, in an effort to reconnect her self with the source of memory. Janet Frame explores her favourite themes of place, the interior of the mind, self and other and their reconnection, through a strong garden-like setting, in which the images of flowers and plants flourish alongside those of twentieth century environmental degradation.

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<sup>332</sup> *The Carpathians* is set in the Horowhenua district, on the Kapiti Coast, the same area as Lake Papaitonga. The town Puamahara is a blend of Levin, with its IHC Home and centre of the horticultural district; Waikanae "a good place to retire in, with more than the usual homes and hospitals for the aged" and Porirua with its "ghost hospital" Kenepuru. The hospital was fully equipped but not operational for a number of years in the late 1970s to early 1980s, because Wellington surgeons refused to travel that far to provide their services. The surgeon superintendent, W J Trezise and his team, worked for a year equipping the new hospital for both surgical and medical patients, but owing to the difficulties with the surgical team, an out-patients or emergency clinic only operated, hence "ghost hospital." In the following years, despite full, modern, surgical facilities, the hospital took only medical patients and the theatre suite was not used. Interview with Mrs W. J. Trezise.



The title *The Carpathians* links the subject Mattina to an ancient European past and place which parallels that of the Maori:

The Carpathians are a great mountain system, extending from Bratislavia to Orsovo, in crescent form . . . the region is wild and fertile and well wooded with oaks, beeches, evergreens, firs, and wild animals are found, including the wolf, bear and lynx, the chamois and ibex . . . <sup>333</sup>

Mattina's search for place and identity is assisted by the local Maori who as in *Potiki*, are exploring their roots and attempting to reconnect with their ancestral environment and ancient values. Through them, Mattina learns how she too can reconnect self with a world from which she feels alienated:

For many years now she had been aware of a longing to feel herself as part of a grand creation. Her love for Jake had its origins in that feeling, as had her brief love for Big John Henry and recitations of great prose and poetry. <sup>334</sup>

Mattina is aware that there is a lack to her existence, a lack of connection between her inner self and the external natural world. This is the central theme of Frame's novel, the search for self, the self's place in the world and the role of the creative artist, novelist, poet, painter, within this framework. *The Carpathians* is not a nature novel comprising descriptive passages on the

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<sup>333</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*, 66.

<sup>334</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*, 114.

inspirational beauty of nature. It is an environmental text in which the language of the mind grows out of the external environment and where in turn the mind alters the external environment. Frame interweaves the issues of self and world, the internal and external ecological landscape in a search to reconnect self with environment (world) and the role language and memory play in this process.

Mattina's journey to Puamahara, New Zealand is to discover the source of memory, the source of self that has been separated from world and environment and must to be reconnected before her death, which is sensed, but not known. Once there, she connects with 'impostor novelist,' Dinny Wheatstone, her alter ego who voices the deep sense of division within Mattina:

The imposture begins with the first germ of disbelief in being, in self, and this allied to the conviction of the "unalterable certainty of truth" produces the truth of disbelief, of deception of being, of self, of times, places, peoples of all time and space.<sup>335</sup>

Together, Dinny and Mattina form the inner and outer landscapes of self, (the ego, one's point of view) and world. Through Dinny Wheatstone, Mattina comes to know herself, her life and "and all points of view"<sup>336</sup> in the two months that she is in Puamahara.

Frame identifies the importance of place and memory with identity. As Mattina tries to reconnect herself with others through Dinny's novel, poking and prying ruthlessly into the lives of the ordinary people of Kowhai St, each of her subjects yields up a part of their point of view, a part

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<sup>335</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*. 51

<sup>336</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*. 122.

of self; the “self” that is created through language and memory, memory that contorts the boundaries of past and present, memory that creates place and identity. Frame suggests that without memory, we have no past, no ancestors or place. “Connie Grant, the reclaimed grandmother who felt unclaimed as the lost property of two countries,” has become separated from her memories, her ancestral land. Like Madge with Sharon, she speaks a different language from her son and daughter-in-law and grandchildren, and feels she no longer exists, that she has lost her “self.”

For Sharon, however, identifying self with land/world means immersion in the legends and language that have grown out of the land, as it does for Hene and the people of the marae who are also learning to reconnect with their legends and their land. It is through the European Renée, that Mattina learns:

The country’s full of legends. Teeming with them, north and south. They used to be hidden under those legends from the Northern Hemisphere, but now that we’ve got our own slant on things, legends are everywhere. They don’t often break into our real life. . . . We’re only just beginning to look closely at the place we’re living in. The Maoris have been looking at it for centuries and their legends have long ago crept in out of the cold to be part of their lives. And now we’re looking. You have to look for something, I suppose, besides your homes, furniture and gardens.”<sup>337</sup>

And Mattina, who “knew that New Zealanders of all races had reached a self-consciousness of an identity they had been struggling for years to find and capture” hopes to find what she is seeking

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<sup>337</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*, 111.

from the Maori - the people of the land who held or harboured a source of memory which the latecomers, the other immigrants were only now learning to share."<sup>338</sup> When Hene analyses the return of Maori to their ancestral village she also touches on this sharing of memory:

Only three families live here now. . . . But more are returning. We don't realise how unique it is until we leave it for the city. The Pakeha has nothing like this way of living - not here in New Zealand. I believe it is like a small English village without the post office, the pub and the general store."<sup>339</sup>

She is reminding Mattina of her own ancestral memory of place, the villages of Europe. In so doing she draws attention to the European lack, unlike the Maori, of memory linked to Aotearoa. The memory of place for the descendants of white colonials is that of Europe, of Little Red Riding Hood, of the Carpathians:

. . . the town of the Memory Flower had no wood-cutters cottages, no forests of northern spruce; no foxes or wolves that may have been long buried in the minds of many of the inhabitants."<sup>340</sup>

Europeans in New Zealand have to re-shape their identity and build new memories with their new land and forests (minus woodcutters and wolves) in order to connect with it. Sharon, who as a third generation New Zealander is learning to do this.

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<sup>338</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*, 81.

<sup>339</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*, 83

<sup>340</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*, 66.



Frame illustrates Mattinas growing reconnection with self through her rediscovered awareness of her surrounding environment. For her, as for many the natural world has been swallowed up in a world of environmental exploitation, industrial pollution and plate glass apartments, like those of her home city, New York, where contact with the environment is restricted to a view through a window on the thirty-first floor. Frame addresses the isolation from nature in New York, where the crowds and vehicles protected the inhabitants from nature, from “the vastness of its ocean, its recurring tides, floods, tidal waves.”<sup>341</sup> On her arrival and in the days following, Mattina experiences an increased awareness of plants and flowers in Puamahara. She is aware of the fragrance of freesias, budding honeysuckle and early blossoms in the orchards, and the sense of oneness with a past which celebrated the interconnectedness of all things and as time passes: “She moved downwards to a new distance that became incredible in its nearness, like an animal of long ago and far away breathing near her in the dark.”<sup>342</sup> She notes flowers everywhere, in gardens: “The flowers were minute green-tipped white bells of exquisite frailty - what were they?” and she admits that her “knowledge of plants was limited. She was not used to trees with giant blossoms as big as creatures with folded winglike petals. . . .” Mattina notices flowers on womens’ clothing: “Most of the women . . . wore clothes patterned with flowers and leaves, of all colours. She supposed that flowers here were like sheep, valued and cared for.”<sup>343</sup>

She surprised herself by thinking about plants and flowers. Already I’ve spent most of my time in Puamahara talking about or musing on vegetation. In New York such thoughts never entered my head.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>341</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*, 37.

<sup>342</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*, 79.

<sup>343</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*. 41.

<sup>344</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*. 37

She remembers that friends who had left New York almost forgot their way of life there. It “became obliterated by the plants they grew . . . making a ground cover over their memory of the city.”<sup>345</sup> Frame suggests that once we remove from the city, and are replaced or reconnected with the natural environment, it takes over and becomes the central point of life. In New York, Mattina’s apartment boasts two uncomplicated, nameless, indoor plants that she is unattached to but now she remembers the plant given on their wedding day and meant to bloom after twenty four years. The family look forward to its flowering, but someone poured chemicals on it and killed it, “bringing grief to Jake, Mattina and John Henry who’d been linked to the plant and its and their future blooming.” . . . “And when it died, Jake said never again would he link his life to a plant. Yet he spoke wistfully.” Instead, Jake placed his faith in words, “Words covered everything” he said, but they were not enough, and he is never able to marshal all the words in his head coherently enough to create another novel. Mind separated from matter, man separated from environment, creates a dysfunctional human being. Frame includes here a subliminal message about the misuse of chemicals, warning that they can kill, in this case not only the plant, but hope also in the future. The death of the plant signals the end of the threesome, with the onset of Mattina’s terminal illness.

While Patricia Grace examines language in relation to forming place and identity, Frame illustrates how if language is removed, so too is memory without which we cease to exist. She illustrates this through Decima who is autistic and has no spoken language. Her father Joseph is speaking of his daughter when he refers to the tuning instrument:

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<sup>345</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*. 38

Brains travel over the distance of time and space; instruments stay home. This tuning device has an allotted memory, but it can't say "I remember because it isn't an 'I', it's a nothing with no self . . . it has no ancestral memory.

No memory, no identity, no self and world. Frame demonstrates this after the catastrophe, the mysterious rain of words which takes the form of an environmental disaster, the only apparent survivor of which is Mattina. The rest of the residents who are rained on lose their language and as a result disappear as if they had never existed..

### **The Environmental Memory Flower**

The division of inner and outer landscapes is reinforced by the environmental issues that Mattina increasingly becomes aware of once outside her normal environment, New York. Frame raises environmental issues to highlight the psychological dis-ease with and separation of, self and world. Puamahara, like the distant Carpathians, is amazingly fertile, "the fertility of the soil is fed by the crushed bones of vanished rivers and the blood of former generations," and "where even the town gardens blossom amazingly with varieties of native and exotic plants." It is a town where place is a blend of the native and the exotic. The street names were of "rivers and towns the settlers would never see again or were named "by those with a sense of belonging to the land, after native trees - manuka, rata, kowhai, kauri, the trees being the first heroes of the settlers, the conquered heroes that in time became the enemy. Puamahara itself has gradually concealed its fertile earth beneath concrete.<sup>346</sup> Perhaps because of its floral abundance, Mattina initially sees small town New Zealand as a cemetery, a place for the dead where "graves are more spacious than usual, with flowers and vegetable garden . . . and where the noise pollution of cars,

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<sup>346</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*. 12-13.



trains, dogs and radios does not penetrate.” “Then the dream vanishes, and those you thought to be dead appear in the doorways with brooms and brushes and motor-mowers and hedge clippers to perform the daily sweep and cut and snip” in order to tidy up nature, keep it under control and “to protect the habits of being human: housekeeping their lives.” Mattina, shutting the window to drown the noise of a motor mower “was certain that the Memory Flower had been a flower: a weed would have been killed long ago.”

### Environmental concerns of Frame

Behind the picture perfect travelling brochure scene of clean and green is a different reality. As with Grace, Janet Frame voices the changing attitudes of the 1970s and 1980s to the environment; in *The Carpathians* she addresses the issues of air pollution, noise pollution, chemical poisoning, pesticides, insecticides and litter. She addresses New Zealanders’ search for and obsession with place, manifested in ownership of houses and consumer goods and once again the old settler struggle of keeping nature at bay, now restricted to the domestic garden, is reassessed.

Frame reflects on the growing concern with environmental pollution; the air in New York that choked Mattina and stung her eyes; the cars that New Zealanders regarded as part of the household; “Like the chickens and cattle in other lands; but with a deadlier breath.”<sup>347</sup> Mattina notes the plastic litter in Tyne street but also that on the whole it is cleaner than small-town USA:

Obviously someone was responsible for cleaning the sidewalks and streets of empty packets, plastic bags, drink cans, milk cartons. In small-town USA it

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<sup>347</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*. 73.



was likely to be piled in drifts behind the stores or sharing waste lots with abandoned automobiles where grass and weeds, grey stalked, stunted, beaten by winds of pollution, hadn't a fist chance. Here in Puamahara vacant lots were quickly dressed, it would appear, in coats of green furry grass and weeds studded with masses of yellow button flowers.<sup>348</sup>

Despite Jake telling her that Noo [sic] Zealand is pure, she is aware of the litter and refuse, noise pollution and air pollution: She observed:

. . . the scraps of paper, the empty packets, the broken beer bottles and empty beer cans on the grass verge . . . the noise from blasting radios, the constant traffic noise from the north-south highway, air pollution and smell from burning rubber in rubbish fires, the drift of leaking gas from the garage on Gillespie Street, the spray-painting fumes from the car-yards. . . the drift of pesticide from the commercial gardens and orchards out of town.<sup>349</sup>

Frame constantly draws attention to the pollution. Even in the passage describing Jake's visit to the orchards following Mattina's death, Frame reminds the reader again that all is not as it seems and while it ends on a positive note the preceding passage undermines this:

. . . in spite of the modern methods of chemical spraying, of constant pollution that diminished the necessary swarms of bees and gave those who survived a sickly convalescent appearance, and in spite of the drifting air from

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<sup>348</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*. 47.

<sup>349</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*. 79.

Puamahara's factories and motorways, the blossoms had survived one more year.<sup>350</sup>

Frame is, however, offering hope for the future. She portrays the blossoms representing the recycling of life in nature that continues against all odds; they are "recorded by memory, the Housekeeper of Ancient Springtime". Springtime is the period of rebirth and renewal, and memory recalls this renewal of self with world, "reinforced by human memory using words, spoken and written language."<sup>351</sup>

For Frame the importance of the creative artist is paramount in the transference of memory, the link between human beings and their environment. And this role is undertaken by the writers and artists. She writes that one of the surviving treasures of New York are the immigrant artists, separated from ancestral land, for whom New York has always been home. "Those New Yorkers who began their life with loss and a great grief and later became writers, painters and composers, created a castle from their foundation of grief, where magnificent windows let in the light from this and other worlds . . . who created new dimensions for the city."<sup>352</sup>

Frame expresses her concern for the separation of self from environment and nature when she writes:

. . . when your familiar place . . . is changed to the desolation of realising that distance may transform your feeling and knowing into nothingness, that you yourself may destroy and declare not to exist what you do not now know and

<sup>350</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*, 195.

<sup>351</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*, 195.

<sup>352</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*, 104.

have ceased to be part of. Then desperately you must forge links or deny whatever lives in time and space, your denial meaning the constant possibility that you may fall into the darkness at the edge of the Earth and may never be known again.”<sup>353</sup>

If we distance ourselves from our environment, and deny that we are part of an ecological whole, we will end by destroying the environment we have turned our backs on and by so doing, may destroy ourselves. Janet Frame contends that in order to survive we need to rebuild our relationship with the environment and reconnect self and world, self and place, through memory and words, legends and stories, paintings and music. Frame is adamant that we cannot exist separately from environment. We are our environment.

Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*<sup>354</sup> stands alongside the previously discussed novels as an environmental text. Like them, it is a comment on people's physical and psychological relationship with their environment and their separation from it. In *The Bone People*, Hulme interweaves Christian and environmental mythology and language and her three main characters almost form a spiritual trinity, in which each is self in relation to two others, seeking to be reunited. Each of the three main characters is a victim of circumstances which has dislocated them from self and place, creating for them internal conflict and a crises of identity, manifested in loss of communication. As with Mattina, Kerewin's isolation is self-imposed and takes the form of walling herself up from people in a tower in order to protect herself. Once completed, the tower becomes a prison. For Simon Clare it is an inability to speak in words, and he solves this by developing an alternative form of communication and in addition, an insight to his

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<sup>353</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*, 16.

<sup>354</sup>Hulme, Keri. *The Bone People*. London: Picador Edition, 1986. 157.

environment that he might otherwise not have had.<sup>355</sup> For Joe, it is a frustration and inability to communicate effectively with his son in his demand for perfection and he resorts to the abusive behaviour learned from his own grandfather.

Kerewin's is a struggle for identity, which is manifested in her angry response to the pine trees on the way to her family beach home. As she, Simon and Joe drive to the beach house she looks out at the pines:

"Bloody pines," snarling to herself. "Look at it. . . . where it isn't cut over, it's pines. . . . they march on and on in gloomy parade."

"This place used to have one of the finest stands of kahikatea in the country."

"And they cut it down to make room for those?"

"They did . . . "Pines grow faster. When they grow. The poor old kahikatea takes two or three hundred years to get to its best and that's not fast enough for the money minded." . . . "I hate pines."

Initially, her attack seems precipitated by the European need to make money fast and get as much from the land as possible in the shortest possible time while Hulme takes this opportunity to have a sly dig at European capitalism. However, Kerewin is also expressing the fundamental difference between pakeha and Maori ecological values. But it goes deeper than that. When Joe queries the pine's usefulness she replies: "O there's room in the land for them, I grant you, but

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<sup>355</sup>It has been suggested (Anthony Curtis /Financial Times, back jacket) that Simon is autistic, but his behaviour is not compatible with such a diagnosis. Simon relates to the people around him and makes eye contact; autistic children usually do not. However, his behaviour is compatible with that of post-traumatic shock syndrome. There is a suggestion also that he has been injected with heroin as a young child or that he has seen others injected, hence his fear of needles.



why do they have to cut down good bush just to plant sickening *pinus*” . . . “Look at that lot, dripping with needle blight dammit. This land isn’t suitable for immigrants from Monterey or bloody wherever.”<sup>356</sup> Is Kerewin only referring to *Pinus radiata* or is she referring to other immigrants from wherever? There is a suggestion here that Kerewin, who is part Maori, is identifying herself, her Maoriness with the native kahikatea, the pines representing her other half, the alien immigrant European culture, from wherever. If this is so, then she is struggling to accept her blue eyed, brown haired and skin as pale as mushrooms, self. Kerewin admits an identity crisis as she muses: “It’s very strange, but whereas by blood, flesh and inheritance I am but an eighth Maori, by heart, spirit and inclination, I feel all Maori. Or . . . I used to. Now it feels like the best part of me has got lost in the way I live.”<sup>357</sup> The way she lives, in isolation within a concrete tower that has become a prison is the antithesis to the way Maori live, their lives intertwined as part of an extended family and the land. Her links with the Maori and natural worlds are preserved in touches round the tower and in her use of herbs and traditional medicine. When as a threesome they travel to the beach, Kerewin experiences almost simultaneously the rekindling of the powerfulness and peace of the family place within her, and the first twinge of the canker of resentment, hatred and self immolation. Because of her own inner struggle she fails to help Simon and Joe in their mutual circle of destruction. Kerewin’s mental condition is mirrored as a physical one and in the belief that she is dying she destroys the tower and sets out to further isolate herself in the wilderness. As Kerewin leaves her partially ruined tower she fills a silk handkerchief with “enough soil to fill her palm” and puts it in her pocket.

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<sup>356</sup>Hulme, Keri. *The Bone People*, 157.

Kerewin does however admit the pine has uses. As they pull the car in near a solitary pine she comments “More blight,” morosely, but brightens, “We can use the bugger for firing though.”

<sup>357</sup>Hulme, Keri. *The Bone People*, 60.

Wherever I go, however I go, I carry this earth for memory. And should I die in a strange land, there is a little more than just my flesh to make a friend and sanctuary of alien ground.<sup>358</sup>

In this way Kerewin will maintain identity and a continuing link with her standing place, because the soil and herself are one. In a deserted family hut left over from gold digging days, in the bare, treeless, windswept, gorse covered hills in the Mackenzie Country, Kerewin battles with the illness of self and soul that manifests itself physically. Kerewin has already surmised that her condition could be initiated by stress and mental discontent. Hulme demonstrates the interconnectedness of things in Kerewin's concept of holistic treatment. "Doctor does not confer with religious who does not confer with dietician who does not confer with psychologist."<sup>359</sup> Kerewin is reasserting Hippocrates' hypothesis, pointing out that the whole person, body, mind, diet and environment has to be taken into account when assessing illness. It is the same concept as the ecology of environment. Nothing stands alone. Kerewin undergoes a physical and psychological cleansing alone in the hut surrounded by the empty hills. The time alone surrounded by a harsh environment is necessary for Kerewin to come to terms with her inner self. Her physical illness takes her to the brink of death but she emerges metamorphosised and cleansed, as if shedding a skin, and free of the canker within. Kerewin knows she is healed as her ancestral land accepts her back on the ruin of the old hall on the marae:

As she turns away, a great warmth flows into her. Up from the earth under her feet into the pit of her belly, coursing up like benevolent fire through her breast to the crown of her head.<sup>360</sup>

<sup>358</sup>Hulme, Keri. *The Bone People*, 331.

<sup>359</sup>Hulme, Keri. *The Bone People*, 416.

<sup>360</sup>Hulme, Keri. *The Bone People*, 430.

Because she is at peace with herself and her environment, the new-born Kerewin is a whole person, physically, psychologically and spiritually and she is able to reach out to others, Li the blind cat, her family, Simon and Joe. This is reflected in her new home. Instead of the fortress to keep people out, it is:

. . . a shell-shape, a regular spiral of rooms expanding around the decapitated Tower . . . privacy, apartness but all connected and all part of the whole.<sup>361</sup>

Joe also undergoes a physical and spiritual rebirth in the bush and on the harsh beaches of the South Island which takes the form of a reassertion of the emotional bond between subject and world and the need to reconnect them. He is assisted through the process by the mystical kaumatua who passes on to Joe his burden of watching over the soul of the country, the ancient drowned canoe, the little god and the mauri, in the deep waters of a spring. Joe questions the kaumatua about the silence and barrenness of the place where the canoe lies: "If it is, the heart of Aotearoa . . . why isn't this whole place . . . flowering? The kamatua suggests that: "Maybe they [the people] have come too far down other paths for the old alliance to be reformed, and this will remain a land where the spirit has withdrawn. Where the spirit is still with the land, but no longer active. No longer loving the land." He laughs harshly. "I can't imagine it loving the mess the Pakeha have made, can you?" Hulme addresses the environmental damage caused by the settlers in Joe's response:

Joe thought of the forests burned and cut down; the gouges and scars that dams and roadworks and development schemes had made; the peculiar

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<sup>361</sup>Hulme, Keri. *The Bone People*, 434.

barren paddocks where alien animals, one kind of crop, grazed imported grasses; the erosion, the over fertilisation, the pollution. . . .<sup>362</sup>

He believes that while the Maori may have started some of the havoc, they would never have carried it so far. He looks at the well and comments that he can't see the spirit of the land waking again: "The whole order of the world would have to change, all of humanity, and I can't see that happening, e pou, not ever."<sup>363</sup> Hulme is making reference to the enormous ideological changes that society will need to make in order to reconnect subject with world, that had been expressed in documents such as *Blueprint for Survival*. While Joe despairs, Hulme offers hope through the kaumatua: "Eternity is a long time," says the kaumatua comfortably. Everything changes, even that which supposes itself to be unalterable. All we can do is look after the precious matters which are our heritage, and wait, and hope." Keri Hulme in the 1980s is voicing then what environmentalists still work towards today. In New Zealand local bodies such as regional councils, the Department of Conservation and private organisations such as Forest and Bird look after our heritage, the land, air and water, while they work towards changing society's approach to using land and resources.

After the kaumatua's death, Joe remains on the land he has inherited, learning to live in cooperation with nature as the kamatua has previously done, fishing, hunting and looking after the garden. He had said to Joe: "It has been a very easy life, I suppose. No wars or great doings. Just watching things grow, and catching things for food . . . No money problems, always enough to eat, enough to smoke, a roof over my head. A man can find satisfaction with enough."<sup>364</sup> Again Hulme is commenting on modern western civilisation, that our greed has outstripped need,

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<sup>362</sup>Hulme, Keri. *The Bone People*, 371.

<sup>363</sup>Hulme, Keri. *The Bone People*, 371.

<sup>364</sup>Hulme, Keri. *The Bone People*, 368.



and we have become blighted by an inner dissatisfaction as a result of the outer break between self and world. Joe undergoes the process of reconnecting himself with nature and is finally released from his task, to rejoin his friends and rebuild his life.

Kerewin, Joe and Simon too are reconciled, three in one, one in three, separate and yet part of a whole. Joe sums it up as: “E nga iwi o nga iwi.”<sup>365</sup> Keri Hulme’s book relies heavily on the ecological images that link people with each other, their physical and psychological environment and the effect of this on their well being. The circular or spiral nature of life and death are confirmed in the last lines: “ka ao, ka ao, ka awatea. Te mutunga-ranei te take.” It is dawn, it is daylight, the end - or the beginning. The issues of ending and beginning, past and present within memory, the interconnection of memory and language with self and world, are all issues which need to be addressed today.

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<sup>365</sup>Translated this is “O the bones of the people (bones of my ancestors) or O the people of the bones i.e. (the beginning people, the people who make another people.) Kerewin, Joe and Simon Clare are The Bone People. Together they link pakeha and Maori, two cultures, past and future, people and land. End notes. 450.

## Conclusion

### A Changing Discourse

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Attitudes to the indigenous forests and the environment in New Zealand texts are shaped by and filtered through many forms of cultural mediation: history, science, psychology, philosophy, politics, economics and business. Nature and the environment cannot be separated from culture and therefore from literature.

New Zealanders have moved through many phases in their cultural attitudes towards the indigenous forests of Aotearoa; exploitation and rapid deforestation in order to survive, the need to recreate a sense of place by replacing the “foreign indigenous” with familiar but alien invaders, fear of the unfamiliar and the need to bring it under control. In the middle of the twentieth century attitudes to the forests changed as New Zealanders began to identify more strongly with their land and at the same time recognise what they had lost. Finally in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century attitudes change again, first toward restricting economic growth in order to facilitate ecological survival, and then to facilitate growth and integrate business and environmental goals. Continuing through this discourse is the unchanging attitudes of big business such as developers, who in their greed for profit continue to ravish the land.

Through all these changes one aspect remains constant; the dichotomy between the ideal and the pragmatic, between the unlimited utilisation of, and/or the conservation/preservation<sup>366</sup> of Aotearoa New Zealand’s native forests and other natural resources. Depending on the business or environmental culture of the time, the supremacy of one or the other is more pressing. Present

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<sup>366</sup>I have differentiated preservation and conservation as the former leaving remaining virgin bush untouched, and the latter as sustainable management, which may mean using the resource but having a planned environmental management policy which includes replacement.

efforts to encourage businesses to behave in a more environmentally responsible way may help to reconcile the issue.

Literary theorist Dana Phillips writes: "I just think that nature cannot deliver us from the constraints of culture, any more than culture can deliver us from the constraints of nature."<sup>367</sup>

Culture and nature are interdependent regardless of which culture we belong to. Writing about the environment is a means for provoking discussion on philosophical and moral issues that threaten the survival of our planet, regardless of whether the vehicle be poetry, prose, a novel, a book on the advantages of environmental business management or a party manifesto; writers can assist human beings to understand their ecological place in a world, where place seems to shift according to current popular doctrine and philosophy. While "nature cannot deliver us from the constraints of culture", if we fully understand our ecological role, we *can* modify our cultural viewpoint to the position where culture and nature work together for a sustainable way of life. Literature has an important role to play in this understanding. By their very nature, creative writers stand both within society and beyond it. Because of this they are often able to voice controversial issues with less risk of offending. Writers, therefore, can perhaps explore environmental issues through their work in a less threatening medium than the scientist or environmentalist. They may be able to show that if we step beyond the environmental line without understanding our limitations, ignoring past environmental disasters, it may solve immediate environmental issues and bring temporary wealth to a few, but limit our future options for survival. Many of the creative writers discussed in this thesis make the point that if we continue to manipulate our inherited European culture "to deliver us from the constraints of nature" while neglecting to invest in risk management or plan for a sustainable future, we do so

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<sup>367</sup>Phillips, Dana. "Ecocriticism, Literary Theory, and the Truth of Ecology" in *New Literary History*, 1990, 30:577-602

at our peril. However, creative writers also offer hope that we will recognise that all life is inter-related and interdependent and that subject and world can be reunited. Writers play an integral role in increasing the knowledge and understanding of human beings as being part of, not separate from that biodiversity. Janet Frame puts it this way:

[Auckland] . . . needs more poets and painters and composers and writers, so many to a square metre, much more than it has, all built into the city's plans, to waken and put to sleep again the volcanoes, to give depth and height to the buildings and the people, to explore the forest in the sky, to make it known that a forest grows in the sky.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>368</sup>Frame, Janet. *The Carpathians*, 111.



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## Interview

Trezise, Kathleen Vonne. Telephone Interview. 20 August 2002.

## Alphabetical List of Illustrations

Barr, Jim

*The Kiwi Joker's Garden*

Pen and Ink

Artist

Bromhead, Peter

*One Tree Hill*

Pen and ink cartoon

Collection the artist

Heaphy, Charles (1822-81)

*Mt Egmont from the Southward* 1819

Watercolour 15 <sup>1/4</sup> x 24 <sup>1/4</sup>

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

*Kauri Forest, Waikaroa River, Kaipara* 1839

Watercolour 18 x 15

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

Hoyte, John Barr Clark (1835-1913)

*Devil's Punchbowl on the Bealey* c.1875

[Also known as *The Road to Otira, Arthur's Pass*]

Watercolour 628 x 412 mm

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki

Lee-Johnson, Eric (b.1908)

*The Slain Tree* 1945

Oil on board 570 x 360mm

Private collection

McCahon, Colin (1919-1987)

*Takaka Night and Day* 1948

Oil on canvas

915 x 2130mm

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki,  
gift of the Rutland Group, 1958

McLatchie, R.L. (1875-1963)

*Hut in the Bush*

Watercolour

Jacket Cover Design

Preston, James (1834-98)

*Opawa Station* [Rutherford's]

Not dated

Watercolour on paper

235 x 300 mm

Ref: JP24

Canterbury Museum, Christchurch

Spöring, Herman Diedrich (c1730 – 1771)

*A fortified town or village called Hippah, built on a perforated rock, at Tolaga in New Zealand*, c.1784

Morris sculp. London. Alexr Hogg [1784?]

From Anderson, G W ed. A new authentic and complete collection of voyages ... London: A Hogg [1784] op. p45. In Hawkesworth's voyages, 1773, v.2 pl.18

Reference No. B-098-025

The Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

Von Tempsky, Gustavus Ferdinand (1828-68)

*Ambuscade in Taranaki* 1866

Watercolour 8 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 11

Auckland War Memorial Museum

Watkins, Denys (b. 1945)

*In the Wilderness* 1989

Oil and wax on canvas 1830 x 1525mm

Collection the artist

Wright, Frank (1860-1923)

*The Close of Day* 1909

Oil on canvas 1125 x 1940 mm

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki

Unknown Artist

*It's Preserving Time* 1981

Pen and ink drawing

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